

Jai Srimannarayana!

# Saints of the World Quiz Contest

# Bhagavad Ramanuja



Jai Srimannarayana!

# Message from HH Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji!

“If my act of revealing the Manthra, redeems the whole world, from the horrendous clutches of karma, and for that Infernal Hell will be the result, I have absolutely no objection to go to that Hell”

Who else can show such a convivial concern other than Acharya Ramanuja?

Nearly a thousand years ago, a savior, a marvelous philosopher- saint appeared on this Earth, announcing to this world, the advent of a scintillating era in the world of philosophy and spirituality. His vibrant philosophy “tri-une Monism”, Visishtadwaitham, raised curtain for ushering an era of social, as well as, philosophic revolution. Bhagavad Ramanuja was instrumental for the revival, growth, amplification and vivification of “Visishtadwaitha school of thought” which had been in existence from time immemorial.

Humanity all over the globe, barring religion, caste, creed, territory etc. should be indebted to this ‘great savior’ whose philosophy penetrated and enlightened millions and millions of Truth Seekers

Bhagavad Ramanuja, was the beloved son of the couple Sri Asuri Keswava Yajvi & Kanthimathi. He sanctified this Earth with his appearance, in Sri Perumbudur, near Chennai in the state of Tamil Nadu, during 1017 AD. Being a precocious and brilliant child, he gave out beautiful and true explanations to the Vedic texts even as a lad. His studies were profound and his thinking was deep. He turned out to be a great learner under the tutelage of several Acharyas. In the process of learning, he suffered several privations and indignities and he withstood them all with a burning zeal for studies and reverence to his preceptors.

In fulfilment of untold 3 wishes and mandate of his great grand guru Sri Yamunacharya, another equally illustrious savant, Sri Ramanuja spread the concept of Visishtadwaitham, dynamically far and wide, 1. By presenting his “Magnum Opus” “Sri Bhashyam, a commentary on Veda Vyasa’s Bramha Suthras, 2. of 2 most brilliant children of Sri Kuresa Misra, as “Parasara Bhattar & Vedavyasa Bhattar” and 3. Systematizing the Nammalwar’s expositions with right commentaries and making them as a part of the regular worship.

This extra ordinary multifaceted genius brought about many a reform such as i. unity among all classes and creeds through his revolutionary step by taking Harijans into the temple at Melkote, showing no caste distinctions on the path of God, ii. Divulging the Ashtakshari Manthra of Lord Narayana to the world, regardless of consequences or indignities he was to have suffered from his Guru Goshtipurna, iii. Presenting 9 treatises on his own, iv. He reformed and systematized

Jai Srimannarayana!

the deity worship in all the temples, especially in Srirangam and protected the Agama System. V. he declared to the world that the presiding deity on Tirumala Hills was "Lord Srinivasa" only and offered Him "Sankha & Chakra", divine conch and divine discuss, by making Him his disciple. Vi. Gaining vast experience, by touring the whole country along with Kuresa and finding out the real heart of Veda Vyasa, by making research on Bodhayana Vrutthi at Kashmir Library, were to name a few.

It was Bhagavad Ramanuja's genius, skill of organization, administration, vastness of learning and total devotion to a cause throughout his eventful existence on this earth for 120 full years, made him the "SAVIOUR" and lives forever in the hearts of millions of followers, all over the world. May his light shine forever to usher in an era of peace and tranquility!

Our mangalasanams are also due to one and all, who are going to experience the grace of the great acharyas, whose love blooms in their hearts by reading this wonderful work

--chinnajeeyar--

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

This is an edited version of the original work by "**Alkondaville Govindacharya**" which was first published in 1906. We thank all the JET Volunteers who have contributed and helped in the Editing process. A separate document with all the Quiz practice questions will be published soon.

Jai Srimannarayana!

CHAPTER I :  
**NATHAMUNI**

A long time elapsed between the Azhvars (Saints) and appearance of the Acharya (Sage) Sri Ranga Nathamuni or Sri Nathamuni in short. Isvarabhata was the father of Nathamuni and Isvaramuni was Nathamuni's son. All the three together lived in Viranarayanapuram where exists the Holy Shrine of Mannar Koil.

The Resident Deity of the temple (Mannar Koil) is called Mannanar, Lord Krishna or Raja Gopala. This place is about 15 miles from Chidambaram (Chitrakutam) and where the famous tank Viranarayanapuram is situated.

Mannanar was their household Deity. One day, the Nathamuni along with his father and son went to the shrine, and prayed to Mannanar to permit them to undertake a pilgrimage to the North of India to visit holy shrines where God appeared like Mathura, Gokula, Brindavana, the Holy banks of Yamuna (Jumna), Govardhana, Dvaraka, Ayodhya, Salagrama, Badarikasrama, Naimisaranya, Nrisimha-giri and others. God appears in various forms to accomplish threefold objective:

1. Saving the good
2. Punishing the wicked, and
3. Establishing virtue in the land (Bhagavad-Gita. IV-8)

Lord Mannanar gave them permission to do so. They started forth with their families and reached a place called Govardhanapura, situated on the banks of Holy Yamuna. They offered prayers to Lord Krishna. They were fascinated by the beauty of Lord and all the surroundings and decided to spend the rest of their days in Govardhanapura. On a certain night, Sage Nathamuni had a dream in which Lord Mannanar appeared and commanded his devotee to return to Viranarayanapuram.

Sage Nathamuni was impressed by this experience and decided to return to his Native land. He took the permission of Lord Krishna and started his journey back. On the way back they stopped at Puri Lord Jagannatha temple also called as Purushottama Kshetra. After paying reverence to the Lord, they next went on to Simhadri and Ahobilam the abodes of Lord Nrusimha. They then arrived at the Sacred Hill of Tirupati, celebrated as the abode of Lord Srinivasa. God is said to have chosen Tirupati (Tirumala) on this earth as the center for the salvation of mankind.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Enchanted by the beauty of Tirupati, Nathamuni wanted to stay back permanently. But Mannanar's commands reminded him to return home. The Sage could not resist this ; and so left the Holy Tirupati, and en route visited, among others, the holy spots known as Ghatikachala (of Lord Nrisimha), Hastigiri (or Kanchi of Lord Varadaraja), Tiruvahindrapura (near Cuddalore of Lord Devanayaka), Tirukkovalur ( of Lord Trivikrama), Srirangam (of Lord Ranganatha), Tirukudandai (or Kumbhakonam of Lord Aravamudu or Sarangapani) . Finally Nathamuni returned to his native place Viranarayanapuram.

Here the sage received an ovation from the holy inhabitants, and was conducted in procession to Mannanar. The Lord was highly pleased and made His wishes known to the assembled community that they must look upon the Sage as His specially blessed devotee, provide him with suitable lodgings, and all other necessities of life ; and take good care of him. All this they gladly did. And Nathamuni made a flower-garden for the Lord, and employed himself in its care, serving the Lord with the offerings of garlands, scents, lights ; and in such wise usefully spent his time in the company of wise and holy men, in the cultivation of Divine Knowledge and its propagation.

One day, there came a party of devotees from North of Trichi, to visit Mannanar. They were singing the sacred Hymn, "Aravamudu" or the Decad : V-8 of Saint Nammazhvar's Tiruvaymozhi, and ending with the 11th verse of the same, in which it is said : "This Ten out of the Thousand, Sung by Kurugur Sathagopar".

Nathamuni, hearing this, begged the visitors to repeat the "One Thousand." But they said they only knew this fragment of ten out of the one thousand poems. On being again asked whether anyone else knew the same, they confessed that they knew nothing whatever of it. The sage dismissed them with the usual holy Tirtha and prasada from Mannanar.

Nathamuni was anxious to trace out the rest of the Prabandha (the Dravida Hymns of the Saints); and surmised that they might in all likelihood prove recoverable in the Kurugu Land (Azhvar Tirunagari near Tirunalveli). He travelled south to this place, and paid due honors to Saint Namazhvar, and Lord Polindu-ninra-Piran (or Adinatha) and set about inquiring for the missing Prabandha.

He met Parankusa Dasa, a disciple of Madhurakavi and asked him for information. He said :-- 'Sire! Not only the Tiruvay Mozhi of St. Nammazhvar but the Prabandhas as well of the other Azhvars have almost been forgotten, as a very long time has elapsed since the days of their composition. My Acharya, St. Madhurakavi, has left this message that whosoever will concentrate his mind, fixing himself in a Yoga posture before St. Nammazhvar's holy image and repeat the ten-versed Hymn, the Kanninun Sirutambu, twelve thousand times, all the times devoutly dwelling on the Holy feet of the Saint, will be blessed with the vision of Nammazhvar.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Nathamuni was rejoiced to hear this. He fell at the feet of Parankusa Dasa and implored him to teach the Mantra, Kanninun- Siruttambu. Parankusa Dasa finding Nathamuni a fit soul for the communication, taught him this ten poems; and Nathamuni with due preparation and in all austerity, sat down in meditation for the term required, and duly invoked Nammazhvar by the twelve thousand-times repeated Mantra.

Nathamuni was qualified to receive this revelation as he possessed the qualities of a true devotee namely: Faith virtue, devotion to God , serenity, wisdom and courage. Sri Maha Lakshmi, the Universal Mother showed her mercy and commanded Sanit Nammazhar to appear to Nathamuni. As if a voice came from Heaven, the holy image of the Saint opened its mouth and asked Nathamuni the object of his invocation. Nathamuni submitted to him his prayer: to recover the lost knowledge of the Prabhandha.

Saint Nammazvar was pleased to reveal just like Lord Krishna revealed to Arjuna,

- The Holy Tiruvaymozhi of 1000 verses
- 3000 verses of Hymns sung by the other saints who appeared before and after St. Nammazhvar
- The holy Doctrine of the Three Rahasyas
- The secrets of Yoga

Nathamuni felt himself blessed. He remained in Tirunagari absorbed in the services of Azhvar and Adinatha. But lord Mannanar again appeared in his dream and commanded Nathamuni that he should chant the revelation before him. He communicated the dream to Lord Adinatha and Azhvar, whereupon he was permitted to return to his native place and asked to spread the instruction he had received, among deserving devotees with good spiritual character namely virtues such as Sama and Dama (or conquest of the senses and the mind).

Nathamuni headed to Viranarayanapuram and visited many Holy Shrines and learnt much of the traditional lore connected with them. He went to Lord Mannanar and as commanded in the dream duly recited all the Prabandhas, he had now received, before Him.

The Lord after thus giving audience to Nathamuni thought to Himself thus:- "We provided the souls with bodies and senses; We gave them Sastras to guide them in the right direction; We ourselves often incarnated; and yet Our objective of salvation of all remains incomplete. The Prabandhas of the Azhvars are a valuable means by which to bring about this salvation." He commanded Nathamuni to set them to music and in this manner disseminate the Holy Knowledge.

In obedience to this command, Nathamuni set the Holy Prabandhas to music--celestial music, it is written -- with the help of his nephews KizhaiakattAzhvan and MelaiakattAzhvan ; and the Prabandhas being now like the Vedas, associated with the three-fold intonation of Udatta,

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Anudatta and Svarita, spread from that time onwards far and wide in the land.

King Chola is said to have ruled in those days in a place called Gangaikonda Chozhapuram, when two courtesans came to him. One could sing according to the mode called deva-gana (celesstial mode); the other according to the mode called manushya gana (human mode). Each thought she excelled the other; and the object of their approaching the king was to have the dispute settled between them as to who actually was the better. The king ordered a council to meet, before which the singers were made to perform their parts. The dispute was decided in favor of the manushya gana ; and rich presents were bestowed on that performer, while the other was considered to have failed.

The lady of the deva-gana thought thus :- "My method of singing, cannot be appreciated by humans and I shall consecrate the same therefore to the Devas (celestial beings)". So she went from one Holy Shrine to another, everywhere displaying her art to the Deity therein manifest. She in due course reached Viranarayanapuram and as was customary with her, she went to the Shrine of Mannanar and there sang her song in the audience of our sage Nathamuni.

Nathamuni heard and understood her mode; and mightily pleased and as a mark of his appreciation, gave the tirtha and prasada of Lord Mannanar. She then went to king Chola and spoke thus; - "There is one soul, at least, O King, who can understand the beauties of my deva-gana. He is by name Nathamuni, the blessed devotee of Lard Mannanar at Viranarayanapuram."

The king's curiosity was roused. He sent messengers to Nathamuni, begging him to visit his court. He on his side, on receiving the invitation, thought thus: - "We have set the blessed Prabandhas to exquisite music. Let us visit the king's court, and take this opportunity of making these known to the world." Thus he went to the king's court. On his arrival, the king rose and welcoming the Sage with every mark of honor, offered him a suitable seat. Whereon the Sage blessed the king, and inquired as to his object in inviting him. The king said :-"Holy sage can you distinguish between the devagana and the manushya gana? The Sage then requested that the performance be given before him. When this was done, he addressed the king thus :- "You all have ears for the manushya-gana only. Only the Devas can understand the Other." "But", the king respectfully asked, "how can we be made to hear it?" " Thereon the Sage directed that the 400 kinds of tala (rhythm) be marked, and explained to the king the rate of each.

The king understood from this explanation the regular harmonical progression and symphony which this method lent to the deva-gana music, which produced in him a bliss never before experienced. It is also related that a pair of cymbals was placed near a consecrated post, and the deva- gana was sung, when it was found that the post began to melt. They stopped the music, and when they attempted to lift the cymbals, they stuck to the post ; and when they began the music and lifted them, they came off. The king went into raptures over this, and falling at the feet of the Sage proposed to reward him abundantly. But the Sage, to whom even

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

the offer of Lordship over Worlds was no temptation, politely declined the presents offered; and blessing the king, returned to Vira- narayanapuram.

Nathamuni had eight prominent disciples:--

1. Uyyakkondar
2. Kurukai-k- kaval-appan
3. Nambi Karunakara Dasar
4. Eru-tiru-vudaiyar
5. Tiru-k-kanna-mangai-andan
6. Vanamamalai Devi-y-andan
7. Urup- pattur-Acchan-pillai
8. Sokattur-Azhvan

Jaya-Samhita (of Pancharatra Agama) describes a true disciple thus:-

*"He indeed is a true disciple*

*Who owns, sole for the Guru's sake*

*All riches--all wisdom--*

*All works--his body itself!"*

Such deserving disciples then, Nathamuni, initiated into all the Holy Mysteries of Religion, taught them the Divya Prabandhas, and left a legacy of works, like

1. Purushanirnaya
2. Nyaya-tatva treating of Sublime Truths of Religion, beginning with God, the Lord of the Cosmos ; and
3. Yoga rahasya (or the art of communion with God)

Nathamuni then retired from active habits of life and became immersed in the contemplation of Mannanar, fixing His resplendent form ever before his mental gaze. This samdhi state of the Sage came to be known to the outside world and finally reached the ears of king Chola. To see the wonderful Sage and pay homage to Lord Mannanar as well, he left his capital and, accompanied by his consorts, reached Viranarayanapuram. There he saw Nathamuni absorbed in Yoga (meditation) and, lost in respect and wonder at this unusual sight, was quietly retracing his steps.

But the sage took them for Lord Krishna and His Holy Consorts; that they had been pleased to visit him. Thus fancying in his delirium of Yoga, he ran after them. Uyyakkondar and others, his disciples, observing this divine hallucination, pursued the Sage and meeting him at Gangai-konda-Chozhapuram besought an explanation from him as to the apparently insane nature of his conduct. He told them that in his eyes, they appeared as Lord Krishna and His Consorts and this vision threw him into a frenzy of love. The disciplines reminded him that service to God and the Godly were the highest aim, and that when this demanded waking life on his part, he was not to allow himself to be ecstasized in this manner to the prejudice of such service. He came to

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

himself and returned to his Divine Service at Lord Mannanar's.

Matters went on thus for a certain length of time, and the sage became more and more absorbed in his illumination. On a certain day he called in his disciple kurugai-k-kaval appan, and commanded him to learn the Eight-limbed yoga', and taught him the same.

The sage now called his other intimate disciple Uyyakkondar and asked him also to practice the Yoga method. But he humbly answered the Sage:- " Holy sire, while I still carry the corpse with me, how is marriage possible" It will be time for me to consider the matter when I am about to give up my body". "Then", said the sage, "employ yourself in the dissemination of the Sastras and the Prabandhas". The sage now called his son Isvaramuni and said :- "Son, you shall have a son. The name "Yamunaitturaivar", you should give him". And he commanded his disciples Uyyankondar and kurugaikkaval Appan to communicate in due course to this would be son, all the knowledge of the Sastras and the Yoga he had imparted to them. Leaving his instructions thus, he resumed his Yoga. Time passed.

King Chola had gone out into the country with his followers on a hunting excursion, and he happened to pass by Viranarayanapuram on his journey back. Our sage's young daughter watched the grand cortege, with bows arrows, female attendants, monkeys and what not. But to her it all seemed like a vision, which, running up to her father, she described as if two men with bows, a woman and a monkey called at his place and inquired for Nathamuni and went their way. And our sage at once construed this (in his Divine-filled imagination) as if Lord Rama himself, with His brother Lakshmana following Him with bows and arrows (as His body-guard), with Queen Sita between them, condescended to visit him, as described in Ramayana. "Rama went foremost of the three, Next Sita followed, fair to see, And Lakshman with his bow in hand walked hindmost of the little band".

Forthwith he started from his Yoga-seat and went in search of this Holy Band, and asking those whom he met on the way, for traces of their journey. They said,: "Go this way, go this way," evidently fancying that he was in search of the king and his retinue. He increased his speed and arrived in the vicinity of Gangaikondapuram; and asking the residents there to direct him further on the way where the Holy Band went, they said they had not seen any. He looked forward and far out and sideways, and seeing nothing of what his heart yearned for, heaved a deep sigh, wept and swooning away, fell on the ground and departed from this world.

The disciples and the son, of our Heaven-departed Sage, received the tidings of the extraordinary translation and could not bear the pain of separation; but fate must be submitted to by all. So they travelled to where the sage was lying in state, and after prostrating themselves before the body, duly cremated him according to the Brahma medha ritual prescribed in the Vedas. Returning home, all the rest of the ceremonies were duly performed by Isvaramuni, the son. And Kurugavalappan selected a place near where his Master was accustomed to sit in Yoga, and steadily practise Yoga. The Sage is said to have lived 540 years.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER-II : UYYAKKONDAR AND MANAKKAL-NAMBI

Uyyakkondar is the same as Pundarikaksha. The name Uyyakkondar has an interesting story connected with it. Once on an occasion, Vangipuratt-Acchi, the father in-law of Nathamuni, sent a request to his son-in-law to send his wife (i.e., Acchi's daughter), Aravinda-pavai for a visit. Nathamuni sent her, escorted by Pundarikaksha, his trusted disciple. Some of the dependents of Acchi looked down upon Pundarikaksha as of an inferior caste. Pundarikaksha belonged to "purva-sikhi" which is a class among Brahmans whose custom was to wear the tuft of hair right on the crown of head. And therefore they fed him on stale food. But he never resented this treatment. He, on the other hand, considered it as the greatest blessing that was conferred upon him. Leaving the wife of Nathamuni in her father's place safely thus, he returned home. Upon inquired by Nathamuni to narrate all that took place at Acchi's residence, Pundarikaksha narrated with joy the happiness he derived from eating stale food. When asked how it could be so, he answered that it was certainly so on the principle explained by the Saint.Tondaradippodi- Azhvar :-

"If but their broken bread the saints will grant indeed it shall my nature purify". (*Tirumalai, verse 41*)

On hearing this, Nathamuni embraced his disciple and exclaimed: "You are my savior". Thus Uyyakkondar means: "he who practiced the highest precepts of religion taught by his Master". Such was the reverence of Uyyakkondar or Pundarik-aksha towards devotees of God. He had many disciples under him with whom he was happily engaged in the delightful study and exposition of the Utterances of the Holy Azhvars.

The chief of these disciples were five,  
(1) Manakkal Nambi  
(2) Tiruvallikkeni panperumal Arayar  
(3) Sottaippusi Sendalankarar  
(4) Sri Pundarika dasan,  
(5) Ulagu Perumal Nangai.

Of these disciples, Manakkal Nambi or Sri Ramamisra was the greatest, inasmuch as he bore to his Guru (Uyyakkondar) the relation of Lakshmana to his Master and Brother Sri Ramachandra. This was so much the case that when the Guru's wife Andalamma died, Ramamisra did all the menial services necessary in the house hold of the Guru. In illustration of this implicit servitude

Jai Srimannarayana!

to his master, it is recorded that on a certain occasion, he accompanied the two daughters of his Guru on pilgrimage to a bathing place. They were returning and the damsels shrank at a small stream in their path because it was slippery

Ramamisra saw the situation and immediately coming to their rescue, stretched himself at length across the channel, and let them walk over on his back! The Guru heard this incident, and drawing the disciple to him with exclamations of joy, touched his head with his feet as favor, a great blessing not so easily bestowed on all indiscriminately. "Is there anything more that I can do to you?", further asked the Guru. "What more can I ask," said the disciple, "than that, having already attained my highest ambition, viz. that of serving at your Holy Feet, this service should be continued to me forever". Uyyakkondar was overcome with this exemplary attitude of Ramamisra. And in his irrepressible wish to do to his disciple the highest good, commended to him once more for meditation the Dvaya Mantra.

Uyyakkondar's sojourn in this earth was now approaching its end. Ramamisra, reverently approached and enquired Uyyakkondar the subject of who after him was to bear the apostleship. "Well, my son," said he, "I had hoped to carry out myself the behests of my Holy Master Nathamuni. He communicated to me when he was passing away to expect the arrival of a grandson for him in future, (i.e. son to Isvaramuni), to whom to impart all the Mysteries of our Faith. And to name him as Yamunaitturaivar, as my Guru willed. But providence has willed it otherwise. This duty therefore devolves on you, the next and my most trusted disciple. And you therefore will bequeath our mysteries to posterity in the Holy Sottai line of descent. So delivering the message, Uyyakkondar left his body, seating himself in the "Padmasana" posture, and uniting his heart with the Holy feet of his Acharya, Sri Nathamuni.

Neither Ramamisra, nor his brethren, could bear this pang of separation. But gradually they recovered and girded themselves to carry out the last services and sacraments for the departed with all due ceremony and solemnity. The memorial verse dedicated to him on the occasion is recorded as following:

***"Namaha Pankaja Netraya Nathartha Pada  
Pankaje  
Nyastha Sarva Bharaayasma Tkulanathaya  
Dhimathe"***

Ramamisra was now, with his disciples, engaged in the work of furthering his holy mission. He was always in eager expectation of the hoped-for holy son to be born to Isvaramuni. This

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

happy event came about in the month of Adi under the asterisk Uttarada. Joy overspread their countenances, and they forth with went about administering to the child all the sacraments fit for the occasion. According to the wishes of Nathamuni he named the child Yamunaitturaivar and observed all the needful Preliminaries prescribed for the Vaishnavas according to the pancharatra text, which means in English the following:

***“Who was this holy Child, but Yamunacharya (the Sanskrit synonym); Alavandar (the Tamil name), the famous fore runner of Sri Ramanuja, who was to come.”***

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER - III : ALAVANDAR

Such was the advent of great Alavandar, which had been foreseen by his predecessors. An advent destined to inaugurate a system of thought which was thenceforward to grow, amplify and vivify the nascent religious sense in man. Alavandar signified literally: "He who has come to reign" i.e., to reign in a system of religious thought, which was to glow in man's heart uplifting him to God in love.

Duly were performed, as he grew, the sacred rites of anna-prasana, chaula and upanayana and the life of the student began in earnest. Alavandar would attend the school for a day and stay away at home. Questioned by his fellow students as to the cause of his absence, he would tell them, "you are learning the same things again and again". Questioned by his parents, he would say, "They are reading the same thing over and over; but I have learnt it all already".

A precociously clever boy Alavandar was, and thus he was excused regular attendance at school. He finished his student's career rapidly and the next stage of life, wedlock, was duly entered into. By this time the end of Isvaramuni drew near, and he did farewell to all with the consoling reflection of having left a model son for the service of the world. The noble son had all the sacramental routine for his departed parent strictly gone through and now set out to fulfil his own vocation.

Grammar, logic, philosophy and allied subjects were taken up. And he studied them assiduously under Maha Bhashya Bhatta. There was at this time of Akkiyazhvan, residing in the court of the monarch of the country as Pundit and royal chaplain. He was thus, in his own opinion, the head of all the literary men in the country, from whom he assessed tributes as a recognition of his suzerainty.

The tribute was dasabandham or one tenth of the income of each learned man. A demand for this was sent out to Maha Bhashya Bhatta, who thereon was troubled in mind. On Alavandar inquiring and being told all the circumstances of Bhatta's discomfiture, he received the demand-notice and tore it into pieces in the presence of the royal messengers who had conveyed it. They returned and narrated the occurrence to Akkiyazhvan, who again sent men to Maha Bhashya Bhatta to know whether it was a new poet or a man of letters, who had dared so to affront him. Alavandar again interfered between his teacher and the men and sent them back with the appropriate retaliation for Maha Bhashya Bhatta.

Akkiyazhvan had felt his pride already piqued and now the second message set him aflame

Jai Srimannarayana!

with rage. "Is there a scholar to oppose me?", he cried frantically, and appealed to his king for protection and redress against the insult he had received. It was not Maha Bhashya Bhatta, but an insolent boy of his party, who had thus insulted him, was of course the report of the men.

The king now dispatched some messengers with a written command to the boy to come to his presence. But the proud boy unceremoniously destroyed the royal mandate, and let the messengers depart. The king was duly told of the indignity so offered. He reflected a moment and thought to himself that it must be no ordinary person who could command courage to slight even royalty. He would therefore send envoys with escort and letters, a formal invitation to the extraordinary boy to come and grace the royal court with his august presence.

This was appropriate to him, and so the boy accepted the invitation and arriving, alighted in the royal hall of audience with all honors paid. All assembled to receive the curious visitor. Akkiyazhvan of course was present to witness the prodigy, feverishly fearing what the next event would prove to be. His fears were well founded however, for it was like a bomb bursting before him, when a scrap of paper was thrown by the distinguished visitor before the royal pundit. It was at once a gauntlet and challenge. The scrap contained this famous verse which means in English the following

'Find, if you will, than me a second soul,  
Who wots entire all Vedic dogmatics,  
In all the stretch from Himalaya,  
To Rama's bridge- the joy of Sita's soul  
Or East to West, which mountain ranges bound, With sun and moon in  
turn, their crests adorning'

On reading this, Akkiyazhvan's wrath grew: turning to the king, he implored "My royal patron! Permit me to argue, this boy out of his intolerable vanity, and crush him before you all." The king gently asked the boy if he was capable of standing a combat such as his Pundit would give. "Most certainly, your Majesty! Give me leave," answered him, "but you will not be capable of judging between us and deciding as between the winner and the loser, nor can we own to you our mutual victory or defeat. Appoint, please, judges versed in the matters of our contention". "Well said," agreed the king and selected fit umpires to adjudge the issues of the intellectual contest pending.

It was an unparalleled and exciting scene. And so the king and his consort both took their seats to watch the interesting proceedings.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

The queen saw the boy and with her keen insight and penetration decided to herself that he was going to be the victor. "My Lord! She said, addressing the king, "if this boy wins not, throw me to the dogs". "If he wins", exclaimed the king in his turn, "I will part with half my kingdom for him".

Akkiyazhvan spoke, "Vain stripling! No drawn contest between us is needed. A mere trick suffices to put thee down before this august assembly, "witness you all!" he said to the assembly, and turning to Alavandar said: "If you, proud boy, should say "yes" in any matter, I will prove the "no" of it and vice versa, 'yes' to your 'no' and the winner in the end shall touch the head of the loser with his foot". "Agreed," promptly retorted Alavandar and without further ado, made three short statements and challenged Akkiyazhvan to negative them if he could. Listen, proud pedant, to these and disprove if you can!

(1) "Your mother is not a barren woman."

(2) "This king is paramount"

(3) "This queen is a good wife."

Akkiyazhvan was simply stupefied, as he could not dare to disprove these facts and therefore kept helplessly silent.

They now entered the arena of literary debates and here also Akkiyazhvan was beaten. Alavandar addressing his opponent said :- "**As for the victor touching the head of his victim, O pundit!-for that I shall desist, though agreed to by yourself and in consideration of your grey hairs and your eminent status as Guru in the Royal house hold**". On hearing this declaration, the learned assembly applauded Alavandar's attainments and noble demeanor and worshipped him with the honors of a Brahmaratha (=a triumphal procession).

The Queen was overjoyed to find that her insight had not belied her as to the results of the combat and drawing the conqueror, Yamunacharya to her breast exclaimed :- "**Yennai Alavandiro**" i.e. 'Did you come to fulfil me'? Alavandar thus means: "**He who came to fulfil** ", namely

(1) Fulfill his spiritual mission on earth, and

(2) Fulfill the queen's prevision of his success. With the king, the queen, Alavandar entered the inner apartments, her joy knowing no bounds.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

The monarch, true to his promise, invested Alvandar with half his kingdom. In royal bliss thus did Alavandar and his holy wife, who by this time joined him, remain.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## **CHAPTER - IV : ALAVANDAR'S SPIRITUALIZATION**

Ramamisra was watching silently the eminence which Alavandar had reached so rapidly. And when he heard of Akkiazhvan's ignominious defeat, and Alavandar becoming a king, his joy knew no bounds and he danced with flags in hand. He now thought of carrying into effect the mission he had received, of making Alavandar the future Apostle of the Faith. So, he went to the palace, but the guards obstructed his entrance. He found his way however into the kitchen where contracting friendship with the cooks, he ascertained from them the potherbs that pleased Alavandar most, Tuduvalai. He daily took it to the kitchen for a period of six months; and yet no notice was taken of it. Wearied, he stopped away for a few days.

Alavandar finding his favorite dish missing from his dinner so suddenly, enquired of the cooks the reason. They informed him of an old Brahmana having, for six months uninterruptedly, brought the green herb and having stopped the supply for a few days. "If he should return again," Commanded the king, after chiding them, "inform me at once." Ramamisra thought he would try again, and so put in his appearance with the favorite vegetable, after some interval. The king was immediately informed; and he ordered the venerable man being conducted into his presence. When he duly arrived, the king rose, and making obeisance, seated him with every mark of respect. And asked how he may reward him for his services by money or by lands.

Sri Ramamisra said, "Good king, these riches I do not need from you; for I have precious riches, amassed by your ancestors, to give you. And I shall show you where they lie treasured up. Till I put you in possession of these, let me be admitted to your presence without hindrance by the guards at thy gates". Alavandar was taken out of himself by this unexpected revelation, and placed his men under instructions to admit the worthy visitant freely without caring for ceremony.

Sri Ramamisra now began to teach Alavandar the Bhagavadgita, - the essence of all the Upanishads. As Alavandar listened attentively through the eighteen books of this Sublime poem, his spiritual sense was awakened, and a craving caused in his heart to realize God, as is spoken therein. "How shall I realize Him?" Alavandar asked Acharya. "That is taught in the Great Charama Sloka", promptly responded the teacher and taught its significant mysteries. The more Alavandar meditated on these, the more they entered deep into his heart. The saving Grace taught therein made him more and more inclined to surrender himself to God, and more and more cultivate the sense of resignation to His will. His soul bent more and more

Jai Srimannarayana!

to Him with the nourishment the teachings gave, just as the ripening grain-stalks bend as they receive more milk.

As days passed, his love for the Merciful grew warmer and warmer; and as this love increased, his attachment to other things became weaker and weaker. The Teacher watched the spiritual progress of his disciple, and thought the time was ripe for leading him to where his promised patrimonial wealth lay hidden. He led him therefore to the Holy shrine of Srirangam, where pointing to God reposing therein in the serene glory of His presence, he said: (English transliteration)

"Who will not worship Rangam, the most Holy, - If he be wise? For, does not wisdom blossom here and keep Yama (death) out of sight?" This is your trove, your heritage, and my trust, which I here discharge on this auspicious day."

Alavandar, with the spiritual vision endowed by God's Grace, saw in the Holy image of Ranga the Treasure of the Universe enshrined; and exclaimed, with

(a) feelings of remorse in his heart for past days, which had been spent without this Blessed Vision, and

(b) feelings of bliss overflowing in streams of loving tears, at the fascinating sight he enjoyed:- 'O Blissful God' exclaimed Alavandar, 'many days have I lost in the vain pursuits of the world. I mourn for this. Now I have seen You reclining of Your Sesha. I serve You for evermore. I find myself reclaimed from the *death* of worldly enjoyments, and initiated into the life of Your service.

And Alavandar exclaimed (*transliterated into English below*)

"Lord! To whom who has tasted Your service, lands and friends and riches, Sons and wives, cattle and houses become hateful objects".

After this a determination came to him to renounce the world, and don the robes of the Sanyasin, inasmuch as the love of the world and of God were incompatible with each other. From then onwards, he devoted himself to divine contemplation and service.

Alavandar's spiritual fame attracted to him many disciples, of whom the following were notable

1. Periya-Nambi,

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

2. Tirukkottiyur-Nambi,
3. Periyatirumalai Nambi,
4. Maraneri-Nambi,
5. Tiruk-acchi-Nambi,
6. Alavandar- Azhvar,
7. Tilrumalai-y-andan,
8. Vanamamalai-y-andan,
9. Taiva-vari-y- andan,
10. Isan-andan,
11. Jiyar-andan,
12. Tiruk-kurugur-Appan,
13. Tirumohur- Appan,
14. Tirumohur-misran,
15. Taivap-perumal,
16. Vakul-abharana Somayajiyar,
17. Titu-k-kurugur-dasar,
18. Tirumalirunjolai-dasar,
19. Vada- madurai-piran-dar,
20. Alkondi-ammangi,

Twenty in all. They were all learned and became evangelists as well of the Faith.

Manakkal-Nambi, (Ramamisra), who had five disciples, namely,

1. Alavandar himself,
2. Taivattuk-k-arasu-Nambi,
3. Gomathattut-tiruvinnagar- appan,
4. Sirupullur-udaiya-pillai, and
5. Vangi-puratt-acchi

was now to deliver his last message to Alavandar.

Ramamisra mentioned to Alavandar, "Learn the Yoga from Kurugaikavalappan since he was bestowed with that knowledge by Nathamuni. I am now going to depart; to my disciples, give all learning and instruction, and make Srirangam your capital, and pass on to posterity the Faith bequeathed to us by Nathamuni, your spiritual as well as bodily grandsire." So delivering himself, he passed away with his heart fixed upon the holy feet of his guru.

Time passed with Alavandar happily in the work of propagating the faith and writing works, of which those that are extant are the *Stotra-ratna*, *siddhitraya ad Agama-pramanya*, - the bulwarks of the Visishtadvaita-Vedanta. At this stage he thought of visiting Kurugaikavalappan. Accompanied by his disciples, he proceeded to that place and finding Kurugaikavalappan was

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

absorbed in Yoga, approached the sanctuary with the utmost caution and reverence, and planted himself by the wall on the other side of which Appan was seated.

Then Appan exclaimed, "Is there one of the Sottai-race (i.e., descendant of Nathamuni) standing there?", surprised and with fear, Alvandar ventured to speak, "Holy sir, yes, I am a most humble scion of that race; my name is Yamunai-t-turaivar (Yamunacharya). I am come here to do obeisance unto you". So saying, he went forward and fell at Appan's holy feet. Rising, after being blessed, he asked of Appan, how despite caution on his part, he had been discovered by him. To which, Kurugaikavalappan said :- "Son, when God is with me, He so loves me as to be listless to all else; even Sri, His Spouse, is unable to withdraw His attention while He is so engaged; but now He looked away from me three or four times. I concluded that none other than a child of Sottai race was close by". At which account, Alavandar was delighted; and entreated Appan that the Yoga-Mystery might be revealed to him, as directed by his Guru Manakkal-Nambi; for he had come in quest of it. "Certainly it is intended for thee, son", said Appan, "But I can only impart it at the moment of my death. That moment comes the next Pushya-month, Guru-pushya-yoga, Abhijin muhurta. Take this scrap on which the time is noted so as to put thee in mind of it. Come precisely at that moment". Prostrating to Appan, Yamunacharya returned to Srirangam.

*Adhyayan-otsava*, or one of the great annual festal celebrations, in connection with the Holy Temple here, came round. It is the festival when all the 4000 Prabandhas of the Azhvars are sung antiphonally. In the course of this recital, the Araiyaar, or the chief chorister of the Temple sang the verse of Tiruvay-mozhi, viz. *Kaduvina* (x.2.8), in which occurs the passage :- **Nadamino namargalullir** etc., meaning

*'Speed, good souls, to Ananta-Sayana,  
Remind We this-speed, oh speed'*

This passage reiterated by Araiyaar was taken by Yamunacharya as a sign that a shrine so dear to Saint Nammazhvar" namely, Anantasayana, was one, which to visit became imperative on him. He immediately rose and, placing his disciple Teyvavariyandan in charge of his *matham* (monastery), went on a pilgrimage to Anantasayana, where he visited the Lord Seshasayana by way of the three-doored sanctum. Some time passed thus. He suddenly remembered the scrap given him by Appan, and calling for it found to his surprise that it was the very moment he ought to have been with K.Appan for receiving the Yoga-Mysteries. With sorrow indescribable, he chid himself for his forgetfulness and wished, in his agony, for a *pushpaka-vimana* to waft him instantly to K.Appan! Helpless and in sheer anguish he left Anantasayana and started back for Srirangam.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

In Srirangam, meanwhile, Teyva-vari-y-andan was unable to bear the separation of his Guru, Yamunacharya, and consequently became ill and wore away daily. Physicians were brought by his friends to examine the patient. They all declared that some deep mental affliction was at the root of his illness. But asked the friends: "Is it worldly affection of any kind,--may be woman--gnawing at your heart?". "No affliction, "said he, "troubles me, but affection which I have for my Guru; hence, if I am conducted to him promptly, I may hope to live". Despairing of his life, the friends laid him on a stretcher and carried him towards Anantasayana. As they proceeded on their journey, Andan daily picked up strength and revived sufficiently to be able to go on foot. At Karaimanai river-side, the Guru and the disciple met. The latter fell flat on sighting his Guru, overcome by joy.

The Guru, finding him thus lying motionless, addressed him thus: "Sri Rama was a Master, hence He had the power to make his brother Bharata carry out his behest, (namely, to stay at Ayodhya till he returned from his exile in the forest; but I seem no such master to you, as I am powerless like Rama to exact obedience from you". This sarcastic remark penetrated deep into the heart of Andan, and he felt that by transgressing the commands of his Guru to remain in Srirangam, he had disobeyed him, speechless therefore he lay.

The Guru taking compassion--his anger at the disobedience of Andan abating by this time--said: -- "I believe, son, you desire to reestablish with me the relationship of master and disciple. If so I bid you rise." On hearing this, Andan rose, trembling with fear and stood dumb. The good men standing near remarked that Andan's temperament was like that of Lakshmana, who said that his separation from Rama would be like taking the fish out of the water (Ramayana II.32.31). Yamunacharya hearing this said, "Andan! disciples constituted like you are rare. I am proud of you. But oh, much distress I find in you. Take courage". So saying, he softly stroked him and bid him go and visit Anantasayana. "You are my Anantasayana. I know no other", burst out Andan, opening his mouth for the first time. Yamunacharya was struck with the extraordinary character of his disciple and taking him to be for one who answers the description

"That Teacher is all who Faith bestows on his disciple He is Vaikuntha itself, the Milk-sea and the Dvaraka"

lead him back to Srirangam, which they all reached in due course.

In the company of his faithful followers, Yamunacharya was here engaged in the prosecution of his spiritual mission; but a thought now began to harass him that to carry on the good work he had begun, no competent soul was yet found among his disciples.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

**CHAPTER-V**  
**RAMANUJA**

***His birth and studies***

Yamunacharya was thus troubled in his mind as to a competent successor to whom to hand on the Torch of Faith for posterity. His disciple Nambi or Srisailapurna had proceeded to The Holy Hills of Tirupati to live there for a time in the service of the Lord seated therein, Sri Venktachalapati. He had two sisters, Bhumipiratti and Periyapiratti, or Bhu-devi and Sri-devi. The elder Bhudevi was married to Asuri Kesavapperumal, the performer of many Yagas residing at Sriperumbudur. Sridevi was married to Kamalanayana- bhatta of the Vattamani clan, residing at Madhuramangalam.

Of Bhudevi was born Ramanuja, the Great Reformer and religionist of the 12th Century, just as Rama was born of Kausalya and Krishna of Devaki. Of him it is written (*transliterated into English*)

***It is the First Ananta that became Lakshmana next, and Balabhadra next,  
again the One next in Kali".***

And this One was the Great Ramanuja born in the Kali age, as the Spiritual Sun to dispel the darkness of sin and ignorance, reigning rampant as said in the verse : -

***"The Scriptures are lost, and so the Traditional Laws, The twice-born have  
become degenerate,  
The allied sciences as well are wrecked, Oh, how Kali (Iron age)  
grows in power!"***

To Harita Rishi was also, by God, foretold the coming of the Great Luminary, Ramanuja, as follows :-

***In thy line, Harita! will be born Sesha himself- My Own--for worlds'  
Salvation***

Thus then was ushered into the world a Great Saviour, in the fullness of his own age.

Tirumala Nambi or Srisailapurna got tidings of this birth, and forthwith proceeded to Sri Perumbudur (10 miles from the station of Tiruvallur, Madras Railway), to visit the child. Seeing his friend Asuri kesava, he congratulated him on the auspicious event and said, "Friend, I see the blessed child. He is above his kind. The light in his face indicates this. He

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

possesses, in embryo, all the qualities which shall make him a sage, learned and wise. Name him therefore Lakshmana as he will be to God as Lakshmana was to Rama. Lakshmana is incarnated as Ramanuja. As the illustrious child grew, the several sacraments binding on the Brahmanas were duly administered till he came to be full sixteen years of age. And by that time, he had passed through the student's course, namely the learning of the Vedas and all that appertains to that study. He was now married; or as the Vaidikas say, he duly entered in to the order of the Householder after Brahmacharya. He left his home in search of a competent teacher who would teach him the Vedanta and found one in Yadava Prakasa, living at Tirupputkuzhi in the neighborhood of Perumalkoil, or Kanchipuram. And here he joined other students learning under that teacher.

Meanwhile, Kamalanayanabhata at Madhuramangalam became the father of a boy, the mother being his wife Sridevi as noted. Srisailapurna receiving the news, hastened to the place and congratulating Bhatta on the happy event, foretold that the child was one of great promise; he would grow to be very wise and good and unworldly, and an ardent Champion of Religion. He was to be named Govinda. All the Samskaras (sacraments) were regularly administered in his case. He came of age and also entered the order of the householder. Hearing of his cousin-brother Ramanuja studying under Yadava- prakasa, he gladly joined him to prosecute studies in his good company.

In the course of their readings, Yadava came across the passage, "*Satyam Jnanam Anantham Bramha*" (Taittiriya Upanishath: II, 1.1 ) and he explained it in a way most repugnant to the spirit of the passage itself. For the passage means :-

***"Brahman (God) is Truth (Sattyam), knowledge (Jnanam), and infinity (anantam)".***

But Yadava said that the attributes of Truth, Knowledge and Infinity could not co-exist in Brahman, inasmuch as broken-horn-ness, horn- lessness, and full-hornness, could not co-exist in a cow, for example: a cow cannot have broken horns, no horns and be fully horned at one and the same time; and therefore Brahman cannot simultaneously possess various attributes. Brahman with attributes was therefore a logical impossibility.

Ramanuja protested with his teacher that this Upanishad passage could not be thus misinterpreted and so tortured as to suit his own imaginary Brahman. Challenged by the teacher to furnish his own explanation, Ramanuja argued thus, " To begin with, a sentence cannot mean otherwise than what it is intended to mean. "That Brahman is Truth etc." is what is evident in this passage. It does not run thus :- "Brahman is not Truth, "so as to make

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Brahman devoid of any attribute, thus reducing It to a non-entity. And then, if there is Brahman, It must have attributes, for an attributeless Brahman can have no existence (truth). A thing must be some-thing, not no-thing. And thirdly the attributes Truth & etc ., are not inconsistent with each other so as to preclude their co-existence in Brahman, such as the inconsistency of light and darkness co-existing in space for example. The attribute Truth is meant to show that Brahman exists not at one moment merely, and ceasing to exist beyond that moment. Brahman is Truth is therefore intended to establish Brahman's existence in eternity, or its eternality in time. Brahman is knowledge is next intended to establish that Brahman is Spirit, for knowledge means Thought. Thought means Intelligence, sensations and so on. And thus Knowledge is an inseparable adjunct of Brahman, for otherwise Brahman would be no Spirit, but simple non-intelligent or non-sensate, or non-thinking stuff like lifeless matter.

Brahman is *Knowledge* therefore establishes that *Brahman is Spirit or life*. Brahman is *infinity* is next intended to establish that Brahman is without limits or conditions, or its infinity in space and mode. Truth therefore is the term which characterizes Brahman as *Eternal*, distinguishing it from what is non-eternal; *Knowledge* is the term which characterizes Brahman as Spirit or Life, distinguishing it from what is non-spirit or non-life; and infinity is the term which characterizes Brahman as Infinite, distinguishing it from what is *non infinite* (or conditioned by space-limits or mode-limits). And these attributes and infinite others can co-exist in Brahman without mutual contradiction, as redness, softness, perfume &., can harmoniously co- exist in the flower. The analogy of the cow is not appropriate in this case; the analogy of the flower as quoted, or the sun having light and heat co-existing, are appropriate. And therefore to try to postulate an attributless Brahman, or a Brahman in whom different attributes cannot co-exist, is neither logical nor consistent with affirmatory character of the Vedic passage in question" Yadava after hearing this simply said in disdain: "Thou, to argue with me?" and kept silent.

On another day, Ramanuja, being a sincere disciple was anointing his guru Yadava with oil; when Yadava took into his head to descant on the Vedic verse from Chandogya Upanishad (1.6.7)

***'Thasya Yatha Pundareekameva Makshinee..'***

'Brahman, '(or He who is the golden-hued in the Sun), has his eyes red like the posteriors of the monkey. When Ramanuja heard this, he felt a pang shooting across his heart to find that he had to hear the noble Vedic passages thus abused and ill-treated by Yadava. His grief was so keen that a hot tear stole into his eye, and dropped on the lap of Yadava, as

Jai Srimannarayana!

Ramanuja was bending over him to rub his head with oil. The drop scorched Yadava. He stared and looked up.

Seeing Ramanuja troubled, "What is troubling you?" asked Yadava. "I am grieved," he said, "that beautiful Vedic lines are so awkwardly construed". "What is your interpretation, then?" angrily vociferated Yadava. "Sir," cried Ramanuja, "can you not see that *ka* means *water*, and *pibati* means to *drink*. Water-drinker is thus *kapi*, the *sun*, or the lotus-stalk. *Asa* is to open (vikasane) or to rest (upavasane). *Pundarika* is the lotus. And therefore God in the sun, is He whose eyes are like the *lotus which blooms under the balmy beams of the sun, or lotus which rests on its stalk below?* it is to repudiate God to deny Him Person; and when Vedas Postulate such a personality, it is doubly to repudiate Him by reading blasphemous similes into the Vedas, where reverential gravity and grandeur are intended. Such constructions betoken nothing short of heresy". Yadava heard this irresistible oration of Ramanuja, and flared up saying, "Haughty Youth! if you cannot abide by my instructions, you must leave me". Ramanuja spoke not a syllable in reply, but took his departure.

The Surprising intelligence of Ramanuja, his original ways, and divinely disposed heart, all combined to set Yadava thinking; and his cogitations landed him in vice inasmuch as he believed that Ramanuja was a rival who would any day be his superior in learning, subversive of his philosophy of *advaita* (monism). In short an oddity who may injure his reputation as the teacher in the land, and a possible revolutionist whom it was expedient to put an end to.

Thus thinking, Yadavaprakasa called together those disciples who were after his ways and said. "Look, all of you do quietly subscribe to my views, but this Ramanuja alone is adverse and perverse, and entertains opinions opposed to mine. He is likely to become our declared enemy. Can you devise some means by which to do away with him?" They suggested many ways of disposal, but none of them recommended itself to Yadava, as it meant sinning, for which Sastras declared that one must expiate and suffer. And secondly in whatever way Ramanuja was to be done away with, that must be above suspicion.

After much consultation and deliberation, they pitched upon a plot, namely, to invite Ramanuja back into their fold and treat him as their best friend as one without whom they could not live. When they would start on a holy pilgrimage to Varanasi (Kasi) and there drown Ramanuja in the Ganga (Ganges) river, near Manikarnika-ghat. The ostensible object being pilgrimage, the real one being Ramanuja's death which, taking place in the Holy Ganga, would be counted as an affair of merit. And they thought it would not involve the actors in sin! What travesty of spiritual ethics, by Yadava!! A veritable whited sepulchre he must have been.

Into a hellish conspiracy such as this then, Yadava and his accomplices entered, just as Duryodhana did as regards Dharmaputra and his brothers, whom he had contrived to kill in a wax-house. They therefore invited Ramanuja to join them as without him they said they felt uncongenial and begged of him to prosecute his studies as he willed, undisturbed. Some time passed thus.

Yadava now announced his intention of going on a pilgrimage to Kasi (Benares) and making due preparations, started on the journey with Ramanuja of course. Along with Ramanuja, there were Govindabhata, Ramanuja's maternal cousin, following. Govinda somehow got scent of the evil designs of Yadava on Ramanuja. Other disciples too had their suspicion that Govinda might divulge and defeat their machinations. They took care therefore to keep him and Ramanuja apart as far as possible. They had now arrived at the Vindhya-range of hills, and while crossing a valley, Ramanuja stopped a little behind for purposes of nature. And Govinda contrived to tarry with him. The others were a little in advance. Govinda took advantage of this seclusion to disclose to Ramanuja the designs of Yadava in as few words as possible and advised him to escape. So saying he left Ramanuja.

Ramanuja taking the hint, left the main path and turned aside, soon hiding himself in the wilderness of the Vindhya. He roamed about in the jungle aimlessly, the fierce sun beating upon his head, and stones and thorns hurting his feet, drawing forth blood. Wandering away thus into unknown regions for some time, he was fagged out. Hungry, thirsty and footsore, Ramanuja was unable to advance further. "Only greatest sinners" he cried, "deserve this fate. Hence it is written (translated into English) :-

***"Those who steal others land are born in the water less wilds of the 'Vindhya, as dark snakes lodging in dry anthills"***. He was bewildered, not knowing where to go and what to do. He looked round for help, mind troubled and heart-sick. While he was in this state, all on a sudden burst upon his sight a Fowler and His Wife.

God has defined himself as One who can have no joy without His faithful ones and One who incarnates with bow, arrow, sword and even a wife, to befriend His faithful in times of peril.

Seeing them, Ramanuja heaved a sigh and was comforted at the thought that someone had come or been deputed by God to succor him in his distress. Ramanuja accosting them asked who they were and where they were going. "We are fowlers coming from Siddhasrama in the North and are wending our way to Satyavrata- kshetra(The puranic/legendary name of Kanchi) in the South," said they. "May I accompany you to that Holy shrine?" asked Ramanuja

Jai Srimannarayana!

"Most willingly", said they, "follow us".

They leading, Ramanuja trudged on, till Vindhya was now out of Sight, and the sun was setting. Ramanuja performed his evening Prayers. And as it was getting dark, all the three sat down under the shelter of a big tree, and were sinking into the soft embraces of sleep. The Fowler's wife addressing her husband said, "Dear, can you get me a drink of water to allay my thirst?" "Wait a little. " answered the husband, "directly it dawns. I promise to find you close by a beautiful pond, full of cool and fragrant water". Ramanuja overheard this conversation and thought: "Oh, if only it were in my power to do this kind Pair a service now, at least as a requital for their kindness to me! But I am in unknown regions". And he dozed away in such reflections.

The night had now nearly worn away, a flush suffused the East, and a morning breeze gently began to blow. Ramanuja rose with thoughts of God in his breast, and offered up his morning prayers. After this he looked round for his guides, in order to pursue the Journey, but to his amazement he did not find them. He called for them aloud and searched in every direction, but all to no purpose. He proceeded a few steps in alarm, not knowing whither he was going. But by this time the sun had appeared above the Eastern horizon. Ramanuja could see his surroundings better, and heard peoples' voices. He took heart and, a few steps more, discovered a pleasant garden, a pond and a few men standing by. "What a contrast this day is with yesterday," gladly cried he, astonished. "What country could this be?, is there any close by?" he asked himself.

The people gazed at him wonderingly, saying: "Are you mad, Brahmana? Do you not see before you the bright Punyakotivimanam?". At this Ramanuja looked up and saw the high Gopuram (or cupola) of the Temple of Lord Varadaraja, the worshipful Deity of Kanchipuram. He was struck dumb with delight and astonishment. It now dawned upon him that He who had directed his steps in the Vindhyan Wilds was no other than God himself, who not only guided him but miraculously transported him over a distance of nearly 1000 miles in a night!! Like the joy that thrilled Sita when she heard of Ravana's fall, like the joy that ravished Rama when he heard Hanuman say "I have found Sita," like the joy of Hanuman when he entered the Madhuvana on his return from Lanka, was Ramanuja's joy after the wonderful adventures he had recently passed through.

He simply fainted away with delight, especially when he reflected how God descends to the weak and helpless, even as saint Parankusa (Nammalwar) fainted when he reflected how Krishna, though God, submitted to be bound by a rope by Yasoda! Charmed into ecstasy, Ramanuja cried, "To Arjuna, O God! You revealed Your beatific Form, but to me You hid Yourself under the guise of a Fowler. I took you for a mere Fowler and I beseech Your pardon

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

for taking You for an ordinary creature. Even as Arjuna besought You, so do I, "Krishna! Yadava! Achyuta! Overlook it, if taking You for friend, I called you by names such as these, unmindful of Your Greatness as God; remit, O God! any slight I may have, unwarily shown You, while we moved together, sat together and ate together and joked together, as equals,"

Ramanuja was thus drowned in rapturous delight after the wonderful experiences he had. Out of sheer joy he fell prostrate, rose, fell again, shed tears of joy, was bathed in perspiration- in short, felt his whole being divinely transported beyond himself. From that day on, he carried water daily from the holy well (Salaikkinar) to the Lord Varadaraja.

Jai Srimannarayana

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER VI

### YADAVA, GOVINDA AND RAMANUJA.

Yadavaprakasa and his disciples, finding that Ramanuja did not follow, stopped and waited for him for some time. Govinda came up however and joined them. "You have come, but where is Ramanuja?" asked Yadava. "I never stopped with him," said Govinda in reply, "I walked my own way, and so I am not aware of what has become of him. Yadava sent his disciples in search, but they returned unsuccessful. "What could have happened to the poor youth, Oh! "thus did they all feign grief. Baulked thus in their intentions, they continued their journey sullenly on to Kasi.

They duly arrived there. It was the month Magha, and they went to bathe in the Holy Ganga. While bathing, Govinda found a Sivalingam (phallus-stone) floating up into his hand. He showed this to Yadava, who said :- "You are a most fortunate man. Gangadhara (Siva), himself has appeared to you. From this day you are most dear and venerable to us. Your name from this day shall be :-" Ullangai- Konaranda-Nayanar (he who brought in his palm)". They all now started homeward for Kanchipuram, visiting on their way Jagannatha, Ahobilam and other shrines. Before reaching Kanchi, U. Nayanar took leave of Yadava, saying he would instal the Sivalingam in a suitable place and then joining them. Yadava permitting, Nayanar went to his birth-place Madhuramangalam, and there with the help of the learned men of the place installed the Sivalingam, and remained in its staunch service. Kalahasti is a place sacred to Siva. It is written that this Siva appeared to Nayanar in his dream commanding him to join by the Temple-authorities of the place also, commanding him to join his Temple-service at Kalahasti. A dream was dreamt by the Temple- authorities of the place also, commanding them to proceed and bring Nayanar with honors. They did so, and bringing Nayanar in festive fashion, made him the dignitary of their temple, investing him with the signet-ring and other insignia of that office.

Yadavaprakasa, as already said, had arrived at Kanchi. Here to his astonishment he found Ramanuja, who he had believed had been lost in the jungles. He feigned joy however at seeing him and said, "Our grief at your loss in the Vindhyan wilds, was very great; at seeing you now, it has given place to boundless joy". Ramanuja narrated to him how he lost sight of them as they were much in advance, how he lost his way; and how while wandering sick and sore in the mazes of the forest, a Fowler broke upon his sight suddenly; and how He guided

Jai Srimannarayana!

his steps so that to his wonderment, he found he had traversed a great distance while he thought he slept under a tree, but waking up to find he had been brought to Kanchi. This account made Yadava to stare at Ramanuja in combined fear and wonder; whom he now looked upon as a being not of the ordinary run of mankind; not to be despised but looked upon as one deserving reverential regards. And feeling remorse in his heart for his evil intents towards him. He could not therefore but turn his hate into love for him; and therefore invited Ramanuja to grace his school with his presence and to complete his studies if he so willed.

While these events were passing at Kanchi, two Sri Vaishnavas of kanchi travelled to Srirangam, to pay their devotions to Ranganatha, which they did and then went to Alavandar (Yamunacharya), the great apostle of the Faith. Alavandar was there teaching at the time. After due exchange of courtesies, Yamunacharya asked them for any news of an interesting nature at Kanchi. They related to him how a youth Ramanuja by name, born at Bhutapuri (Sri Perumbudur) came to Kanchi to read Vedanta under a unistaffed Sanyasi, Yadavaprakasa; how in the course of their readings, differences rose between them as regards interpretations of Veda-texts,- Yadava contending for a quality-less God, and Ramanuja for a quality-full One, and so on. And how, on a certain day, a certain blasphemous exegetic by Yadava of a Veda-Passage excited and pained Ramanuja and drew forth burning tears from his eyes, which accidentally falling on Yadava's thigh scorched him like fire. How on his challenging, Ramanuja gave his beautiful interpretation that the passage meant that God's eyes resembled the lotus opening under the sun's rays, and how this and other disputations of the sort led to their separation. Yadava's plot on his life and the rest of events, adventurous and miraculous, which followed thereafter in succession.

Yamunacharya heard this account with rapt attention and exclaimed (English translation given below)

***"The bad are legion like fire-sparks in a furnace.  
But the good, if found in the fire, are like lotuses therein"***

So saying he felt a great longing to immediately go and see Ramanuja. He prayed to Lord Ranganatha and taking leave of Him, left Srirangam with his followers. On his way paying honors to God Nayanar and the three First Azhavars at Tirukkoilur, reached Kanchi in due time.

Tirukkacchi Nambi, on hearing his Acharya coming, gathered together the holy people of

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Kanchi, and with Sri Sathagopa, *Tirtha and Prasada* of the Holy Temple of Varadaraja, went forward to meet and welcome him. Yamunacharya received the holy gifts of God, and seeing Tirukkacchi Nambi, his disciple, lying prostrate at his feet for joy and veneration for the Guru, lifted him up with affection and inquired, "Gajendradasa are you steady at your fanning service to Lord Varada?" "By your grace, Sir, The Lord is accepting my humble services," said he. And then they proceeded together to the Temple, where Yamunacharya paid due honors to the Lord Varada.

While he was thus employed, Yadavaprakasa came on a visit to the temple, with his followers. Yamunacharya saw them, and asked who among his followers was Ramanuja. They pointed him out. "That bright and glorious central figure." said they, "possessing those fine shoulders, broad and long, like Rama Himself,-that is Ramanuja." Yamunacharya drank him in with his eyes, and sent his prayers after him, as the host was moving away.

Yamunacharya now mounted up to the Central Shrine of Lord Varada (called Hastigiri) and standing before the Deity sent up a prayer to Him thus :- "O Great Lord! grant me a boon. You are Varada (Boon-Granter), by Your favor, the deaf hears, the lame runs, the dumb speaks, the blind sees, and the barren bears. Grant me then, that this Ramanuja shall become the bearer of the Torch of our Faith". An urgent call from Srirangam now obliging Yamunacharya to return immediately, he found no leisure to do anything more, nor time even to say something to Tirukkacchi-Nambi, about his wishes and future plans. To Srirangam thus he returned.

Jai Srimannarayana

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER VII

### RAMANUJA - CONTROVERSIES AND MIRACLES.

Yadavaprakasa was conducting his Vedanta classes as usual. It so happened that the princess of the then Raja' of the dominions, to which Kanchi had then belonged, became obsessed with an evil spirit (*brahmarakshas*). The Raja was endeavoring to find an able exorcist of demons. He was told that Yadava was well versed in such lore. The Raja sent men to invite him. They went and told him the state of affairs with the princess and that he was wanted. Yadava said to the men, "Go you back and tell the spirit; "Yadava commands him to leave the princess". They returned and delivered the message; "Yadava commands. Leave you, the princess," They demanded of the spirit. "Go back", bellowed the Rakshas, "And tell Yadava from me, to depart from this country".

The Raja's men ran to Yadava again and delivered this message from the rakshas. Yadava now went himself with a troop of his disciples, and stationing himself before the obsessed princess, began to mutter potent magical incantations and showing his fist, bid the devil depart. But the devil (i.e., princess) stretched its legs and pointing them towards Yadava said, in sovereign contempt of him, "You think Yadava, that I do not know your magic and magical formulas? I know you".

Neither the *Mantra* nor your person can be efficacious as against me. You have no knowledge of me nor have knowledge of Yourself. Go from here", "But", put in Yadava, "You have knowledge of me, and of yourself as you boast?" "Learn then from me," retorted the Rakshas, "You were an iguana in your past birth, living in the holes of the bank of the Madhurantaka tank. A batch of Sri Vaishnavas were travelling to Tirumalai (Tirupati) on a holy pilgrimage. They stopped at the tank, cooked, ate and left the place. They had left the leavings of their food, and had spilt some water. You did then scamper to the place and ate of that

Jai Srimannarayana!

food and drank of that water. This fortuitous merit brought thee to this present *janma* (birth) of you as a Brahmana with learning. As for myself, I was a Brahmana in my past birth. I began to perform a *Yaga* (a Brahmanic sacred ritual), but there were omissions in the regular chanting of the mantras, and the acts connected therewith. And so the *Rakshasajanma* has devolved on me. You see now how I have knowledge, and you not?" "Very good," said Yadava. "Tell me then who will make your dislodge from the princess?" "There," said the devil, pointing with its hands folded in fear and worship. "In your ranks there is that angel from Heaven incarnate among men, whom you have the glory of counting as your student, and whose name is Ramanuja. At his bidding I must flee".

Yadava turned to Ramanuja and begged of him to command the evil spirit to leave. Ramanuja did so. "But I will not", it said, "unless, O Holy soul, You place Your Holy feet upon my head". Ramanuja did so. "I now salute You Holy Ramanuja, said the spirit in a loud tone "I am leaving the princess". "But stay", said Ramanuja "how shall we know that you have left?", By this sign replied the spirit, "into that *asvattha* tree Yonder, I shall enter, the evidence thereof shall be the breaking of a branch". And so it happened. The Raja was overjoyed, and loaded them with presents and honors. Yadava-prakasa showered plaudits on Ramanuja and glad at least that his prestige was somewhat saved by his noble disciple, returned to his retreat.

For Yadava was one day explaining the Vedanta-texts "***Sarvam Kalvidam Bramha***" and "***Neha Nanasthi Kinchana***", as if they meant that soul (man) and God were identical. The first passage means, All this *indeed* is Brahman, and the second means, ***There is not the least diversity here.***

According to Yadava, the first passage meant that all this Cosmos is God; the second passage meant that *all the diversities that are seen in the Cosmos are illusory*. Ramanuja took objection to these interpretations and said that the cosmos can never be identical with Brahman (God) nor can it be proved unreal. For the first passage: *all this indeed is Brahman* meant that the cosmos is permeated with His Spirit, i.e. full of god; in other words the cosmos has no existence independent of God; it exists by His will. He is its Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. He is its Ruler and rules by His immanence. And the second passage meant that the diversity is on the cosmos and real inasmuch as it is sustained by the Unity of God. That therefore whoso sees the diverse cosmos as severed from God sees not aright. There is but One God, neither two nor many. In Him is all. That is the meaning of the text. Cosmos is not denied inasmuch as its existence is eternal substantially, though it exteriorly undergoes adjectival change. It is an axiom that *nothing can come out of nothing*. The cosmos is real. It is in God, who is thus one only, not many. This passage is thus an assertion, not a negation, of the cosmos.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

As obstinately as Yadava preached his pantheism, so obstinately did Ramanuja rebut him. Yadava got enraged at last. "No more can you read with me, Sir" he cried, "you must henceforth find your own congenial teacher".

Ramanuja was glad to leave this teacher of impossible and absurd philosophy. Straight home he went, and informed his mother Sri Devi of all that happened. "Enough of your studies, son!" said she; there is Tirukkachi Nambi who is in great favor with Lord Varadaraja. Seek his advice and service, and abide by his will. That will do you all the good." Ramanuja at once sought Tirukkachi Nambi and sought him to employ him in divine services in the Temple, even as Lakshmana besought of Rama :-

"Rama ! say: "do" and I am thy servant"

Nambi said:- "Lord Varadaraja much likes the water from the Salai-well you were once bringing him. Fetch the same daily and serve Him." Therefore, thus Ramanuja employ himself.

Jai Srimannarayana

## CHAPTER- VIII

### ALAVANDAR'S LAST DAYS AND LAST WORDS

We shall for a moment turn to Srirangam. Yamuna was aging now. He became ill. Tiruvarangapperumal Araiya approached him, followed by Yamuna's disciples Tirukkottiyur-Nambi and Periya- Nambi. The latter prayed to him to give them the best salvatory advice. Yamuna spoke thus, "Good souls do and feel as following:

1. Look upon the shrine of Raganatha as your very life;
2. The Great God enthroned in that shrine as your Saviour.
3. Make Tiruppanazhvar,-the Panchama Saint who is the beloved of this Great God, your ideal for loving contemplation. This holy Saint is to God Ranga as Kurumbarutta Nambi, the potter is to God Venkatesa and as Tirukkacchi Nambi, the Vaisya is to God Varadaraja.
4. This Saint, to you, sir," addressing Araiya, "is your very soul".
5. And continued, "what is dear to you, Holy Sire, is dear to me; the means of your salvation, are my means as well".

Jai Srimannarayana!

Araiya, prostrating to Yamuna said: "Sire, you now seem to talk as if you are envisaging truths as exist in Nitya vibhuti (=Eternal of Unvarying Cosmos, Vaikuntha). It makes me almost envious to study you thus". "Sir", Yamuna said, "how can you be envious of me, if I go to Nitya-vibhuti before you do? Can great and good men like you be envious of others' fortune? So, if I leave you all in advance, reconcile yourselves thus". Now to all his disciples, he administered general instructions thus:- "Hear me, sons! A *prapanna* is he who has absolutely resigned himself to God. If after professing so, he should still entertain doubts as to whether his soul is at all in the safe keeping of God, that very doubt is proof of his want of trust in God. A true believer in God is only he who feels a quite sure of his soul's safety in His arms, and that this body is a temporary form begot by *Karma*, ceasing when karma ceases.

***A prapanna is thus one who has intellectually divested himself thus of all concern, either as regards his soul or his body, both being in the keeping of two divergent determining agents.*** This resigned attitude of the mind constitutes the true *prapanna* (believer). Dwell on the sense contained in the Holy Name Narayana, as it contains the sum of all divine wisdom. It is the Name signifying, "We are in Him, and He is in us". "*He is in us* proves the bond between Him and souls, the bond by which He is bound by His Grace to save us. We are in Him proves that we can freely and wholly trust Him for all our welfare. Anything less than this trust savors of diffidence, or which otherwise constitutes the rebellious attitude of the soul.

On the other hand, to compel God to save us by our importunities, also savors of disobedience and to think that God must be one at our beck and call, is equally impious and disloyal. Absolute trust is when we think of ourselves as destined by Him to serve some mighty purpose of His, and as mere instruments required in willingness to do His bidding so that what His purpose may be fulfilled. There is no purpose of our own as apart from His. God is the proprietor and we are His property, of which He alone has the full power of disposal.

In other words, He is the Master and we are His Vassals". The disciples asked again; "Sir, what are our *Means and our God?*". The Master said:- "Your Saviors are the *means*, but do not think I am one. In this matter, it is not for me to dictate, you must use your own judgment. Again Your Saviors are the *goal* as well. To serve them eternally is the Goal. And these Saviors are one with God as their minds are en *rapport* with Him, so that to serve them is to serve Him, and what pleases them pleases Him. Find your temple of bliss (bhoga) in the Tirumantra, your temple of flowers (*pushpa*) in the Charamasloka and your temple of bounty (tyaga) in the Dvaya. I echo but what our Saints have said before". On hearing these, T.Araiya said, "Oh, Sir, after your departure to *parama-pada* (= Vaikuntha), what matters it, if worms, like us, die?" Yamuna, hearing this, made no reply to such a token of affection; and fearing lest such praise

inflame his pride and destroy humility.

Araiya, Periya Nambi and others went to the Temple and there in the presence of Lord Ranganatha stood revolving in their minds as to what had transpired. Periya Nambi and others said they had decided to give up their lives, if Yamuna passed away, for they could hardly bear such separation. Ranganatha read their thoughts and a voice came, "I conjure you all not to think in this wise. You must abide by My will as to how long it may please Me to keep men on earth and when I may choose to dismiss them from there. Take Araiya for your guide after Yamuna's departure." They all heard this divine mandate, and speeding to Yamuna related to him the extraordinary occurrence. He said, "I echo the mandate. Grudge me not that celestial bliss into which I am about to enter, nor grudge the service which Ranganatha will demand of you for some time to come after me. But if overcome by grief at having to leave me, you persist in your intentions to give up your lives on my account, it will be most hostile to the will of our Masters, Uyyankondar and others, that a continuous succession of spiritual teachers of your faith shall be maintained. Do not then lose heart. Resigned to His will, live on". They were still unpacified.

To put heart into them, the Master continued, "Know these truths again.

1. Endeavour to see no difference between God and God's saints. In God's saints, God Himself is present.
2. On the other hand, know that when you do a service to your disciples, you shall take no credit to yourselves for doing it. The credit belongs to the Masters of whom know you are the accredited agents.
3. And when you serve God, think your services are transmitted to Him by the Saints and Sages, whom you succeed.
4. Further, when you dispense to your disciples, let the motive for such dispensing (i.e., imparting instruction or bestowing gifts & e.) be not one of selfishness (i.e., for a return from them of money, or satisfaction of a worldly end). If a spiritual preceptor has such motives, and if he ever considers himself superior in the midst of an assembly of holy men, he deserves to be discarded".

The disciples were still dejected, and the Master again continued his discourse thus:-

5. "Fix your hearts on Lord Ranganatha. He is your sole End and Aim. Enough, if the first things you do every morn is to lay a flower at His feet.
6. Here are three objects for your worship, God, the Guru, and His Faithful. In the middle of these three terms centers the ideas of the first and the last terms.
7. This centering in a Guru, who is sensibly present, will be your means to cross

Jai Srimannarayana!

the sea of this world. I consign you then, dear disciples, into the hands of T. Araiyaar."

T. Ariyaar now addressed the disciples, "Hear to the parting words of our Master. Take courage. I also lay it upon you not to think of dying, because the Master leaves us. If you break these commands, you shall forfeit both the Land of Bliss and the Union with the Blessed. After hearing these assuring words of Araiyaar, Yamunacharya found peace in his soul.

Yamunacharya recovered somewhat; and took his bath of health. For joy, they made great feast and in a body proceeded to the Temple to pay honors to Lord Ranga, accompanied by Yamuna. The curtain across the sanctum was drawn aside. The congregation was full. Yamuna stood silent for a while before the Deity with folded hands, and then spoke thus:- "Strange, is this Heaven? Am I among the Celestials, the Angels? As he uttered this, the garland of flowers from Lord Ranganatha's neck slipped and dropped on the ground. T.Ariyaar promptly picked it up and put it on Alavandar's neck, saying, "I suppose, sir, your wishes are now fulfilled." Dismissed by Ranganatha with *tirtham and prasadam*, they all returned to Alvandar's monastery.

Here, after seeing every one partake of holy food, Alavandar prostrated before them all and asked forgiveness of them all for any wrongs. "How can you do wrong, Sir, and what is there for us to forgive?". So saying, T.Ariyaar raised him up in reverence. The master now took his food, and went on saying many precious things, knowing that his end was fast approaching.

Something more was yet in store, before God was pleased to take to himself this pioneer of the Visishtadvaita Faith, News reached Kanchi of the critical state of Yamunacharyas health. Two Sri Vaishnavas hastened to Srirangam to visit the sage, perhaps for the last time. Yamuna received the visitors with great earnestness and asked them to tell him how things were going with Ramanuja. They informed him that owing to an altercation between Yadava and Ramanuja, the latter had severed his connection with him and was employed solely in the services of Lord Varadaraja. "God has granted my fervent prayers then, and be He praised," cried Yamuna, elated with joy. He called Periyambadi (=Mahapurna) to his presence and said, "here are glad tidings for us. Ramanuja is happily disconnected from Yadava. Go forth at once to Kanchi and bring him to me." Mahapurna immediately left.

But Yamuna in the meanwhile got worse, despite his will to live till Ramanuja's arrival. And all the disciples were made uneasy, and hoped against hope that the Master might live.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

It was the month Vaiyasi, and the usual temple-jubilations of the season were proceeding. The avabhrita (closing) day came; and Yamuna went to the Temple, and paid his last worship and homage to Ranganatha, whom, as well as Saint Tiruppanazhvar, stationed at His feet, he devoured with his eyes from toe to top, and top to toe. Receiving Tirtha and Prasada, he returned to his monastery, and gathered together all his disciples and temple authorities round him. He fell prostrate before the assembly, and once more craved their pardon for all his faults. In one voice they cried, "Holy Sire, why you speak of faults?". He now addressed them thus- "I beseech you all to take care of the venerable Araiya. O you officers of Ranga's Shrine! I pray to you to conduct all the several items of worship, such as *mantrapushpa* to Lord Ranga, punctually; and distribute holy food to all your gurus and holy souls of the place, and to all pilgrims coming from all quarters to visit the Shrine". "These must be his Last words", thought all, sorrowing much in their hearts. Turning to Yamuna, they said, "All shall be done Sire, as you wish." Sri Yamuna now assumed the padmasana posture, held his breath, and fixing all his mind and heart on the Holy feet of his Acharya Manakkal Nambi, commanded the disciples to repeat loudly the *Brahmavalli*, *Bhriguvalli Purushasukta*<sup>3</sup>, *Archiradi*<sup>4</sup>, *Suzh Visumbu* etc. And as the moment Abhijit (midday), coupled with Sravana constellation arrived on the sixth day of Vaiyasi, and as trumpets began to blow, the Holy Sage was elevated to Nityavibhuti (Eternal Realms).

***How Alavandar was interred is described in detail below:***

Tiruvarnagapperumal Araiya and others fell to the ground senseless with grief at this bereavement which was so hard to bear. But they had to perform all the services for the departed; and rallying therefore to the task, they bade the son of the Sage (i.e., son before he took the robe of Sanyasin) to do what was necessary.

They sprinkled water over the place (*sthala-suddhi*) after sweeping; constructed a four-poled *mantapam* (booth or bower), and adorned it with festoons of darbha (sacred grass), and *sengazhu-nir* flowers; silk hangings were hung and *chamaras* (*chouries* or streamers) were arranged in tassels. To the four posts were tied young plantain Trees with bunches of green areca-nut at the capitals. Fruits of different kinds were hung from the canopy, and a flag hoisted at one corner. To the four faces, East, South, West and North, were hung respectively festoons of tender foliage, of *palasu*, *asvattha*, *khadira*, and *udumbara*. Paddy grain was spread on the floor (of the bier), and *purna-kumbha* (water-filled vessel) were placed outside the bower, at different corners, repeating the Twelve Holy Names, Kesava etc., Their necks were wound with *Kusa*, *durvadarbha*, *Vishnu-Krantha*, and various flowers; these were worshipped after repeating the *Dvaya-mantra* along with the names of the *Guru-paramapara* (the apostolic series), and with the Twelve Holy Names, Kesava & c., they were consecrated,

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Leaving the vessel in the *Isanya*-quarter(North-East) called the Sankarshana-vessel, the four others were taken up, and with them they laved the body of the Sage after the *Panch-amrita* (the five articles of milk, butter, honey, curds and cocoonut- water)ablution was over, repeating the Purushasuktha all the time.

The gentry of the place (*mudalis*) now took up the remaining twelve vessels outside the bier, and ablutions were performed with these after presenting the assembled magnates with rolled betel and nut and obtaining their permission, after dextro-ambulating them. The place at the outer-door was next cleaned with cow-dung, and over the space so consecrated, rice grain was spread. A mortar and pestle were brought and sacrificially washed with water, and new pieces of cloth were tied to them. Turmeric was placed in the mortar. Dasis (or maid-servants) stamped with the holy *Chakra* and *Sankha* - thus consecrated to Vishnu-draped themselves in washed garments and decked themselves according to the occasion, and going round the Holy Trivikraman Street, approached the door. And prostrating before the holy assembly, with their leave, the Meru-god representing pestle was taken up, and repeating the Twelve Holy Names, the turmeric in the mortar was pounded, called *Sri-Churna*.

Now came Araiyar and others. They drew on the paddy a figure of earth with its nine divisions (*bharata-khanda*) &.) At the eight corners of this space were placed eight vessels filled respectively, with holy powders, holy unguents, holy scents, holy flowers, holy laja (fried rice) holy milk, holy curds, and holy water. And decked with the buds of *darbha*, *asvattha* &c., repeating *Dvayamantra* all the while.

To the East, they placed a winnow-basket filled with huskless *laja*; to the West a vessel filled with Sri-Vaishnava-food-washed water; to the North, money and other presents to be distributed to the Sri-Vaishnavas; the South, a golden platter filled with the garland, raiment, &c., worn by Lord Ranganatha. Then prostrating to the Sanctified image of the Sage, they went round it, and rehearsed Tiruppallandu, Kanninun Siruttambu, Suzh- visumbani mukil. Araiyar then went round the holy streets of Srirangam with music, chanting the Tiruvirattum and coming back to the monastrey, sang the finishing hymns.

Then the eight vessels of holy milk &c., were emptied over the sage's body, which was then adorned with Lord Ranga's gifts of garland, raiment and other things. They all then distributed among themselves as prasada the remnants of all that was offered to the sage, and earnestly gazed at his figure so as to distinctly retain it in their hearts forever afterwards. They then threw themselves at the Sage's feet which they devoutly pressed against their

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

eyes, hearts and heads; and now completely overcome, gave vent to their grief which they could not control, by torrents of tears trickling down their cheeks, and sent forth loud lamentations.

The worthies of the place pressed round the mourners, and by kind words assuaged their grief. They then lifted the bier, the Sage seated in it, on to a stretcher (or litter), which they bore reverently on their shoulders, and carried in splendid procession in the streets, conches blowing music discoursing, and men and women setting up a sacred dance. The Prabandhas were recited in the front, Veda Parayana bringing up the rear. White clothes were laid in the streets in front of the procession, the members of which bore sugar-cane sticks in their hands, and carried bright vessels filled with water on their heads.

As the procession wended its way, *laja*, flowers and scented powders were broadly showered over all, the vestal virgins of the sanctuary bearing torches a loft and leading. *Chamaras* (chowries) waved on either side, and white cloths were brandished in the air<sup>1</sup>. And to crown all, bugles and trumpets proclaimed as it were, "The Great Sage Alavandar, the Defender of our Faith, has gone forth to Heaven". After thus peregrinating the Holy Streets, the Sage was carried to *Tirukkaramban-turai*, a spot close by the South bank of Coleroon (Kolladam) river in the North, and there purifying the spot with the unused water of the Sankarshana vessel (kept in reserve), all the sacramental ritual enjoined for Sanyasins (monastic order) was gone through punctiliously. The sage was now duly installed in a cavern made in the ground. We shall leave the elders and dignitaries of the temple thus busy, and turn for a moment to events which were in the meantime transpiring in Kanchi.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## ALAVANDAR AND RAMANUJA

We saw Mahapurna sent to invite Ramanuja to Srirangam to join the holy fold of the Faithful. He duly reached Kanchi, and delivered the message of his Acharya to Kanchi-purna, in whose holy company, he duly paid his devotions to Lord Varadaraja. Taking the path leading to Salai well, from which Ramanuja was bringing his customary water for the service of Lord Varada- he went on reciting his Acharya Yamuna's hymn :-

“Narayana!, who, in Vedas versed, will dispute Your Natural Greatness and Sovereignty vast; for know they not that Brahma, Siva, Indra and celestials all, are but as drops of foam upon the Ocean of Your Glory?”

Ramanuja was coming from the well and he heard this recitation. Not only was his attention arrested by it but was so struck with its beauty, sense, pathos and literacy that he anxiously inquired of the reciter (whom he did not know yet, of course) who was its worthy author. "Whose could such words be save my Acharya Yamuna-muni's?" readily responded Mahapurna. "I must then visit this great soul," said Ramanuja. I shall certainly take you to him," replied Purna, jubilant at the success of his mission.

The Tiru-manjanam (holy ablution) water, Ramanuja duly delivered at the Shrine; and he submitted to Lord Varada his great wish to visit Yamuna; and taking His leave as also Kanchi-purna's, he immediately proceeded in Maha-purna's company and by forced marches, reached the Kaveri river. They saw from that distance great crowds gathered, and employed evidently in very serious work. "What is all the bustle about?" asked Ramanuja anxiously of some wayfarers. They said that Yamuna was no more. This news made Maha-purna and Ramanuja distraught, and the shock prostrated them and struck them senseless. Recovering somewhat, they wept inconsolable tears, as all their plans were foiled, and hopes blasted. An irreparable loss, it was. Mahapurna found Ramanuja disconsolate, and fearing worse consequences, forgot his own grief for the moment in order to pacify Ramanuja, in the manner, it is said that in the sword-cut, the scorpion- sting is forgotten Recovering breath somewhat, he exhorted him thus "Take heart, Ramanuja! knowest thou not the saying:- 'Obstacles to virtue attack even great men; but when vice sets in, obstacles flee somewhere!" and raising Ramanuja in his arms, led him by the hand to where the sage Yamuna was lying in state. "I have at least been able to see this," said Ramanuja, and drank as it were with his eyes, the Holy Figure; but as he scanned it up and down, he discovered to his surprise that three of the five fingers of the right palm of the Sage were closed.

He turned round to the assembly and questioned them about this strange sight. "We never marked this before, Sir," they said. Ramanuja reflected for an instant, and imagining that the sage might have some ardent wish in his mind unsatisfied, which he probably so indicated,

Jai Srimannarayana!

asked the bystanders if they were aware of any specific wishes of the Sage expressed to them at any time in the course of his religious talks with them, "We are not particularly aware of any such directly", they said; "but indirectly we know that he often used to say that he wished very much to see three things perpetuated. Firstly, gratitude must be shown to the memory of Krishna-Vyasa and Parasara. Secondly a tribute of love should be paid to St. Narmmahvar. And thirdly, Vyasa- Sutras or Brahma-Sutras must be commented on to bring out the real Visishtadvaita sense contained in them.

Ramanuja heard this and said:- "O Holy Sage," addressing his Figure, "If this is thy mind, I promise I shall carry it out, provided I have the health, provided your grace is on me, and provided God grants my prayers. "No sooner this was said than the three bent fingers of the Sage opened out, as if to say: 'aye'! The whole assembly was witness to this miracle, and in one voice they all declared, "Sir, doubt not that the sage's grace is fully on you; the very power and glory of his spirit will enter into you; you are the next fit successor to him for the evangelical work of our Faith. We all anoint you here for the task." Ramanuja lovingly and steadily gazed at the Holy Figure of the Sage, and contemplating Him to his fill, pressed His feet to his heart and eyes, and bathing in the river-as the last service rendered to the departed-took leave of Mahapurna and started immediately back for Kanchi, not caring to visit Lord Ranga, on account of the sore disappointment which had been caused. It is chronicled of Ramanuja that he often used to express to his holy assembly that if he had but been permitted for one single day to be in the living company of Sri Yamuna, he would have constructed a staircase to Heaven and procured free admission to all thereto.

The magnates of the place then did the remaining part of the interment, conducted with due obsequies (final rites) and in due course raised a cenotaph (brindavanam)<sup>1</sup> and mantapam<sup>2</sup> over the site. Memorial verse were thus sung :-

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER - X

### RAMANUJA AND KANCHI-PURNA

Ramanuja, with a heavy heart reached Kanchi, and recounted the events he had first witnessed, to Kanchi-purna. Purna mourned much over the loss of his Acharya, aggravated by the thought that all the projects they had formed in their minds were thus frustrated; but reviving, comforted Ramanuja by saying:- "Lord Varada is all-knowing and all-powerful. Let us submit to His will. He will make good our loss by appointing you in his stead, for our Faith." So saying, he conducted Sri-churna-paripalana, and Tiru-v-adhyayana for his Acharya.

Ramanuja again employed himself as before in the Tiru-manjana<sup>3</sup> service to Lord Varada, and as friendship and respect for Kanchi- purna deepened, he found much spiritual worth in this staunch devotee of Lord Varada. One day, Ramanuja earnestly begged of him to become the sponsor for his soul. "Come, Holy Ramanuja!" said Purna, "You desire this of me, because you think I am worthy of such position, but know that I am an unworthy non-entity, whom Lord Varada has perhaps chosen to think of as somebody. And you are evidently intent on acting on the principle:-

Yogis (or spiritual men) are born among all castes; and no caste- odium shall hold in their cases, for they have seen their souls" Lord.

This dictum holds good as regards our soul-relation, but it cannot be applied as regards our external conditions of birth and social polity as ordained by the Scriptures (Vedas). You shall not therefore externally profess to me bonds which influences against the typical social system of Varna and Asrama, yours is Brahmana-body and mine a Vaisya-body, and as long as these last, we must respect temporary distinctions for the sake of the safety of our social fabric, which we cannot violate.

Ramanuja admitted the legality and expediency of the caste system, and yet he felt it ought to be disregarded in special cases where such spiritually advanced souls as Kanchi-Purna's were concerned. He therefore resolved the next day to invite Purna to his house for a feast. "Accept, Sir an entertainment in my hut", prayed Ramanuja. "Most gratefully", said Purna not to disappoint him. Ramanuja was rejoiced at the prospect of obtaining the remnants of food eaten by a spiritual elder, albeit he belonged to a low class in society. Going home, he ordered his wife to prepare a sumptuous meal for a distinguished guest. And he himself bathed, performed all the ceremonies ordained for the householder, carried the daily-service-water to Lord Varada, and performing worship to his household Lord, also Varada, left home to bring his guest to his door. He went by the south Street, and turned West towards the retreat of

Jai Srimannarayana!

Purna. But Purna had already left his place, taken another direction, prayed to Lord Varada as usual, and doing his daily services here, had proceeded to the cottage of Ramanuja. Here, not finding him, he begged the wife to give him food immediately as he had to return to the Temple for urgent service.

She did so, and he left. She then pushed away the leaf, from which Purna had eaten, by means of a stick, purified the place with water and cow dung and considering herself impure by this act, bathed again. Ramanuja finding Purna absent from his cloister had retraced his steps to his hut, and finding that his wife had bathed for a second time, asked her why? She said, "Sir, your Sattada (non-Brahman) guest came and having eaten is gone. Being a low caste man, I have purified the place where he ate, and I have bathed," "Ignorant woman!" he cried in anger "What have you done! How have you frustrated my plans!"

"What shall I do next?" Ramanuja pondered, "What I had wished has failed. Perhaps it is God's will that I should not violate caste restrictions even in special cases. Be it so". And he again betook himself to Purna's cloister. "Sir! Pardon me for constraining you to do a thing against your will, but now do me another favour. I have a few doubts in my mind. I beg of you to have them solved by Lord Varada, whose beloved worshipper you are". "Willingly I shall submit them to Him," he promised Ramanuja That night, when all the formal duties of the temple were over, Mahapurna stood before Lord Varada in silent contemplation, hands folded. "I think you have something to ask of me", "Lord Varada said. " Yes, Lord! Ramanuja has a few doubts, which he has asked me to submit to you and obtain answers, some doubts, he has not expressed." "I know them", said Varada, "He is asking me these doubts, in the manner I myself once asked Sandipani for knowledge. He knows the sweets of God service by birth-right, and knows my will and acts up to it. He has learnt many things and in many quarters. Now he has six doubts in his mind. Here are the six answers thereto:-

1. I am the Supreme Truth (para-tatvam),
2. I and souls are different (bheda),
3. By faith shall men reach Me, their salvation.
4. Thought of Me at time of death (antima-smriti) is not compulsory (on My faithful),
5. Release from bondage (moksha) follows immediately on death (of body),
6. Choose Mahapurna for Your Acharya...

Kanchi-Purna reverently received this message and withdrew. The next morning, he hailed Ramanuja with intense joy and communicated to him the divine message. "Were these your doubts, Sir!" he asked. "Yes, your Holiness I prostrate to you for it most heartily," said Ramanuja. Purna was struck by this strange coincidence, and henceforth, (suiting the action to the word) looked upon Ramanuja as the destined Saviour.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER XI: RAMANUJA'S CALL TO SRIRANGAM

Leaving Ramanuja at Kanchi for a while, we shall turn back to Srirangam. The Faithful of the place felt now a great void amongst themselves and in their hearts, after the passing away of Alavandar, their spiritual Guide. How to fill up this vacancy, was their haunting thought. They resorted to Mahapurna and prayed to him to devise proper means for a fit successor. Mahapurna looked at them and said, "You forget past signs given us ? Did not Alvandar himself, while he was in Kanchi, point out Ramanuja to us as his successor? Do you not remember the miracle of the closed fingers of that sage, opening at his utterance? Ramanuja then is our successor. Our Acharya could not have been mistaken in his wise selection." "Well said, well said," cried the whole community, "We pray to you, Sir, to bestow your serious thought on this matter, kindly seek out Ramanuja and prepare him for his high Office, and conduct him here, to Srirangam." Mahapurna gladly assented, and immediately made preparations to start. His wife was to accompany him. He went to Lord Ranga, and obtaining his leave to proceed on the holy errand, left Srirangam, and reached by rapid marches Madhurantakam (near Kanchi), and there stopped for the day in the Shrine of Eri-Kattaperumal or He who protects the tank.

Ramanuja also had in the meantime resolved to proceed to Srirangam and accept Mahapurna his Acharya for having been so commanded by Lord Varada. Taking leave of Him and Kanchipurna, he arrived at Madhurantakam. They met. Ramanuja was thrilled with joy and surprise at this unexpected meeting. He exclaimed, "O my heart! You see how your desire has met yours?" and prostrated before Mahapurna. Mahapurna was equally overjoyed at finding that his mission was so soon and so readily to be fulfilled, and raised Ramanuja, fondly holding him to his breast. "Here and now," prayed Ramanuja, "admit me as your disciple and teach me all that is good for my soul" Mahapurna said: "So near are we to the Holy Hastigiri" 2, where Lord Varada resides, we shall go there for the initiation you so much desire". "No, Sire, not a moment is to be lost," said Ramanuja, "is not the example of our Yamunacharya still fresh, viz., his having breathed his last just when I was about to see him? This is a warning against waste of time. Are not our lives here of lightning duration?" So saying, he dropped at his feet again. Purna raised him up lovingly.

"What zeal! indeed," he said, "it shall be as you wish." And leading him to the Holy Vakula tree near the (Tank-Guard) Temple, and placing him on his right, performed all the sacraments of initiation as laid down in the Pancharatra-Sashtra. That process is briefly thus:-

Preparatory discipline for mantra initiation requires the mark of the discus and Conch (Chakra and Sankha), or of the five weapons (of Vishnu, viz., Chakra, Sankha, Gada, Khadga and Chapa) being stamped (on the several parts of the body), with appropriate mantras. This is enjoined for the sake of rendering the mantras imparted, effective. The wearing of these chakra and other marks, is to signify that the soul has been wedded to God, as the wearing of bangles etc., by a dame, signifies that she is joined in all faith to a husband. The disciple (or the Postulant) shall sit before the Guru, humble, with joined palms. The Guru shall meditate on his Guru and all the others preceding him apostolically, and impress the chakra symbol on the disciple's right shoulder and Sankha on the left shoulder, and looking at him with eyes beaming with grace, shall repeat the Gem of Mantras (mantra-ratna), and make the disciple repeat the same with him, along with the chhandas and the rishi attached to the mantra. In this manner, Mahapurna, placing Ramanuja to his right, called to mind his Guru Alavandar's feet, and speaking in the right ear of Ramanuja, imparted to him the Mantra-Gem (Dvayam).

with all its adjuncts, and solemnly ordained him thus:-" I direct you, holy son, most solemnly, to deem yourself as the next appointed of Yamuna. He has departed, you know, placing his holy feet on your head, consecrating you to fulfil His holy Mission on earth, in the same way as Rama, placing His sandals on the head of Bharata, departed to the forest to carry on the work of His Kingdom." Next to Yamunacharya thus, succeeded Ramanuja, Mahapurna playing but the part of an instrument of the former in ordaining Ramanuja this succession. Pillai Amudanar<sup>1</sup> or Tiruvarangat-amundanar recorded in his Ramanuja-Nutt-andadi. Ramanuja, reverently asked Mahapurna to explain to him the triplicity, viz., (1) Pramana (2) Prameya and (3) Pramata or literally the (1) measure, (2) the measured, and (3) the measurer. Purna explained thus:

"1. Pramana, or the measure of God- knowledge, is the authoritative Revelations, the essence of which is contained in the Dvaya-Mantra, (or the Mantra which explains the dual nature viz., the Mother-Father of the Deity ;

2. Prameya or that which is measured by this measure of Revelations, is God Himself, the Mother- Father;

3. Pramata or the measurer is the prophet or seer, who knows God and so knowing, makes others to know Him.

This measurer is yourself," So saying, they both paid obeisance to Rama, the Tank-Guard, saying:- "You are really Rama, or He who delights the world. By your blessing, there shall be one undivided faith in the world, so that all men may love each other and live in peace. This is Rama."

They now both left for Kanchi to visit Lord Varada. Kanchi purna met them on the way in due humility and conducting them to Kanchi and to the Hastigiri shrine, invoked Lord Varada to manifest Himself to the worthy visitors, even as Rama-misra

Jai Srimannarayana!

called upon Ranga to manifest Himself to Alavandar<sup>3</sup>. They were blessed with the Beatific Vision of God which they rapturously enjoyed.

Ramanuja led his Guru Mahapurna and his consort to his house, and accommodated them in the upper story, providing all other comforts necessary. For six months, Ramanuja sat at the feet of his Guru, and received from him important lessons on the Dravida Scriptures and other Mystery lore of the Sri-Vaishnava Faith.

On a certain morning two Sri- vaishnavas came to Ramanuja, and did him the service of anointing with oil. They asked for food as they were hungry. Ramanuja inquired of his wife, if she had any food remaining from over-night. "No, not so much as a grain of it", she said; but Ramanuja suspected her sincerity, and bidding her go on other business, entered into the cook-room and examined the vessels, and lo, he found food hidden away. He called his wife and angrily spoke to her thus, "Are you capable of this, that when hungry souls are waiting at the door, you bother the least? Is there worse meanness than refusing food to those who come in dire need? And a lie added to the meanness! Oh, sin!"

On another day, Ramanuja was out for his morning ablutions. His wife and the Guru's wife met at a well for drawing water. An altercation ensued between them as to the comparative purity of the pots they held. Purna was observing this. As soon as his wife returned home, he thought it wise to pack up immediately and actually left Kanchi for Srirangam, after soundly chastising his wife for the unpleasant occurrence, of which he held her to be the cause. Ramanuja returned home, and as usual went to visit his guru, but he found him not. He asked the people about the place to account for his sudden absence. They said, "Sir, your lady and your Guru's lady had a quarrel near the well over a pot. The Guru took his wife to task for giving occasion for this, and thinking that if he stayed longer under your roof, her conduct might again give rise to unpleasantness, he considered it beneficial to leave the place forthwith.

Ramanuja was white with rage on hearing this, and recovering, addressed his wife thus, "Thrice you sinned. My Guru Kanchipurna came and took his food under my roof in my absence, and you took the very leaf from which he ate as unholy and polluting. This was your first guilt. When hungry souls came craving for food you did deny it and you did lie. This was your second guilt. And now you had had the audacity to pick a most unseemly quarrel with my venerable teacher's consort. This is your third and crowning crime. No more are you fit to remain with me. You are a worldly woman, blind to spiritual interests. Take all this money. That is the stuff that well suits a shrew. Well do the Sastras say:- "Woman is at the bottom of all crime decency. It is good therefore You should return to where you came." So saying he swiftly dispatched her to her parents' abode.

"This world is hateful. Indeed, I must adjure all concern with it", thus did Ramanuja seriously reflect. It is said: "Bathe in the holy pond called Anantasaras, shadowed by the cupola of the Holy Temple, resolving that nothing in the world bestows real bliss. All sins shall depart. Seek Lord Varada as the Refuge; and one shall gain the blessed regions of Vishnu." And so Ramanuja bathed in the Ananta-pond, and resolved to become a sanyasin. It is laid down:

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

"One shall receive the holy order of the Sanyasin either from a mendicant Sanyasin or from God direct". And thus resolving Ramanuja betook himself to

Varada, and there prostrating before Him, prayed thus: "O Granter of boons! Warder of death! Bestower of the Land of the Angles! I have seen enough of all the varieties of worldly delusions, fathers and mothers, wives and children and all worldly goods. I feel sure that these ties block one's way to You, Yours and Spiritual Preceptors. I value them not; I value You and Your Holy Blessed feet alone. Grant me deliverance from those and service to these. Invest me therefore with all the insignia of the Vaishnava ascetic: the Triple-staff, the Holy- thread, the Under-cloth, the Loin-cloth, the Upper-cloth and the begging hoop (or rope-swing for receiving alms)" So did Ramanuja supplicate. Lord Varada was pleased and through His official agent (archaka), He was pleased to grant his prayers, and gave him from that day the name of Ramanuja-muni. "My own Ramanuja, you shall don the robe of the Sanyasin and serve Me", was the command given through Kanchipurna. Receiving this command in due humility, Ramanuja retired and became a Sanyasin from that day.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER - XII

### RAMANUJA'S CHIEF DISCIPLES

So Ramanuja had now weaned himself from the world. The discipline and daily routine ordained for monastics, he went through punctiliously. He was glad within himself to find that Yamunacharya's eyes of grace, which had fallen on him, had wrought wonderful results in removing all obstacles in the way of serving God alone, and in causing all conveniences for leading such a life. It was time now to think how best to carry out the (post-mortal) wishes of that pioneer- sage of the Faith, Sri Yamuna. Alone, he could not accomplish it; he wanted a competent colleague.

He could think of no one better fitted than Govinda-Bhatta, who had all the threefold qualifications of fidelity (to him), abdication (of the world), and enthusiastic faith (for spiritual science). But he had turned a staunch Saiva; in Siva's service at Kalahasti as already related. Who would show him that there was the One God whom Scriptures declared as: "All-scent and All- savour?"<sup>1</sup> So he mused and his thoughts lighted on Tirumalai-Nambi (Srisaila-Purna), the venerable worshipper of Venkatesa at Tirupati, learned in the Vedas, versed in the nectarous Prabandhas, and otherwise possessing spiritual qualities calculated to influence men of Govinda's stamp and redeem them from their wrong ways. He dispatched a confidential Sri Vaishnava accordingly to Nambi, (Purna); and to deliver to him a message thus, "Holy sir! Your nephew Vatta- mani Govinda-Bhatta was my school-mate. I pray you for my sake to extend your grace to him; and redeem him to your blessed feet."

In the meanwhile, Kurattazhavan, called Tirumarumarban of the Haritafamily, and Mudaliyandan of the Kandadai-family, heard of Ramanuja having joined the monastic order. They were rejoiced and forthwith proceeding to Kanchi, fell at his feet and prayed that they may be taken into the Sri-Vaishnava fold by the sacrament of Pancha-samskara etc., Ramanuja welcomed them, and ordained them as they desired. And as stated in, "After receiving the mantra, the Dvija shall worship his Acharya, and in all Purity ever remain implicitly in his service," they remained devoted to Ramanuja. (In the sequel, we shall use the Sanskrit names of these disciples, viz., Kuranatha or Kuresa for Kurattazhvan, and Dasarathi<sup>2</sup> for Mudaliyandan). A coterie of pupils was thus gathering round the future pontiff of the Vaishnava faith.

As to Yadava-prakasa, a new chapter in his life was about to open. For his mother was a good woman. She was a frequent visitor to Lord Varada; and had won the good graces of Sage Kanchi-purna. She had friendly conversation often too with Ramanuja. All these forces combined to mould her disposition for the New Faith; and at last made her to wish that her son Yadava had also belonged to this band. With this wish strong in her, she was one day mounting the steps of Lord Varada's Shrine, when she over-heard someone uttering: "So be it. "She construed this to be good augury for her; and on returning home informed her son of

Jai Srimannarayana!

what had happened, and exhorted him to give up his single staff of the advaitin and wear, like Ramanuja, the triple-staff, sacred thread, and sikha ( tuft of hair on the head), thereby embracing the Vaishnava faith.

For a long time, Yadava had begun to doubt the soundness of advaitism. Ramanuja's reasonable and decent interpretations of Vedic texts as against his own, were working strongly in his mind; and, of the greatness of Ramanuja himself the Brahma-rakshas, or the spirit which had possessed the princess, had clearly proved. The divine succor which God, disguised as Rama, had rendered to Ramanuja, whom he had lured on the sanctimonious pretext of a Kasi-pilgrimage, and the sincere counsels

of his own mother to boot, had further all contributed to dispose his heart. There he was converted, but, "Mother" he said, " as a monk of the advaita-persuasion, I had rid off the tuft and holy thread (Yajnopa-vita); and to wear them again, a penance has to be performed by me; and that is laid down to be a journey round the world. I am old and unfit for such a task. Indeed know not how to go." Yadava was harrowed by these thoughts, day after day. But one night he had a dream. The Lord Varada appeared and said 'There is no need to go round the world, Yadava! That is done by going round our Ramanuja. Do it then and bear the insignia of the New Faith which he may present to you."

Yadava woke but had yet no faith in the dream. So he betook himself to Kanchi-purna, and begged of him to consult Lord Varada, Purna being a favourite votary of Him-as to some matters agitating his mind. That same night, KanchiPurna submitted to Lord Varada, Yadava's petition. "I know it all," said Lord Varada. "His mother had already persuaded him to become a three staffed Sanyasin, but a doubt as to how it was possible to amend the past by bhupradakshina, preyed upon his mind. I have by a dream quieted him by suggesting that instead, he need but go round Ramanuja. Being a dream as it was, he lacks faith and refers it to you again." The following morning, Purna delivered this message to Yadava, who was now satisfied. Straight away he went to Ramanuja, and asking his forgiveness for all the past, begged to be ordained as a monk and admitted to the New Faith. "But propitiation before conversion is demanded by our Laws, and that in this case is circumambulating the world once," said Ramanuja. "Enough to go round you, sire, so commands Lord Varada," explained Yadava humbly, and putting the same in execution without waiting for a reply, stood before Ramanuja with folded hands. Kuresa and Dasarathi, the new disciples, watched these events in infinite wonderment and exclaimed, "If some reach God by love, others reach Him by hate as well?" "May he join our holy band!" "Ramanuja was mightily pleased at the valuable adherent won to his cause, made Yadava undergo all the sacraments for the Brahmana over again, such as Chaula and Upanayana, invested him with the triple-staff, etc., and named him Govinda-jiyar, stamped him with the holy symbols of Sankha and chakra, gave him the Holy Mantra, and enjoined him to write a work on Yati dharma (or the Institutes of monks), showing the harmony that exists among various texts. Govinda-jiyar accordingly wrote a work of eleven chapters, each chapter treating of an aspect and submitted the same to Ramanuja.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

He read it and expressed his approval of the same. Not long however was Govinda-jiyar spared to serve his Acharya; for he soon after left the earth and drew himself away to the Great Beyond.

Kuresa and Dasarathi were much attached to Ramanuja, who took them through a course of the Two Mimamsas (the two Exegeses on the ritualistic and the contemplative Divisions of the Veda). While such studies were being prosecuted, the reports reached Srirangam of Ramanuja taking to Sanyasin order, and other events rapidly succeeding it. Mahapurna and other disciples of Yamunacharya received the tidings with joy, and longed for Ramanuja's coming to Srirangam, making it his permanent quarters. But they were helpless; and Ramanuja too had once before in grief and despair, returned from the place without even visiting Lord Ranga, being disappointed at the sudden death of Yamuna. So, they went in a body to Lord Ranga and petitioned to Him to prevail upon the Lord of Kanchi Lord Varada- to spare Ramanuja for them. So a message from Lord Ranga, who granted their petition, was sent to Lord Varada But a reply came to the effect :- "If it is possible for one to forego his love, I too can part with my Ramanuja," On hearing this, Mahapurna and other worthies were much perturbed, but after some deliberation, determined to depute an elder in person to approach Lord Varada and persuade Him by hymns to grant them Ramanuja inasmuch as the Lord's very name Varada meant: "Granter". They besought accordingly Tiruvaranga-p-perumal Araiyaar, the Venerable Elder of the place to march to Kanchi on their behalf, and so extol Lord Varada as to make Him condescend to grant them Ramanuja. Araiyaar immediately left Srirangam on this holy errand, after obtaining leave to do so from Lord Ranga. On his nearing Kanchi, his relative there, by name Varantarum perumal Araiyaar met him and escorted him to the Holy City, and tended him under his roof as befitted a distinguished visitor.

The next morning, in due fashion, Araiyaar proceeded to the Temple. Lord Varada had that day taken His august seat in the pavilion called Kacchikku-vayttan, surrounded by the Holy Assembly; Kanchi- purna stationed before the Lord reverently doing his allotted service of fanning. Ramanuja stood by his side devoutly uttering the Devaraja- Ashtaka hymn sung by Purna. Ramanuja saw Araiyaar, went forward and received him most cordially. "May I be allowed to pay my obeisance to Lord Varada?" enquired Araiyaar. Purna led him to His august presence, in full Holy Council seated, and Araiyaar fell prostrate before Him, repeating Yamuna's verse; "Oh, when, O Strider of the Three Spheres, will Thy Lotus-Feet, decked with all the signs such as the discus, bedeck my head?2" Rising he was honored with tirtha, prasada and Sri Sathagopa. Araiyaar then, set to celestial music (devagana), chanted a select number of the Lyrical hymns of the Azhavars (Saints); and as he sang, danced and went into raptures.

"When His faithful sing and dance for joy, God Himself keeps time", it is said. So, Lord Varada was pleased with the devotion of Gayaka, and vouchsafed to him all the honors belonging to His Shrine. "Why do I want these?" said Gayaka, "my wish is not for these. Pray grant me a boon, as You are, O God, famous as the Boon-Giver". And so saying, he continued his song and dance with more fervor. Pleased, Lord Varada spoke thus." Ask, my beloved, anything, except

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Me and My Consorts." "Pray grant Him," readily replied Gayaka, pointing to Ramanuja, who was close by. "Oh lost," exclaimed the Lord! I wish I had the forethought to include Ramanuja on the side of exceptions. However, son, except Ramanuja, ask for any other boon." "But", remonstrated Gayaka, "do you also retract like mortals? Are not your own words these: "Rama has no two tongues"? On hearing this, Lord Varada had no alternative but to reluctantly say, "Well, we grant you Ramanuja; take him. And we bestow on him the title, Yatiraja. "No sooner was this said, than almost convulsively Gayaka grasped Ramanuja by the hand and said, "Proceed, Sire" Ramanuja said not a word. He fell prostrate before Lord Varada, and saying: "Yours will be done." He, immediately started, not even caring to enter his cloister. As he went, he merely ordered his pupils Kuresa and Dasarathi to bring up his daily worship Varada. Ramanuja thus followed Gayaka to Srirangam. Kuresa after escorting Ramanuja some way, returned to Kanchi, but Dasarathi accompanied. Dasarathi was Ramanuja's sister's son, but he was the only relative whom he retained.

Looking steadily towards Srirangam, his future home - a home, the vestibule of the Eternal Home - with joy bounding in his heart, went Ramanuja. In due time the north branch (Kolladam-Coleroon) of the Kaveri, encircling Holy Island of Srirangam, was reached. Ramanuja stayed here to take a holy bath and deck his body with the twelve marks, consecrated by the Holy Names of Kesava and so forth. In the meanwhile, news had sped to Srirangam of the arrival of the Holy personage. Mahapurna and other disciples of Yamunacharya, the elders of the place, the monks and acolytes (ekangis) and others were rejoiced at this good fortune, and proceeding in a body to the Temple, delivered the tidings to Lord Ranga. Thereupon His command issued thus: "O, my faithful, you march forth in full congregation, office bearers and all men, with all the holy paraphernalia of my Temple and every honor, to meet and receive my Ramanuja". The public formed itself into a grand procession, which with music discoursing and flags flying, headed by Vishvaksena (Senaimudali) streamed forth towards Kolladam even as the celestials and angels, go forth from the gates of Heaven to the shores of the Viraja river, to meet and welcome the faithful, who have finished their pilgrimage on earth, and are reaching the portals of the Refulgent city of God.

They met Ramanuja; and after mutual exchanges of religious courtesies, the procession turned towards Srirangam. Thus led, Ramanuja crossed the river, neared the Tinkodi rampart, and the Damodaran turret, where he laid himself at full length on the ground. Then rising, he reverently threaded the Tirumalai-tanda-perumal street (beginning always from the east and turning to the west, by south=pradakshina), he went round the inner Trivikraman-street, reaching in due course the big sacrifice-altar (balipitha), where he prostrated himself again; then he went to the Mother's shrine, paying homage to Mother Sri-Ranga-Nayaki, the blessed Consort of Sri- Ranga; next the Chandrapushkarini pond was reached, where he sipped the holy water; and then wheeling round, the next southern entrance was reached, guarded by Nayanars (gate-watchers), and all the Saints from St. Nammazhvar downwards were visited in order, not omitting the numerous other shrines dotted round the Temple.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Next the courtyard called the Ani-y-arangan-Tirumuttam was entered, where Ramanuja prostrated again, and wheeling round the inner corridor, loving eyes fixed on the pranava-like Vimana, (the gold- covered cupola over the sanctum sanctorum), the shrine of Vishvaksena was reached, where making obeisance, he was now in the precincts of the central Father's shrine. In this place, which goes by the name of Azhagiya-manavalan tirumandapam, the Lord Ranga (the moveable image called Namberumal) came forth in advance to meet Ramanuja, even as the Lord in Heaven leaves His Throne of Glory to go and embrace and welcome the souls who are saved and are arriving at the golden gates of Heaven. Ramanuja was thrilled with joy. Bliss possessed him. He fell down, rose, fell again and held his hands up, fell again, and rose; thus did he reverently pace up to the Holy of Holies, where supporting himself against the mana-t-tun pillar, he saw the blessed figure of Ranga reclining on His Ananta-couch<sup>1</sup> and rivetting His eyes on the Holy Figure, enjoyed the Blessed vision in the manner enjoyed by St. Tiruppanazhvar in his Amalan adippiran, and recited in accents of bliss the Tiruppallandu of St. Peri- Yazhvar, and the following bewitching verses of Yamunacharya:-

Bow to you Bow to you, beyond reach of word and thought; Bow to you; Bow to you, reachable by word and thought; Bow to you, Bow to you, Infinite in Riches;  
Bow to you, Bow to you, Infinite in Mercy Know I not virtue, aye, blind to my soul,  
Nor do I love your Holy Blessed Feet; Wayless and Goal-less, I, O Refuge! Meekly seek and fall at your Holy Feet.

The lord Ranga was enchanted with these outpourings of Ramanuja's heart, and was pleased to place on his head His Blessed Feet, which Ramanuja received in humility as the greatest honor and blessing conferred on a mortal; and stood transfixed with the thought that from that day onwards he had become one whose life was to be solely dedicated to the service of God. As he was thus ruminating, Lord Ranga (=periya perumal, or Lord stationary resting on Serpent Sesa) spoke thus; "All the riches of our Kingdom here and of Our Upper Regions, are given to you, and to your followers. The title Udayavar is conferred on you. Take charge of Our household here, of which We appoint you guardian and trustee, and manage all its affairs wisely." Ramanuja received the mandate humbly and turning to Maha- purna said, "What blessings belong not to those who have trusted Acharyas like you, Sire? To my spiritual connection with you, is due to the extraordinary favour Lord Ranga has bestowed upon me this day." Purna said: "O Noble pupil of mine, the prophecy of St. Nammazhvar, to which we were keenly looking forward, has come true this day."

The prophecy is that contained in his verse: "O Men, learn that Kali Well soon come to an end", and this is with reference to yourself. Pray then, start your holy duties without further thought." Ramanuja obeyed, and assumed charge of his exalted position. Taking his seat in the Hall called the Periya Tirumandapam, he instituted searching enquiries as to whether the weights and measures used in the Sri- bhandara (stores) were correct; whether the flower

Jai Srimannarayana!

service, sandal- paste service, food service, light service, and all such services were all duly done; whether the Temple servants were carefully selected and cared for; whether the public works of the shrine's noble structures were duly attended to; whether the flower gardens attached to the Temple were properly tended and conserved; and whether the land and other properties pertaining to the temple were well looked after. And thus from day to day was Ramanuja engaged in restoring order and system in the vast concerns of the Temple. He picked out Akalanka Natt-azhvan, and making him his disciple, set him over the Temple as his assistant; and saw to the strict and punctual discharge of all the ceremonial duties connected with the daily, fortnightly, monthly and yearly festivals of the shrine.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER XIII

### KURESA JOINING RAMANUJA.

Kuresa having despatched Ramanuja returned to Kanchi. From here he went to his village Kura, about three miles to the west of Kanchi. Being the Lord of this village and very rich, he was called Kuranatha or Kuresa. He was as bounteous as rich. From morn till late in the night, the blind, lame, poor and disabled were freely served with food and clothing. One night, when the day's duties were over, the brass-made doors of his mansion were closed violently. This made such a ringing noise that it was heard at Kanchi. Lord Varada's Consort Lakshmi questioned Him as to the cause of the noise.

The Lord explained to Her the greatness of Kuresa. "Then I wish to see him," said She. Kanchi-Purna was commanded to go and fetch him. Purna duly came and was welcomed with every worship due to such a distinguished guest. Purna then disclosed the object of his mission, resulting from the deliberations which Varada and Lakshmi held on hearing the creaking of his brass door. Kuresa was dismayed on hearing this. "What!" he cried, "A sinner like me, a wretch, a worm, to appear so big in the Lord's Eye. Crawling insect that I am! My doors to create disturbance in God's House! Pride hampers salvation; humility paves the way for it." So reflecting Kuresa formed a resolution to forsake all and join Ramanuja at Srirangam He put his resolution into execution at once by abandoning all his riches, houses and lands, which he gave away in charity to all that came, and bidding his wife Andalamma give up every article dear to her without regret and accompany him, left Kuresa.

Purna returned to Kanchi, and recounted the extraordinary deeds of sacrifice following on repentance, and the departure, of Kuresa. Lord Varada was astonished at such swift operation of His Grace on Kuresa's heart and told his Consort: "Well, you have had your wish fulfilled now".

Kuresa was now well on his way. Without fear he trudged on. They were, husband and wife threading their way through a thick forest, and night also fell over them. The wife, unaccustomed to travel in this manner, dreaded thieves in such forsaken tracts, and turning to her husband asked him trembling, whether there was no fear in such places. He quickly answered, "Dear, if you have stuff anywhere hidden on your person, there is fear. Fish feed on water-worms. Fowls feed on land-worms. Death feeds on life. And so thieves feed on riches. I suspect, dear you have something with you, though I commanded you to relinquish all behind." "Pardon me, Lord," said Andalamma, "I have left all behind, but thinking you might need a cup to drink from, on your long journey, I secreted but a golden cup." So saying, she unfolded the vessel from her cloth, and shaking with fear, handed it to her husband. He took it and threw it away into the jungle, and said to his wife: "Now, lady walk on. Your fear has been cast out." Thus did this matchless pair travel on and in time reach Srirangam. Ramanuja was jubilant at his arrival; and sent out his pupils to receive him with every mark of respect, and

Jai Srimannarayana!

conduct him to his Math. Ramanuja, on his approach, rose and, warmly enfolding him in his arms, welcomed him to Srirangam, to himself, and to all the great work that jointly they were destined to accomplish in the near future. Kuresa thus forsook his rich home and all at Kura and made Srirangam henceforth his permanent residence, subsisting here on alms. Thus did a great and most important personage for the life-work of Ramanuja, join him. We shall leave him for a time and see how fared Govinda at Kalahasti.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER XIV

### GOVINDA

A Sri-Vaishnava had been dispatched, it will be remembered, to Sri-Saila-Purna (Tirumalai Nambi), to deliberate on the mode of reclaiming Govinda, who had become a Saiva, and had been made the director of the Kalahasti Temple. The messengers returned with a joyful countenance to Ramanuja. Before they broke the tidings, Ramanuja saw by his face there was success, and bade him recount what had taken place. He began thus, "Holy Sire, with your holy leave, I reached Tirupati in due time, and making obeisance to Purna, conveyed to him you had entrusted me with. Purna was rejoiced to find that what he himself had contemplated doing with regard to Govinda, was Ramanuja's wish as well, and that his own intention was thereby sweetened. So saying, he immediately started with a knot of followers, including myself. We reached Kalahasti, and Purna himself under a tree near the Temple-pond. Ullangai-Konaranda-Nayanar (= Govinda) came there with vessels to the pond in order to carry water for the ablution-ceremony of Siva, all the time chanting songs of His praise. Purna said:-- "What fruit will you get, by cold-bathing the Kouraidecked Thing?2, Govinda heard this, looked up in Purna's face, smiled and went his way. "This will do for once. Let God work upon his heart," Purna exclaimed to himself and returning to Tirupati, attended to his usual studies and teachings.

Sri-saila-Purna now made another venture. He went to the same tree and pond as before in Kalahasti. Nayanar (=Govinda) was coming as usual with vessels to fetch water. Purna thought he would try a plan even like the plans of God, who works without being seen, and is unknown by men as the Planner. To the world, God seems as if sleeping, but He is all wakeful. So reasoning within himself, Purna wrote his Guru Yamuna's verse:

Svabhavikanavadhika, etc., on a piece of palm-leaf, and allowed it to lie in the path of Nayanar, who of course was unaware of the design. He came. The piece arrested his sight. He took it for curiosity, read it but threw it away and went on his errand. But as he was returning with his pots full, he felt an impulse to pick up the piece again, and read the contents once more deliberately. He did so and looked round. There we were seated under the tree, He came near and said, "The wail has turned into verse, said Valmiki, and like him reflecting over his spontaneous utterance, I have been reflecting over the meaning of this chance-found strip. Did you, sire, throw it? Is this your property?" addressing Purna. On this the following conversation ensued:--

Nayanar: Have you lost your property?

Purna : We cannot lose our property. Others only lose theirs (meaning, we cannot lose our

God. You have lost.)

N. Never mind that. How is it you are all assembled in one body (i.e., you are all belonging to one cult, and seem to pursue a peculiar path).

P. Well, we have been brought together, as various ways meet here (i.e., the Path to God we are pursuing is the One Path into which all other paths issue).

N. But is there a Path for those who stand aloof like you? (i.e., aloof-ness or isolation or Kaivalya is the state of souls which on the one hand have eschewed material fetters, but on the other hand have not recognized God. This isolation is what in modern days called the AEonic suspension of souls, equivalent to eternal damnation).

P. We are not aloof in your sense. The aloof are those who have discarded their real property (God); but we hold our property (God) firm in our hands. We are thus God-sided (i.e., God-partisans) if you please.

N. Never mind this. Have you now come here to leave your relatives?

P. No. We have come here to buy kine?

N. Never mind that. What difference is there between horizontal and vertical? (i.e., is it not immaterial whether we paint our foreheads horizontally or vertically).

P. Yes, there is as much difference between as between beast (horizontal) and man (vertical)<sup>2</sup>.

N. I suppose, this is the language and cult of a New Style (i.e., a New Dispensation?)

P. Nothing new is ours. It is as old as time, and sanctioned by authority (Veda,) (i.e., our Vaishnavism is not born to-day. It is as old as the Vedas)

N. But if we inquire into Sacred Authorities, it is found to embody all sorts of cults.

P. Exactly. And that is the reason why you should fully inquire, divine into the very depths of knowledge as to what is the Highest Truth in the Universe; and diving, bring up the Pearl of truth from all the mud and ooze, (i.e., find out Narayana from all the tangled skein of the Vedas).

N. Nayanar thus was dumb-founded. He simply nodded his head, scanning Purna all the while from top to toe, and went his way with clear signs of serious thought in his heart visible in his countenance<sup>1</sup>.

Purna now thought thus: "Yes, his heart has now quickened<sup>2</sup>, the rest is God's own work. I consign the troubled soul there to Him". So saying he returned to the holy Hill (Tirumalai =

Tirupati).

Thus did the Srivaishnava narrate to Ramanuja the result of his mission to reclaim Govinda to Vaishnavism. Ramanuja on hearing this, went into a paroxysm of joy, and turning to Dasarathi and other disciples, said: "Look, how our great Guru Yamuna's Holy voice has found its entry into Govinda's heart; and how Govinda played a burlesque and spoke to our Sri-saila-Purna thereon in sarcastic quibbles. And see how our Purna retorted to Govinda in the same clever sarcastic style. Being well versed in Sastric lore, see how Govinda acknowledged Purna's significant sarcasms, and allowed himself to be beaten into silence. What a polemical victory? And hear me now expound to you the meaning of their cypher repartee. I simply cite a number of authorities bearing on the question.

- (1) "There are two things Kshara and Akshara. Kshara is all this being; Akshara is liberated souls. And different from these is Purushottama, Myself, the Person par excellence &c.," [Bhagavad- Gita, XV. 16 to 19].
- (2) "He (Vishnu) is the first of the Immortals, and Prior to them" [Prabandha].
- (3) "The Soul of those who walk virtue's path" [Naradiya].
- (4) "He is the Door to Salvation" [Prabandha].
- (5) "Hardly one knows Me truly" [Gita: VII-3].
- (6) "I am Thine, and Thou art mine" [T.V. Mozhi, II-9-9].
- (7) "He must be classed with beasts who has no knowledge (of God)". [Hitopadesa]1.
- (8) "How else will they spend their time, (if not by thinking of Vishnu)?" [Periya-tiru-v-andadi, v-86].
- (9) "Those who wear vertical marks on their foreheads, &c., are Vaishnavas"2 [Sri-Bhagavata].
- (10) "Sprinkle the Holy Dust of the feet of godly men". [T- vay-Mozhi, IV. 6-5].
- (11) "All twice-born shall wear vertical marks"3 [Yajnya-valkya].
- (12) "Vedas are the source of authority"4 [Manu. II-6].
- (13) "Sat, O Saumya, was in the beginning"5 [Aitareya Up : VI-2].
- (14) "Atma, Saumya, was in the beginning"6 [Aitareya Up : I-1].

Jai Srimannarayana!

(15) “Brahman, O Saumya, was in the beginning” [Vajasaneya : III-4]1.  
And if it be asked who is the Sat, the Atma, the Brahman.

(16) “Indeed, it is the one Narayana” [Mahopanishat : 1].

(17) (Narayana or) Vishnu is the highest God; and Agni is the lowest. All other gods go between” [Aitareya Brahmana, I-1-1].

(18) “The Pranava is the bow, Atma is the arrow, and Brahman is the Target. The wise man shall hit the Target and become filled with It” [Mund : Up : I1-4].

(19) “From Narayana is Brahma born, from Narayana is Rudra (Siva) born”5 [Narayana Up].

And Smritis, Puranas, and Itihasas support these authorities, for see Bhagavad-Gita, X-2, XI-37, IX-10; Manu-Smriti I-8, XII-132; Vishnu-Purana I, 1-32, I, 2-20, IV, 1-39, I, 22-64 and 78, VI, 4-10;

Maha-Bharata, Santi-Moksha, 168-78 and 79; 169-19, 30 and 31, Udyoga, 67, and Harivamsa, 32, 223-39, 279-47, &c,

When therefore Sri-saila Purna answered Nayanar in his own riddles, he was convinced inasmuch as he was well-versed in Sastras. And Purna feeling sure that Nayanar was well on the way towards conversion, returned to Tirumalai. How clever of Purna!” So saying, Ramanuja congratulated the Sri Vaishnava who had returned. “And what next?” asked he.

“Sire,” continued the Vaishnava, “listen to the results of the third sally of Purna. He made obeisance to Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati and entered the purlieu of Kalahasti and camping there in a tope, spent his time in teaching his disciples the commentaries on Tiruvay-mozhi, (i.e., Bhagavad-Vishayam). Nayanar came that way and got up a trumpet- flower tree. Purna had taken up Tinnan-vidu or Cent: II, Dec.2 of St. Nammazhvar’s Tiru- vay-mozhi, for comment; and as he went on reciting and explaining, Nayanar attentively pursued the discourse. Purna came to the fourth verse thereof, which ended with, ‘Except the One God (Krishna), which other deserves flower or worship?’ On hearing this, Nayanar jumped down the tree at once, flung away his flower-reticule and fell at the feet of Purna, overcome with emotion, and exclaimed:- “No, no; no one else can deserve. Holy Sire! I am an ignoramus and apostate and am unclean and wallowing in the mire of worldliness. Save, me, save me. Alas that when God of the two Universes, (Narayana) has been, when we have had the ‘Love-beaming Lotus-Eyed (Vishnu)’ when we have had Krishna, the sea-and-land Swallower, when we have had the Kalpaka tree which had saved the herds and herdsmen from Indra’s hail and storm (Krishna), when we have had the Sri-breasted (Vishnu), when we have had the glorious ‘Silkmantled (Vishnu)’, When we have had the ‘Ganga-toed (Vishnu)’ , the God of the fragrant Tulasi, I wasted my strength,energy and time.....” So went on Nayanar, now really Govinda, supplicated Purna to save his soul, lost in the wilds of false faiths. Govinda thus lay prostrate.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Purna looked at his disciples and saying: "Repentance has washed this soul clean, and Alavandar will now accept the purged heart", lifted him up with loving hands, patted him on the back and discoursed to him in soothing tones, drinking Govinda, as it were, with his gracious eyes, and hugging him as it were to his heart."

The Saivite residents of Kalahasti came to know of Nayanar's remorse, recantation and redemption and hemming round Purna, re-monstrated with him thus:-- "How can you entice, Sir, our Nayanar, by mesmerizing him with charmdust? "Why do you ask me?" retorted Purna, "there is your Nayanar; ask him. Know, our ways are hidden to you, and we never swerve to others' ways." Then they turned to Nayanar, and seizing his hand, "Come", said they. Govinda swiftly snatched his hand away from their clutch and said in anger: "Here, take away the temple- keys, the signet-ring and other articles of your cult and creed. My connection with you has from this moment ceased; and I have nothing more to do with you. I am entirely rid now of old shackles".

So saying, he suited action to word, by clapping his hands, and turned his face away from them. Thus beaten they said to Purna: "Sire, we had known all this yesterday; and yet we thought we would go to you and make a stand and try to force or persuade Nayanar back to us, but it is hopeless, we find. Hear, however, the dream which we had. Our God of Kalahasti (Siva) appeared to us and spoke thus"-- "Listen, my faith- ful! In the old days, the Vedas and Sastras suffered at the hands of the Pashandins, Baudddhas and Charvakas. They were restored by the three- staffed Sanyasin, Dattatreya. Again now, as of old, the Vedas have suffered by heretical vandalism.

To re-establish them, the celestials Vishvaksena, Ananta and Vainateya have become incarnate on earth, under the names of Yamuna, Ramanuja and govinda. To help them, the Divine Symbols of Vishnu- the Conch and the Discus-- have appeared as Dasarathi and Kuresa, respectively. So, the Vedic Vaishnavism which is going to revive un- der these Masters is a system which is after my own heart. Govinda had entertained a wish once for living in Kasi; and this desire I fulfilled by' appearing as the linga in his palm, and giving him thus a chapter of Saivism; so that he may be in a position to show and prove to others the comparative merits of the two systems, which can best be done only after personal experience. Vaishnavas are a free people. Interfere not. Let them alone". 'Such was our dream,' the Saivas represented, 'and so, Sirs, you are free, and we return'. Purna's plans were thus worked out.

He took Govinda to his home at Tirupati, and has had , as expiatory, the tonsure, etc., performed as also the five-fold Sacraments<sup>2</sup> of the Vaishnavas-- on the shores of the Holy Pond, called the Svami-Pushkarani- administered. After this the Holy Teachings contained in the Prabandhas of the Saints (Azhvars) were duly im- parted, and the Five Fundamental Truths<sup>1</sup> of religion were explained to him, thus making Govinda an all-round Vaishnava for evangelistic work with Ramanuja. Govinda looked upon Purna, his Master, as God Himself. He knew of no other God except his Saviour, Purna, to whom he was a servitor, in thought,

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

speech and deed, even as Lakshmana was to Ramachandra.

And I, Master, remained with them so long, enjoying their company as well as studies". Thus related the Vaishnava to Ramanuja.

On hearing this, Ramanuja rapturously eyed the Srivaishnava and uttered blessings. The first successful evangelistic work of Ramanuja had thus been accomplished, by the recovery of Govinda from his apostasy.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

**CHAPTER XV.  
RAMANUJA AND MANTRA.**

Sri Ramanuja had not yet formally seen his Guru Sri Mahapurna, at his residence, after his arrival at Srirangam from Kanchi. And, two, through his wife, he had possibly offended him. But he had abandoned her on that account and donned the sannyasin robes. Was this sufficient amends to appease the Guru? Such thoughts embarrassed Ramanuja. He would however go and tender ample apologies. So he walked on to his Guru's dwelling. In an attitude of veneration and humility, he prostrated himself, and telling him how he had made expiation for his past conduct, begged of him to pardon that for which he was not personally responsible.

Purna said he never knew there was anything to pardon, but that on the other hand Ramanuja was daily growing in his estimation. "Sire", said Ramanuja, "to fill the blank caused by Yamuna's sudden departure kindly deign to impart to me all the mysteries of religion that great Guru of mine has entrusted to you for the purpose." "With the greatest delight", replied Purna, "I have been eagerly looking out for an occasion like this. There shall be no more delay. The essence of our Holy Faith is embedded in the Dvaya-mantra. 'O, its greatness! Its power and strength! A gem, eternal, holy, the very gist of the Vedas! Purifying, meritorious! Rich, world-winning and healing.

So saying, he briefly imparted to Ramanuja the essentials of religion contained in it, viz., There is but One God. He is all merciful, and is therefore our Way. He is All-knowing and All-mighty, and is therefore Our God. The soul's end and aim is therefore eternal living service at His Holy Feet. There are glorious amplifications of this truth yet. Learn these at the feet of Tirukkottiyur Nambi ( Goshthipurna), who was an intimate disciple of Yamuna.

Ramanuja took leave and proceeded to Tirukkottiyur (near Pudukota); and, on arriving there asked the passers-by where GoshthiPurna was living. "There, in that poor low hut", said they, pointing. Ramanuja fell on his knees, and all the way from where he stood up to the hut, he went prostrate. Only those knew Nambi well, who knew how not to see defects in their Masters, but only saw pefections, and these to exaggeration. Ramanuja approached Nambi and falling at his feet prayed: "Teach me, Holy Sire, all the recondite doctrines of our Faith. I am the humble feet of MahaPurna". In order to test the strength of Ramanuja professions, Goshthipurna said in an off-hand manner: "What have I to tell, and to whom?", and gave him no countenance. Ramanuja never spoke another word, either of supplication or of reproach; but simply prostrated himself and returned to Koil (= Srirangam).

Gosthipurna had to visit Srirangam for the season's festivities connected with that Holy Fane. He came and paid homage to the Lord Ranga, who was pleased to dower him with all honors, and commanded, through the officiating priest, :- "Instruct our Ramanuja in all the occult lore

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

of the Faith". "But, O! Glorious God!" said Gosthipurna, "It is You who has ruled: Tell not those who have not been apprenticed at least for a year. Reveal not high truths to the non-serious, non-dutiful, who love me not? So that if I have to carry out the strict letter of Your law, I must wait and try Your Ramanuja". "Not so in his case", answered Ranga, "As he is fully qualified according to the requirements of the text:--

Body, wealth, mind, life itself, belong to the Guru, and therefore he may be instructed.

"Come to my place", said Gosthipurna to Ramanuja, and left Srirangam. Ramanuja went all the way, as directed, to Thirukottiyur again. But when he went there; "Not this time; can you go now and come again?" told Gosthipurna. Ramanuja never thought of a protest, and never felt irritated, but simply obeyed the command, and returned to Srirangam. Eighteen times, thus, it is chronicled, did Ramanuja journey to Thirukottiyur and return, each time being told the same thing. Gosthipurna had at the same time no other idea except that of testing Ramanuja's faith and zeal, and testing him through an ordeal of novitiate probation - To see if his spirit was strong and capable of overcoming passions of the mind.

Had his will been weak, he would long ago have given up his endeavor as unworthy of pursuit. Had he succumbed under the weight of disappointment and chagrin, that would have proved him an unworthy disciple, to whom it would have been useless to reveal occult truths. Such were Gosthipurna's thoughts. And on the other hand, Ramanuja's tenacity of purpose was raising him every time in Purna's estimation.

When he returned to Srirangam for the eighteenth time, however, he felt somewhat, and was moved to tears at the futility of his repeated efforts, and was found deeply revolving in his mind, as to what he should do next; when a disciple of Ghostipurna chanced to come from Thirukottiyur, and came on a visit to Ramanuja. Ramanuja, bidding him be seated, and after preliminaries were over, poured before him his bitter grievances, and consulted him as to how he should make himself worthy. And he finished the consultation by saying, "Has not God pledged to save us from evil, and grant us bliss? Even so are God's regents on earth. How am I to become worthy, if by the worthy, my unworthiness is not effaced; and unless the benefactor gives, how is the receiver to be blessed?" The disciple returned to Thirukottiyur, and told his master how Ramanuja was pining for knowledge. "Has he such keen appetite? Then I must at once feed him. A moment's delay more on my part brings sin. Let Ramanuja come to me alone with his staff and pennant. So did Ghostipurna exclaim; and bade the same disciple go forth at once and bring Ramanuja to him. Swiftly came he, and prostrating himself before Ramanuja begged of him to proceed. He started immediately, taking his two intimate disciples with him, Kuresa and Dasarathi; and fell at Purna's feet. "These instead of you alone, as I had commanded!" exclaimed Purna irritated. "Holy Sire!" explained Ramanuja, "come with staff and pennant was your order. So I have come." "Staff and pennant! Which is your staff, Which is your pennant?" asked Purna. "Sire, Dasarathi is my staff; Kuresa is my pennant. I am never without them nor they without me". Purna's irritation vanished and he was moved

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

by Ramanuja's exemplary conduct and astuteness. "Well", spoke Purna-- who had been commanded by Lord Ranga in a dream again, to reveal Holy secrets to Ramanuja as the latter was no other than Adishesha himself incarnated-- "I make exceptions for you and your Inseparables; I command you that to no others shall you impart the sacred truths I am going to divulge to you".

So saying, he led Ramanuja to a secret corner of his hut, and there revealed to him the hidden truths of the Tirumantra, or the Mantra of the Ashtakshara-Upanishad, the eight-syllabled and three-worded Mantra, the gravity of which is thus described:-- "Pranava the first; Namas the middle; and Narayana the last. So runs the Eight-syllabled Mantra, to be ever used in prayer by seekers after God. It is the granter of every boon, and promoter of devotion and dispassion". "This", he said, "is the Mantra which all our Saints and Sages constantly recited and pondered over. It is the bestower of eternal bliss". Ramanuja reverently received the teachings, and considered himself now as regenerated and saved. But he could not contain the truths within him, though imparted under pledge of secrecy. "Why are such truths so jealously guarded from all mortals? If God is not for sinners, for whom is He? And therefore is not His Holy Word a message for all? Why should mortals be denied its saving power? But I shall not make a secret of it. I shall divulge it to all regardless of consequences". So did Ramanuja reflect and reason. Compassion for all men burned in his heart. So he made up his mind to proclaim the Word to the public.

The next day, he entered into the big and elevated hall of Torkkzhvan, or the Lord Nrisimha, Resident of Tirukkottiyur, invited all to assemble there; and his full heart flowed to them in the revealing of the precious truths relating to Spirit, which he had learnt from Ghostipurna, under vow of secrecy. This news reached and roused the indignation of GhostiPurna. He commanded Ramanuja to appear before him; and asked in tones of anger, "Culprit! did we not strictly enjoin you not to reveal our noble truths of religion to the undeserving vulgar? How did you misbehave, and outrage promises made?" "Revered Sire", submitted Ramanuja, "I confess I am guilty of disobedience. But I taught the truths to others to glorify you and your lore." "That is not it," retorted Ghostipurna, "The disobedience on your part is the question. That, you have glaringly shown. 'What is your punishment for it?' "My punishment is certainly hell, "Sire" submitted Ramanuja. "That you know very well" protested Purna, "and yet what made you to violate my law?" "Sire", said Ramanuja, "Pray listen to me calmly", Disobedience surely deserves hell. I must be sent there, no doubt. But, holy Sire, may I submit that it is but little sacrifice for one sinner to make, inasmuch as it brings salvation to many. Moreover all the merit of that wholesale salvation goes to you, because of the Holy Secret having emanated from your great self? These reasons emboldened me to infringe your holy command. It was compassion for mankind that rendered me blind to your injunctions. I ask forgiveness. Do with me, holy Sire, what you want to." G. Purna was struck dumb at this reasoning and his own heart moved. 'Oh, that this idea never entered my crippled heart", said he excitedly, "my heart, would not feel warm with love for mankind. I am hated. Strange I never felt the all-embracing love of Ramanuja. Ramanuja! Yatiraja! Indeed You are He, come

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

on earth. I see it all now”.

Thus vehemently venting forth the new and strange emotions stirring in his breast Ghostipurna rushed forward and embracing Ramanuja continued:-- “Holy son, you are mine, my own indeed are you. Your name shall henceforth be Emberumanar. The creed that I gave you was known as the Creed of the High Vedanta till now, would henceforth be known to the world as the Creed of Emberumanar. Not only that, in addition to which you have already heard from me, which you proclaimed from the house-tops, you shall have to hear more from me. Secrets there are yet. Come.” So went on Purna, in the exuberance of his strangely awakened love for Ramanuja. “Holy Sire”, softly said Ramanuja, “I am not to lay down law for you. Had I in the least thought that there were yet other Secrets than those you have already so graciously divulged, and therefore stood in need, that would prove I lack the trust in you and doubt your sincerity. But if I say now: ‘I need no more’, that would prove that I had not understood well the bearings of the first set of secrets given to me. So I hold my peace. It is for you therefore, master, to decide in these circumstances and from events which have transpired, what I deserve”. My own son, Ramanuja, dear!” said Purna, “then let it be deferred. Go now and come again, but mind, come alone.” Ramanuja stretched himself before his Guru, rose and left for Srirangam with his ‘staff and pennant’.

Sometime after, Ramanuja journeyed, as bidden, to his Master for further instructions, and humbled himself before him. “Come now”, said Goshti Purna, clasping Ramanuja’s hand lovingly. Taking him to a sequestered spot and adopting every precaution that no one may disturb them, “touch my feet”, said he, “and promise you will not venture on further disclosures of our most cherished secrets”. On Ramanuja solemnly pledging his word, Purna began in the manner of Lord Krishna:--

“It is the Last Word (Charama-sloka) of the spiritual science, contained in the Lord’s verse” said Purna. Thus:--

“Give up entirely all other Ways, Choose Me alone as your Way; You, from all sins, I will absolve,  
No more then shall you mourn”. [Bh: Gi. XVIII.66]

“Son, reveal not these holy Truths to the unprepared, undeserving, unerving, and haters of God (Me)”. [Bh : Gt. XVII. 67] Ramanuja, if you value these Truths, then let not atheists and heretics hear them. Guard them against such.

“Let it be, Sire, as you wish” said Ramanuja, “but may I not make exceptions of such worthy God-loving souls as Kuresa. How can I conceal from Him?” “He may be worthy” enjoined Purna”, but our Sastras lay conditions such as:--

“One year, half year, quarter year at least, shall the postulant be examined in every way; and

Jai Srimannarayana!

then shall the Guru initiate him, graciously, disinterestedly. And therefore, after putting him to test and seeing that he really craves for knowledge during this trial-period teach him.” Ramanuja received these commands and returned to Srirangam as a victor returning home after successful campaign. He thought to himself that even like the Eighteen Chapters of the Gita preached by Sri Krishna, before the Last Word (Charama-sloka) was revealed, in order to test Arjuna’s mind, were the eighteen trips imposed upon him by his Guru. “I am Crown Prince now”, he exclaimed rapturously, “and I am heir to the Kingdom of God”.

Kuresa was now longing to learn this Truth. He was anxiously waiting for an opportunity to declare his mind. He found one and throwing himself at the feet of Ramanuja said: “Holy Sire! how I realise the effects of Yamuna’s petitions to Lord Varada. By them you have become the Pioneer of our Faith after discarding all worldly concerns? A holy band is gathering round you. I am happily one. See, how again Yamuna’s disciple, Goshti Purna, has gifted you with his special grace. May I not be so blessed by you in turn?” “Son, beloved”, said Ramanuja. “You must bide your time one year. That is my command”. “Master”, humbly submitted Kuresa, “One year! Ah, it is intolerably long. Can I stand it? Shall I live so long, so long? I have heard that one month’s fasting and lying at the door of the Master, is considered a good equivalent for one year’s probation.” So saying, Kuresa put his word immediately into execution. Ramanuja was moved by pity, and at the end of the month, he initiated him into the final principles of the Gita.

Dasarathi was watching all the while. He found no rest for his mind till he learnt the saving truths. So he approached Ramanuja and fell at his feet. “Teach me, also, I pray, Master”, said he. “Son, my permission was for Kuresa only. You must go to Purna and obtain his permission”. Dasarathi ran to Tiru Kottiyur, and threw himself before Purna. But Purna never gave him countenance. Dasarathi held to his resolve, and repeated his importunity; but Purna as resolutely turned away from him. This went on for six months. If Dasarathi had any pride of birth or learning, this probation was good for him. He humbled himself again. Purna now glanced at him. “You are one of Ramanuja’s favoured, I surmise”, asked he. “Yes, Sire! I am known as Dasarathi; I have come to learn the cream of Gita-teachings from you”. Purna said “Let every trace in you cease, of the threefold egotism which troubles mankind, that of talent, wealth, and ancestry. Ramanuja will be the best judge in these matters. Go to him and wait on his will and pleasure. He will bless you.” “Be it as you will, Sire”, said Dasarathi and humbly retired to Srirangam.

Dasarathi’s return, Ramanuja was watching, and when he came and fell at his feet, and related all that took place at Tiru Kottiyur, Ramanuja, in the midst of many assembled disciples, said: “Do you see Dasarathi is now a changed person. If he had any notion of self-esteem before, how it has disappeared now! What a transformation effected by my Guru! Rise, Dasarathi! You are now qualified to hear high lessons of the Spirit. I will reveal them at once.” So saying, he communicated to him the quintessence of the Gita-teachings, and exclaimed joyously. “Aye, now indeed, I may claim as my own, my Staff and Pennant.”

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER XVI RAMANUJA'S INTERPRETATIONS

Some time elapsed thus. Goshthi-Purna came on a visit to Srirangam, where he met his college friend Tirumalai-Andan (Maladhara). He took him with him and went to see Ramanuja in his retreat. Ramanuja on seeing his Guru come, rose and receiving him with due respect, entered into conversation. "Ramanuja!" he addressed, "you are now to hear the utterances of our Holy Saints, the Tiruvaymozhi of St. Nammazhvar, to begin with. I commend you to the care of my friend Maladhara, who has been fully well instructed in that lore by Yamunacharya." So saying, he placed Ramanuja's hands in those of Maladhara, and begging of the latter to take his trust through a course of the Prabandhas, left for his own town.

They began the new course of studies. But as Maladhara gave out the explanations of each verse he had heard them from his Guru, Yamuna, Ramanuja gave expanded or improved versions of the same. Maladhara used to say that he never remembered such explanations given out by Yamuna. "But they are right, Sire! And Yamuna's mind was really that", Ramanuja used to reply. In due course, they came to the verse: Ariya-k-kalaltu [T. Vaymozhi II, 3,3]. Maladhara explained it thus: O God, when I was ignorant, you gave me the knowledge of my relation to you, and yet you have confined me in this carcass which destroys this knowledge" "This cannot, be Sire!" protested Ramanuja, "if you consider the trend of the whole Decad here [II, 3], it is an acknowledgement of all the manifold good, God did to the Saint. While so, one verse in the middle of the Decad cannot convey an accusation against God. So, by a transposition of the terms of the verse in question, the meaning becomes, "Whilst I was yet confined in this carcass which destroys knowledge, you were pleased to bestow knowledge of my relation to you O God!" "I don't remember Yamuna so explaining to me", said Maladhara, "I like not such interpretations from you." So saying, he ceased teaching further. The news of this interruption of studies reached the ears of Goshti Purna.

He journeyed thereon to Srirangam to inquire into the cause. Meeting Maladhara, he asked for an explanation, "Friend!" began Maladhara, "Our studies never go on smoothly, for Ramanuja, I find, is too much for me. He has an eternal store of new interpretations. For instance, we were reading Saint Nammazhvar's verse Ariya &c, [II. 3 . 3.]. Whereas I construed it as conveying a spirit of tirade against God for His ways of dealing with souls, Ramanuja construed it as an expression of gratitude to God, so as to make verse 3 harmonize with the other verses of this Decad. Such a protesting spirit seemed to me a violation of a disciple's decorum, while his constructions also seemed at variance with our Yamuna's mind. Hence I had to stop studying with an eccentric pupil like Ramanuja." "But pardon me", interrupted Purna, "Ramanuja is right, for I remember our Yamuna having so explained. You seem to have forgotten. Friend! Ramanuja is incapable of going wrong. If anyone knows Yamuna's mind, it is he. Look upon him as like another Krishna who went to Sandipani for instruction. You are but a pretense. He knows all. No more be under the delusion that you are teaching him truths not already known to him. So, permit me as a friend, to lay it on you hence- forth as a sacred duty

Jai Srimannarayana!

to continue the Tiru-vay-mozhi from where you dropped it; even if, to do so, it were necessary on your part to wait on Ramanuja, instead of his waiting on you. He is such disciple as his Gurus must go to him”.

So saying, Gosti Purna went to Ramanuja’s monastery, accompanied by Maladhara and Mahapurna. Seeing them, Ramanuja rose exultingly, and prostrating himself, welcomed them all. Purna thus made peace and saw to the Prabandha-studies being again pursued in right earnest.

They sat to the study again under these terms of conciliation. A passage was again being explained by Maladhara. “Not so, Sire!” interrupted Ramanuja. Yamuna meant it another way”. “How do you know Yamuna?” excitedly queried Maladhara, of Ramanuja, “You have never conversed with him once in your days. You just saw him after his death. And yet you dare to interpret his mind to me!” “With your leave, Master”, submitted Ramanuja, “Look upon me the Ekalavya to Yamuna. That will explain how I understand him.” “I understand you now, Holy Ramanuja. I find the words of my friend G. Purna indeed confirmed by my own experience of you. You are even an Avatara. To me are you teacher, not I to you. I have learnt from you many things that I had not learnt from Yamuna.” So saying, Maladhara rose and made obeisance to Ramanuja.

Thus, without further impediments to progress, the study of a course of the Prabandhas was in due time completed. Mahapurna now suggested to Ramanuja that there were other mysteries yet, which if he so desired, he might learn from the venerable Tiruvaranga-perumal Araiya. Ramanuja took the hint at once, and from that day forward engaged himself for six months to offer milk daily to Araiya as a premium for learning. And to this he added the service of preparing for Araiya a turmeric-paste (manjal-kuppu) for ablution-purposes, when the adhyayana-festival came round in the year. One day the preparation was found not quite to Araiya’s liking. Ramanuja threw it away, and immediately prepared it anew. Araiya was watching this solicitude on Ramanuja’s part. “He loves me as one may love God. He loves me, a son of God, as God Himself incarnate, thought Araiya. “Come, noble disciple”, said he, “You are fit to know the highest mystery. By your services to me you have earned it. So you lay claim to all that I have. Know then that God’s apostles and representatives on earth are God Himself visible in that form. Our Sastras hence proclaim:--

“The Guru is Parabrahman Himself; is one’s real Wealth; is the Object of love, and our Refuge. He is our Wisdom and the way. Who preaches such a Saviour, is the Saviour of Saviours.” Know that God asleep is the Guru awake; God invisible is the Guru visible and moving. The Gurus bring messages of God. They are God’s mouthpieces. Through them, God chooses to teach mankind. Look upon the Guru (Saviour) then as God Himself on earth. Look upon him as St. Madhurakavi looked upon St. Nammazhvar, as Lakshmana upon Rama and Satrugna on Bharata. This is called the Panoramopaya, or the fifth and ultimate means of reaching God”. Thus did Araiya descant on the greatness and virtue of Saviours, as the constituted channels

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

through which God becomes most accessible to mankind. "They are appointed and sent by God to perform the functions of salvation. They are empowered mediators between man and God. Who reject them reject God, and their salvation is imperiled thereby. This truth is hard to be realized by mankind, which is apt to deny the Saviour by the very fact of His moving with them, living with them and sharing with them all their joys and sorrows. The very intimacy breeds contempt. Those only steer clear of this danger of denial who can pierce through the veil of the visible symbol of the Guru. Ramanuja! Seriously reflect over this truth and be blessed." Obtaining this truth, Ramanuja became supremely happy.

Here it may be asked, how one disciple can have more than one Guru? It was Mahapurna who acted the first sacramental Guru to Ramanuja, at Madhurantakam, as already narrated. And yet we find Ramanuja resorting to many Teachers for instruction. There is no serious spiritual objection to such a procedure, it is stated. For a king may entrust more than one minister of his, with the wealth of his realm, to be made over to his heir when he comes of age. Each minister discharges his particular trust in due season. Such was the case with Ramanuja. For the great Yamuna has made many, the custodians of Spiritual Truths, which were to be imparted to Ramanuja, each in his turn. Ramanuja was to have received them directly from Yamuna, but fate had ordained otherwise. Ramanuja's hopes, which had been dashed to the ground when Yamuna suddenly passed away, were now fulfilled. Yamuna had signified to his disciples that Ramanuja was to be the High Pontiff of their resuscitated Ancient Church; and the deposit of spiritual truths he had left with them was to be placed in his hands.

The Gurus of Ramanuja therefore were thus bound to discharge their sacred trust. When they did so, each in his time, they were relieved and happy. It may be the teacher or the disciple. The canon laid down is that who so is qualified to receive spiritual truths must be told them, regardless of formalities otherwise prescribed, for the disciple to wait on the teacher and so on. A teacher, it is even said, becomes a teacher only when he has found a fit pupil, only when he has transferred to him his wisdom. Thus Ramanuja's teachers became entitled to that honor only after teaching Ramanuja and disciples became true disciples only after becoming disciples of Ramanuja. Ramanuja is therefore described as the Central Gem in the precious necklace made up of the gems of Teachers and Disciples of Vaishnava apostolic.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER XVII. RAMANUJA'S MINISTRY BEGINS

Ramanuja's studentship was now complete. He was already spiritual before intellectual. The naturally spiritual man was by means of intellectual accomplishments, to bequeath a legacy to the world in the shape of written works. He composed three in the beginning embodying the principles and practices of the Vaishnava faith. These were the gadya-thraya (The Three Proses), the Daily Worship-manual called the Nitya, and the Commentaries on the Bhagavad-Gita. The cardinal doctrine established by him in these works is the Unity of Godhood expressed by the term Narayana of the Taittiriya Upanishad and others. And Ramanuja disseminated the doctrines among many who were gathering about him; and thus did his ministry begin.

It was the practice of Ramanuja, as a mendicant who had abandoned the world, to visit seven houses daily and collect alms. Only upon this is the Sanyasin to subsist, according to the Yati-dharma. Alms- begging is enjoined on the principle that the ascetic has nothing to call, or ought not to own, any worldly goods as belonging to him, as such owning begets a series of attachments necessarily and weds him again to worldly interests; and to show to the world that the world to the spiritual man is beggared before God. The worldly man ought not to beg, and the spiritual man ought not to bestow. This is reversed in modern times. The law is: the material man is the custodian of the spiritual man's body, and the spiritual man, of the material man's soul. The commodities of exchange between the two are substance and spirit. Each party has his laws and conditions for the exchange. Hence a spiritual-beggar is no burden upon society. Other beggars are indeed so, and ought to be banned from their professional preying upon others honest labour. A spiritual beggar is a benefactor inasmuch as his very presence among men, not to say of the influence of his words on them, is a great moral and spiritual influence, elevating them from the gross to the ethereal, from the fleeting to the lasting. Such a monk- mendicant was our Ramanuja.

We have said above that Ramanuja's main endeavor was to establish the Unity of Godhood. In doing so, he did not abstract God from His Universe; a process tried by monism ending in negation--, but restored God to His universe in all the fullness of His Infinite nature, so to say. By his practice, he illustrated it, even when he went about his begging excursions. For it is chronicled that Ramanuja, while so engaged one day in the through fares of Srirangam, a few boys, from mere frolic, way laid him and pointing to a figure like man which by their toes they drew on the dust, said: "Boasted friar, here is your God. If He is everywhere,

Jai Srimannarayana!

here He must be. Worship Him then". Ramanuja was delighted to hear the boys sermon to him thus. At once he put his bowl down, prostrated himself before the Figure on the floor, and thanking the boys went his way.

On another occasion he came across a number of boys in the streets. They were enacting all that they saw their elders doing in the Temple. They had described in the dust a diagram of the Srirangam Temple, with several chambers allotted therein for God, for His Consort, His Saints and so on. Regular worship they commenced, and it was now time to offer food to the several Deities. The boys procured the food easily; for they gathered the road-dust, made it into convenient heaps, and offered the same to their God pictured on the ground. Food so consecrated should be distributed next, to all the worshippers. That is the rule. So the boys did; and finding Ramanuja in their midst: "God's food, Sire, take", cried they. Ramanuja fell reverently on the floor, and rising, as reverently stretched his hands and received the food and went his way.

Ramanuja's stewardship in the Temple necessarily gave rise to bickering on the part of the priests. They were jealous of his discipline and his growing power. "Why not do away with this Sanyasin, and let us freely revel in corruption"? thought they. They decided they would poison him. One of the seven houses which Ramanuja was found frequenting for alms, they went and prevailed upon the owner to mix poison with the alms and give it to him. In India, the house-wife is to perform the duty of doling out alms. So the husband told the house-wife do the nefarious deed. She objected, but he persisted. She was obliged to obey. Ramanuja came. With hands somewhat trembling, she doled out poisoned food to him, and prostrating herself before him, abruptly retired with eyes downcast. Her manner, he observed, was somewhat peculiar that day. This raised suspicion. He thought he would place the food before a dog. He did, and lo! It made the dog sick and giddy; it fell and died. "**food with poison (sa-gara)**" cried Ramanuja: "Let the poison (**gara**) go to its birth-place (**sagara**)". So saying with a pun on the word sagara, he cast the food into the waters of the Kaveri river close by.

From that day Ramanuja would fast, but soon news of this flew to G. Purna who left from T. Kottiyur for Srirangam to set matters right before it was too late. Purna had neared Srirangam and was crossing the dry bed of the Kaveri river in the midday sun, which was scorching the head and the feet. Ramanuja, with his chosen, went to meet the Guru, and fell prostrate before him on the burning sands. Purna did not bid him rise. Kidambi-Achan by name, a disciple of Ramanuja, who loved him much and who had accompanied him, watched this with painful expectancy. Finding the suspense insupportable, and provoked beyond patience, he cried to Purna: "Sire! Are these the exactions of civilities between Teachers and Disciples? Does your code of etiquette permit such infliction of cruelty? Does your stony heart demand,

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

that a tender flower like my Ramanuja should be fried, and roasted before you like this? I care not for your absurd regulation". Thus fulminating and objurgating at the Guru, he swiftly raised Ramanuja and hugged him to his breast. A moment of the most painful anxiety and suspense, it was too, for Purna; for he was by this means trying to find out the person, who truly loved Ramanuja. Looking now at Acchan with eyes beaming with admiration, Purna said: "Acchan, you are the sort of person I have been looking for. Now that I have found you, my fears for Ramanuja's future safety are dispelled. I appoint you his body-guard; and no one but yourself shall cook for Ramanuja. You alone shall discharge that most important and holy duty henceforth'. Kidambi-Acchan became thus the **Mahanasacharya**, or Ramanuja's **Master of the Hearth**.

Thus shielded from schemes against his life, Ramanuja was spiritedly diffusing to all earnest comers, the philosophy of true religion. An important event came about at this juncture. A profound Brahman scholar there was, by name Yajna-murti. Wherever he went, he entered into debates with learned men on knotty points of the Vedanta, invariably carrying off the palm of victory. He went for a bath in holy Ganga, and there also he entered the arena of Vedantic discussion and vanquished the disputants. He became the one-staffed Sanyasin, a proclamation this that he was professor in the successful establishment of the **Maya-vada**, or the illusoriness of the Cosmos.

Fascinated by subtilities of his sophistry, many became adherents to his cause; and he rose in fame, and pride as well. But he was told that there was a Ramanuja at Srirangam, and until he crossed with him, his victory would not be complete. This roused his vanity.

Mightily did he prepare himself for the contest. He armed himself with heaps of books and arguments, and came down to Srirangam, with his band of disciples, and with all the ostentation and demonstration of a big Pandit. Dashing up to Ramanuja in all the style of an egotist, he invited him to an intellectual warfare. Ramanuja declared he was ready. "What is the wager for our combat?" he asked of the philosopher. "If I am defeated", he said, "I will embrace your faith". "If you win", said Ramanuja, "I shall give up my ministry in the world". So staking, they fixed eighteen days for the discussion. For sixteen days it waxed hot; and yet there appeared no odds between them. But on the seventeenth day, the balance began to swing in favour of Yajna-murti, Ramanuja having felt the want of an argument to overpower the fiery array of them on the side of the adversary. Yajna-murti, reading the signs of discomfiture, and puffed with pride, left Ramanuja in that situation, as if in contempt, and stalked out of the monastery for that day.

Ramanuja felt the situation keenly, and poignant grief entered into his heart. Tortured with thought, he shut himself up in the chapel, and after worshipping his own Lord Varada

Jai Srimannarayana!

there in the usual routine, prayed to Him thus in agony: -- "Holy God! If I, a weak mortal, am repulsed in the fight, **Thy** Cause can never be repulsed- a cause which has been established on earth of yore, by such saints as Nammazhvar and sages as Yamunacharya. So far, the success attending our dispensation is because of Your will. By Your holy Word (Revelations), You have been justified and demonstrated in all Your variety of manifestation as well as essence. Now it has pleased You to pitchfork a false prophet on Your world-stage and let him dance. Let it be, if such is Your will". Imploring thus, Ramanuja fasted and slept. The Lord Varada appeared to him in a dream and thus spoke: "Beloved, be not vexed. We are giving you an able adherent to help your mission. Tomorrow, the last day, level at Yajna-murti all the quiversful of arguments against **mayavada**, to be found in the works of Your Grand-Guru Yamuna. Ramanuja bounded with joy, and performing all the routine duties of the day, and prostrating to his chapel-God, ventured forth into the debating hall. Yajna-murti was already there. Ramanuja's dignified manner, stately gait, and glory of countenance, struck terror into him.

A presage of defeat, it seemed to him already. "What a contrast", exclaimed he, "between the state in which I left him yesterday, and that in which I see him this day! He is advancing towards me in all the majesty of a mad elephant. This is surely extraordinary. He must be more than human." So thinking, he instinctively rose, and advancing towards Ramanuja, cried: "Sire, no more words between us, I pray. I confess I am beaten". As he said, he placed Ramanuja's sandals on his head, and implored him to deign to gather him to his holy fold." "What is this?" said Ramanuja surprised, "I never expected this from you. Our case is still contested. Let us argue it through and see where it will land us". "Pardon me, Sire", submitted Yajnamurti, "no more fight. When I actually see you are one with God, I dare not open my mouth again". "And yet", rejoined Ramanuja, "I wish to say that the Mayavada or illusion-doctrine necessarily strips God (Para- brahman) of any attribute. But from our Scriptures we derive no support for an attribute less God. Such texts as that 'God is Truth' etc., become untruthful. But if you justify the God of attributes, because of his becoming so conditioned by avidya (ignorance), then 'how is such a God, who allows His Light to be eternally obscured by such ignorance, ever to get rid of it? If you say, what of it, then you will thrust yourself into a position from which there is no escape. For, you will have postulated two eternal things: God and Ignorance, or knowledge and non-knowledge, which is duality, viz., ignorance, which is dualism and therefore antagonistic to monism. In your attempt to establish monism or non-dualism, you necessarily negate everything else than Brahman; but in that very act, you posit a duality, viz., ignorance, which eternally thwarts that Brahman! The pampered elephant of advaita (monism) therefore gets all unawares, stuck in the mire of dualism." Thus did Ramanuja preach. Yajna-murti followed the speech in rapt attention, and when it ended broke his staff and bend in himself enabled to acquire a golden convert to his Faith. The Samskrit of this is Devaraja- muni or Devarat. Ramanuja led him to Ranga's temple, where he was made a recipient of all the honors due to a member of the Faith, and brought him back to his monastery, where he was introduced to the worship of his Lord Varada, and consecrated

Jai Srimannarayana!

food thereof given him. The partaking of food completed the initiation and the convert became a part and parcel of the Vaishnava community. A course of studies relating to the Prabandhas and other esoteric teachings was gone through; and the love-religion of the Vaishnavas was thus spread before him, at which his heart melted and the intellect bowed.

Ramanuja had in Devarat a great access of strength. His addition made his flock brilliant. He joined the other two jewels of Ramanuja's band, Dasarathi and Kuresa. Classes in philosophy were ably conducted with these members. Ramanuja's fame went abroad. Anandazhvan or Anantasuri, Ecchan, Tondanur-Nambi and Marudur Nambi, hastened to become his disciples. When they came, he directed these to Devarat for initiation into the Faith. He obeyed but declared that Ramanuja was thus trying to hang heavy stones to the neck of a poor sparrow! "Beware", he said to the new disciples, "I am but his vassal, his tool. Ramanuja is your real Saviour. Me, forget; but him, remember".

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### RAMANUJA'S FIRST TOUR

Ramanuja's school was thus filling. A course of studies in the Prabandhas was being conducted, and the verse in St. Nammazhvar's Tiru-vaymozhi: Ozhivil-kalam, was reached. This verse is of the Decad III.3, addressed to Lord Venkatapati or Srinivasa of the Holy Tirupati-Hill. It says:-

*Ever joined to You at all times, Service all, we must render You, O Father! and Light of the Hill,  
From which limpid rills trickle down!*

On reading and explaining this, Ramanuja went to the Sacred Hill, called Pushpa-mantapa in ecstatic thought, and glancing on the assembly of scholars before him, asked: "Is there any one amongst you, prepared to stay in Tirupati, make flower-gardens, and daily serve Srinivasa with flowers there of?" Ananthalvan stood up, "Bid me go, Sir" said he and quickly went to Tirupati and there, growing up a flower- garden, carried flowers daily to the Lord there. He called the garden 'Ramanujam'.

Ramanuja was informed of all this from time to time, and he longed to visit Tirupati himself. For this purpose, he swiftly went through the Tiruvaymozhi course, and proceeding to the Temple, prayed to the Lord Ranga therein to permit him to go on a tour to Kanchi, Tirupati, and other shrines. "Granted, but return soon", was the reply that came.

Obtaining thus the holy permission of Lord Ranga, Ramanuja left Srirangam with his disciples on a tour, the first of the kind after his anointment as the Pontiff of the rising Vaishnava-faith. On his way north, he visited Mahitakshetra, and other shrines, arriving at Dehali Nagara, or Tirukkovalur, where he rendered homage to Lord Trivikrama, who appeared to the Three First Azhvars. From there, he proceeded to Chitrakuta or Chidambaram, but left the place in a hurry.

He next arrived at Ashtasahasragrama, where he had two disciples by name Yajnesa and Varadarya. Of these, Yajnesa was very rich and Varada very poor. To the former, Ramanuja sent two of his disciples to announce his arrival, and ask him to be his good host during his halt. Yajnesa, when the disciples came, was in an arrogant mood and heeded them not; thinking that when Ramanuja chose to come himself to his doors, he would receive him in proper form. At this cold treatment, the disciples returned to Ramanuja with fallen faces and reported to him the conduct of Yajnesa. "Then we shall not enter his doors", said Ramanuja, "We shall go to our poor disciple Varada at once and without notice." So saying, they threaded their way to Varada's lowly hut. (1. The latter's full name is Paruttikkollai

Jai Srimannarayana!

Varadacharya, and his wife is the famous Paruttikkollai Nacchiyar, Sanskritized into Karpasaramamba). But he was absent on his daily begging rounds. His wife, the good Paruttikkollai, espied them coming. She wished to step forward and welcome them, but she had such a thread-bare garment to cover her, owing to abject poverty, that she could not with any decorum show herself to any.

So, she sheltered herself behind a door, and clapped her hands so that Ramanuja might take it for a signal of welcome, and not go away elsewhere, as that would be disastrous to her soul's welfare, in as much as Ramanuja's condescension in having come to her poor house would prove profitless. Ramanuja at once understood the delicate situation in which the poor lady was placed, and taking off the colored cloth which covered his head, flung it through a window into the house. She picked it up and wearing it, approached Ramanuja whom, in welcoming to her house, she prostrated most humbly and said, "O my gracious Guru, you are most welcome to my humble cottage. Pray accept this water for washing your hands and feet: and be seated here." She then thought to herself like this, "What mighty merit must mine have been what austerities must I have done, what gifts must I have bestowed, in order that Ramanuja, who is Vishnu Himself incarnate, come on earth to save mankind, should come to our house. Diving grace has descended upon our undeserving selves. For the Guru (Saviour) is God Himself, He is the Good. All our goods, body and soul are His. The true disciple is he who thinks and acts thus. So do our Scriptures say. But I have not a handful of grain in my house, nor a single coin where with to worship the worthy Sannyasin. My husband is out on begging, but his petty pickings will not suffice for the worthy guests. To honor a guest like Ramanuja, I will even sin. Saint Parakala, in the old days, robbed and cheated people in order to serve God. He ensconced himself in fastnesses, waylaid men, stripped them of their goods, and offered them to God. Even Lord Ranga Himself was once eased by him of all his precious jewels; and with them feasts were given to the faithful.

Creatures whirl round the wheel of Samsara, but the Guru comes with his teachings, and extricates them from this; and gives them God. To repay the Guru for this is impossible. Hence I will even sell my body and worship him wherewith for God Himself has said:-- "If for My sake you sin, it becomes merit; all merit without reference to Me becomes sin." The Guru is even greater than God. Therefore I shall have recourse to the rich merchant of this place, who has been casting his adulterous eyes on me for a long time. I shall all be used for the entertainment of my honored guests". So thinking she addressed Ramanuja thus, "Holy Sire, rest here but a moment. By your grace, you shall anon see my house filled with articles to feast you and yours with." So saying, the virtuous lady left the house and hurried to the merchant, and forcing a most bewitching smile into her face to please him, said: "Good man, time has now arrived for the fulfilment of your long-cherished desire. My Guru is pleased to come to my house. And I have to entertain them, for which all food-stuffs and vessels are wanted. Please order them at once". The merchant, studying the standing beauty more than ever, and inflamed at the overtures she herself made this time, obeyed her commands without a word, and sent an abundance of things with her. The good woman stood before

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Ramanuja in all humility with these things. He was struck with her devotion and commanded that she should herself cook for him, a great privilege, indeed, bestowed on a woman by a holy person. She did so. And Ramanuja and his disciples, after bathing and worshipping God, partook of the holy food, offered him in love, and rested in her house, his whole being pulsating with blessings for her.

While thus Ramanuja was resting in his loving votary's house, Varadarya, the husband, returned home after his begging. The good wife related to him all the circumstances beginning with the Guru's arrival and up to the repast which she was able to spread before him during his absence, and the worship and joy which she, in his absence, was able to give to the illustrious guest. "Madam", said the husband jubilant, "though you are young, your wits are old; else how could you have done such a grand task? You are not a wife, but a goddess. Not are you a nominal disciple, for, for your saviour, you have sacrificed all, even your woman's honor". Applauding her thus, he went to Ramanuja and clasped his feet firmly; then rising and with palms joined, praised him thus: "O Prince of men! King of ascetics! A thousand salutations to you. For the redemption of things with life and lifeless, you are born amongst us, Vishnu Himself, the Lord of the Universe. You are all-knowing, and all-wise, and are the very reflection of Hari. As, in a deep dark well, wallow creatures entangled in the meshes of their varied deeds, who else but you are able to lift them from this dismal abyss? Who but the magician can draw the venom out of the cobra-bitten person? Who but the sun can dispel darkness? What but cool water can allay a man's thirst? The samsara-smitten sinner finds relief only by worshipping your holy feet. Praise be to my Guru, by whose magic the evil spirit left the princess and itself was redeemed. Hadn't you not appeared amongst us, how could a sinner like me have been saved? Learned men there are by the hundred, but their ways are pashanda leading them downward!. How gracious! Your holy steps were directed to the abode of a poor creature like me. The very sight of you has absolved me of all my sins. I am content. I rest in peace; and so do my ancestors." Ramanuja blessed him and giving him the Sripada- tirtha, let him partake of food (prasada). He was struck with joy at the unity of heart and purpose, this excellent pair possessed, and dwelt with them for some time.

The pair now thought of returning the kindness of the merchant. They both went with Ramanuja's tirtha and prasada, and delivering them to him, asked him to partake of the same, and then do what he liked with the wife. He left. The merchant's heart leapt with joy, but when he drank the holy water and ate the holy food, he felt within him a strange revolution. His carnal intent for the damsel gave way to wisdom and worship. He walked round her and threw himself before her, and with hands upraised in devotion said: -- "Madam, you are my mother, and your husband is my father. The darkness of ignorance had overspread my mind, making me a fool and lusting after thee. I fall at thy feet, mother. Pardon me Protect me. Take me to your great Guru and throw me, a slave, at his holy feet. Subject me to any penance by which my sin may be expiated. Let me walk in the path of righteousness anyhow."

The dame told her husband of all this remorseful confession and begged him to quiet the

Jai Srimannarayana!

convulsed soul of the merchant. All this was marvelous. Anon Varadarya bent his steps to the penitent man and leading him to Ramanuja, cast him at his feet. Ramanuja, who inquired how all this came about, was told all. His surprise was equal to his joy. He had made a good disciple, to whom therefore he duly administered all the five Vaishnava sacraments. It is chronicled that this disciple thenceforward shone as bright as the summer moon, having placed all his wealth at the disposal of Ramanuja, whose fame thus spread all over the country.

Yajnesa, the rich disciple, knew nothing of all this. Whereas he expected Ramanuja would be coming to him; probably he was on his way. So he had gathered together many things at home to feast his Guru; and was prepared in other ways to receive him, as he thought. He waited thus with his relatives, but there was no sign of Ramanuja coming. This set him pondering, and he left home in quest and despatched other men also. They learnt that Ramanuja had bent his steps to Varadarya's house, after the indifferent manner in which his two messengers had been treated by Yajnesa. These tidings they carried to Yajnesa. On hearing it, he fell to weeping; and hurrying to Varadarya's house, cast himself at the holy feet of Ramanuja, beseeching his pardon. Ramanuja lovingly lifted him up and read to him a sermon thus, calculated to be useful to the whole world: "Yajnesa listen. What I utter is good for thy soul".

"A Vaishnava should require the five Samskaras, should know the five Truths, and follow his saviour. But more than all this is the service to those who are godly. The two messengers that came to thee were Vaishnavas, godly men. They came as guests besides, and were way-worn. But thou didst eject from thy threshold. This did not become thee. Thou shouldst have welcomed them, washed their feet, fanned them, fed them and worshipped them in every way befitting Vaishnava visitors. They are Vishnu Himself in that form. After they had eaten, thou shouldst have eaten what was left as thy prasada. When this course is strictly followed, that shows a real Vaishnava. But when it is followed for the sake of show, fame or gain, it is as good as not done. Houses of show, fame or gain, Yajnesa, are not our houses. What pleases God is sacrifice made without motive (satvikadana)". Yajnesa heard this and was ashamed. "Lord", he prayed lowly, "I am undone, extend to me forgiveness, and accept me". "Son, listen", said Ramanuja, "thou shalt make amends by daily washing clean the clothes of the Vaishnavas here, and thus be saved".

So commanding, Ramanuja left Ashtasahasra grama with his disciples and by way of Tirukkowlur or Dehalinagara, where he visited the ancient shrine of Trivikrama and the Three First Azhvars, reached Kanchi. He first entered the monastery of Kanchipurna, who was still living, and prostrated himself before the venerable sage, dedicating a verse to his memory.

The joy of Purna at seeing Ramanuja covered with glory, knew no bounds. He led him lovingly to the Temple of Lord Varada, the God of Kanchi, it will be remembered who granted Ramanuja to Lord Ranga of Srirangam. As he reverently walked, he fell on the floor before the

Jai Srimannarayana!

entrance, cupola, (the Gopura) and the Anaikatta deity there. He entered the gate and washed himself in the holy pond Anantasaras. With the twelve holy names of God he consecrated his body next, and visited Jnanappiran (Varaha) in the outer enclosure. Proceeding further, he bowed successively to the Azhvars, Balipitha, and the Jaya-vijayas, the celestial Door-keepers. Winding round, he saluted Adishesha or Ananta, and the Holy Ant-hill, and the great hall to the east of it where Yamuna's gracious eyes had for the first time descended on him and elected him as the future Minister of the Faith. Here he repeated the memorial verse for Yamuna.

Then he visited Kariyamanikyatt emberuman and looked up reverently to the vimana (tower) over the holy of holies, then bowed to the goddess of the culinary apartments, and then Perandevi, the Consort of Lord Varada, dedicating a verse to Her.

Then Chakrattazhvan (the Sudarsana Discus), Garuthman, called the Largefoot (Periyatiruvadi), Vishvaksena, the Lord of hosts, and then ascending the steps of the HastiGiri (or Elephant-Hill), Lord Varada was reached, Kanchipurna all the time leading, and Ramanuja following. Ramanuja threw himself before his old Patron God, and receiving tirtha, prasada, and Sathakopa, returned with mind steeped in divine bliss.

He informed Purna of his intention to proceed north to Tirupati to visit the Lord Venkateswara. Purna congratulated Ramanuja on the joy that was in store for him by the intended trip, and bade him god-speed. He was journeying on thus with his devotees, when he lost his way. On looking round, a man was found drawing water from a well. "Show us the way, good man", he asked. "This way, gentlemen", said he showing the way. "In what way can I show my gratitude to this person?" Questioning himself thus, Ramanuja prostrated himself before him. Seeing this, all the disciples did the same, astonished though at Ramanuja's spiritual views of men and things, uncommon of course to other men.

The track shown was a straight one, and led unmistakably to the foot of the Holy Tirupati Hill. Here the Ten Azhvars are enshrined. Due obeisance was made to them and the Holy Hill itself, rising from there in sacred grandeur. Ramanuja would not mount the hill for fear of desecrating it with the touch of his feet; and so remained at the foot for some time, when VitthalaDeva, the king of the Tondira country, struck with the fame of Ramanuja, became his disciple, and brought to him abundant wealth, with which he established a village of thirty houses, with thirty small estates attached to each, and granting them to thirty deserving families attached to his band, named the village Ila Mandayam.

The news that Ramanuja had arrived reached the ears of the venerable SrisailaPurna and others residing on the Hill. They swiftly descended and heartily greeting Ramanuja, asked him to go up the hill with them to see the Lord Venkateswara (Appan). "Look, Sire", Ramanuja addressed Purna, "the Ten Azhvars have remained at the foot without daring to tread on the

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Hill. How can I do so now? It satisfies me quite to remain with the Azhvars here, and do them services. "If you won't go, Ramanuja", said Purna "neither shall we go". "Then be it as you will, Sire", so saying, Ramanuja bathed, and proceeding to the Tamarind tree, at the foot of the Hill, did obeisance to the Holy Hill; and saying; "By the foot, he ascends", tremblingly climbed he.

As he crossed the seven hills and dales, he enjoyed the charming panorama of nature presented to his sight, the rills trickling down the hill slopes, vegetation low and high adorned with flowers of all imaginable colors and the hills and the valleys teeming with animal life-- the most interesting and mischievous of these being the monkeys. Purna had gone in advance, and by the time Ramanuja reached the Tiruppariyatta rock, he returned with Lord Venkata's tirtha and prasada, to welcome him. "Could not some youngster be deputed for this work, venerable Sire, instead of yourself coming to do me these honors?" asked Ramanuja of Purna. He replied, "Sire, I searched all the four corners of this place for one younger than myself. I could not find one. I am the youngest, hence I have come to welcome you". On hearing this language of humility on the part of a venerable person like Purna, Ramanuja and his followers expressed wonder, and humbly accepting the honors that had been brought, proceeded to the stone- fencing, where all the monks, recluses, acolytes, the elders and all the establishment attached to the Holy Fane, met him in a great body, and escorted him.

Ramanuja now came in sight of the Fane itself, and prostrating himself before the Vaikunthagate, bathed in the Koneru (a tank), decked himself with the Twelve Holy Marks, went round the four streets, drinking in with his eyes the handsome dwellings of the Faithful, the ramparts, cloisters, colonnades, then saw the flower garden tended by Anantalvan or Ananthasuri who had gone to live there, upon his direction; there, from sheer delight, he embraced his faithful disciple, saying: "having nursed you, I now reap the fruit".

He enjoyed the surrounding scene of gardens thick with Vakula, Patala, Punnaga and other trees, fragrant and flowing with honey, affording eternal shade to weary travellers, and delighting their vision with bunches of flowers hanging from their branches, and entertaining their ears with strains of music poured forth by bees and all kinds of beautiful-plumaged birds. Here and there embosomed in the gardens, were cool ponds, covered with white and violet lotuses, in the midst of which swam and danced cranes and storks and all sorts of water-birds, in all the voluptuousness of nature's bounty.

Passing on from these bewitching scenes and songs, he went to Varaha's Shrine, before which he bowed and then to the gate of Arararacchazhudan and the Attani Tamarind Tree, and then the Bali pillar, and then the pavilion called Yamunaitturaiver. He then sipped the holy water of SwamiPushkarini, entered the gate Sanbaka, visited in order Madaippalli, cook-rooms, Yagasala and Tirumamani mandapa, Vishvaksena and Nrisimha. Here he looked up reverently at the Anandanilaya vimana, (cupola over the holy of Holines), crossed the Kulasekhara threshold, until at last his vision was blessed with the Blissful Image of Srinivasa within-- the

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

God in the Heart-- resplendent with all the Holy Weapons and Ornaments, and Sri in His Bosom". Abode of Grace (Srinivasa)!" Ramanuja exclaimed, "I have fallen at Your holy Feet", and so saying, he stretched himself before God, and rising, stood transfixed before the Beatific Spectacle, with hands raised and folded.

Tirtha and prasada were given, which he received in all humility and stayed to see the ablution ceremony (Tirumanjanam), and the Bali festival of Azhagappiran. "This is indeed Heaven", he cried, "this is indeed the abode of angels; I must not stay here long lest I desecrate the Holy Place". "But three days in a Holy Shrine, the visitor ought to stay", remonstrated Purna. "So be it", said Ramanuja, and after three days were over, he walked into the Shrine, Purna leading, to take leave.

As he stood before Lord Srinivasa, a voice came from Him (i.e., the deity): "Have we not already conferred on you in our Southern House (Srirangam) both the kingdoms, the material as well as the spiritual (Ubhaya-vibhuti)?" "Your pleasure, Almighty!" responded Ramanuja; and descended the Holy Hill with Purna.

In the Lower Tirupati, Ramanuja sojourned for a year in the house of SrisailaPurna, partaking of his food there and reading with him the RAMAYANA, the first of the Ithihasas. Here he found Govinda- his maternal cousin-- engaged in doing all kinds of services to Purna. One day, Ramanuja found him prepare the bed for his Guru, and sleep on it first himself. He reported this strange conduct of Govinda to Purna, who sent for him and asked for an explanation, enquiring further what punishment a disciple, who so behaved, deserved? Govinda submissively said: "Such an act, Sire! Surely deserves punishment, but listen. If by my trying your bed myself beforehand, I make myself sure there be nothing in it rough or knotty which may press against your soft body, sure there be no insect to bite and disturb you when you sleep, it matters little if I go to hell". Ramanuja was delightfully astonished at this strange explanation, and his love towards Govinda increased.

On another day, Ramanuja had gone out on a visit to Purna's holy Garden; while he was returning, on the way he observed Govinda put his fingers into the fangs of a snake, and withdrawing them go to bathe, and proceed to Purna's house to perform the usual services. Feeling curious at this unusual act of Govinda's, he questioned him. He explained that he saw the snake open its mouth as he approached and he found, on examination, that it had a thorn on its tongue. He extracted the same from it to relieve the suffering creature, and then went about his business. "What a tender heart you possess, Govinda!" said Ramanuja to him, struck with wonder.

The reading of the Holy Ramayana was now finished. And Ramanuja humbly begged Purna's permission to return to Srirangam. You have come so far, noble soul", said Purna, "What have I done for you?" "Sire", answered Ramanuja, "when I learnt that our dear Govinda went astray, it caused me heartache; I was pondering how to reclaim him, when you, Sire, fulfilled

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

my heart's wish by circumventing the poor heretic, by preaching to him the True Faith, pointing out to him the dangers of the path he had strayed into and otherwise convincing him of the Truths of our Religion: and thus by destroying the perverse notions he had formed in his wandering mind, restored him to our holy fold. What better achievement can be effected than this? Permit me to ask yet another favour of you, Sire can you part with him, and let me have him?" Without a moment's thought, "Come, Govinda called Purna, "You are from this moment, Ramanuja's own. I make a free gift of you to him. Go with him and be to him, I command, all that you have been to me. Nothing less will please me."

Govinda said not a word, but followed Ramanuja, after prostrating himself before his Guru. They all now left Tirupati, and visited on their way home the holy Places of Ghatikachalam, Tirupputkuzhi-where the holy well Gridhra Saras and other holy waters are situated- and Tiruvehka, and in due course reached Kanchi, where to he was welcomed as usual by Sage Kanchipurna.

Govinda was found to grow cheerless, and was day by day losing health. Ramanuja was watching him decline; and divining that separation from his beloved Acharya must be gnawing at his heart, producing all the outward symptoms of grief, he thought it prudent to send him back to Tirupati. So, he bade him depart, giving him two Srivaishnavas as escorts to see him safe to his destination. Govinda reached Tirupati, and stood outside his Acharya's house, in mute devotion. The attendants entering informed Srisaila of the return of his old disciple,-- who was standing at the door. Purna was displeased and indignantly cried "Let the mad fellow depart. He ought not to cross my threshold". Purna's wife watched this and interposing begged her husband that one who had come so far and hungry and tired, should not be so summarily dismissed, but that he might be permitted to have rest and food. "No", gruffly said the husband, "no such consideration can be shown to a sold thing. A sold cow cannot be given grass. Let him be off".

Govinda spoke not a word, and tired and hungry as he was, he left with the two Srivaishnavas immediately, and reaching Kanchi, where Ramanuja was still sojourning and stood before him like a dumb statue.

The Srivaishnavas told Ramanuja all that had taken place at Tirupati. Ramanuja admired the farsightedness on the one hand of Srisaila, and on the other, the implicit obedience of Govinda, whom he gradually won over, with kind treatment and sage counsels to himself. Govinda thus became in time reconciled to his new environments.

Ramanuja now bade adieu to Kanchi and KanchiPurna, and duly taking leave of Lord Varada, left the place, and in due time returned to Srirangam. He was met by all the notables, elders and dignitaries of Ranga's Fane, and conducted thereto with joyful ceremony. "Have you, beloved, visited my north abode (Tirupati)?" thus enquired Lord Ranga of Ramanuja, who

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

stood reverently at the door; and bestowing on him tirtha and prasada, bade him go to his old monastery and resume his holy ministry to the growing congregation.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER XIX

### GOVINDA'S CHARACTER

Thus did Ramanuja make his first holy pilgrimage, and was now settled again for another term in Srirangam, imparting instruction to his followers on the holy science of Vedanta, both in Girvana and Dravida. Govinda, amongst them, drank deeply of this knowledge, and felt more and more attracted to Ramanuja, in mind as well as in heart,-- an attachment which was enhanced moreover by the fascination of Ramanuja's glorious person and services rendered to him, with unflinching solicitude.

One day, Ramanuja was conducting his ministry in a large assembly of the faithful, when the latter applauded Govinda for his estimable qualities, such as wisdom, devotion, self-abnegation, and devotedness to his spiritual preceptor. Govinda, all the while, nodded assent. Ramanuja observing, questioned: "How is it, Govinda, while it is seemly for others to heap praises on you for your perfections, you do not think it unseemly to accept them all? When others exalt us, we must not allow ourselves to be piqued, but profess humility. That would be more becoming indeed!" "Noble Sire", said Govinda, "pardon me if I explain to you why I nodded assent. Their praise means, 'Divine you are, that you have been redeemed from evil paths by our Saviour Ramanuja-- a very God on earth.' 'Not like ourselves, but sunk as you were in abysmal depths of rottenness, you have good reason to exclaim: 'Who is equal to me on earth? Who is equal to me in heaven?' To this again I must nod 'yes'. For where their eulogy of me is but commendation of yourself and your glory on earth, I have no other alternative but to say 'yes'. On hearing this, Ramanuja was simply enchanted with Govinda, and saying, 'good, good', drew him warmly to his bosom, and cried, "Govinda! Embrace me that I may become as enlightened as you are. By this embrace, convey to me some of your grace."

One day, Govinda was found standing at the door of a strumpet's, stupefied as it were. This looked strange to people who passed that way. News of it reached Ramanuja. He sent for him and asked: "What made you, brother, linger at the doors of infamy?" "Sire", he said, "the inmates, there whoever they were (I do not know), were singing your praises. This fascinated me so much that I was rooted to the spot, and so long as the music of your praise rang in my ears and lifted me into bliss, I could not stir from the spot". Ramanuja made inquiries whether they were really hymning his praises there (tallattu), and found it was true. "An angel on earth, you are, Govinda! Can such love as yours be found on this dust?" exclaimed Ramanuja.

It is written that Govinda was an extraordinary soul, who had realized in his life what it was to lead a spiritual life. This was further displayed in a crowning event in his chapter of life. In Ramanuja he realized God, ever-present. This presence made him ever feel that there was neither solitude nor darkness. God in Ramanuja's form ever filled his outer eye as well as his

mental vision. Hence he felt no solitude. Constant spiritual illumination and light of God filling all space made anything like night or darkness impossible for him. He never left Ramanuja, and was ever engaged in listening to his expositions of the Divine Science.

One day, while they were so engaged, Govinda's mother found occasion to enter the hall and within Ramanuja's hearing informed her son that his wife had come of age. Govinda told her: "If so, mother, let her come when there is solitude and darkness". But the mother waited for days and failing to find her son in 'solitude' and in 'darkness', complained to Ramanuja about his waywardness and probable unwillingness to keep house with his wife, in the manner of the world. Ramanuja thereon called on Govinda to abide by his mother's pleasure, and for one night at least, to remain with his wife.

He bowed assent. And they made feast for the nuptial ceremony, and put Govinda and wife together in a bed-room and went their way. Left alone with his wife, he began a discourse on theology and theosophy, and all the night through preached to her, God and His Glories, His Riches and His Wonders, His Blissful Presence in the heart and His Love to His Creatures, and so on himself, as he preached, reveling in the rapturous enjoyment of God. It was now morning, and relatives came to offer congratulations on the happy state of the couple. But the mother was aware, by overhearing, what had all night transpired within doors. "How is it, son", remonstrated the mother, "you seem to have been engaged otherwise with your wife. We could hear a regular religious sermon in a nuptial chamber!" "Mother", replied Govinda, "when God is in my heart, and is everywhere present, and ever watching me, how can I escape from Him, and feel lonely enough to be able to do any other work than that of His contemplation, and praise? With no solitude, no secret act is possible; with no darkness, no dark act is possible".

This interview between son and mother was reported to Ramanuja. "Govinda", he said, calling him to his side, "so, you have passed the greatest ordeal which can be put upon a pure soul like you. You can never be worldly seeing how you hate things of that sort. But, come, Sastras require every man to belong to some definite Order; and as you cannot be a householder, be of the Order of the Sannyasin. This was exactly the wish of Govinda, and he begged that he be so ordained at once. It was done, and Ramanuja conferred upon him his own name of Emberumanar. "That, noble Sire", said Govinda, "is too great an honor to put upon an humble creature like me. Bless me with a name which a shadow like me deserves. "then", gracefully said Ramanuja, "let it be Embar, the shadow (or abbreviated form) of Emb (eruman)ar".

## CHAPTER XX: DEVARAT

With Ramanuja and his exemplary adherents, like Govinda, days were thus passing in Divine Discourses, Divine Incidents, and Divine Occupations. In a previous chapter we left Yajnamurti, renamed Arulalapperumal Emberumanar, after he became disciple of Ramanuja. To this sage some incidents happened about this time. A number of Srivaishnavas from a foreign land came on a visit to Srirangam and inquired of the street goers where the monastery of Emberumanar was located. "Which Emberumanar?" they asked. The travellers feeling strange, asked whether there were two such sages for the Faith? "No, but here is Arulalapperumal Emberumanar bearing that name, a name after Ramanuja. Hence our question. If you mean Ramanuja himself, there is his monastery". So instructed, the travellers found their way to Ramanuja.

This conversation however accidentally reached the ears of Arulalapperumal Emberumanar; and it grieved him such to think that he should be confounded with Ramanuja. "No such confusion", he thought, "would have arisen, had I not lived apart from Ramanuja in a separate monastery; and that with his name, as if I were a rival here set up against him! My dwelling hence ought not to stand". So saying, he immediately pulled it to pieces; and hastening to Ramanuja, clasped his feet, crying: "Oh, my Holiness! Was it not enough that this sinful soul of mine had in all the past eternity been estranged from Your holy Feet, and why should this alienation yet persist?" "Beloved", said Ramanuja, "You, are talking in riddles; what is the matter with you? Why are you in such great affliction?" "Holy Sire", said he, after narrating to him the street conversation of travelers and how it affected his reputation, "no more can I live apart from you a contingency-- this, which gives occasion for mistakes which are injurious to the well-being of my soul, and which jeopardize its eternal interests. My soul can only thrive by being made to live ever with thee and move about as the marks of your sole and as your shadow; and to be allowed to do your every service". "Be it as you wish", said Ramanuja, graciously lifting the prostrate form of Devarat, for whom he composed a work called Nityam, or the method of worshipping God, and appointed him to the daily worship duty in the math. From that day forth, he never left Ramanuja's side, and drank deep all the precious truths of philosophy and religion which flowed like honey from Ramanuja's holy lips.

These sterling truths of the Vedanta, he embodied in two short treatises of his, composed in Tamil verse, called Jnanasara, and Prameyasara. The substance of these works is

- that to the true disciple, the Teacher himself is God visible, and
- that services at his feet are the crowning joy of the soul.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

CHAPTER XXI  
**SRI-BHASHYA AND OTHER WORKS**

Kuresa, Dasarathi, Devarat and Embar (Govinda) were the most loyal and well read among Ramanuja's disciples. There were countless others, of course, in his congregation. Daily classes on theological subjects were conducted. As they were reading St. Nammazvar's Tiruvaymozhi, they came across the verse –

*' i-lingat-titta-Purnattirum, Samanarum Sakkiyarum .....', [IV-10.5] i.e., Diverse faiths, as taught by the Linga-purana, the Samanas (Jainas) and Sakhyas (Bauddhas), etc.,*

And they discussed the defects of these systems, as also those of the advaita dictum that liberation (moksha) is made sure on the mere knowledge of the meaning of such Vedic texts as Tat tvam asi,-- You are That, i.e You, Soul, are That, God;

None of these systems, they argued, have hit the true spirit of the Vaidika-religion, i.e., Vedanth. Thus they discussed, and arrived at a decision that a true interpretation of the Vedanta, should be systematically made and Ramanuja accordingly sat down to prepare a standard work embodying an exhaustive refutation of monism (advaita) and similar theories and a consequent defence of Visishtadvaita or qualified monism.

Kuresa was selected to help Ramanuja in this grand task. Before he began, Ramanuja enjoined upon Kuresa that if in the course of his writing his dictation reducing to writing his dictation, he should find anything not agreeing with his views, he should cease writing. Thus was Sri Bhashya, the stupendous standard work on Visishtadvaita philosophy of the Vedanta- or a commentary on Brahma-Sutras- begun to be written. As the work was progressing, Ramanuja dictated a passage wherein he gave the definition of soul (*atma=jivatma*) as *that which is conscious or that which has cognition alone as its distinguishing attribute.*

Here Kuresa ceased writing, for to him such a definition, though valid, was as good as no definition, inasmuch as the most essential characteristic of the soul, namely, its *allegiance or leigeship to God (Seshatva)*, was a serious omission; and that such an all-important Omission was tantamount to defining the soul as identical with the body itself; for no basis for true religion was raised by merely apprehending the soul as *that which is characterised by consciousness, unless the soul is also the sole property or possession* of the Universal soul, God.

Defining soul as that which has consciousness merely, without any reference to its being essentially related to God, as quality is related to thing, or as property to a base, or as mode to substance, as light to the sun, or scent to the flower, amounted to tacitly ignoring such

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

essential relationship; and that without this relation to God first emphatically asserted and defended, anything said of the soul was ineffective, inasmuch as a soul without God is non-existent, in the same way as without the sun, light is non-existent. What made to the soul really soul was its **indiscernible** relation to God, otherwise it is non-existent. And where was the beauty or utility in loading such a separated soul orphaned of God, with any number of attributes such as consciousness and bliss? Such was the train of thoughts running in the mind of Kuresa and hence, when Ramanuja defined the soul as that which is conscious, he stopped transcribing the same. But Ramanuja was absorbed in his thoughts; and continued dictating further but Kuresa had come to a full stop. This incensed Ramanuja, who cried:-- "Sir, if you mean to write the commentary on the Vyasa-Sutras (=Brahma Sutras), you may do so", and kicked him and ceased dictating. But Kuresa was neither taken aback nor ruffled but remained imperturbably cool and collected. But friends vexed him with the question: "How do you view this affront?" "Comrades", he replied, I have no view other than that I am my master's property (chattel), which he is at liberty to use or treat in any manner he thinks fit". Ramanuja, by this time, reflected over the whole position in his retreat; and it flashed on him that his omission to define the soul as that which is a belonging of God, was a grave mistake inasmuch as this essentiality of soul was \_\_\_\_\_  
the very foundation of his theology. If that were missed, the entire superstructure was built on air.

Kuresa did well in ceasing to write to Ramanuja's dictation, but it was at variance with the right view of the question which Kuresa knew, being a perfect savant as he was. Also Kuresa's own behaviour after the harsh treatment was an actual illustration of the view he so rightly entertained. These thoughts converted Ramanuja's rage into repentance; and calling Kuresa at once lovingly to his side, "Son, you are right", said he apologizingly; "now pray write down the true nature of the soul as that which is God's, and let us proceed with the rest of our work".

In this manner did Ramanuja compose the standard works: Sri Bhashya, Vedantha Dipa, Vedantha Sara, Vedantha Sangraha, and Bhagavad Gita bhashya. And thus did he fulfil one of the wishes of Yamunacharya.

Jai Srimannarayana!

CHAPTER XXII  
**RAMANUJA'S TRAVELS**

The devotees of Ramanuja's congregation, who had so long listened to his teachings and who had the good fortune reading his great works illustrating his faith, rose one day and reverently bowing to Ramanuja said: "Holy Master, your system is now perfect, and it must be made known to the world at large. The ways to God are diverse, and confusing. Let the true way, you have discovered to us, be made accessible to all. Pray then undertake a tour of ministry and as a tour, it shall have the added benefit of visiting Holy Shrines." "So be it", said Ramanuja, and representing his intention to Lord Ranga, he obtained his permission. With his devotees, he left Srirangam, and visited Tirukkudandai (Kumbhakonum) and other places in the Chola mandalam, and won victories there by theological debates. Then he went to Tiruvali-Tirunagari, the nativity of St. Parakala or Tirumangai-Azhvar.

Here an interesting incident happened. Ramanuja was devoutly making his round of several holy shrines encompassing the Central Shrine Tirunagari. Then he met a Chandala woman approaching. As she was in the way, Ramanuja, asked her to give him way, so that he might pass on. But she without moving away addressed Ramanuja and said, "Sire, which side shall I move? Here before me stands your holy self, a Brahman whom I cannot approach. Behind me is the Holy Shrine Nil-nilamuttam (=Tiruk-kanna-puram); to my right are the Tirumanan-kallai (where st. Tirumangai waylaid the Lord) and Tiruvarasu (the Pipal tree used by the St. as his watch tower); and to my left is Lord Tiruvali-Manavalan. There is thus purity all around me here, which side then can my impurity turn?" Ramanuja was struck dumb at this unexpected answer from an unexpected quarter. "Forgive me, madam", he said, I did not expect such spirituality in a low-caste woman as you are. But for all that you are holier than me. So saying he administered to her the holy Vaishnava sacraments; and allotted her a place in the Shrine, where her image is to this day seen and revered by all the visitors.

From there he turned to the south, going to Tirumalirunjolai (10 miles north of Madura), and other Shrines, in the Pandya mandala. He held arguments there with the learned on philosophy and won laurels. Thence he travelled to Tiruppullani (Darbhasayanam near Ramnad), Setu (or Rama's Bridge), and returned to Tirunagari, the birth-place of St. Nammazhvar, before whom he reverently repeated the Kanninun Siruttambu of Saint Madhura Kavigal. The Saint was delighted with Ramanuja's devotion and blessed him with tirtha, prasada, and other honors. And Ramanuja, dedicating the verse took leave of the Saint after visiting the holy Tamarind Tree under which he is enshrined, and Lord Adinatha resident there. The various Shrines in the vicinity were all visited, engaging in polemic controversies wherever he went and overthrowing his opponents.

Duly he reached Tirukkurungidi (Kuranga-nagari about 20 miles south of Tinnevely), and

Jai Srimannarayana!

visited the Lord Nambi. A voice came from him thus: "Ramanuja, we have often incarnated on earth, as Rama, Krishna, and so on in order to save mankind; but we have never been able to persuade people to Our ways as you have done. How do you do it?" "Almighty", said Ramanuja, "if you will ask me in the way that a disciple or a pupil is required to ask his teacher or tutor, I will answer you."

Nambi understood Ramanuja, and commanded a throne being brought and begged Ramanuja to be seated there and from that position answer the question. Ramanuja mentally placed his Acharya Mahapurna, on the throne and taking his stand before it, whispered into Lord Nambi's right ear thus:--

"Of all the mantras, the Mantra-ratna, and the Dvaya are great. Easily do they carry one to the Supreme State. These teach that the way of Resignation or Surrender to God variously called nyasa, prapatti, saranagati, is the most beneficial to man and compasses for him every good".

"Thus, Great God", said Ramanuja, "by Thy own best instruments of salvation, have I prevailed upon the hearts of men". Lord Nambi was mightily pleased with this declaration, and proclaimed that He was henceforth Ramanuja udayan. Ramanuja gave Nambi the Holy Name of Srivaishnava Nambi and tendering his apologies for what had occurred, left Kuranganagari.

From here Ramanuja entered into the Malayalam (Malabar) country, visiting the shrines Tiruvan parisaram, Tiruvattar, and others and paid homage to Lord Anantapadmanabha in Tiruvananthapuram (Trivendrum), through the three doors of this Sanctum, and left the place after overcoming opponents and establishing a Ramanuja Math there with the help of the then king, who became a disciple of his.

He proceeded north along the western sea-coast of the Peninsula to such Holy Shrines as Mathura (Muttra), Nandavraja, Govardhana, Brindavana, and others and Salagrama, MuktinathaKshetra, Gandaki river; "Salagrama Hill" is stated in another work. Vaikunttham, Dvaraka, and Ayodhya, Badarikasrama, Naimisaranya and Pushkara, and then on to Bhatti-mandapa; (this is probably Bhatti mandala near Lahore), and Kashmir, the seat of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, was now reached. She praised Ramanuja's grand work and placed Ramanuja's Sri-Bhashya on her head, drew Ramanuja close to her bosom and gave him the title Bhashyakara and handed him the image of Hayagriva for worship.

The pandits of the place, on seeing these special favors of Sarasvati bestowed on Ramanuja grew envious, and called upon him for a disputation. This was granted and in the end they were routed. The king of Kashmir silently watched these events; and when he found the pandits discomfited, he looked upon Ramanuja as no ordinary mortal and permitted himself to be enlisted into his fold. The king asked Ramanuja to explain the Traditions on which he based his Visishtadvaita interpretation of the BrahmaSutras. Ramanuja said that the old Traditions were the Bodhayana-Vritti, and the glosses by Tanka, Guhadeva, Kapardi, Bharuchi,

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

and others. The king went with him and the pandits into his library and had a search made for such works.

They were found, and on a perusal it was found that Ramanuja's exposition was correct. Ramanuja and Kuresa took this opportunity of studying the BodhayanaVritti better, as the Pandits would not allow the work to be taken away by him. Ramanuja was anxious to secure the work, but objections to his taking the book away were insurmountable. He felt grieved, but Kuresa assured him that he had retained the cardinal passages in his memory, and could reproduce the same whenever wanted. This allayed Ramanuja's anxiety; and he allowed the Vritti, though very reluctantly, to be restored to the Library, at the King's request, as the latter knew his Pandits would otherwise give trouble and would not hesitate even to kill Ramanuja. And yet the Pandits resented all this, as their prestige suffered so much; but being powerless to openly harm Ramanuja, as the king was already on his side, they entered into a dark conspiracy to kill Ramanuja by black magic.

This came to his knowledge; but spiritual gaint as he was he remained undaunted, and simply watched how events would develop themselves. They resorted to black magic, but instead of their plans succeeding, it had a contrary effect; for they were all suddenly seized with madness. The king saw this, and pitying the poor wretches approached Ramanuja, and falling at his feet, implored him to relieve them, as he could not look on their sufferings. Ramanuja, by a simple act of his will, cured them; and the king made them members of the Faith, and escorting Ramanuja with all his staff, a few stages on his return journey, took leave and joined his capital.

Ramanuja took the road towards Varanasi (Benaras), which he reached in due time, and bathing in the Holy Ganga (Ganges), and visiting the Lord of Kandamennum Kadinagar proceeded south to Purushottama Kshetra (Jagannatha or Puri, on the east-coast of the Indian Peninsula). Here also were disputations held on philosophy and religion, Ramanuja coming off victorious; and a Ramanuja Math also was established. Here, on his attempt to introduce the worship, as laid down in the Pancharatra, into the Temple there, the priests objected. Ramanuja still resolved to reform the practices prevalent there which were not cleanly and to his liking, but Lord Jagannatha is said to have appeared to him in his dream and prevailed upon him not to attempt the reforms, as his priests were much attached to Him with their old ways of worship which therefore he might not disturb. And when Ramanuja awoke, he found to his surprise he had been transported all the way to Sri-Kurma. Here he paid homage to the Lord in the Kurma-form and journeyed on to Simhagiri (Ahobila) and other shrines. Winning his way throughout by polemical triumphs he finally arrived at Tirupati.

Here a Saiva-Vaishnava controversy of a curious character had been waging. Ramanuja proposed that both Saiva and Vaishnva emblems, such as Trisula and Damaruka, and Chakra

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

and Sankha, be placed in front of Venkatesa's Image in the sanctum sanctorum, and the doors be closed and securely locked, after carefully examining the chamber that no one lay hidden there; and the character of the Deity might be determined by the choice of the emblems made by Him. This test was gladly agreed to by all. The emblems were accordingly prepared and placed before the Image. Next day, both the parties came in a body with eager expectations of their own opinion being realized. But when the doors were thrown open in full daylight and in the presence of the whole assembly, it was found, that the Lord had assumed the Vaishnava-emblems, with the Saiva emblems lying unused on the floor. Ramanuja's joy knew no bounds. He sang and danced, eyes streaming with tears of delight at the miraculous event and the Beatific Vision presented to his view. The Sivas were thus ousted.

Ramanuja made the circuit of the Shrine, and descending the Holy Mount, did homage to the Azhvars enshrined at its base, and thence proceeding to Kanchi and other Shrines such as Sri-perumbudur (his birth-place), Tirvallikkeni (Triplicane) and Tirunirmalai, and thence crossing over to Madhurantakam and the Holy Vakula-tree there, under which his Guru Mahapurna gave him the first initiation, and thence on to Tiruvayindrapuram (Tiruvendipuram near Cuddalore), where he tendered his salutations to Lord Devanayaka, and vanquished disputants wherever met, and thence on to Viranarayanapuram, the "Holy place of sage Nathamuni (the place where he sat for Yoga (meditation) and Lord Mannanar there, returned to his head-quarters, Srirangam.

He proceeded to the Temple to visit Lord Ranga, announcing his arrival; and after the usual ceremonies, Ranga's voice came inquiring: "Are you satisfied?" Ramanuja answered: Holy Lord, how can I be otherwise, when Blessed vision is ever reflected in my mental mirror wherever I may be. I have but fulfilled Your holy errand on earth." Ranga commanded tirtha and prasada to be given him. Ramanuja from there bent his steps to his own monastery, his soul steeped in peace and bliss.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## **CHAPTER XXIII: THE BIRTH OF VYASA-BHATTA AND PARASARA BHATTA**

Thus had our Bhashyakara accomplished his second pilgrimage through Bharata-Khanda. Those were days of religious rejuvenescence in India brought about by the inspired personality of our Ramanuja. For his influence spread from house to house, village to village and throughout Bharathland, and his spirit fanned the fire of religion, smouldering in human hearts.

Kuresa was the very soul and shadow of Ramanuja. In erudition he was a scholar; in conduct, he was a paragon of excellence. Never a day was he found remiss in all the duties of the day, classed as Abhigamana, Upadana, ijya, Svadhyaya and Yoga2.

We have already told our readers that Kuresa lived by alms; because he had given away his all at Kura and come to Srirangam to live with Ramanuja. One day, it rained all the morning till it was past the Sangava or the Upadana time, which is set apart for excursions for collecting alms. Kuresa's strict rule it was, to beg each day's requirement at the houses of virtuous folk, and never to store a second day's provisions in his house. Prevented then by rainy day from stirring out, Kuresa and his pious wife Andalamma fasted, after taking the usual bath, performing the morning sandhya and other ceremonies and offering to his home God, a fruit and some water which they later, took, being sacramental. It was now evening, and Kuresa, performing the evening sandhya, never bestowed a thought for his hungry stomach, but devoutly went through a reading of the Tiruvaymozhi (Prabandha) considering this as his manual, and thus went to sleep. But the wife was awake and was sore grieved at heart that her godlike husband was fasting. As she sat, she heard the temple drums and bugles announcing that Lord Ranga was having his night-offering of food, called the periya-avasaram. This disturbed her musings; and she gave vent to her feelings thus, "Ranga, when your bhakta is fasting, how can you revel thus in feasting?" A cry of distress like this was of course heard by the Lord; and the cry, it is said, pierced his ears like arrows.

Uttamanambi, a temple-functionary, was asleep on a pial; and he dreamt a dream in which Ranaga appeared to him and commanded him thus: "Nambi, my bhakta Kuresa is fasting; rise, go to my Temple, and carry on the head the holy Aravanai-food which has just been offered me, in right processional style from the Temple to his house. Uttama-Nambi awoke, startled, and hastening to the Temple, did as commanded. As the music and other din of the procession reached Kuresa's doors, he was disturbed from his sleep, and awoke, wondering what was happening at that hour of the night. He met the processionists and inquired of them what brought them there. Uttama-nambi said: "Sire, Lord Ranga bid me carry you His holy food. Pray accept." Kuresa received the same devoutly but he would not have the whole quantity. He said to the messengers, "Holy sires, I should not deprive the Lord of His income by

Jai Srimannarayana!

disposing of this food as usual. But I cannot refuse it altogether, as it has been so graciously sent by Him. I should but take two morsels, one for myself, and the other for my wife. Lord Ranga has so fully made me His own that I do not stand in need of anything on earth. I thank you, sires; please retire with the remaining food to the Temple." After thus dismissing the Temple servants, Kuresa sat down and asked his wife whether she thought of any thing in particular when he was asleep. She confessed to him she did so. She said she envied Ranga enjoying his last sumptuous course of food for the day, while His bhakta was hungry. "Good lady," said Kuresa petulantly, "You should not have been thus guilty. Do not do this again." And they both devoutly partook of each one of the two morsels that had been retained; and Kuresa went to bed again, somewhat out of humour with his wife. But he had a dream. Lord Ranga appearing spoke to him: "My beloved, the two morsels you have eaten, will be the seed for raising two precious sons in your family. They shall be considered as my own sons. As sons, I myself choose to appear in furtherance of my own future purpose, in the same manner as I chose to appear as Rama, the son of Dasaratha, and Krishna the son of Vasudeva" The dream was over. Kuresa awoke, and related it to his wife and others, and attended to his duties, quietly expecting events to develop in their own good time.

Some time went by. In due course, two sons were born to Kuresa as predicted by Lord Ranga. The ten days of post delivery sutaka were over, but Kuresa never concerned himself about the name-giving and other sacramental rituals, which the Vedas require to be administered to new-born infants. His idea was that to his Ramanuja's spiritual family the children belonged, and it was for Ramanuja therefore to do the needful. Ramanuja, however, now made his appearance, accompanied by Govinda; and commanded him to bring the little ones to him. Govinda sped in all earnestness to Andalamma, and lovingly hugging the two gems of babies, ran to Ramanuja, muttering all the way the Holy Dvaya-Mantra as a protective shield for the babies against evil influences; and lovingly lifted them up to Ramanuja. Ramanuja graciously scanned them with his love-moistened eyes, and observing the splendid appearance and glorious looks of the infants, blessed them heartily, and addressing Govinda, said:- "Brother, what did you do? The smell of the Dvaya-Mantra comes to me from the babies." "Sire, Yes," replied Govinda, "as I was conveying the precious charges to you, I shielded them with the power of that Mantra." "Then brother," commanded Ramanuja, "as you have constituted yourself the guardian of the bodies of these gems, you shall be the guardian as well of their souls. And these two infants are no other than the two sentences of the Dvaya itself, made manifest in their persons thus." So saying he stroked the infants with his hands, adorning them with the panch-ayudha ornament; and in due time made Govinda administer the pancha Parankusasamskara, naming the infants Parasara Bhattarya, and Vyasa-Bhattarya, thus fulfilling another of the three wishes of his Great Guru, Yamunacharya. Thus were two great luminaries for the Faith ushered into the world in the wake of Ramanuja.

Uttama-Nambi, in a work called Lakshmi-Kavya, composed by him, sang of them.

Another event also occurred about this time enabling Ramanuja to fulfil the remaining wish of

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

his Great Guru Yamuna; to name some fit person by the name of Parankusa or Nammazhvar in perpetuation of the memory of the Saint of that name.

The reader will recollect the redemption of Govinda by Srisaila-Purna of Tirupati, described in a previous chapter. When Govinda joined the Vaishnava-band, he felt so blessed in his regenerate life that he would not allow his newly awakened delight to rest in himself alone. So, he sought out his own brother by name SiriyGovindapperumal, and explained to him the beauties of the new faith. He brought him to Purna, who graciously accepted him as his disciple. Govinda and G.Perumal had thus become spiritual associates as well, and had both come to live with Ramanuja at Srirangam.

The event which came about was that Govinda Perumal had a son born to him, and this, to Ramanuja, was another valuable acquisition to his Faith. So he hurried to Perumal's place, and blessing the child, named him Parankusa-Nambi. This fulfilment of Yamuna's third wish was recorded by Uttama-Nambi in his Lakshmi Kavya.

We shall close this chapter by asking our readers to remember the "threefinger-miracle" of Yamuna, related in chapter IX and that the three fulfilments thereof by Ramanuja, on whom had devolved that sacred duty, were, in order, the composition of Sri-Bhashya, the Commentary on the Brahma-Sutras; the naming of two children in memory of Parasara and Vyasa; and a third child, in memory of St. Nammazhvar.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## Chapter XXIV: BHATTARYA

Now we will be treated to the interesting traits of luminary Parasara Bhattarya, or simply Bhattarya son of Kuresa.

Kuresa had two sons Bhattarya and Vyasa. Lord Ranga commanded the two little brothers to be brought to His temple and adopted them as his own sons. Their cradles were swung there in His own chamber, called the Manattun. Lord Ranga and His Consort Lakshmi took care of them every way. The Lord had willed that before He accepted the courses of daily food offered to him, the children should be first served; or, that they should help themselves to what dishes they pleased by allowing them to toddle about to the place where the food in several dishes was spread before Him.

One day food has been placed before Ranga as the special service of the king who then ruled. That day the children, as usual, stole about at pleasure and helped themselves to the dishes. The priests were offended at the conduct of the children, and handling them somewhat roughly, sent them outside the Temple premises. That night the Raja had a dream. The Lord appearing to him, declared: "I had just tasted your food-service. The officiating priests interferred with my children, the Bhattars and prevented them from having their full share and treated them roughly. I could not take the food any more. Today I am not pleased with you." The Raja awoke and making inquiries, found his dream to be correct. He ordered that services should be conducted in the manner which best pleased the Lord.

Bhattarya was now a boy of five years, and showed signs of extrodinary intelligence for his age. His father Kuresa was one day reciting the Decad of St. Nammazhvar, beginning with Nedumark- adimal (viii.10.1). In this decad, the greatness of God's Saints is described. In the third verse, the desription runs thus: Siru-ma- manisar " i.e., God's Saints are small- great." The boy, who was attentively listening to the recitation, stopped the father at this place. He asked him: "Father, how can a thing be both small and great at one and the same time, for you said small-great?" "My Dearest! What an unexpected question from a small boy like you! But it would be a hard task on my part to convince you of the justness and beauty of the apparently contradictory terms. It is difficult to explain based on Sastras. But I shall try by other easier means to make you understand this puzzling passage of our Holy Saint. Do you see our Sages of Srirangam, Siriy-acchan, A.P. Emberumanar and others like them? See, they are small in stature, but very great in knowledge and wisdom. So, do you now see how contradictory things like small and great can yet be harmoniously combined in one and the same thing?" The young questioner was satisfied.

The boy was a budding genius, as became evident from another incident which happened at about this time. There was a learned man by name Sarvajna-Bhatta, who was proud of his erudition. He had successfully carried on warfare of polemics (arguments) in Varanasi and other places; and who had now arrived at Srirangam. To show to all how great a man he was, he sat himself in a sedan chair and paraded himself in the streets with his followers before and behind, proclaiming his fame and titles, and announcing that he was the Sarvajnabhata, meaning one who is all-knowing. Bhattarya, the boy, was at this time playing with the dust in the street. He heard the name Sarvajna dinning in his ears, and he got irate at it. "What!" exclaimed he, "While there are such all-knowing giants amongst us, as Ramanuja, Kuresa, Dasarathi, Devarat and others, who dare call himself by the proud name Sarvajna, all-knowing?" So saying, he took a handful of dust in his hand, and ran up to the sedan, in which the Pandit was seated. He spoke mockingly at him thus: "Hello, man, stop, and answer me this before you step further. If you are all-knowing, as you call yourself, tell me what quantity of dust I have in my hand." This sudden and curious interrogation, by a mere boy, checked the Pandit. He was so confounded and confused that he could not compass a ready answer. "I see," cried the boy "You are dumbfounded by the paltry question of a boy. Could you not say 'You have a handful of dust?' You don't deserve the title all-knowing". So saying, the impertinent little boy turned to Sarvajna's attendants and asked them never more to exhibit their poor master pompously in the streets. He exhorted them in the sweet words, to drop the insignia they were carrying, and cease blowing the trumpets" The surprise of the pandit at this strange behaviour and talk of a mere urchin, now turned into wonder and admiration. He inquired of the by-standers whose son this prodigy was. They said: "Sir, he is the son of Kuresa, the soul of our Guru Ramanuja, the Pontiff of our Faith." Sarvajna exclaiming: "The beginner surely flies, not creeps." lovingly lifted the little marvel into his sedan, and moved on till the procession approached the house of Kuresa.

Pon-naycchiyar or Kanakamba, the good wife of Dhanurdasa was standing at the door watching. Seeing the boy Bhattarya seated in the sedan with a strange person, she ran up, and drawing him from the vehicle, covered him with her garment, and rushed with him into the house, muttering the Dvaya-Mantra. She gave the precious boy into the arms of its mother Andamma. She chided her for having allowed her gem to stray out thus into the streets and expose himself to 'evil eyes'. She anxiously sprinkled him with Ramanuja's Sri-pada water, to ward off evil influences. She also vaguely feared, lest such a prodigy as her boy would be allowed to live long on earth!

Bhattarya grew older. About eight he was now, and the holy- thread ceremony (Upanayana), was duly performed and he was sent to school to learn the Vedas and other subjects. The boy attended the first day and learnt some Veda. The second day, when he went to school, he found the teacher repeating the same lessons as those of the previous day to the boys. He therefore left the school and went to play. His parents finding him thus employed, questioned him as to why he did not attend school. "I did attend, father," said he, "but they were reading the same lessons again, and so I left it." "But did you learn the lesson in one day?" asked

Jai Srimannarayana!

Kuresa. "Yes," was the ready answer. "Then let me hear it," demanded the father. The boy repeated his lesson without a flaw, even in the difficult intonations of the Vedic syllables, called the udatta, anudatta and svarita. The brilliance of Bhattarya terrified the parents, who seriously thought of delaying his education for some time. In due course, however, the boy rapidly picked up all learning, Kuresa and Govinda personally instructing him in the artha, and the tatva, Sastras.

It has already been said that Lord Ranga and His Consort Lakshmi were the adoptive Father and Mother of Bhattarya. As a child and boy, he really looked upon them as such. But he had now grown up into youth, and was taught that Ranga and Lakshmi should be adored as God and Goddess of the cosmos. Well, the youth was once on a visit to the Temple, when Ranga and Lakshmi, were having their retired moments after all the bustle of the day's worship had subsided. Ranga, in feigned anger, bade Bhattarya depart. The Youth went a few paces. When Ranga ordered him back he obeyed. Ranga asked him; "when you visited us now, what did you think us to be?" "As God and Goddess of the universe, Lord," meekly replied Bhattarya. "But," asked Ranga, "What did you think us to be before this?" "As my Father and Mother," he responded. "Think of us in this relation always. That pleases us 'more than the relationship of God and slave." From this we understand God is more in search of men's hearts than their heads.

Another incident is related about this time. A Smarta pandit took it into his head to test Bhattarya. He entered as the latter was seated in his house, and after preliminaries asked him to explain how a Vaishnava is distinguished from a Smarta. Bhattarya did not care to enter into an elaborate controversy with his adversary on this question; delicate in as much as it is a bone of contention between the two great divisions of Brahmanas in India, the Smartas (advaitins) and the Vaishnava (visisht-advaitins); but simply called the questioner's attention to the signs of Chakra and Sankha inscribed on both his arms-a sacrament enjoined by Sastras on all Vaishnavas. "I see", the pandit said; "but what authorities, master, can you quote from the Sastras, justifying you to set you yourself this kind of custom?" queried he. "Sir, replied Bhattarya," I shall not trouble you with all that, for when I shall quote one authority, to which we in common profess allegiance, you shall go satisfied. Haven't you learnt the first sutra of Apastambha-Dharma, which says, the wise practices of our wise elders are our best authority; then come the Vedas? My father Kuresa followed it and therefore I do. Is it enough? For do you not follow in the footsteps of your elders?" The pandit was thus silenced and went his way.

The Young student's course was now finished. It was time that a bride should be found for him. Kuresa had left his kith and kin in the Kanchi land and had adopted Srirangam for his country. So, when the marriage-question of his boy came up, Kuresa did not know where to bring a girl from. "Hence he asked Ramanuja: "Sire, not only have I no relations of mine in these parts, but those others who may willingly offer a girl belong to a lower rank in society. What shall we do in this fix?" Such was the great social question which Ramanuja had to solve in those days. Ramanuja said: "We have Mahapurna and his people. We must choose from them." These

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

considerations satisfied them and they applied to this clan for a girl. But they could not give one they said, for the hard and fast barriers dividing clan from clan for a long time. But Bhattar was advancing in years, and must be married at once or all thought of it must once for all be abandoned. His mother Andalamma was in a perplexity. But Kuresa told her in a careless way: "Don't worry. I am helpless in the matter. You know that our children belong to Lord Ranga? I have resigned them to His care. Let His will be done, whatever it is." With these soothing words, he left his wife and went to the temple, laid the case before The Lord and returned home. That night, Mahapurna's relatives had a dream, in which Ranga commanded them to make matrimonial alliance with Kuresa without ado. They rose and what they had rejected when proposed by, they now voluntarily offered to, Kuresa. For, two maidens by name Akkachi and Manni were gladly given in marriage to our Bhattarya. A social question---a very hard one indeed---was thus solved in those days; and Kuresa became a house-holder.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER XXV: DHANURDASA

In the last Chapter, we read about Kanakangana, who was standing at the door of Kuresa's house, and her husband Dhanurdasa. (in Tamil, Pillai-Uranga- villi-dasar). They became disciples of Ramanuja. How they became is what shall be narrated in this Chapter.

In Nichulapuri or Modern Uraiyur (near Trichinopoly) lived Dhanurdasa, so called because he was a 'good athlete and archer'. To his caste-men, he looked as terrible as death. He loved a girl by name Kanakamba who was very beautiful. So much was he enamoured of her that he never left her side for a moment and never took his eyes off her moonlike face. The Chaitra festivities of Lord Ranga now came round. Kanakamba was anxious to witness them, and so she left Uraiyur. The lover of course would not let her go alone. So he accompanied her, and walking by her side, held his coverlet over her head in great solicitude to screen her handsome face from the sun's rays. Not a ray should even steal in. So eagerly did he watch her face.

Ramanuja was returning from his ablutions in the river Kaveri, surrounded by his disciples, to join the procession of Lord Ranga. As he was coming, his eye fell upon this loving pair. He wondered at the intense care the lover was bestowing upon his beloved. He turned to his disciples and said, "Sons, look at this curious scene! He pays such attentions to a courtesan! Man may be blind with love for a girl; but he generally keeps it all secret; but here it is a bold outrage on public decency. It is interesting to me however to see how love can be blind. Let me try to turn this man's love from the girl to Lord Ranga." So saying, he set a few disciples to shadow the pair and find where they lived; and return with news. On his disciples bringing him the necessary intelligence, Ramanuja sent for Dhanurdasa, and looking on him most graciously, asked who he was and what brought him to Srirangam.

The looks of Ramanuja filled with kindness acted on him like a spell; for Dhanurdasa made obeisance and explained that his residence was Uraiyur, where he was a renowned gymnast, and that he came to Srirangam on a holy visit to Ranga. Ramanuja asked, "Will you allow me, son, to rebuke you for your open violation of public morality? You say you are a powerful gymnast; but 'how is this consistent with your open love-makings to a girl shamelessly? A sense of shame stole on Dhanurdasa at this well-meant rebuke, but he replied, "Holy Sir, how can I help it? She is so lovely, this dear Kanakamba. Her eyes are more beautiful than the lotus. My heart and those eyes are one. The least exposure to the sun, how can those charming eyes bear?"

If they fade, my heart would burst. This is the truth, O Saint; now tell me if I am wrong." Ramanuja listened to this guileless speech, in silence, and looking on Dhanurdasa with pity, said, "But, son, if I could show you better eyes than those?" "Ah, Sire," interrupted Dhanurdasa, "if so, it were a great gain to me; and that by your favour." "Come then at once" so saying,

Jai Srimannarayana!

Ramanuja led him in to the Temple. Showing him Ranga's figure, recumbent on His couch, Adi Sesa, "look at those bewitching eyes." said he, catching hold of his hand, "they are the eyes of Ranga, Lord Ranga, the Father of this universe. Look steadily and study their beauty."

Dhanurdasa did so, and he saw something there extraordinary, divine, and he found he could neither stir from the spot where he stood, nor move his eyes from the Vision before him. He was completely hypnotized as it were. "God's grace has descended on this person," murmured Ramanuja to himself, as he watched and left for his monastery. Dhanurdasa gave up food and sleep from that day and was daily found in the temple, looking on Ranga with straining eyes. Ramanuja now sent for him and asked him how he felt. He said: "Master! How can I be grateful enough to you for the bliss into which you have deigned to steep a wretch like myself. Make me your slave and complete the work of salvation you have, taken into your hands." Ramanuja smiled and conferring on him the sacramental Panchasamskara, took him into his group. Kanakamba came to know of all this, and a wish rose in her mind to become herself a disciple. So she hurried to Ramanuja, and repentantly implored him to take her also into his Vaishnava fold. Ramanuja, overcome by her prayers, did so, and joining her with her lover, - now as 'wife to husband', - blessed them both, and allowed them to work in his math (monastery) as his most dutiful servants. It is recorded that the wife even excelled her husband, in wisdom and all other spiritual perfections, by the wonderful grace shed by the Holy Feet of Ramanuja. Like Hanuman, who did every service to Rama was this pair to Ramanuja.

Dhanurdasa had so far been metamorphosed, that he became the greatest favourite of Ramanuja. So rare was his piety, that though Dhanurdasa belonged to a lower caste, he had privileges conferred upon him. For often, Ramanuja was found returning from his river-bath leaning on the shoulders of Dhanurdasa; though when he went to the bath he leaned on Dasarathi, a Brahmana. A Brahmana is unclean before bath, and clean after it; and thus Dhanurdasa as a Sudra, and Dasarathi as a Brahmana must have changed places. But Ramanuja had it the other way as told above, which much exercised the minds of his Brahmana disciples. They once made bold to ask him for an explanation, which he condescended to tender thus, "O Vaishnavas, have you not heard that learning, riches and high-birth swell a fool with pride but adorn a wisemen?" This man is utterly destitute of this threefold vice but you are not. Hence he is fit enough to be touched by me and to prop on." On hearing this, the disciples bent their heads in shame, and dared make no protest; but all the same, malice kindled in their hearts against Dhanurdasa - that he a Sudra should stand so high in their master's estimation, their own prestige as Brahmanas being jeopardized thereby.

Ramanuja was aware of this and wished to cure his Brahmana disciples of the disease, which in his opinion was spiritually fatal. He wanted them realize their error and correct it. He called one of his intimate disciples privately, and ordered him to take away all the clothes of the objectors at night when they were asleep. It is custom to daily wash clothes and hang up to dry. The order was duly carried out. His disciples rose in the morning, and finding their clothes were missing, fell foul of each other and made a great hubbub.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Ramanuja was witnessing this entire brawl, unseemly to a Brahmana in his opinion; and smiled. To put a stop to further disturbance, he called them all to order, and listened to their complaint, and condoning them for their loss, advised them to be reconciled to each other. He told them to wait for better luck whenever it might please providence to send it to them. He let some time pass thus, and one night, he called Dhanurdasa to his side and was engaged in conversation with him alone for some time. He now called the aggrieved parties, and in the hearing of Dhanurdasa spoke to them thus: 'Sons,' I remember well your grief and strife at the loss of your clothes some time ago. I will now tell you something which will fetch you much profit. Indeed it will very much more than compensate for your loss. See, Dhanurdasa is with me. I will keep him here engaged. You will proceed to his house unobserved. As it is very late in the night, you will find his wife Kanakamba drowned in sleep. She has a lot of precious jewels about her person. Go and cleverly strip her of them all and come away."

Taking these orders, the Brahmanas stole to Dhanurdasa's house like thieves. They went in, and to their joy found Kanakamba fast asleep on her bed, decked in all her splendid finery. They approached her softly, and deftly stripped her of all her jewels on one side, as she lay sideways. As they were doing it, she awoke but just opening her eyes a little closed them again, lest they might flee away in fright. Nor did she move a limb lest they might be disturbed in the middle of their work. For she saw they were Vaishnavas, for whom she had nothing but love and reverence. She was glad they were taking away but their own property; for whatever things she owned in this world were not really hers but entrusted to her for their sake. (This is how property is to be spiritually viewed; and we have already said that in spiritual perfections, Kanakamba excelled even her husband.) Well, she lay thus quiet till every one of the jewels was removed from one side. She was now anxious that the Vaishnavas should complete their work, and not to go away with only half work done. She therefore gently rolled over to her other side, as if in sleep. This movement however created fright and put the thieves to flight. They returned.

Ramanuja seeing them come back gave leave to Dhanurdasa now to go home, as it was unusually late. As soon as he went a few steps, Ramanuja called the robber disciples, and taking from them the jewels, bid them dog the footsteps of Dhanurdasa in the dark, unobserved by him, and watch all that might take place in his house and report the same to him correctly. They did so. In the house, Kanakamba was expecting her husband back from his rather long absence that night, and when she heard his footsteps, she rose and washed his feet and welcomed him home. He looked at her, but she looked very strange with one side of her bare and the other side decked with ornaments. 'What is this, lady?' he cried, taken aback. "Nothing wrong, lord", said she soothingly, "I will explain all and you will be pleased. The Brahmanas, who you know are our Gurus, came here, and I was lying as if asleep. They took all the jewels on my right side. Our possessions are theirs, Sir, as you know. So to let them have all, I quietly turned round on to my left side. With all my care in doing so, to make them believe I was fast asleep. It gave them alarm, and they, to my great regret ran away." On hearing this, Dhanurdasa flew at her in rage, saying, "Foolish woman! You have spoiled the work. It was your duty to have lain quite motionless. If your jewels were theirs, they were also free to take them in their own way. But

Jai Srimannarayana!

instead of letting them exercise that liberty, you moved just when they had done half their work. They would probably have turned you round, had you been perfectly still. Well, you have spoilt it all. At any rate, half your jewels have been well invested; the other half is vanity." Thus half consoled as it were, he went to sleep, with his thoughts fixed on the Holy Feet of Ramanuja.

The Vaishnava Brahmanas who were outside, eavesdropping, heard all this conversation and hurrying back to Ramanuja, gave him a full report of it. Ramanuja on receiving it, addressed them thus, "Oh! Men, do you now see? Some fellows, made away with your clothes some time back. But on that trifling account, you fell to quarreling and, calling each other names, made such an inglorious uproar. But here is Dhanurdasa, whose mind was not in the least disturbed, albeit he lost so many valuable jewels. Please tell me, sirs, whose wisdom is great, yours or his? Know then that caste is of no importance. It is virtue that is most prized." Thus did Ramanuja instruct the disciples who bore a grudge against Dhanurdasa. They were crest-fallen and kept quiet.

The night was spent thus. The next morning, he sent for Dhanurdasa, and drew from him an account of all the incidents which took place in his house, and restoring to him his jewels, blessed him. Dhanurdasa never refused what was given him, for, if he did so, it would be like opposing his Guru which is not proper to a true disciple. Unquestioning obedience to the spiritual preceptor is one of the most important canons laid down by Vaishnavism. And this, Dhanurdasa observed to the very letter. It is recorded that Dhanurdasa's regenerate life was full of such incidents. One such interesting event is recounted by Periya-Vacchanpillai in his commentary on St. Nammazhvar's Tiruviruttam, v: 99: "Inacchol." Kuresa read Tiruvai mozhi, and Dhanurdasa, who heard it, melted into tears. Observing this passionate outburst of feeling, Kuresa exclaimed: "Beloved Dhanurdasa! We are known to fame as very clever dialectic gymnasts over knotty questions of philosophy and all that sort; but none of us can claim the privilege of your birth which brings to you such a a love-lorn heart which we struggle hard to possess." It is related again in the 36,000 commentary on Tiruvaymozhi (VII-4- 1 "Azhi") that Dhanurdasa was called "Mahamati" by the worthies of Srirangam, inasmuch, as his love for Ranganatha was so intense that whenever, the Lord was taken in processions in the streets, 'Mahamati' walked in front with his sword drawn, so that he may cut any who dared to do any act, in the least offensive to the Deity. Vidura of the Mahabharata fame was called Mahamati, inasmuch as his love for Krishna made him to examine the seat, which he had himself prepared for him in his own house, lest he might have unwittingly allowed any danger to lurk in there. Mahamati literally means - the force of wisdom blinded by love for God. Dhanurdasa also was thus so wise, i.e., so love-blind as to fear danger for one (God) who is above all dangers.

Kanakamba, the wife of Dhanurdasa, proved to be an exemplary devotee of Ramanuja, for she looked upon him as the Saviour. It is related that a number of disciples approached the lady one day and expressed to her their doubts as to whom they should look upon as their true saviour, for it was in their experience that many professed themselves as saviours, and they also owed to more than one preceptor the spiritual knowledge which they had received and the good

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

conduct which they had adopted in their life. It was thus evident that if Ramanuja was to be looked upon as saviour, there were others as well to whom a measure of this qualification was ascribable. Kanakamba on hearing this, simply gathering her locks together into a knot, tied it up with a red thread, and kept silent. The disciples understood what she meant to convey by this behaviour. The numerous black hairs signified many teachers but the saviour was Ramanuja alone, represented by the red thread. Ramanuja crowned them all and bound them all together into his representative self; in other words united into his unique person, all the functions of minor teachers who went before and came after him. The disciples wondered at her steadfastness and fidelity to Ramanuja, and went away congratulating her on her spiritual eminence.

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER XXVI

**DASARATHI, MARANERI –NAMBI** - Such were the additions that were being daily made to Ramanuja's holy band.

We have seen in a previous chapter that Mudaliyandan or Dasarathi was Ramanuja's sister's son. We have seen in the last chapter that when Ramanuja went to the river Kaveri for his daily bath, he would lean on Dasarathi for support, and when returning from the bath he would lean on Dhanurdasa. One day Ramanuja was asked why, when he donned the robes of the Sannyasin (ascetic), he did not give up Dasarathi, inasmuch as that order demanded that all kith and kin should be renounced. Ramanuja said that Dasarathi was an exception to this rule, for he was to him as valuable as his triplestaff {tridanda}. When he went to Kottiyur to receive instructions from Goshthi-Purna, he had told the latter the same thing. "So, gentle-folk," said he to the questioners, "if it is possible for me, an ascetic, to give up my staff, only then can Dasarathi leave me. He, though a bodily relation, is yet a kin to my soul"

Ramanuja was once teaching Dasarathi Tiru-vay-mozhi, in all his leisure moments. One day, as he was teaching it from his couch, Dasarathi was so overcome by the sentiments of love to God contained therein, that he stopped repeating the verses with Ramanuja as is usually done. Ramanuja saw this and was glad to see Dasarathi so sensitive to devout emotions, such as characterize real mystics. "Son," he said, "it is no wonder our love-saints so move your heart. For the Vedas themselves have been given out to the world in the shape of the Dravida-Prabandhas, even as 'the Vedas themselves are said to have incarnated as Lakshmana, when the Lord of the Vedas himself incarnated on earth as Rama.'

Thus many days were spent in useful occupation, and in thinking out projects for the enrichment of world. One day, Attuzhay, the daughter of Mahapurna, left her mother-in-law's house to her father's. "What is the matter, daughter?" he asked her. "Father", she complained, "You know we women have to go to the river to bathe. I asked my mother-in-law to accompany me, as I have to go alone. But she chose to be ill-tempered and further taunted me by saying, 'Your parents have indeed, sent so many servant girls as a part of your bridal goods {stridhana}; why not take one of them with you instead of asking me!' I felt this jeer so keenly that I have come to you." "I do not know anything of these matters, poor girl" said he coaxingly, "go and inform Ramanuja, who is our Head." So Attuzhay hastened to Ramanuja and laid her grievance before him. "Oh, I see your mother-in-law wants a servant for you at her house," said Ramanuja, "here is one, take him." So saying, he called Dasarathi and bid him accompany the young lady, and work under her orders, considering himself as part of her stridhana.

Dasarathi immediately obeyed, and following the young lady to the river where she bathed, worked in her house like a slave. The sudden advent of Dasarathi, and that for purposes of

Jai Srimannarayana!

menial service excited the curiosity of the members of the household, for they knew him as a venerable person attached to Ramanuja, and for whom they had devout regards. So, they asked him to say what made him leave Ramanuja and come to their house unasked, and that too for free service? "Friends," he said, "I am not master of myself, nor can I judge why my Master Ramanuja wishes me to serve in your household. He bid me go with this maiden and be at her service. I have done so. For reasons and motives, if you are particular, I must refer you to our Ramanuja." They all ran to the monastery and humbly falling at the feet of Ramanuja, besought him to say why such a high personage as Dasarathi was directed to go to their humble dwelling for drudgery. They submitted further that this measure of using a saint as a slave made them sinners. 'We are already sinners, Sire', they pleaded, "Pray let not this addition be made". Ramanuja simply answered, 'Good men, we sent our Dasarathi as a part of our bride's outfit, for the little Attuzhay is my guru's daughter, and therefore our daughter. If you are not willing to accept what, in duty bound, we have sent, you are welcome to return it.' They returned home and begged Dasarathi to kindly return to Ramanuja.

### **Purna – Maraneri Nambi**

At this time another momentous question turned up. One of Yamuna's disciples was Maraneri-Nambi of Maraneri, of the Pandya country. He was a Sudra i.e., a member of the fourth caste of the Hindu social system. He lived with Mahapurna, who was a disciple himself of Yamuna, and a Brahmana. Maraneri being a beloved disciple of Yamuna, Mahapurna had great regards for his master's man. Maraneri fell sick. He prayed to Mahapurna thus, "Sir, though my body is of the Sudra, it is one which by service to my master Yamuna, is sacred. It is going to die now. Pray cast it not to dogs. Who will throw to dogs the oblations (purodasa) set apart for Devas? My body belongs to Yamuna". Purna quieted him by saying that he need have no anxiety on that account; that all would go well. With this assurance, Maraneri breathed his last, and Purna cremated him instead of burying, which is the custom for the Sudras and had the Brahmamedha rites performed, which is only ordained for the Brahmins.

Ramanuja, Purna's disciple, came to know this. Though he was himself a reformer, yet, in his opinion, time was not yet ripe for extending all Brahmanic privileges to Sudras. They must be gradually raised, first in spirit, i.e., in principles and customs and morals, and then only such social privileges granted, as may not outrage at once the communal sense of the composite body of the Aryans. Ramanuja was doing this work cautiously, even so having to face much criticism from the higher caste-men. While so, for Mahapurna to have extended the highest privileges of a Brahmana, viz., the Brahma-Medha obsequies, to a Sudra, however high he may be spiritually, was a shock to the communal feeling which it was not expedient to deliver. Ramanuja going to Mahapurna, and making due obeisance, argued with him in this manner and finished by saying, 'Sir, I am building a system, but you are pulling it down'. To which, Purna answered thus, "Ramanuja, I admit the force of your objections. But I am for radical reforms, not half-measures, and then, we ought to have a margin for signal exceptions like Maraneri. Besides, have I not precedents to justify my present act? Am I superior to Rama, the Hero of the

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Ikshvaku race? Is Maraneri inferior to the Bird Jatayu, for whom Rama performed the Brahmamedha? Am I greater than Dharmaputra and is Maraneri lower than Vidura, to whom the same Samskara was administered? And are the truths uttered by St. Nammazhvar, in his Tiruvaymozhi: “Payilum” [iii-7] and “Nedumal” [viii- 10], descanting on the greatness of godly men, irrespective of caste and color, mere senseless babble?”

On hearing this, Ramanuja was silent. “But in my turn; I have to propose to you one question”, began Purna “and that is this. How is it that I found Maraneri, uttering neither ‘Ranga is my refuge, nor ‘Yamuna is my refuge,’ when he died? You know this is what is enjoined on all the Faithful at time of death”, Ramanuja said, “Such an omission is no ground of accusation against him. For I know he had abandoned himself entirely at that moment to God, trusting Him in His promise that: ‘at the time of death, it is not for dying man to remember or say anything but for God to remember the dying man and do the needful.’ ‘But’, retorted Purna, “this is a promise made by Varaha, when he was consumed with love for His Consort Bhū. How can such a Word be depended upon? Ramanuja answered, “Don’t you know Sir, that our salvation is sure when our Father and Mother are ever together?” Purna was pleased with this apt and intelligent answer.

At this time another incident happened, Sri Ramanuja was one day observed leading a poor dumb man with him and shutting himself up with him in the monastery in a private chamber. Kuresa was watching this unusual conduct on the part of the high pontiff; and looking through a chink in the closed door, observed Ramanuja showing the dumb man by means of signs, his own holy feet, and making him understand thereby that their contemplation would be the sole means of his salvation. Kuresa, on seeing this supreme act of grace, thought thus, “Alas that I have been born Kuresa, a man of learning and wisdom; I would have been happy to have been born as a dumb and boorish to have deserved such precious free grace as this man!” It is said, that Kuresa swooned away under the weight of this reflection.

About this time, Ramanuja undertook a journey to Tiru Kottiyur on a visit to his Acharya Goshti Purna. He was found seated on a high loft in his house absorbed in contemplation. Ramanuja waited for an opportunity and submissively asked what it was he so intently dwelt on; in other words what was the mantra he muttered to himself and the dhyana or object of his thought. Purna said, “Noble son, my only mantra is the Holy Name of Yamuna and my only dhyana is his blessed figure (vigraha) which fascinated me as I studied it when he was bathing in the holy Kaveri waters. “The Guru’s Holy Name is our hymn and his image the object of our loving contemplation” so say the Sastras. Ramanuja prostrated himself before his Guru and returned to Srirangam.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

## CHAPTER XXVII: CHOLA'S PERSECUTIONS

It is written: "When the gracious eyes of a good Guru fall on a person, his salvation is sure, be he dumb or deaf, fool or wise, old or young."

Ramanuja was showing his graces on all in this way; and was holding his Vedanta-discourses in splendid style with a splendid array of disciples, headed by such illustrious personages as Kuresa, Dasarathi and Devarat. The Chola king, for the time being, happened to be a most bigoted Saiva. He was bent upon destroying Vishnu temples, and otherwise prosecuting Vaishnavas, though his son (Vikrama Chola. 1113-1128A.C.), wisely hinted that he had set to himself an impossible task, inasmuch as he could never destroy the two strong props of the Vaishnavas, the Tiruvoymozhi of St. Nammazhar and Ramayana of Valmiki.

The king, then resident at Chidambaram (or Gangaikonda Cholapuram) was a staunch supporter of Saiva System that he adopted coercive measures to bring men of all other faiths into its fold. For this purpose, he had a proclamation issued in which was written "There is no (God) greater than Siva;" and every one, especially every learned man, was commanded to affix his signature to the document in proof of his assent to this proposition. Many obeyed either for fear of being punished, in case of refusal, or on grounds of conscience, or enticed by hopes of rewards of land and money from the king. Others deserted the country and hid somewhere. Naluran, a disciple of Kuresa, happened to be the king's minister. "What is the use, your Majesty!" said he "of your obtaining signatures from all men indiscriminately. No good purpose is served thereby. If you can obtain the signature of the two veterans of the Vaishnava faith, Kuresa and Ramanuja, living in Srirangam, that will be a capital stroke of policy, and your declaration about Siva's pre-eminency will only then have received irrefutable testimony". Chola immediately directed messengers to go to Srirangam and bring Ramanuja. They arrived and standing before the gate of the monastery, declared their errand, and said that Ramanuja must go with them to the King's Court forthwith. The door-keepers rushed inside and whispered the news softly to Kuresa, who was then engaged in serving bath-water to Ramanuja. Kuresa foresaw the dangers of persecution that threatened; and without telling Ramanuja what he meant doing, he donned the colored robes of Ramanuja, and taking up his tridanda, emerged from the monastery; and saying: "I am Ramanuja, proceed", to the King's men. Mahapurna, observing this, followed Kuresa on this ominous expedition.

Ramanuja, coming from his bath, called for his colored robe and staff, but Dasarathi told him that Kuresa had worn them and departed with the King's messengers, who had come for Ramanuja, in order to compel them to sign a declaration paper maintaining Siva's superiority over all other gods. On hearing this, Ramanuja exclaimed in sore distress of heart thus, "Oh, what will become of Kuresa and Mahapurna, in this war of bigotry! Let me wear the white garments of Kuresa!" "You must not, Holy sire, even remain in this spot," submitted Dasarathi

Jai Srimannarayana!

in fear, “lest harm should come to your valuable life.” Ramanuja’s fears were further aroused, but he knew not how he should act in such an emergency; and so he hurried to Lord Varada, and made supplication to him meltingly to ward off the evil which threatened to engulf them all and to wipe off all the the good work. He prayed in the fashion of St. Bhaktanghrirenu.

## **Ramanuja In Melkote**

“Good God,” said he “The Chola king is very powerful just now. I leave to you how and when you will punish him. I will now leave this country.” So saying, he looked northward in the direction of Melkote, and taking his disciples with him, left Srirangam with a heavy heart. In the meanwhile, Chola’s men coming to know that it was not the real Ramanuja who was caught came in pursuit of Ramanuja. By this time Ramanuja was crossing a broad sandy river; and sighted the pursuers. “What shall we do?” he said addressing his disciples, “let us take handfuls of sand and with this mantra (The 4th verse: “Kudal-kadaindu” of Periyazhvar’s Tirumozhi. V-4-4)

repeated over it, throw them in their path as we proceed; and leave the rest to God.” They all did as he said. When the royal emissaries trod on the enchanted sand, their feet stuck, and their pursuit was thus checked. “Ah, these Brahmanas have used magic against us” exclaimed they, and beat back in confusion. Ramanuja proceeded now on his way with Lord Ranga for his help.

They threaded their way through trackless wilds and before they arrived at the base of the Nilagiri Hills, Ramanuja and his disciples missed each other in the wilderness. They were wandering in search of each other, when one disciple met a few forest men busy ploughing land. These happened to be the disciples of Tirumalai Nallan Chakravarti, - an old disciple of Ramanuja. Meeting a Srivaishnava, they naturally felt themselves attached to him and asked, “Sir, where are you coming from?” “From Srirangam, good folk,” he replied. “How is our Ramanuja doing there? Is all going on well with our blessed Lord Ranga?” they asked. “Good folk, where is God? What do we care for His blessed state? Know that our Master Ramanuja had to desert Srirangam on account of Chola’s persecutions, and we know not where he has strayed away in this wilderness’, they replied in grief. On hearing this, the men ceased their work in the fields, and for six days searched for Ramanuja without food and water. On the sixth night, in the gloom, they heard men’s voices. They were sure the voices were like the voices of Brahmanas. They listened. Ramanuja’s party also had sighted a fire which the searching party had lit on a field to warm themselves. For it was a dark night, rainy and chilly.

Ramanuja had reached the foot of a hill and his other disciples had joined him. They were all wet and hungry and shivering with cold. And Ramanuja noticing the light was asking his disciple to carry him there. The search-party guessed already they must be the ones they are searching; but of course were not sure. So, as soon as they heard their conversation, cried out, “Here, sirs, come here, we shall show you the way.” They joined one another. The guests were led to the blazing fire and warmed; dry clothes were provided and every service was gladly rendered to

Jai Srimannarayana!

make them comfortable. And then they inquired: "Where are you all coming from, sirs?" "From Srirangam," they said. "What is our Ramanuja doing there?" they queried. Ramanuja kept silent, but his disciples asked, "How do you, good men, know Ramanuja?" "Sirs," they said, "Our guru is Nallan Chakravarti. The last advice he left with us was that His holy feet alone were our way to salvation. Thus we know Ramanuja." "Then here he is." So saying, they pointed out Ramanuja amongst them. On this discovery, they fell on their faces and clinging fondly to his feet, wept for joy. They then brought grain and honey in abundance; and new pots, in which to fry the former, pound it into powder, and mix with honey and eat it. Ramanuja and his men gratefully partook of the same, after having been greatly exhausted by journeys retired for a long-wished-for rest.

## **Ramanuja – Kongil Piratti**

The next morning, they were all up and prepared to continue their journey northwards towards the hills and beyond. One of the forest-men and one disciple were chosen to carry tidings to Srirangam and inquire how it fared with Kuresa; and the rest-forty-five disciples, it is written--journeyed north ward, guided by the forest-men. They performed about six days' journey and reached a certain fastness in the heart of the Nilagiri Hill range, where the chief of the forest-men lived. The chief was gone out hunting. The guides conducted to the chief's wife, whom, as their high mistress, they addressed thus, "Madam, these holy men are our Gurus; we commend them to your care. Pray attend to all their wants, and whatever it may cost, debit it to us and write off the name in the accounts against wages due to us by your master." Thus entrusting their holy burden to good hands, they departed. The chief now returned from his hunting, and was told all. "How can we eat, while these good men are hungry," he said, and despatched his men to conduct them to a neighbouring village, to the house of a Brahmana, named Kattalaivari, sending an abundance of provisions to entertain them with, without the least delay. The messengers saw this done and returned and reported the same to their chief.

The wife of Kattalaivari was the reputed Kongil-piratti or chelanchalamba. She prostrated herself before them and asked whether she might not cook for them. They replied in the negative. "To whose feet, sirs, do you belong?" she inquired. "Ramanuja," they replied. "Doubt not, sirs, I also belong to him", rejoined she. "Strange, pray give an account how that came about." asked the guests. "Sirs," she began, "once rains failed, and famine was on the land. We therefore left our native land and went to Srirangam; where I and my husband engaged a house, living on the second floor thereof. I was daily watching Ramanuja emerging into the streets, after his morning's duties in the temple were fulfilled, for the sake of entering seven houses to collect his daily alms. As his holiness strolled in the streets like a very god on earth, many people fell at his feet; among the number I particularly observed Akalankanatt-azhvan, the husband of Tripuradevi. One day, Ramanuja entered my poor house. Observing it, I ran down the stairs and stood behind a door, attentive. "Good dame, what is in your mind," he asked me, and I humbly said, "Holy Sir, you come begging to poor peoples' houses, while I see kings fall at your feet in the streets. Please solve this mystery for me." He said, "Dear daughter,

Jai Srimannarayana!

I tell these men bits of news about God; and they become attached to my person. And it is my duty to go to poor houses, and go anywhere where there may be people who wish to hear good tidings of God." "Then, Holy Father," said I, "may I not be the recipient of a little of it?" "Surely," said he, "and he told me what was good for me and took his departure. Now rains fell, and famine had left our land, and we are free to join our native country; but I had forgotten the good advice given to me by Ramanuja. I was troubled and did not know what to do. As I was pensive however, Ramanuja suddenly dropped into our poor house again. I ran down the stairs to meet him and excusing myself for my bad memory, begged of him to tell the tidings of God once more to me, as I was about to leave Srirangam for my native village. Looking upon me graciously, he impressed upon me once more the Dvaya-mantra, along with the Holy Names of all the Apostles of our faith, God downwards and ending with himself. He was leaving me; but I entreated him to stay a while and bestow on me something which I might carry in remembrance and which I might worship as my saviour. And he was so kind as to grant me his holy sandals. And then I and my husband returned home with this blessed gift. Never since have I had the joy of seeing Ramanuja again. It is many years ago now." Ramanuja heard all this, but he was half in cognito, wearing the white garments of Kuresa and many days had gone past, so that Kongil had not recognised him yet.

Learning, as he did, the account given, he gave her permission to cook and commanded a disciple of his to watch her performances. She left and her procedure was thus, by repeating: 'Blessed be Ramanuja,' she sprinkled her head with water so consecrated. She washed the whole house with cowdung and water, took fresh pots, and wearing a clean washed colth, cooked meals, all the time mutturing the holy prabandha, and after placing the vessels in clean baskets, entered her puja room. Here she placed Ramanuja's sandals on a raised dais, and repeating: "Ramanuja's Holy Feet are sole refuge," offered the viands she carried, and returning to the guests, begged them to wash their feet and get ready to eat the meals before it became cold.

The disciple, told out to watch her, was now called aside by Ramanuja to give an account and he recounted exactly all that she did. But he said, "It was dark in the puja room. There were two black objects, which looked long, which she worshipped and to which she offered food." "Daughter," called her Ramanuja, "please let us see what you worshipped in the dark." She brought them and said "Holy Sire, these are the sandals of my Ramanuja, which he gave to me at Srirangam. I daily worship them and eat only after offering food to them. And this day I did the same, nothing more." Ramanuja measured them with his feet, and said, "Curious enough, they suit me; but come here daughter." She approached and he whispered into her ears thus "Daughter, know that these disciples of mine are very strict. They see the sandals suit my feet, but this does not quite satisfy them however, please let me hear what Ramanuja taught you." Kongil repeated the mantra taught her before. "Good, but do you discover Ramanuja in this band?" asked Ramanuja. Kongil returned inside and bringing a light examined Ramanuja's feet, and exclaimed, "Sir, your feet are indeed like Ramanuja's, but you wear white robes which he did not and could not as a Sanyasin. I am confused, Father." Ramanuja moved by her anxiety

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

and no longer wishing to hide himself, from her said, "Dear daughter, I am Ramanuja." On hearing this, her confusion turned into joy and wonder. She fell on her face and nestling to his feet, wept for joy. "Disciples," said Ramanuja, turning to them: "Now there need be no more hesitation on your part to eat her food. Sri Krishna ate Vidura's food, for it was pure and good. Such is our Kongil's food. Go and eat." They did so, but Ramanuja did not. So Kongil was troubled and cried. "But how about you, father," said she, "I shall bring milk and fruits; offer them to your God and eat." Ramanuja did so, and all then rested, steeped in bliss.

The devout Kongil collected the remnants of food left, after they all ate, and taking it and the foot-washed water of Ramanuja to her husband, who was sleeping aloft, awakened him and let him eat. But he saw her fasting. "Why do you not eat, dear?" asked he. "Lord," she answered, "Ramanuja and his disciples have come to our house from Srirangam, and they have slept away without taking food." "What can I do, lady?" he asked. "Cannot you, Lord, become Ramanuja's disciple?" "If you please," said he. On obtaining this promise on the ruse, she ate and went to rest after her hard day's loving labour. Next day, she awoke and approaching Ramanuja, prayed to him to stay yet longer, and deign to take her husband to his fold by administering to him necessary Vaishnava-sacraments. He gladly consented and did every thing needed and reading to them many a useful lesson for their future welfare, sojourned in their good home for a few days, and taking leave of the good pair by blessing them, pursued his journey.

## **Chapter XXVIII: Ramanuja – Karnataka : Saligrama**

The Nilagiri Range was thus traversed, and threading their way with toil north-west, they reached Vahni-Pushkarini. Resting here for a few days, they made their way to Mithila Saligrama. Here they found the place full of staunch adherents of Saivism, who gave the new arrivals scant or no welcome. Ramanuja hit upon a method to turn their minds. He called Dasarathi to his side and said "Son, here is the fountain from which the village folk carry their drinking water for their households. Unnoticed by them, dip your feet into the water and watch the effect." He did as said. The villagers drank the water and their hostility for the new comers turned into civility. They even went so far as to become Ramanuja's followers in Faith. A memento of this incident of the water, magnetized by the holy feet of the best of his disciples, affecting a miracle, is to this day still preserved in the shape of a small shrine erected on the spot. Here are installed the feet of Ramanuja for devout worship by all, and the holy fountain is close by, connected with the shrine by a flight of steps. Every pilgrim descends into it and reverently sprinkles the waters over his head. "The town deserves the name of Saligrama, i.e., the stone symbol of Vishnu," said Ramanuja in joy, on account of this strange event.

Jai Srimannarayana!

### **Vaduganambi or Andhrapurna**

Of the many who embraced the Faith here, the chief was Vaduga-nambi or Andhrapurna, who became a most devout and intimate follower. Ramanuja taught him all the arcane truths of religion for days, in the Temple of the Lord Narasimha, in the outskirts of the village. And here also, it is chronicled, Ramanuja prayed fervently to Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati to put an end to cruel Parantaka or the Chola king and heretic, his tormentor, persecutor and the declared enemy of the Srivaishnava-faith. It would appear that this intense invocation to the Deity produced its effect inasmuch as Chola found a carbuncle-the king's evil-forming on the nape of his neck, festering with worms, and eventually killing him after much torment. Hence he is known as Krimikantha Chola, or worm-necked Chola.

### **Ramanuja in Thondanur: Vittalraya becomes Vishnuvardhana**

Ramanuja now left Saligrama and proceeded eastwards to Tondanur, which seems to have been then the capital or a capital outpost of the Hoysala Ballaka Kings of the Jain persuasion ruling at Dvara- samudra or Helebid. Vithala Deva-Raya was the name of the ruling king and he had his head quarters at the time, at Tondanur. He had a daughter whom an evil spirit had taken possession. The King had called many physicians and magicians to treat her, but it was all in vain, and he was very grieved. There was a good man in the town by name Tondanur-Nambi, who lived by alms. He used to frequent the palace, and oneday finding the queen, Santala-Devi in grief, asked her the cause thereof. She explained that it was due to her daughter's condition, who was possessed by devil because of which she became insane did all antic things. T.Nambi said: "Noble Queen, may I tell you that a great and holy man, by name Ramanuja, has arrived at our town. I have become his disciple; and I have learnt that he once treated a similar case to that of your daughter, and succeeded in delivering a princess from an evil spirit-a Brahma-rakshas. If you will get him to see your daughter with his gracious eyes, I have hopes of a speedy cure for her." The queen was overjoyed at this revelation and communicated it at once to her royal spouse. He said "Lady if Ramanuja will cast the devil out of our daughter and restore her to a sense of shame, we shall fall at his feet and accept him as our guru."

In the mean while, the king intended to give a feast to his caste- men, the Jains who abounded in the country. The queen however warned her husband thus "Lord, you give a feast no doubt, to your castemen, the Jainas. But they will reject your invitation on the score that you lack a finger of your hand." "How can they dare refuse a king's invitation?" said the king irritated, and consulted his kinsmen about it. They said, "King, the Turushka emperor of Delhi, captured you and your country; and set a mark on you to show that you had lost your independence and sovereignty, by depriving you of a finger. But our custom does not allow us to eat in the house of a finger-less man. Did you forget, you are called Bitti-deva, or the finger-Lord? We refuse to eat in your house." This greatly incensed the king and vowed vengeance against them.

The queen approached Bitti-Deva and said, "Lord, why are you concerned thus? Let us

Jai Srimannarayana!

dissociate ourselves from their community and join the Vaishnava ranks by becoming disciples of Ramanuja. Have you forgotten what our Nambi told us about him? And is not our mad daughter also to be set right?" Well said, we shall at once send for Ramanuja," said Bitti-deva, and sent out men to invite Ramanuja to his palace. But when the men delivered their message to Ramanuja, who had camped outside the town limits, he told them he would not plant his foot in kings' cities. Nambi was there at the time. He rose and falling before Ramanuja, pleaded thus, "Holy Sire, we pray to you not to be so determined, but enter the king's house. He will be an invaluable gain to our faith. Melukote or Tiru-Narayana-puram, about which you have been dreaming, is situated in this king's dominions. Your desire is to restore this old and forgotten place of worship. To do this we want a king to advocate the cause. So we earnestly pray you not to reject the king's overtures. Enter his house and shower on him your graces." Ramanuja was won by this persuasion and immediately made his entry into the city and the king's mansion. Bitti-deva was elated with joy, and as the holy sage advanced, he ran to him and threw himself at his feet. Ramanuja made kind inquires, and entering the royal apartments was told the sad plight in which the king's daughter was.

He commanded his disciples to have the girl brought before him and sprinkle her with the water made holy by the washing of his feet. This they did. And lo, the evil spirit left her; she was no more crazy but returned to a sense of shame, ran into the inner apartments and shrouding herself in garments, returned and fell before Ramanuja, saying: "Holy Saint, you are no ordinary mortal. You are a celestial being descended from heaven. Else I should not have recovered. Praise be to you. I bow to you." Vitthala-Deva was simply carried out of himself on witnessing these miracles, and needless to say, at once became a disciple of Ramanuja, and devoted himself to his service for ever. Ramanuja bestowed on him the name of Vishnu-Vardhana-Raya.

### **Ramanuja's Celestial Nature – Jains' Defeat**

The Jains rose in revolt against Ramanuja. It is said that a body of 12,000 of them marched to Ramanuja, who had taken his abode in Lord Nrisimha's temple at Tondanur, and demanded of him that he should first argue with them on religion and philosophy, before he interfered with their king. Ramanuja seeing this tremendous onslaught of an infuriated crowd, thought to himself thus:- "In order to escape from lightning, I have courted thunder; fearing the scorpion, I have fallen a victim to the fangs of a cobra; breaking away from fetters, I have thrust myself into stocks. What is the way now?" Nambi, finding his guru thus embarrassed, said, "Holy Sir, you are no ordinary mortal. Is not it needed while at such a crisis to reveal your true celestial nature? May not all men realize your greatness and be saved?" Ramanuja, saying, "Let it be so then," retired into an ante-chamber in the temple, and commanding a curtain to be hung up between him and the crowd, became a thousand headed serpent, and argued with the Jaina disputants in a thousand ways, vanquishing them completely. This incident is memorialized to this day by means of a painting of Ramanuja, over-shadowed by the thousand heads of Sesha, on a wall in the Nrisimha temple, existing to this day in good repair in Tondanur (called

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Chaturvedi-mangalam.) Most of them embraced the Vaishnava faith by becoming the disciples of Ramanuja. Vishnu-Vardhana, the king of the Poyasala (Hoysala) country became more and more attached to Ramanuja. Out of the materials of Jain temples pulled down, he got a tank constructed, intercepting the drainage of the river Yadava coming down from Melukote or Yadavagiri, 10 miles to the north.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### **MELUKOTE OR SRI NARAYANAPURAM – Ramanuja donning the saffron robes again**

Ramanuja was thus employed. He not only expounded the profound truths of the Vedanta in Nrisimha's temple at Tondanur, but with those truths converted thousands of alien faiths to the royal roads of Vedantic Vaishnavism. While thus employed he ran short of Tiruman, or the holy white earth, with which Srivaishnavas are required to illumine their foreheads. To go without this distinguishing mark is the greatest misfortune to Sri-Vaishnavas. Naturally therefore Ramanuja was much concerned. He had a dream in which Lord Sri Narayana of Melukote appeared and spoke thus "I am very near you, Ramanuja, on the Yadugiri hill, awaiting your arrival; and there you shall have your Tiruman also as well. Come soon." Ramanuja awoke and related his wonderful dream to all his comrades, and sending for Vishnu-Vardhana, the king, delivered to him the message. The king marvelled and immediately ordered gangs of men to clear the forests in the direction indicated by Ramanuja, and as Ramanuja advanced, the king devoutly followed him behind. Steadily progressing thus, they arrived at the foot of the Yadugiri hill, and ascending it, arrived at the fountain called Vedapushkarini, and sighting the holy slab, (paridhanasila), where of yore Dattatreya had worn his ascetic robes, Ramanuja bathed in the fountain and laying aside Kuresa's white robes, worn when leaving Srirangam, put on his colored ascetic robes. The date of entry into Yadugiri is chronicled as the Bahudhanya year, in the month of Tai (or about 1090 A.D., or when Ramanuja was about 80 years of age). From the Veda-pushkarini, they silently walked forward in search of where Lord Narayana (i.e. His idol) lay hidden. They failed that day to find the place. Ramanuja however saw in a vision vouchsafed to him that He lay covered up in an ant-hill, between a Champaka and a Vakula- tree on either side, and to the south-west corner of the Kalyani-pond, and that the ant-hill was overgrown with the sacred basil. He also saw that the place where tiruman was deposited lay to the north-west corner of the same Kalyani-pond, and he also heard as if Narayana telling him that fragments of basil leave would be strewn along the path which lay between Ramanuja and the places indicated.

### **Thirunarayana**

Ramanuja awoke from his reverie and followed the directions given. This led to Kalyani, and

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

thence on to the ant-hill. This was covered with basil as prophesied. Ramanuja was transported with joy and prostrating himself before the place, removed the earth, and lo, the statue of Narayana was found underneath. Inexpressible joy animated the devout band who were privileged to be present on this most auspicious and blissful occasion; and the divine sight so intoxicated them that they deliriously danced, chanted, praised, sent forth peals of hand clappings and with king Vishnua-Vardhana in their midst, celebrated the occasion with a blast of trumpets and a beat of tom-toms and a burst of instrumental and other music- all, a united out burst and demonstration of the intense spiritual glow in which they had become enveloped by an event. It was the most unusual and extra ordinary event in the annals of mankind. Pails of milk were brought and emptied over the HolyIdol followed by a detail of ritual prescribed by the Pancharatra Sastra. Ramanuja himself personally worshipped the Deity for three days, and Narayana was thus reinstated after ages of oblivion, and the decad of St. Nammazhvar, beginning with oru-nayakam (Tiruvaymozhi,V-i), was dedicated to this God, inasmuch as Ramanuja was the rightful inheritor of all the spiritual wealth of the apostles preceeding him, and was thus the authority to interpret forgotten traditions.

### **Holy Clay for Thirumani**

Ramanuja next proceeded to the north-west corner of the Kalyani-pond, and made a furrow on the ground with his holy staff. It revealed white beds of clay, and thus was another act of his vision realized, to the marvel of all present. Ramanuja thus obtained the holy earth he wanted, (described in the begining of this Chapter) with which he signed himself on the twelve parts of the body prescibed, and to his great delectation.

### **Ramapriya – Selva-ppillai**

The jungle over the summit of the Melukota (Yadavagiri) hill was cleared away, streets were aligned, rows of houses built, a temple erected for Lord Narayana over the ant-hill; and a series of festivals, monthly, annual and so on were instituted. But an utsava (processional) image was wanting - an image cast of a compound of five select metals in fixed proportions. But this was difficult of accomplishment, and Ramanuja fell to musing deeply as to how this difficulty was to be overcome. He was again given a vision, in which Narayana appeared to him and spoke thus, "Ramanuja, our moveable representative is alive, named Rama Priya, which is now in Delhi with the Turk Emmadu Raya. Proceed there and bring it. Ramanuja accordingly made preparations and journeyed all the way to Delhi and there meeting the Raya or king, prevailed upon him to grant his request. The Turk king gave orders that Ramanuja be taken to the apartments where his plundered treasures were hoarded. There were many idols, but Ramanuja failed to find among them Ramapriya; and he fell into a reverie as he pondered how to trace it. He was given a dream in which Ramapriya appeared and said, "I am with the daughter of the king. She has made a plaything of me. To her dallyings and caresses, I am a living person. Come there and find me." Ramanuja awoke and reported to the king that the idol he sought was with the

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Sultani. The king's curiosity was roused at the revelations, a foreign Sanyasin of a different faith was making to him; and not only curiosity but respect and adoration for the holy saint. The King took the Sanyasin Ramanuja into the queen's palace, where no other man dared enter; and wonderful to relate, Ramapriya was there found, fondled by the Sultani, his daughter, to whom He played the husband. Ramanuja, entering, called Him by His name, and lo, the Image jumped down from the couch on which the Sultani had placed Him, and walked to where Ramanuja stood, in all the glory and grace of an incarnated deity, embellished according to all the ideals of taste natural to Aryan imagination. Ramanuja embraced the advancing Divine Beauty with all the fondness of a parent finding his long-lost son; and in commemoration of the discovery, called him by the endearing name of Selva-p-pillai, which in Samskrit is Sampatkumara, by which name the image is still called. The king, who witnessed all this procedure, was simply astonished beyond measure, and loading Ramanuja with gifts and honors, sent him back from the scene of his holy mission.

The daughter Sultani would not bear the separation from the, to her, living doll. She wanted it back for herself. But the father said: "It is their god, daughter; how can we claim Him?" "Then," cried the Sultani piteously to her father: "Send me with my God." "Most cheerfully," said the father, and allowed her to depart with untold wealth and other things, telling Ramanuja, "Holy hermit, your God goes not alone, but with a wife as well - a precious wife. I consign her to your care." Ramanuja proceeded with his Divine treasure, and reached Yadavagiri in due time. Here he inaugurated Sampatkumara in all ceremony, and instituted all the festivals which must be celebrated throughout the year, with the necessary establishment to conduct them for all time to come.

### **Yathisaila**

And Ramanuja assured all who made Yadavagiri their holy residence, that they would be entitled to attain to the same spiritual state as him. By the name Narayanadri in the Krutha-age, Vedadri in the Threta-age, and Yadavadri or Yadavagiri in Dvapara age is the holy hill of Melukote known, and in the Kali-age, as having been restored by the Yati (ascetic) Ramanuja, it is called Yati-Saila. Thus it is written in Satyata-Samhita (pancharatra).

### **Ramanuja - Harijans**

[In those days, in the stupendous work involved in the institution of this Holy shrine, the Panchamas or the Pariahs or those low-caste Hindus who are downgraded to a place in the Hindu Society were of great help to Sri Ramanuja. He gave them the title of 'Tirukkulattar' or the 'Blessed Descendants', and further allowed them the privilege of entering into the Holy Temples to certain limites, viz., the outer gate near the altar (Dhvaja sthambha or Bali pitha) this practice remaining in force even up to this day, in the Temples of Srirangam, Melukote and Belur. They are allowed to bathe in the Holy Ponds attached to the Temples. Ramanuja opened

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

the doors of religious instructions for these classes as well as certain modes of ritual and other privileges peculiar to Sri Vaishnaas, such as the Pancha-Samskara or the Five Holy Vaishnava Sacraments.

It is thus evident how seriously had Ramanuja bethought of elevating the low-classes as regards their eligibility for salvation. Ramanuja had already confirmed too in his own days, what his predecessors had ordained – the enshrinement of saints in the Temples to whatever caste they might belong.

## VICTORY OVER BAUDDHAS

Ramanuja also established a monastery of his at Yati-saila, called the Yatiraja-math, where a Sanyasin is always to live and manage the affairs of the Fane. The building still exists intact, and the monastery has had a line of illustrious successors to this day. An old badari tree still lives in it. During the time Ramanuja was so installed in his high pontificate, he is said to have gone to Padmagiri, and engaged there with the Bauddhas in a philosophical controversy. He succeeded in subjugating the atheists.

## CHAPTER XXX CHOLA'S PERSECUTIONS KURESA & MAHAPURNA'S EYES PLUCKED

Ramanuja stayed in the Mysore Country, with his head-quarters at Sri Narayanapura (Melukote) for 12 yrs. All this time he had no news of what events transpired at Srirangam, which he had left owing to the Saivite king Krimikantha-Chola's persecutions. Now a Sri Vaishnava arrived, and fell with his face flat before Ramanuja. Raising him, Ramanuja eagerly inquired, "Is all going on well with Lord Ranga and all His holy affairs?" "All is well, Sir," said he, "Save that you are very much missed." "But," asked Ramanuja with a fluttering heart, "How did Kuresa and Mahapurna fare who were forced to appear before the apostate Chola?" "Sir," he began, "the two good men, as you are aware were taken to Chola's presence, and Chola commanded them to set their signatures to the written declaration:

*'No higher power than Siva exists.'* But Kuresa poured out before him voluminous authorities from the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis and Puranas, proving that:

- Narayana was the Highest God, being the Cause of the cosmos
- Its author for creation, sustention, and dissolution. Therefore the only 'Object of worship and contemplation'.
- Chaturmukha Brahma and Rudra were respectively His son and grandson and cited other verses to demonstrate his position.

But Chola after listening to all this said in angry tones, "Look here, you are indeed a very clever

Jai Srimannarayana!

person, and therefore capable of interpreting authoritative texts to suit your own preconceived prejudices. I will not hear all this. Here is my circular containing the statement: 'There is none higher than Siva.' I command you to sign it without another word of protest." Kuresa took the paper, but before attaching his signature thereto, wrote:

**'Dronam asthi tatah param,'** and then signed his name under it. The meaning of this passage is: "But Drona is higher than that." This, and **"Sivat parataram nasti,"** meaning: 'there is no higher than Siva,' together make a couplet in Sanskrit verse. Taken together, they read, "There is no higher than Siva; but Drona is higher than that (Siva)." By this Kuresa implicated a pun on the terms Siva and Drona; Siva meaning a small measure, and Drona, a greater measure. This play on words was taken as a slight and affront which necessarily threw the king into a rage. He exclaimed: "Pull out the eyes of this daring jester." "But" exclaimed Kuresa in return, "You need not take that trouble; I will do that act with my own hands, for my eyes ought not to remain after seeing a sinner like you." A martyr to the cause of Vaishnavism, Kuresa, so saying, gouged out his eyes, striking terror into all who witnessed this blood-curdling scene. The cruel king now turned to the venerable old acharya Mahapurna, and cried "Now, Sir, will you sign this circular or no?" Purna said he could not, supporting his refusal by citations from various scriptures. On this, the king commanded his soldiers to catch the dissenter and pluck out his eyes. This cruelty having been inflicted the king drove the two martyrs out of his palace.

## **PURNA LEAVES BODY**

Blood streamed out of the eye-less cavities of old Mahapurna, and the poignant agony consequent may be better imagined than described. Purna's daughter Attuzhay-ammal had followed the martyrs unobserved. When they emerged from the palace with blood dripping and drenching their persons, she ran to them, and leading them by their hands, passed out of sight, and comforted and consoled them as best as she could, wiping their bloody faces, bathing with water, and thus doing her best to stop the blood and alleviate their terrible sufferings. Kuresa was middle-aged, and had besides a strong will, which he further strengthened by the reflection:

"Ah, God, what grace of Yours indeed that you have chosen me as your vessel to give eye for eye" the second eye meaning faith-the Vaishnava faith.

Thus he bore the pain with courage, superhuman. But Purna was in his declining years and tottering as he was in the weakness of old age, found the pain beyond his powers of endurance. He therefore laid himself down on the way in the open, his head resting on the lap of Kuresa; and his feet on his poor daughter's lap. "Holy Sir", said, they to him, "What cruel fate has befallen us, and you in particular. Your birth-place is Srirangam, your God is Ranga, and your disciple is Ramanuja himself; and yet to think that destiny should have ordained your grave in an out-of-the way field near Gangaikonda-chozha-puram! Does this cause you grief?" To this, Purna said, "My beloved children, have you not heard that 'Wherever a Vaishnava may chance to die, there God is present with him' even as Blessed Rama was present at the dying of Jatayu,

Jai Srimannarayana!

in the wilderness” And have you not heard that, “The best place for a Vaishnava to die is on a Vaishnava’s lap or in a Vaishnava’s house? And besides this is a holy land too where I am dying, for it is where our holy ancestors Nathamuni and Kurugai-kaval-appan died. Also know that if we grieve, because we did not die at Srirangam itself, all our posterity will think that for salvation, death in Srirangam alone is necessary. No, no, our rule is that a good soul, which has surrendered to God (prapanna) may meet his death anywhere, and yet be sure of God beside him there.” So speaking, Mahapurna expired with his last thoughts lovingly fixed on Yamunacharya, his Guru and sped to ineffable Rest in the bosom of God.

According to custom, Purna had to be cremated with due ceremony and honors. There came some travelers and said: “O man, you have a corpse, and we help those who are abandoned by (A place called Pasupati Koil, about 7 miles from Kandiur (Tanjore District) is pointed out as the place where Mahapurna breathed his last) all as you evidently are.” Kuresa cried, “Sirs, God is with us; so proceed on your way and succour those who are really abandoned. Then those people, after anaattha prethas (helpless corpses) went their way. And now turned up suddenly Srivaishnavas, people of Kuresa’s own faith, by the help of whom he cremated Purna by the special rite called the Brahma-medha.

Kuresa was now gently led to a shelter, and after resting there for a while, after the tremendous trials he had undergone, was brought to Srirangam by night-marches to elude pursuit by the king’s emissaries, if he still did intend to persecute the fugitives. Kuresa was spending weary days lamenting over what had happened, and grieving that he was denied the privilege of dying with the veteran Mahapurna.

Oneday, Kuresa desired to visit Lord Ranga, for the first time after the chapter of disastrous events related above. Being blind, he slowly groped his way to the shrine. But king Chola had strictly decreed by his royal mandate that none should be allowed to enter it, who was a follower of Ramanuja. When then Kuresa was about to step into the Temple, the guards said, “Sire, our orders are strict. No one belonging to Ramanuja is to be admitted. But you are a good man par excellence, and so we make of you an exception. Enter, but pray make an avowal that you have split from Ramanuja.” On hearing this, Kuresa closed his ears and said: “Good guards, what have I heard? If I have to secede from Ramanuja, and recant as you wish, I had better give up this God Ranga. Without Ramanuja, no God exists for me.” So saying, Kuresa groped his way back, bent with grief, and fell on the ground weeping, uttering, in despairing tones, the holy verses of saints. Soonafter, he left Srirangam, with his two children, to Tirumalirunjolai (near Madura) to spend his days there in grief and solitude.

Such was the narrative given by the guest who had arrived at Melukote from Srirangam. Ramanuja listened to the bitter tale, which was to him like molten lead poured into his ears. With difficulty he suppressed his rising emotions; and at last, containing himself no longer, burst into a passion of grief, dropped on the ground like a felled tree and rolled in the dust, wetting it with his burning tears. His disciples gathered round him and did their best to console

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

him. And he resigned himself at last, thanking God that Kuresa at least was alive, whom thus he had yet a chance to see, though the thought of the loss of his eyes was to him unbearable.

Mahapurna, being his Guru, all the sacraments to be celebrated after death were duly preformed such as Srichurna paripalana, and memorial verses were dedicated to him.

Ramanuja's heart was wrung with agony. He called M.M. Andan to his side, and directed him to proceed to Srirangam, carrying condolences and a budget of news to Kuresa, and return with all the intelligence of that place; and engaged himself more vigorously than ever in discourses on the vedantha which he delivered to his devoted audiences.

### **Ramanuja's Gurus Leave the World**

About this time, Goshti-purna, one of the Gurus of Ramanuja, also died. His diciples gathered round him and asked him what were his thoughts in his last moments. He said he was thinking of his Guru Yamunacharya, and the meaning of his verse:-

'O Rama Great, who forgave the miscreant Kaka!

O Krishna Great, who forgave the miscreant Chaitya! How can my sin persist against such grace of Yours?'

So saying Purna died. And Terk-Azhvar, his son, performed all the funeral ceremonies.

Memorial verses were dedicated to him.

Tirumalai-Andan, Tiruvarangapperumal-Araiyar, Srisaila purna, and Kanchipurna, the other gurus of Ramanuja also soared to the Eternal Regions, at this time; and memorial verses were dedicated to them as custom demanded.

### **Kanchipurna**

It was a very darknight at the close of a day, when Kanchipurna had finished his services to Lord Varada, and had to go home. A torch-bearer by name Arulalan attached to the Temple was found on the premises. Purna begged of him to conduct him back to his retreat lighting the dark way with his torch. But he excused himself saying he was much tired that day, and slipped away, to sleep snug in a corner. Purna thought he would find his way in the pitch-dark night as best as he could. But hardly had he crossed the threshold of the Temple-gate, when there was found a torch bearer with his torch, ready to conduct him home. Purna was glad that the man had kindly changed his mind for his sake. The next morning, however, when Purna came to the Temple to do the round of his duties, the torch-bearer ran towards him, and with a look of great repentance, fell at his feet craving pardon for his refusal, the previous night, to light him home. Purna was taken aback at this demonstration, for he had him actually the previous night. It now however flashed upon his mind that it must have been Lord Varada Himself after all (whose Tamil name is Arlualan also), who had personated the torch-bearer. With joy bubbling in his breast at this additional evidence of God's love for his humble - votaries, he dismissed the

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

real torch-bearer, of course forgiving him.

A tradition also has been handed down, with regard to Arulalan that he was the favorite of Kanchipurna, so much so that he daily received from the latter the remains of Varada offered food in the temple, after having been eaten by him. Oneday Purna gave the food on a leaf to Arulalan. Somehow a leaf had found its way into one of the holy vessels with which food was offered to Lord Varada; and Purna was shown this. He identified it with the leaf he had given to Arulalan; and the latter, when asked, said he could not explain how it found its way into the shrine and into a holy vessel. Of course the temple-officials resolved to perform a great purificatory ceremony. But Lord Varada declared to them that he would brook no such ceremony, inasmuch as Arulalan was such a dear servant of his, and Purna was a sacred person, whose touch of the food and Arulalan's touch of it again made the leaf so holy that he would rather have the day's food served to him with the leaf. This was accordingly done and no purificatory ritual customarily binding was gone through. It is said that Ramanuja had come to learn the extraordinary sanctity of Purna and of all that concerned him and of the esteem in which Lord Varada held him. It was on this account Ramanuja had been eager to partake of the food first taken by Purna. It was for this purpose, it may be remembered, that Ramanuja invited Kanchipurna to his house; but he was thwarted in the design by the indiscretion of his wife.

### **CHAPTER XXXI RAMANUJA'S RETURN TO SRIRANGAM**

M.M. Andan, who was sent by Ramanuja to Srirangam, to meet Kuresa, arrived there and paid his obeisance to him. Kuresa who is now blind, fell into an ecstasy and looked upon Andan as Ramanuja himself. He hurriedly asked Andan, very anxious to know, how Ramanuja was doing. Andan replied, "He is doing good. But his grief at what has happened here and especially at the loss of your eyes, is inconsolable. He has sent me to convey to you his heart felt sympathies." "Good," said Kuresa, "but inform my master that so long as his life has been saved from the wicked Chola, the loss of my eyes is of no importance because his life is the most precious that sustains the world and strengthens it."

News arrived at this time that king Chola had died of a carbuncle on his neck, infested with worms. Andan, to make sure of this news, travelled to Gangai-Konda- Chozhapuram. Having confirmed of the glad news, Andan hurried on to Melukote, taking with him Ammangiammal, whom he met on his way.

In due course they arrived at Melukote. At that time, Ramanuja was busy bathing in the holy pond Kalyani. Andan fell before him, shedding tears of joy, told him the news of Chola's death.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Ramanuja was very happy at the death of the sworn enemy of his Faith, and raising up the two disciples, embraced them, himself shedding tears of joy and said, 'O faithful sons, how far you have travelled, bearing so many hardships simply to give me this joyful message! How best can I reward you? The best that I can give you is the Holy Dvaya-mantra. Receive it.' So saying, he initiated them with the Holy Manthra. Addressing the group of followers that assembled there he said, "O my faithful, our bitterest foe is gone. Our faith has stood this most severe and crucial trial. This holy pond Kalyani is really Kalyani, auspicious, and this Maruti-Andan is really maruti, Hanuman." "Yes," all cried jubilantly. They all climbed the sacred Hill of Lord Nrusimha, rising from the edge of the pond. Prostrating himself before Nrusima, Ramanuja praised him thus: "O Slayer of Hiranya, even now you ended the king Chola, the demon. You saved your devotee Prahlada then, you have saved Kuresa now."

Tirtha and prasada were given to Ramanuja and the devotees. They all descended the hill, and entering the sanctum sactorum of Lord Narayana, asked leave of Him to return to Srirangam, as his work was completed. Narayana gave no answer for a long time. Then Ramanuja urged his request again, "Almighty! Ranganatha's command was that I should stay forever in Srirangam. Owing to unexpected calamities, I was forced to leave the place. Now that all has been accomplished here, may I not return?" Lord Narayana's voice now came: "Be it so, then."

Ramanuja had established in Melukote, fifty-two officers to take care of Narayana. These officers, on hearing that Ramanuja was about to leave them, fallen at his feet weeping, "Holy Sire, how can we live without you?" Ramanuja raised them up lovingly and wiped off their tears, and said, "Take heart, sons I shall let an image be cast after my own likeness, and leave it here, filled with my power. It shall answer all your purposes. Further, I lay it on you all to take care of our Sampathkumara brought from Delhi. He is like my son standing near the brink of a well. Such is my love for Him. See to the proper discharge of all the sacred functions connected with Narayana's Temple. See that you do not cheat God of what is due to Him, or cheat each other. Always remain friendly to one another, and never lag behind to perform the necessary services to God whom we have installed in this country."

Leaving behind a detailed code of temple-procedure, he left Melukote, with a heavy heart for leaving his beloved Sampatkumara and his disciples. Ramanuja's disciples too bid him farewell sorrowfully to part with their cherished master and pontiff. Even the townsfolk did not allow him to depart quietly. After he had gone some way forward, they waylaid him and cried, "Sir, how can we be sure you are in your Image? Give us evidences; else you cannot leave us in bereavement." "Beloved men," said he, "Go back, stand before my image and call me by my name." They ran back and did so. "Ramanuja, our Lord!" they cried." "Yes, I am here and forever" came the voice from the Image. They were satisfied, and running back to Ramanuja, fell before him and after an outburst of grief and of gratitude, and consolation by Ramanuja, he was allowed to bid adieu to them all.

In rapid marches - love for Sampathkumara restraining him, while the prospect of seeing Lord

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Ranga urging him forward- he arrived at the banks of Kaveri at Srirangam. He stopped there to bathe and decorate himself with the twelve holy marks and make other preparations before putting his foot on the sacred land. In the meanwhile, the officers of Srirangam were apprised of his arrival. Their joy was indescribable. They all ran up to him in breathless excitement, and welcomed him back home. After having been away for nearly twenty long years, he was now making triumphal entry in the midst of a bustling crowd, - all eyes and hearts turned to him - after having undergone so many hardships and trials for the Faith. A ceremonial entry was made into the sanctum sanctorum of Ranga, with prostrations at every step. "Son," said the Lord, opening His mouth, "You have been away from Us for too long; sure You must be very tired." "Merciful God," replied Ramanuja, "while You are there with Divine Mother by your side, there is no fatigue to me or all the universe put together." Ranga was pleased and commanded tirtha and prasada to be given, and granted him leave to go and join his monastery and rest after his toils and trails.

But as Ramanuja threaded his way round the streets of Srirangam where he gladly witnessed the charming scene which he had long missed, his thoughts were occupied with Kuresa. The first thing that he did was to step into his dwelling. Of course blind Kuresa, who had by then returned from Tirumalirunjolai (near Mathura), was informed of his master's return. He heard Ramanuja's footsteps, rushed forward from his door, and prostrating himself, firmly, clasped Ramanuja's feet, and bathed them in a flood of tears, and lay there speechless like one bewitched and stricken. Ramanuja was himself greatly moved. He gently lifted up Kuresa, and firmly embracing him, remained speechless by the mingled sentiments of joy and grief shaking the very foundations of his soul. With great difficulty, with tear filled eyes and a choked voice, spoke the one phrase: "Kuresa, you have given your eye-the eye of our faith - for the faith!" Kuresa who had lost his voice so long, recovered somewhat, and repented saying he must have committed some sin unknowingly. Ramanuja consoled him that he was not the one to do any such thing. Lovingly leading him by the hand took him to his monastery.

## **CHAPTER XXXII SHORT EXCURSIONS AND INCIDENTS**

After twelve (or some say fourteen) years of absence, Ramanuja had returned to his central scene, the center of his operations. The faithful gathered round him. Love and veneration for him had multiplied and deepened; and they all said, "Worshipful master, by the loss of Mahapurna, a vacuum has been created in our hearts, and by the loss of our Kuresa's eyes, a wound. You are the soothing balm to our Kuresa's eyes and to our difficulties. Listen, master, the traitor Chola not only harassed us and our leaders, but also carried his vandalism to great excess by destroying our Vaishnava temples everywhere. He had thus demolished the Vishnu Images in Chithrakuta, - about which you shall hear more, and was on his way to Srirangam to do the same. But when he halted for the night in a village, he was suddenly taken ill, a fatal sore

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

burst out on his neck, and killed him after terrible suffering. Srirangam, the center of our faith, was thus miraculously saved. Listen now to what happened at Chithrakuta (Chidambaram). The place, as you are aware, is filled with Saivas, and their leader Chola, had torn up Lord Govindaraja from His seat both the moola (main) and the usthava deities (Images), and had directed their being thrown into the sea. But there was a courtesan by name Tilya (or Tillai) who is a staunch Vaishnava devotee. She managed to divert the king's attention at the time, so far as to enable the Vaishnava devotees of the place to avert the sea-grave for their Lord, and secretly make a way with Him to Tirupati up in the north."

Ramanuja heard all this horrendous tale with a troubled heart, and hot tears rolled down his cheeks. "Beloved disciples, take heart and be comforted, I will set matters right." So saying, he again girded himself up for action, though now very old and exhausted. "Start," commanded he, "let us go to Venkatesa." So they all went to Tirupathi, arriving at which place, Ramanuja had a temple built at the foot of the hill, by the help of a Yadava-Raja or Kattiyadeva, and had Lord Govindaraja of Chitrakuta installed there. He called Him by the name Tillai-Govindaraya, and created a town round the Temple, Govindaraja-pattana (padapuri), which is still flourishing at the present time. He then ascended the High Holy Hill of Tirupati to pay his homage to the Lord Venkatesa. Here, Ramanuja imparted the Art of worshipping God in His Images (Mode of Aradhana) - called the Nitya-Grantha to his two disciples Kuresa and Hanumatdasa. There was another disciple Vangipurattu Nambi, to whom he had promised this knowledge for some time, but there was no opportunity so far. As Ramanuja was concluding his instructions, V. P. Nambi suddenly presented himself before him, and Ramanuja felt delicate because he revealed the secrets to some people while he had not done so to those whom he had earlier promised. But Ramanuja explained to Nambi thus, "Listen, Nambi! Till now I myself could not understand how Lord Krishna who is God all-powerful, submitted himself to be bound by a rope by an ordinary woman Yasoda. Today I find the solution inasmuch as - by the persistence of my disciples Kuresa and Hanumat Das, my own strong will bent to impart knowledge to them though I had promised you first. My own experience then, - of how supplication made my own will to give in, - provides me with the key - 'how even God will allow his resolve to melt before the fire of His votaries' (enthusiastic followers') love." So saying, he gave the promised knowledge to Nambi.

Ramanuja took leave of the Lord and descending the Holy Hill, journeyed to Srirangam via Kanchi. There, the High Pontiff preached to crowded audiences who received them, it is said, as pleasant showers that soothed their parched souls to heavenly rest.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

**CH. XXXII**  
**TEMPLE ADMINISTRATION**  
**KURESA'S PRAYER FOR EYE SIGHT**

Kulottunga Chola II (1128-1158 ?) Or Vikrama-Chola (1113- 1128) who perhaps was also called Kulottunga, the son of Krimikantha-Chola was a pro-Vaishnavite. He had tried his best to convince his father of the futility of his scheming against the Vaishnavas. He warned him that how much ever he tried to repress the vaishnavas by demolishing their temples on earth, he could never suppress the Ramayana and the Mahabharata their strong holds on earth. He also had suffered reverses of fortune on account of the sins of his father. On hearing of Ramanuja's arrival, left to Srirangam in haste, taking with him the Pandya and Chera kings. Approaching Ramanuja, he fell at his feet and craved pardon for his father's faults. Large-hearted Ramanuja granted it at once; and took Kulottunga, by his request, into the Vaishnava fold by administering due sacraments and made him a disciple of Dasarathi. \“Swami! I will not exercise any jurisdiction over the temples hereafter. I pray you to assume the entire control yourself from this day.” Ramanuja agreed to it, and calling Dasarathi, had the entire administration of the Temple formally bestowed on him as a gift in the manner prescribed by the Sastras. It is writtern in the work, called Koil-ozhugu, that a stone inscripton to this effect was installed at the Arya-bhattal gate. Ramanuja was more than hundred years then.

Ramanuja was sore at heart at Kuresa's becoming blind. Oneday, he called him anxiously to his side and said, “Son! Beloved! Lord Varada of Kanchi is, as we know, a ready granter of wishes. I want you to sing a hymn to Him praying to bestow your sight again.” He insisted on Kuresa again and again.” “Sir,” submitted Kuresa,” this material sight, I desire not.”

“Beloved, do as I desire,” often exhorted Ramanuja. Kuresa accordingly sang the hymn known as Varadaraja Stava-one of the five stavas- beginning with:

“Hari! Who deck the top of the Hasti-Hill, whom the Vedas declare as to have neither equal nor superior, bless me.’ And in the twenty third stanza, he prayed,

“Hasti-Lord of bluish hue! Recliner on Ananta! I pray to you to ever let my sight see your bewitching beauty.’ That very night, the Lord appeared in his dream and said, “Granted,” Kuresa rose next morning with a joyful heart, and after performing the day's ablutions, finished the stave. He went to Ramanuja, repeated before him the whole stava, and said:- “Sire, the previous night, the Lord appeared in my dream and he has granted me such spiritual sight as is able ever to enjoy his Beatific Vision - Vision such as obtains in Vaikuntha, according to the verse -

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

In that Vaikuntha, beyond the visible universe, the Immortals see the Eternal Lord with their spiritual eyes.

“My beloved, that is not what I want; come let us proceed to Lord Varada,” said Ramanuja, annoyed, and went with him to Kanchi, and bade him repeat the Stava. Kuresa began and as he was proceeding, Ramanuja was obliged to leave the place for a few minutes on some business. But before he returned, Kuresa had gone to the end of his Stava; and Lord Varada having appeared and bidden him to ask what he wanted, he had absent-mindedly prayed that Naluran might be saved even as he might be saved. ‘Be it so,’ said the Lord. By this time Ramanuja ran in, and learning what had taken place in his absence, chided Kuresa thus, “Son, you have acted contrary to my wishes. You have spoilt matters. Oh Lord, Please grant my prayer that Kuresa regain (physical) sight?” The Lord was moved at this earnest appeal of Ramanuja, and spoke thus: “We grant him that sight; but except Me and you, he shall see no other material object.” Ramanuja was at least satisfied with this, and immediately put Kuresa to test by asking him to look at Lord Varada, and describe Him. Kuresa did so. ‘And now describe me’, he asked next. Kuresa, his face lit up with heavenly joy, described his preceptor’s person accurately in all detail. Ramanuja was satisfied and taking leave of the Lord, returned to Srirangam.

Ramanuja was, after his return, engaged with his disciples, in reading Andal’s Hymn book, the Naycchiyar Tirumozhi and coming to verses IX.6 and 7: Narunarum and Inruvandu, in which Saintess declared that “she would place before the Lord Sundararaja of Tirumalirunjolai, one hundred vessels of nectarous pudding; and if He but came down and ate it all, she would place a hundred thousand more.” Ramanuja stopped at this and looking at his disciples, said, “Why do not we proceed to the Holy Shrine at once and carry out her wish?” So saying, they all rose and journeyed to the place, and spread a great feast before the Deity. From there Ramanuja proceeded to Srivilliputturu, the birth-place of Andal and as he was standing before her, lost in devotion, the Saintess, by the voice of her priest on duty, conferred upon him the title of ‘Koil-annar.’ Ramanuja next proceeded to Tirunagari of Nammazhvar. From Tirunagari, Ramanuja paid a visit to Tirukkolor, about two miles north of it, the birthplace of St. Madhurakavi. As he was proceeding, he met a damsel by name Tiruk- kolor Ammai coming from Tirukkolor. From where are you coming?” he asked her. “From Tirukkolor,” she said. To this, Ramanuja chidingly said, “I wonder, lady, you should not come from a Holy Place, into which, according to the verses of Nammazhvar, everyone should enter?” “To this, Ammai gave the following long reply,

Holy Sir! Who am I to deserve to live in such a Holy Place?

For,

Did I go on such a holy mission as Akrura?

Did I entertain in my house like Vidura?

Did I cast off my body like the Rishi’s wife?

Did I cause a Ravana to be killed like Sita?

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Did I raise the dead like Tondaman?  
Did I offer a corpse like Ghantakarna?  
Did I adorn (a Sita) like Anasuya?  
Did I seek for a Father like Dhruva?  
Did I repeat the Three-lettered name like Kshatra bandhu?  
Did I get trodden like Ahalya?  
Did I ripen, while yet raw, like Andal?  
Did I establish (or proclaim) Narayana like Periyazhvar?  
Did I ransack religions like St. Tirumazhisai?  
Did I know Him as “the Subtlest” like St. Nammazhvar?  
Did I say anything like St. Kulasekhara?  
Did I say, “I pledge my word” like Sri Krushna?  
Did I give clues (to Rama), like Kabandha?  
Did I reveal secrets like Trijata?  
Did I recognize God (in Rama) like Mandodari?  
Did I say: “I know You,” like Visvamithra?  
Did I say: “I know of no other God,” like Madhurakavi?  
Did I give birth to a God like Devaki?  
Did I say, “Conceal Your discus,” like Vasudeva?  
Did I bring up a Cowherd like Yasoda?  
Did I do any service like the squirrels?  
Did I offer fried rice like Kuchela?  
Did I bestow weapons like Agasthya?  
Could I enter the royal palace like Sanjaya?  
Could I with my work obtain bliss like Janaka?  
Did I bite the toe and see Him like Tirumangai Azhwar?  
Did I become the umbrella and so on, like AdiSesha?  
Did I carry Him, like Garuthman?  
Did I keep promise, like Nam-paduvan?  
Did I behold God in a nook, like the First three Azhvars?  
Did I guard two princes, like Valmiki?  
Did I offer garlands, like Tondaradippodi?  
Did I obtain truths, like Tirukkacchinambi?  
Was I immersed meditating on God, like Tiruppanazhvar?  
Did I say “Send” like Vasishtha?  
Did I worship sandals, like Kongilpiratti?  
Did I offer clay-flowers, like Kuruvanambi?  
Did I surrender: “Oh: The Origin!” like Gajendra?  
Did I offer scents, like the hunchback Kubja?  
Did I offer garlands, like Ma:la:ka:ra?  
Did I keep my assigned place, like Bharata?  
Did I serve like Lakshmana?

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Did I land on the other shore, like Guha?  
Did I fight with the demon, like jatayu?  
Did I land on this shore, like Vibhishana?  
Did I offer sweet fruits, like Sabari?  
Did I say: "Here He is," like Prahlada?  
Did I hide (Krishna) like Dadhibhanda?  
Did I go to the forest like Rama?  
Did I proclaim discovery of Sita, like Hanuman?  
Did I relinquish with both hands, like Draupadi?  
Did I say the excuse: "milk boils over," like Vaduganambi?  
Did I hold my throat like selvappillai?  
Did I deserve the command: "Stop here," as Idaiyattrukkudi Nambi?  
Did I carry the message: "He is dead" like Marutiyandan?  
Did I go in pursuit (of God) like Nathamunigal?  
Did I say: "Want Him not," like Kuresa?

(Dadhibhanda was a curd-seller. He is said to have given shelter to Lord Krishna when He was hotly pursued after by His associates in the play called hide and seek and when Krishna asked the curd-seller to ask his reward, he asked for Moksha for himself and for those who belonged to him, down to the curd-pot in which Krishna had hid himself. This was granted.)

Did I refute Advaita, like Ramanuja?  
Did I see the discus, like Nallan?  
Did I go to Anantapuram (Trivendram), like Alavandar?  
Did I feel separation like Teyva-variyanandan?  
Did I compose Andadi like Amudanar?  
Did I give counsel, like Malyavan?  
Did I opine: 'mere ocean-roar,' like Mahapurna?  
Did I exact promise, like Goshthi-Purna?  
Did I obtain mercy like the dumb-person?  
Did I give up my body, like Tiru-naraiyur-araiyar?

(See Ramanuja's Life.

Nallan was a Brahman disciple of Ramanuja, and a great devotee of Lord Varada of Kanchi. He saw a corpse floating down the river Vaigai which bore on its arms the Vaishnava symbols of discus. This was enough for Nallan to drag it to shore and perform funeral rites. The Brahmanas of Kanchi resented this and declined to eat with him. But Lord Varada put on a Brahmana's disguise and attended the funeral meals. The Lord thereon gave him the title: Nattukku pollan, Namakku nallan' i.e. 'Though the whole world is against him, we are for him'.)

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Did I profess insignificance, like Srisaila-purna?  
Did I thrust my finger into the snake's mouth like Embar?  
Did I vanquish (a Pandit) by showing marks on arms, like Bhagavan?  
Did I seek a secluded spot like Villiputtur Bhagavar? 76.  
Did I jump into water like Kanapuratt-ammai?

On hearing this, Ramanuja was thunderstruck and taking Ammai with him back to Tirukkolor, rested under her roof, and partook of the food prepared by her as a token of his admiration and appreciation of her spiritual enlightenment and attainments evinced by her most erudite discourse. Before, returning, he blessed her, and saw to the due performance of all festivals connected with Lord Nishkeshavitta and Madhurakavi. Ramanuja now returned to Srirangam.

An interesting incident is recorded as having occurred about this time. 'The washerman employed to wash the clothes of the srivaishnavas of Srirangam, one day washed Lord Ranga's garments as well. He brought them and showed to Ramanuja. Ramanuja was so pleased with him that he took him to the Lord in the Temple and prayed to Him thus: "Lord, please notice the careful way in which this washerman has washed Your garments. Indeed, with these wound round You, You look wonderful." Lord Ranga accepted the recommendation and replied to Ramanuja thus: "For the loving services rendered to us this day by this washerman, we forgive the offence of his ancestor, the washerman of our Krishna-avatar." To this day it is the custom for the Lord to receive the clothes from the washerman just as he brings them and are used for the Lord. This is a privilege inasmuch as in Indic Society, the washerman is a lowcaste man and the clothes brought by him have to be washed again before a Brahmana will wear them.

It is here chronicled that there was a disciple of Ramanuja called, Pattini-p-perumal. He is said to have been of low-caste. He lived away from the sacred town of Srirangam, in a far away hut; and used to drown himself in the joy of singing the hymns of the Holy Azhvars. Ramanuja's way from the river Kaveri to Srirangam lay where this disciple thus lived. One day he was returning from his bath accompanied as usual by a large number of his followers. He stopped short at the hut, and bidding his followers to leave him and proceed to Srirangam, entered the hut, and spent the time with the disciple as long as it pleased him, in the sweet ecstasy brought on by the singing of the Holy Hymns. Had an ordinary person met a low caste man as Ramanuja did, he would have been outcasted, but they dared not utter a syllable of reproach against Ramanuja's doing it. The practices of great noble souls become the illustrations of the rules of Dharma Sasthras. No reproach thus attaches to the character of glorious souls. Such incidents though trivial in themselves, are fraught with great significance and important issues as affecting and moulding the organic-character of a new community which would at the time be taking definite shape and acquiring special functions in the body-politic of the Aryan-Dravidas.

This new community of Sri-Vaishnavas was not confined exclusively to the Brahmins. It was

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

universal and entertained in its fold every man and woman regardless of caste or color. The community was growing fast and counted millions, of which a definite number carried on the doctrine established by Ramanuja.

The king of ascetics, Ramanuja, had in his following (700) seven hundred Yatis (ascetics), (74) seventy-four episcopal Thrones, known as the acharya-purushas, and countless others, (12,000) twelve-thousand Ekangis (monks of all classes), (300) three-hundred kotti-ammais (nuns), many kings, and others both of the Holy Thread and the Threadless (sattadavar). A list of the names will be given separately. And here, only the chief members with the work allotted to them in the immediate establishment attached to the see, will be noted. Kuresa, Dasarathi, Nadadur Alvan and the Bhattars were to attend Sri-Bhasya Discourses: Yagna-murti (Arulalaperumal Emberumanar) was to attend to the worship of the temples; Kidambi-p-perumal and Kidambi-acchan were to superintend the culinary department; Vatu-purna or Andhra-purna(=Vaduga-nambi) was for oil-bathing and other sundry services to Ramanuja; Gomatham Siriy-alvan was to carry the kamandalu (vessel) and sandals; Dhanurdasa was to be the treasurer, Ammangi was to boil milk; Ukkal-alvan was to serve meals; Ukkalammal was to fan; Maruti-p-periyandan was to minister on occasions of natural impulses; Maronrilla-Maruti-yandan was to be the steward; Tuya-muni-velam was to be the waterman; Tiru-varanga-maligai was to be the store-keeper; Vandar and sundar were to take service under kings; Ramanujavelaikkara was to be the body-guard; and Akalanka nattalvan was to win polemical victories over dissenters.

Jai Srimannarayana!

**CHAPTER XXXIII**  
**VATU-PURNA OR ANDHRA-PURNA**

Vatu-purna or Andhra-purna, whose first entry into our history may be remembered as having taken place when Ramanuja was at Saligrama, [Mysore), is known, above all other disciples, to have been the closest attached adherent of Ramanuja, and the staunchest follower of the Path, known as the Panchamopaya, or the Fifth Path- the Acharyabhimana. In other words, unswerving faith placed in the Saviour, who is incarnated on earth, and never dividing such faith between a saviour who has taken on humanity, and God who ever remains Divine. Vatu-purna was not a mere theoretical believer in this mode of salvation, but exemplified it forcibly by his personal example. In the exclusive worship he paid to Ramanuja's Holy Feet, he excluded all thoughts of God. His Saviour was his God. He recognized no other rival Saviour-God to his visible human Saviour. Once on an occasion, Ramanuja went to the Holy shrine Tiruvellarai (about 10 miles north of Srirangam), Vatu-purna followed him of course, carrying the Tiruppulkudai' containing washed clothes, images, articles of worship etc.,

Ramanuja after reaching Tiruvellarai, went to bathe and returning, opened the cover of the wallet to find to his surprise and chagrin that his own sandals had been placed on the top of all other things.irate, he called Purna and asked him to explain this sacrilege-the sacrilege of placing his sandals over the heads of his holy images of worship! "Sir," promptly answered Purna, "how is my God inferior to yours?"

Ramanuja went to visit the Lords in the temples, but Purna's gaze was steadily fixed on Ramanuja's handsome person, Ramanuja often marked this; and once remarked: "Son, why don't you direct your sight to the charming eyes of the Lord?" Purna then looked at the Lord and looked at Ramanuja alternately for a few seconds and then exclaimed: "Sir", the eyes that have seen you cannot see other objects."

Ramanuja used to hand over the remains of food, after he had eaten to Purna to eat; the latter, after eating, wiped his soiled hands on his head. Ramanuja fretfully chided him for this slovenly habit and directed him henceforth to wash his hands with water, 'Yea," said Purna. The next day, Ramanuja handed over to him to eat consecrated food given to him in the Temple. Purna ate and washed his hands with water. "What have you done, son" exclaimed Ramanuja, "the Lord's food is too holy to be thus washed away, you should have wiped it on your head." "Sire," reported he, "I have done as you had told me yesterday." Ramanuja simply said: "Son, you have overwhelmed me"

On another occasion Purna was busy boiling milk for Ramanuja in the Math, when Lord Ranganatha was conveyed in procession, decked in all the glory of decorative art. Ramanuja rose to go, see and pay homage to the Deity, calling Purna, as he went, to come and do the same with him. But Purna, immediately excused himself saying: "Holy sire, if I come out to see your God, the milk that is on the fire for my God (Ramanuja) will boil over."

Jai Srimannarayana!

At one time, some kinsmen of his came to his house as guests, and used his cooking pots for preparing their meals. But as soon as they left him, Purna broke them all and threw them into the rubbish heap; and picking up cast-away pots in the backyard of Dasarathi, brought them home and used them; thus showing that everything that belongs to the Saviour is holy, and all else is unholy. This demeanour proves the heights of the state of a spiritually risen soul dissevered from all touch of worldliness (vairagya.)

Purna was strict as regards the taking of Sri-pada-tirtha, for he sipped no water washed off any other's foot save that of his Saviour, Ramanuja. He memorialized this faith of his, by shaping an image of his feet and setting them up for worship for all time to come at the village of Saligrama-as the most cherished treasure for himself and all posterity; and that it must be looked upon as such by all the coming generations, was the most solemn trust which he imposed on those near and dear to him, at the time of his end. Vatu-purna is thus assigned a place in the inner cricle of Ramanuja's hierarchical institutions, called the Ashta-diggajas, or the Eight Elephants of Faith to guard the eight cardinal points of the compass. This sage it was who sang the famous hymn to Ramanuja, called the Ramanuja-asthottara- sata-nama, sung every day by every Srivaishnava. The last verse runs thus:-  
'om srimathe ramanujayanamaha'.

Jai Srimannarayana!

**CHAPTER XXXIV  
ANANTA-SURI OR ANANTACHARYA**

Some interesting incidents in the life of Anantarya, another staunch disciple of Ramanuja, are related thus. From previous pages it is known that he was the person who had undertaken to settle in Tirupati and do all the services of Lord Srinivasa. It may also be remembered that he had created a flower garden to which he was paying personal attention. He now wished to construct a small reservoir for water for that purpose. He began excavating it by his own manual labour. But a Brahmacharin suddenly put in his appearance and saying: "Aged sire, the task is too much for you. Let me help and lighten it." He stretched his hand to take off the basket from his head, in which he was carrying earth. Anantarya arrested the boy's hand and said: "Son, if I resign my basket, I shall faint; if you take my basket, you will faint." But he was a stubborn boy and rejoined: "No fear of that, Sir, trust me." Anantarya remonstrated and said, "Son, this service is my life; if you also want life, go fetch your own basket and carry it." The boy disappeared for the present.

Anantarya went on with his work and pressed his poor wife into the service, though she was pregnant at the time. She was employed in carrying loads of earth and emptying the same on to the bank. Her returns were at first slow, but they became soon rapid. Anantarya remarked it with surprise and asked her to explain how she managed to return so rapidly. She naively said, "A Brahmacharin boy" meets me half the way, carries the load for me and brings me back the basket. Hence, your work is done more speedily." "Who is that impertinent urchin meddling with my work, uninvited" Anantarya fulminated at the boy. Running after the boy, gave him a poke under the chin with his crow-bar, saying, "Take that for your trouble, and be gone." The boy took to his heels as if in fright. But the temple authorities found, and later Anantarya too, that Lord Srinivasa in the shrine was profusely bleeding in the chin. This they stopped by applying camphor to the wound. (This is done even to this day, and the camphor is distributed to devotees as prasada).

As Anantarya was fast progressing with his work, he was one day bitten by a cobra. But he went simply to the holy Svami-Pushkarani pond, bathed and returned to his work. People who observed him realized that he should take treatment, else he would die. But he quietly remarked: "No treatment is needed." He now went to the Temple on a visit to Lord Srinivasa, when the Lord remarked, 'Son, why did you think that you need not have to extract the poison from your system.'" "Lord!" said Anantarya, "if the bitten serpent (means .. Anantarya) is more powerful, it will simply bathe in your holy pond and do service here below; but if the biting serpent is more powerful than the bitten serpent (Anantarya), then it will bathe in the Viraja river and do service there above (in your Vaikunthha). This was my thought when the cobra bit me".

Anantarya once upon a time, left Tirupati to go to his native land Posala country, taking food for the journey. After travelling a distance, feeling hungry, he sat down and opened the lunch box. But he found the food swarming with ants. "Curse me, I have sinned" cried he, vexed. "The best Saints have desired to live on the Holy Hill of Tirupati even as stocks and stones. And I, a sinner, have deprived these holy ants of their holy abode." So saying, he carefully closed the box and retracing his steps, hungry as he was, released the ants on the hill and went his way.

Yamunai-turaivan is a chamber in the Tirupati Temple premises named after sage Yamunacharya. Anantarya sat here usually to make flower garlands for the Lord. When he was once thus busy and had not finished, he was called to attend on some other work in the Temple, but he refused to stir. And when he went there with the finished garland, the Lord asked him to explain his disobedience. Anantarya said, 'What have I to do with You Lord, when my flowers are just blossoming and I should not delay stringing them together lest their fragrance be lost for You.' The Lord said, "what if We dismiss you from this place." "Lord, our Saints have sung that You are a temporary resident on this Hill like myself. You might have come to stay here a little earlier than myself; and that is all the difference between us. This Hill is therefore not Yours, it is our common property. You have no authority therefore to dispossess me of it." The Lord was mightily pleased with His curious devotee, which Anantarya was.

Tradition here takes up the finishing episodes in the life of the most exemplary disciple and martyr Sri Kuresa. It is said that Kuresa was a great asset in the Life of Ramanuja, and his exit from the world's stage takes place in advance of that of his revered Master, Sri Ramanuja.

Ramanuja must have been about 110 years and even more by this time. As redoubtable as he was in his championship of Vaishnavism, he was in his strength and zeal unflagging. A recluse, in quiet seclusion, he was imparting to his hosts of disciples the quintessence of the doctrines it was his mission to propagate. One day, Kuresa went to visit Lord Rangatha all by himself. "You seem to have something in your heart to tell me," said the Lord. Kuresa, broke out into praise which took the shape of a splendid Sanskrit verse, - gifted poet as he was-which he explained at great length by his own commentaries. The lord was so pleased as to press Kuresa to ask any favour of him. But Kuresa humbly said that he had every favour bestowed on him; there was nothing more to ask. "No," said the Lord, "Ask once more. And ask for more, if not for you, for the love that I bear to my beloved Spouse Sri and love for my Ramanuja. Kuresa submitted his wish that he be released from the prison of the body, and be gathered to his Feet. "Ask some other thing than that," the lord said; but Kuresa declared that he could think of nothing else. "Let it be so, then," the Lord said; 'What you ask shall not only be a boon for you, but a boon conferred on every one that has any sort of relation with you.' Kuresa, receiving this message, walked out from the sanctum in all the dignity and glory of a crown-prince, soon destined to occupy the throne in the Kingdom of paramapada and instead of going to his own house took shelter in his father's (Alzhwar) house. Soon word reached Ramanuja of what had happened. Agreeably startled, he stood up, and flung his upper garment into the air - an expression of

infinite joy. The disciple who watched this, failed to understand what Ramanuja meant by this act, and humbly asked him to explain. "My faithful," he said "I bear also relationship with Kuresa. My salvation, about which I may have doubts, is thus made safe and sure."

This explains the important consequence that follows from the spiritual relation into which a Master and his disciples may enter; and that is, that saving power is as truly vested in a qualified disciple with regard to his Master as is in a qualified master with regard to his disciple.

But Ramanuja's joy soon gave way to grief, at the impending prospect of separation from his dearest disciple and associate, Sri Kuresa the like of whom there was none; and he forthwith left his Math with all his assembly to meet Kuresa ensconced in the Saint's shrine. They met and Ramanuja chidingly remonstrated with Kuresa for having done an act without previously taking counsel with him. Kuresa kept submissively silent. 'Why don't you speak, Azhvan?' addressed Ramanuja, 'What was the purpose in asking the Lord to let you go to Paramapada in advance of me?' "Holy Sire," now spoke Kuresa, "My object was to preserve the order of precedence there." "Speak not beloved, in puzzles," returned Ramanuja, 'explain yourself.' "Sir," began Kuresa "the saints hymn: 'Mudiyudai' tells us that the angels who are our elders in Heaven come out of its gates to welcome those younger brothers of theirs, who proceed there from here. This is not in order, for younger ones should always go and welcome the elders. This is the order I wish to preserve. Hence I go in advance and welcome my Master when he comes." Ramanuja said, "My most beloved, you forget the rule that prevails in - that all differences and distinctions disappear in heaven - but you desire to maintain the relation that exists here between us as master and disciple. In all the spheres, is there a soul to match you?"

So broke out Ramanuja, and could not restrain tears trickling down his cheeks, but observing that Kuresa had little time now, checked himself and approaching closer, hugged him to his bosom and whispered into his ear the Holy Dvaya-Mantra; and turning to the spectators, whose curiosity was evidently roused by this act of his, spoke thus, "Understand me, sirs. Our Kuresa does not need a sacrament of any kind. The Dvaya is his daily nutriment; and I must serve it for the last time." "Dear son! beloved Azhvan," he said, now turning to Kuresa, "You are my very soul, how can I part with you? Can't you be kind to your Master? Take him with you to Heaven. Why leave him behind to suffer cruel pangs of separation? How can you enjoy Heaven without him? [On page 2527. Vol V of the Telugu Edition of the Bhagavadvishaya, the conversation is thus recorded :- 'While I am yet here, son, how were you anxious for Heaven? "Sir," said Kuresa. "in the depth of my thoughts for the miseries of earthly existence, I forgot this point. Pray forgive me." Ramanuja said, "If Lord Ranga could grant you a boon, he could grant me one too. So I will go and ask him to stop you there." So saying Ramanuja, went a few paces towards the shrine, but stopped abruptly, and reflected thus, "God's will is unalterable. What audacity on my part to go and force Him to change it? I have sinned. Let me submit and be resigned to the inevitable." So saying, he retraced his steps. Then followed the further conversation with Kuresa). How can I exist here without you? Alas, the Lord in Heaven has attracted you, though our Lord Ranganatha here possesses every attraction. So then, you will sever yourself from your Ranga?

Jai Srimannarayana!

Ranga, to lose you! But let me not, my dearest, change your mind and your plans. Be it as you wish. All hail to you, my son; go, go to the Blessed Eternal Kingdom and rule there in eternal peace and bliss!!” So saying, Ramanuja drew him closer in to his embrace and fondly stroking him on the back, continued:-

“Azhvan ! I salute you. You have now my leave to depart.” Kuresa spoke not a word. “His heart was too full for expression. He fell at Ramanuja’s feet like a senseless block of wood. Ramanuja speedily raised him up when Kuresa pressed his holy feet on his head and to his breast, and prayed for the administration of the holy water washed of his feet. Ramanuja administered it in serene solemnity and Kuresa took after addressing the, memorial verse:-

“Ramanuja’s Holy Feet are my Refuge - Ramanuja, my blessed guru; the Ocean of Mercy, - Ramanuja who so loves the gold of God’s Feet that all else to him is dross.”

Ramanuja made a move now towards his Math, towards the North River (Kolladam), Kuresa following him a little distance, “Pray stop now,” enjoined Ramanuja and Kuresa with folded hands retraced his steps to a pandal close by Azhvar’s house. He now called his wife Andal-ammai to his side and asked her what her wish was. She said: “August Sir, your wish is my wish. My own, I have none.” So saying she fell on his feet with folded hands. He now called his sons Bhattarya and Sri Rama-p-pillai to his side, and counselled them thus: “Dear children, You have no bereavement to bemoan, for you have Lord Ranga, your Father, and His Holy Spouse is your Mother. You have been brought up by them. But forget not that Ramanuja is your Saviour. Be obedient to Andal. By thought or speech or deed sin not against Holy Men; on the Other hand ever seek their company.” The sons wept and fell at their father’s feet. “Weep not, dear children,” cried Kuresa, fondly raising them, “for if your grief is caused on account of temporal relationship, you meddle with spiritual relationship, you hold with Ramanuja; but if it is due to our soul-relationship, then you call it in question by such grief. Either way you have no cause for regrets. Cease then and rise above such worldly weaknesses.”

#### **CH. XXXV KURESA PASSES AWAY**

So exhorting, Kuresa laid himself down, -head towards the Temple, resting on the lap of Pillai-Azhvan and feet resting on the lap of Andal ammai- and dismissing from his mind every other thought than that of the Holy Feet of Ramanuja, winged his way into the ethereal spaces. Ramanuja was soon apprised of the event. He at once hastened to the spot and consoled Bhattarya who was weeping and telling him that no tears should be shed over an auspicious event, directed him to attend to the funeral ceremonies. The Brahma-medha ritual combined with that of the Vaishnava, was duly performed; and the following verse was composed to his memory:-

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

How can Kuresa be fitly praised, by whom even Ramanuja's salvation is made sure, - Ramanuja, who is the sure passport to others' salvation?

Tradition says that while Ramanuja or (Lakshmanacharya) is Lakshmana himself of the Ramanuja fame, Kuresa is Rama himself, born again to render to him in those by gone days.

It is said that without Kuresa, Ramanuja would not have been what he has been. Arullala Pperumal Emberumanar sung the praises of Ramanuja in his Dravida Ramanuja-nuttran-dadi, in imitation of Andhra-Purna's Samskrit Ramanuja-Ashtottara; but when Ramanuja heard it, he rejected it as it contained no reference to Kuresa. Verse 7. "Mozhiyai" was then introduced. Then the hymn was sanctioned assigned a place along with the 4,000 Prabandhas.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

## Chapter XXXVI Ramanuja's Last Days

Parasara-Bhattarya, or Bhattarya shortly, the son of Kuresa, had now come to the estate of his father; - spiritual estate. Ramanuja of course knew from the moment of Bhattarya's entry into this world, that he was destined to be the apostle of the Visishtadvaita Dispensation- having been presented to the world by Lord Ranganatha Himself as His own (God.)Son. Providence designed that Kuresa should make his exit from the episcopal stage -for he was too saintly and retired from the world to be an active worker, the requisite for a propagandist. Bhattarya was of this type. So Ramanuja led then this juvenile apostle- delegate to the Lord, so as to make him the anointed, to authoritatively transmit to posterity the great Message he had brought from Heaven. Ramanuja led then this juvenile apostle-delegate to the Lord, and presented him. "We again repeat and confirm our God-fathership to you, son. We consecrate it by giving you this turmuric-water to drink. Grieve not for the loss of our Kuresa, your Father, for we stand to you in that position, more so even". So spoke the Lord. Ramanuja interrupted: "Majestic Lord! Bless this scion with his blessings, symbolized by the serving of tirtha and prasada. Ramanuja returned to his place and calling Embar (Govinda-Jiyar), assigned to him the sacred tasks of preparing Bhattarya thoroughly for the position he was to occupy, by a complete course of studies, in doctrine as well as discipline. After thus discharging the sacred trust which had been vested in him, Ramanuja settled down once more quietly, to spend his time usefully in imparting instruction to his large congregaton in Bhashya and Bhagavad-vishaya.

Kandadai-Andan, the son of Dasarathi, one day approached Ramanuja reverently and said: - "Holy Sire, you are to us in this Kali- Age, God Himself incarnate, come on this earth to establish Dharma, like Lord Kirshna in Dvapara-Age. It is said: Ramanuja the Sun, incarnated to open the lotus of virtue, and dissipate the darkness of vice." So, Holy Father, permit us to instal in Sri-Perumbudur (Bhutapuri) your image, that all posterity to the end of time may be enabled to know you, love you and serve you as their Saviour, and secure their salvation." Ramanuja granted the prayer. Andan accordingly brought statuary to study Ramanuja's figure and reproduce it in metal. This was done and shown to Ramanuja. He scanned it closely top to bottom. Being satisfied, he embraced the statue pouring into it all the spiritual power and grace he had possessed, for the benefit of posterity and commanded that it be installed in Bhuta-puri in the month of pushya when Jupiter would be in that constellation. Andan carried the Image in state to Bhuta-puri and installed it along with the Mula or fixed Image, Sculptured out of stone, exactly in the month and the day fixed by Ramanuja. As the installation ceremonies were being proceeded with at Bhuptapuri, Ramanuja at Srirarangam was suddenly taken ill. He was startled at this, but recollecting that that was the moment his Image was being inaugurated at Bhuta-puri, understood the meaning of his illness. This he also took as a foreboding of the end of his stay on earth and completion of his vocation. He therefore sent a message to Andan to return immediately. Andan obeyed the summons and joined Ramanuja.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Ramanuja had thus all his band of disciples and devotees remain by his side, and gave them the quintessence of his teaching thus "Listen, sons beloved," began he; "Men are of three distinct types, the God-ward (anukula), the God-against (Pratikula) and God-indifferent (anubhaya). 'the first type are the Sri-Vaishnavas the second are the atheists; and the third are the Worldly (samsarins). If you meet with men of the first class, joy as if you found flowers, scents, aromatics and so forth; as if the blush of moonshine spread about you, and gentle breeze softly crept over you; as if you met your, your own most near and dear kith and kin. If you come across men of the second stamp, fear as if you faced a venomous reptile, fire and so forth. If you chance to meet men of the third description, mind them not as you would not mind the stocks and stones that lie on your way. If you discover willingness in them, teach them things of the spirit; if otherwise, treat them with pity. Why these men are turned away from God is because of their love for lust and lucre.

If out of pride consequent on lust and lucre, men condemn Sri- Vaishnavas it is nothing short of contempt for God Himself. If to such pride, holy men descend to paying courtship, it is like the king's wife wandering in the streets for begging. It to samsarins, holy men allow themselves to be lured on account of their wealth and so forth, vain is their wisdom, as they have not learnt to distinguish between gem and glass.

There are six ways by which you can usefully spend your days:

1. Read Sri Bhashya and teach it to others.
2. If that is above your level, read Tiruvaimozhi and make others read it.
3. If that is beyond your ken, build a hut in any holy land and live there.
4. If that is impracticable, do services in a Temple.
5. If that is inconvenient, dwell ever on the profound truths contained in the Holy Dvaya-Mantra.
6. If that also is difficult, take shelter or service under a holy man.

Ramanuja now sent for all the servants of the Blessed Fane of Ranga, and addressed them thus: "O Faithful Servants of our Lord, my time is over, and my services in your company have to come to an end. In the performance of my duties with you, I may have offended some and pained others. As I am now about to leave you, it is seeming that I ask of you, one and all, to forgive me for my short-comings." "Holy Sire," said they all in one voice. 'Why do you speak thus to us your humble servants? Your speech is strange-not only strange, but drives fear into our hearts! You, beloved father, to leave us orphans? You, the soul of the worlds, to leave us lifeless corpses?" "Speak not so, sons" said Ramanuja, comforting them:- "You lose nothing by losing me; for there is Your Lord Ranga here, ever present, and who never leaves you. He is safe sleeping on his serpent-couch and steadily gazing to the South,-for his Bhakta, Vibhishana dwells there. Never be sparing in your services to Him. Be vigilant ,and devout. I wish you all the constant company of the Lord's own elect,-the Srivaishnavas. Farewell.So exhorting them and

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

assigning to select disciples the care of the different sections of his large following, Sri Ramanuja led Bhattarya to Lord Ranga's presence and let him receive the tirtha and prasada prior to him-signifying by this act that Bhattarya was to be the Head of the Sri Vaishnava Church after his departure-and turning to his disciples, said:-"Gentle folk, he shall be next to me in succession. Look upon him as such," Turning to Bhattarya, he said: - "Son, there is a servant of repute by name Vedanti in the uplands (Mysore).Go there, win him by polemics, and convert him to our Faith. "After thus consecrating Bhattarya Ramanuja returned to his Math, and once more addressing the assembly of his disciples commanded them not to stray from the Path when he passed away; not to take his loss so much to heart as to interfere with the due performance of duties falling to their share, -for, said he, "you will then forfeit your connection with me, mahapurna and Yamuna; and you will moreover act contrary to the will of our St. Sathagopa. Approach me, then, each of you and swear by my holy feet that you will carry out my behests, and will never swerve from the lines of virtue. I have marked out for you all."

### **Ramanuja leaves the World**

Ramanuja now commanded that they should retire and return after eating of the consecrated food prepared for them. They obeyed; and when they returned, Sri Ramanuja gave his last words and last blessings; and withdrawing himself gently,-as if he was falling into a quiet natural sleep-closed his eyes, and laid himself down, his head turned towards the Temple, and rested on the lap of Embar, and feet placed on the lap of Vatu-purna (Andhra-purna).

The whole Srirangam and his wife crowded to the Math to witness the last moments of the Great Ramanuja. A party of the elders, in solemn tones, sang the Bhrahmavalli and the Bhruguvalli of the Vedas; and another party sang the hymns of the Dravida-Prabandhas. As they watched Ramanuja lying in state, their hearts beating with the importance of the supreme moment, the crown of his head (at the pineal-gland) burst and the holy Ambassador of God winged his way back to the Native land, the Paramapada.

Like the mighty-trees of the forest, uprooted and blown down by the fierce blasts of the hurricane, did the assembly fall flat on the ground, senseless; when to recovering sense only to feel all the more the keen agony of their irreparable loss, followed by an uproarious outburst of grief, unparalleled by any other event of the kind. Torrents fell from their blinded eyes, and they uttered inarticulate words from their choked throats shaking with passion; and in short, their limbs lay as if bereft of motion by the paralytic stroke dealt by Ramanuja's passing away from the sphere of his labours, up to Heaven, -His Native Home -to enjoy that unutterable rest there-the reward of all the benefactors of mankind. "Indeed, "cried they, "have we realized the truth - when you sprang into our midst, we obtained the 'light of knowledge'; and now your exit envelops us in the 'gloom of evil.'"

When Ramanuja's Grand Guru Yamunacharya ascended to Heaven, a routine of observances

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

and sacraments, processions and funeral was gone through as prescribed by the Sastras for a Vaishnava and a Sanyasin. All this, even to minuter elaborations, and greater detail was solemnly gone through. Thus passed away the Great Ramanuja.

Srimathe Ramanujaya Namaha!

### **RAMANUJA'S GREATNESS**

“Endless are the incidents in the Chapters of Ramanuja’s life. It would be impossible to record them all. Only the salient features have been recorded,” so says our chronicler; Pinbalagia-Perumal-Jiyar. He collects now in one summarised compass all the evidences eloquently testifying to the greatness of Ramanuja.

Lord Ranga declared with his own lips that all the riches of the Kingdom of Heaven as well as of earth were placed’ at Ramanuja’s disposal.

Lord Srinivasa confirmed this grant by His holy word also; and to prove that this was not mere flattery, it is written that a milkmaid by name Tumbaiyur Kondi, was supplying curds to Ramanuja. When he was once on his way to Tirupati, the woman appeared and presented her bill for payment. Ramanuja commanded Kidambi-Acchan to give her food in the Math. She ate and coming to Ramanuja, prostrated to him and submitted to him that she had a favour to ask. He bade her ask it. She said, “Holy sire, I desire not payment in coin for my curds, but grant me Moksha instead!”

“But that power I possess not,” replied Ramanuja, Lord Srinivasa alone can grant your prayer,” “Then give me a written permit, sir, to take to the Lord” asked she. Ramanuja, over-come by her faith, gave her one. She forthwith ascended the Sacred Mount, but she had hardly reached the summit, before the Lord Himself met her on the way, and receiving the permit gave her Moksha on the spot.

Lord Varadaraja of Kanchipura proved Ramanuja on two occasions, when He appeared once in Yadava-Prakasa’s dream and commanded that circumambulation of the World enjoined for a would- be Sansyasin was accomplished by once circumambulating round Ramanuja; and when hot debates on philosophy waged between Ramanuja and Yajnamurti, and the latter was scoring points for victory, the Lord appeared in Ramanuja’s dream and suggested certain Vedic passages being quoted as those would level the adversary to the ground. Next morning the opponent was vanquished.

Lord Narayana of Melukote, proved Ramanuja by His showing the way for Ramanuja’s future in a dream when he was staying at Tondanur; and further condescending to assume the position of a loved Son to Ramanuja- Sampat-kumara.

Lord Sundara-Raja of the Azhagar-Hill near Madura proved by summoning one day all the

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

disciples of Ramanuja before Him. They obeyed but the kinsmen of Maha-Purna (the Acharya of Ramanuja) stopped away. Purna asked them why. 'We are your kinsmen, aren't we? And Ramanuja is our disciple therefore,' said they. The Lord on hearing this spoke, "Your taking Ramanuja for a disciple is only matched by Dasarathi and Vasudeva taking Rama and Krishna for their sons respectively." On another occasion Kidambiacchan repeated before the Lord the verse, 'Aparadha..... In which the expression – agathim-'wayless' occurs. "How dare you utter this" interrupted the Lord. "When you have Ramanuja for your 'way'?"

Nambi, the Lord of Tirukkurungudi, proved by expressing surprise that Ramanuja should be able to bring many souls to God's fold while He 'Himself could not accomplish so much, despite His repeated Incarnations on earth; and He retired every time sad with the thought that souls were more prone to roll down and down into the depths of samsara than climb up to Him. 'Would you like to know the secret Lord?' said Ramanuja. "Then put yourself in the position of a disciple." Nambi did so, and Ramanuja whispered the secret of his success in to the Lord's ear; and ever afterwards, Nambi prided Himself on this kind of spiritual tie established with Ramanuja.

Yamunacharya when he was at Kanchi-Purna on a visit, and saw Ramanuja, following in the train of Yadava-Prakasa, pointed him out to his disciples, saying, "Look, He will be the first leader of our faith."

Mahapurna proved Ramanuja's greatness thus: One day he and his daughter Attulay-amma, were seated in their house, when Ramanuja happened to enter with his train of disciples. Mahapurna at once got up and prostrated himself before him. His daughter asked him how he could do such an act of obeisance to Ramanuja, who was his disciple. Purna replied: "Those feet and this head are a match to each other. Another day Ramanuja was returning from his bath in the Kaveri, when Mahapurna meeting him did obeisance. But Ramanuja stood erect instead of returning this customary homage, and simply lifted up his Guru. Ramanuja's disciples asked him to explain his unusual conduct. He said; "My Guru wishes to please himself by honoring me. If that is his pleasure, it is my pleasure. I should not cross him" The disciples next asked Purna to explain his unusual behaviour. He said "Sirs, I saw in Ramanuja my own Guru-Yamuna, after my own Guru all the perfections of a Guru find their haven in Ramanuja" And Purna made his own son Pundarikaksha the disciple of Ramanuja.

It has already been related, that Goshti- Purna-the second Guru of Ramanuja, revealed the secrets of religion 'to Ramanuja by exacting a promise that he would not impart the same to others.' But Ramanuja broke the promise soon by openly declaring the secrets to all in the Temple. Purna became furious on coming to know this and demanded an explanation from Ramanuja. The latter confessed his fault, but submitted that if his disobedience did entail on him hell, he had the satisfaction of thinking that thousands were saved. -a great price to get in return-; and that Purna, on hearing this embraced Ramanuja exclaiming: "What a large heart you have for others; my shallow heart did not warm like this! You are no other than he (Yamuna)" And he made his son Terk-alvar, Ramanuja's disciple.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Tirumalai-Nambi or Srisaila-Purna-another Guru-it has already been narrated, replied,-When questioned by Ramanuja why an elderly person like himself came to meet him on his way up the Holy Hill of Tirupati, when there were many young persons, anyone of whom he could have despatched, - he said with respect to Ramanuja, he could find no other person younger than himself. And further Purna made a gift of Embar to Ramanuja, and made his son Pillan Ramanuja's disciple.

Tirumalai-Andan or Maladhara-another-Guru-was teaching Tiruvaymohzi to Ramanuja. When the verse 'Ariyakalattu'(11.33), was explained, Ramanuja gave his own interpretations. This offended the Guru who ceased to teach. Goshthi Purna, coming to hear of this speedily appeared on the scene, and gave Maladhara to understand that Ramanuja's interpretations were correct, as they were those of Yamunacharya; and that he must look upon Ramanuja in the light of such a disciple as Lord Krishna was to Sandipa. On another occasion, when Ramanuja, gave out an explanation, which, he said, was according to Yamuna, "You have never spoken to Yamuna, how do you know?" cried Maladhara. "Sir" replied Ramanuja, "am I not Ekalavya to Yamuna?" The Guru at once fell on the ground, saying: "Indeed you are an avatara,"and made his son Sundarabahu, Ramanuja's disciple.

Ramanuja did humble service to the venerable Tiruvaranga- p-perumal-Araiyaar, when the latter, one day, said, "The price of your services, Ramanuja, is all my knowledge", and he taught him the secrets of the Fifth Way (Pancham-opaya),and made his son Tiruvaymozhi Araiyaar his disciple .

Andhra-Purna was a firm believer in this Fifth Way, which to him was the Holy Feet of Ramanuja.

Kaniyanur Siri-y-acchan, declared on oath (ie., when standing half immersed in water) that faith in Ramanuja was the only road to salvation.

Yajnamurti (a convert from Advaitism), whom Ramanuja set up as abbot naming him as Arulalapperumal emberumanar, and to be looked upon as a second Ramanuja, declared to his intimate disciples, Ecchan, Anandalyan, Tondanur-Nambi and Marudur-Nambi that Ramanuja was the real Saviour, and his second Ramanuja ship was only a gracious honour bestowed on him, inasmuch as he felt it as a millstone hung round a sparrow's neck.

Pillai-p-pillai-y-azhvan became the disciple of Kuresa. The latter when asked his pastoral fee (acharya dakshina) stated it as the curbing by him of his three instruments of thought, speech and deed against offending holy men. But the disciple found it very difficult to carry this advice into practice, and evinced great perplexity. Kuresa observing it, called him and said, "Here is a way out of your difficulty, son! You can't avoid hurtful speech, if you wish to keep peace with

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

the world. Your thought is difficult to curb. Hence if you wish your mental sins not to offend God, trust to Ramanuja's feet for reconciliation.

Milag-azhvan challenged Dasarathi for a debate, The latter consented and asked for a wager. "If I am beaten: said Azhvan, "I will carry you on my shoulders." This was agreed to; and Dasarathi won. Azhvan, true to his word lifted the victor on to his shoulders, ran a few paces, and setting him down asked forgiveness for his impudence. Dasarathi lead him to Ramanuja and said: "There is your forgiveness- his holy feet."

Embar counselled Bhattarya thus: - "Son, boast not yourself that you are the God son of Lord Ranga, Kuresa's son, and a servant. Faith in Ramanuja alone will save thee."

Bhattarya counselled Nanjiyar thus, "Son! Firmly believe in Ramanuja as our Saviour".

Nanjiyar warned Nambillai thus:-Grow not haughty that the world calls you: 'World-teacher' (Lokacharya); that you are a clever expert in expounding the Prabandhas. Ramanuja's feet alone can save you.

One day Nambillai took hold of the hand of Siva-k-karai-p- pillai, to go out; and as he crossed the threshold of his house, he discovered holy man asleep on the pial outside. S. Pillai called out to him to withdraw his legs as his master was there. Nambillai immediately let go his hold of S.pillai sayin- "Son, our saints have declared that the legs of holy men are holy legs. To call them "legs" in derision is against you a proof of disrespect and ignorance. Begone from me:" S. Pillai went to his village in disgrace and set up loud wailing, and cried:-"Oh master! You have cast me away like the stone in a sling, from your holy place between the two rivers." Nambillai on hearing this repentance, sent for him and enjoined:-"Trust in Ramunuja, all the faults are remitted."

Tiru-k-kurugai-p-piran Pillan was once in a place called Siru-p-puttur. Somasi-y-Andan read Sri Bhashya under him three times. Pillan left the place for his native country, when Andan pleaded, Sire, I live in this country far from you. Deign to tell me the choicest article of faith for my life." To this Pillan replied:-"Son, keep off pride that comes of your ability to descant on the science of Purna-Mimamsa, and to discourse on Sri Bhashya; but place implicit faith in our Saviour Ramanuja." And Gomathatha-p-pillan bade in a similar manner his disciple Kakkai-p-padi-y-acchan-Pillai.

'When God was angry with you, what did you do?' asked EngalAzhvan of K. P.A. Pillai "I resorted at such times to the appeasing Power vested in our Saviour Ramanuja;" he replied.

A coterie of disciples read Sri-Bhashya under Nadadur- Ammal. They asked: "Father, Bhakti (love to God), we find is a hard thing to do'. Ammal taught them the way of Prapatti (faith in

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

God). They again pleaded: •Sire, it is hard to get faith.” “Then” taught Ammal, “Your only way is to depend on Ramanuja.” Naduvil Azhvan administered similar instructions to his disciples Vangipuratt acchi and others.

“This is a mighty torrent, this Sri-Bhashya, “complained the Aimbattiruvar (52) magnates of Tirunarayanapuram (Melukote) when Veda-vyasaBhattar expatiated on it before Ramanuja’s shrine in the Temple. “Then;” said Bhattar, “trust solely to your household- God Ramanuja, and that is enough.” So again did Naduvil-Tiruvidhi- p-pillai Bhattar comfort his disciple Elaiya-v-alagiyar .

Andhra-Purna often reproached Kuresa and Dasarathi for double heartedness inasmuch as they wavered in their devotion between God and Ramanuja, the Saviour; whereas he was single hearted as being firm in his trust in the latter alone.

The devil Brahma-rakshas signified Ramanuja’s greatness, by so declaring it to Yadava-prakasa.

The dumb lad was another illustration. He was born in Kanchipuram, dumb. After his fifth year he was found missing for two years. He suddenly appeared again. People surrounded him and questioned him as to where he had gone. He replied that he had been charmed away to Kshirabdhhi (Milky Sea). ‘What is the news there:’ asked they. “The only news of any importance,” said he,” was that on earth an avatar in the shape of Ramanuja has descended”. The boy was not seen again, after he delivered this message. This story, the holy Bhagavat-senapati- Jiyar took pride in often relating, to vouch further for the greatness of Ramanuja.

As among Divine Incarnations, those of Rama and Krishna are notable; Vyasa, Parasara, Suka, and Saunaka among the Rishis, Srirangam, Tirupati, Kanchi and Melukote among the Holy places; St. Nammazhvar among the saints; so is Ramanuja among the Acharyas (Apostles) such as Nathamuni.

The importance of Ram-Avatara consists in Rama’s declaring the Divine Gift of Free Grace to all who may approach Him, irrespective of caste or creed, color or condition; in seeking friendship of humble folk like Guha: in performing the obsequies of a Brahmana for Jatayu; in accepting food from the hands of a Sabari; in eating in the company of Hanuman; and so forth<sup>1</sup>.

The importance of Krishna-Avatara consists in Krishna’s delivering the Apocalypse of Bhagavad-gita, with its Charama Sloka; in rejecting the hospitality of Bhishma and Drona for that of Vidura; and so forth .

The reputation of Srirangam comes of Lord Ranga’s having mixed with the (Pariah) Saint Tiruppanar, as intimately as body and soul; that of Tirupati comes of Lord Srinivasa’s having spoken to and moved freely with such souls as Bhima. (Kurumb-arutta-nambi), the potter, and Tondaman; that of Kanchi (Perumal-koil) comes of Lord Varada’s having been so intimate with

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

Kanchi -purna; that of Melukote, of Lord Narayana's having eaten of the food offered by Sucharita's son; and of His having deigned to become the son of Ramanuja hence called Yatiraja-sampat-kumara.

The distinction earned by Veda-Vyasa is because of his Vedanta-Sutras and the Satvika puranas, by all of which he proclaimed the Ultimate Truth by his finishing stanza, I declare, once, twice, thrice.

There is no Scripture like the Veda, nor God like Kesava, that earned by Parasara is because of his Vishnu-purana, in which he gives a clear definition of the Three Eternal Verities, God, Soul and Matter,-hence styled by Sage Yamuna as 'The Magnificent; that earned by Suka is by his Bhagavata by declaring in it the greatness of Vishnu and his earning immediate mukti That earned by Saunuka is by his famous work Vishnu-Dharma; that earned by Narada is because of his declaration as the slave of the holy Vaishnavas. The distinction of St. Nammazhvar arises from his composing' four Prabandhas analogous to the four Vedas, thus popularising Scriptures, and his revealing to Sage Nathamuni the Four thousand Prabandhas, thus establishing the Vaishnava Dispensation. But above all towers the reputation of Ramanuja inasmuch as revealed to all, the Holy sense of the CharamaSloka, made clear the obscure and abstruse texts of the Vedas, made manifest the truths of St. Nammazhvar's Tiruvaymozhi, wrote exegetics on Brahma-Sutras according to the Canons established by Sages Nathamuni and Yamuna in their Treatises; wrote other independent works such as the Gadyatraya; won victories over false prophets and philosophers; thus bequeathing to posterity a system pre-eminently known as Ramanuja's system, though it is a system of thought co-eternal with God Himself.

Ramanuja was one day conducting his ministry in his congregation, taking up the Doctrine of God's Free Grace to frail humanity, as illustrated by Ramayana. Vibhishana, though born among the demons (Rakshasas), was angelic in nature. He tried to dissuade his brother Ravana from his evil ways, but he would not listen; so he severed himself swiftly from all connection with him, and soaring into the sky, crossed the ocean with four attendants and coming to Lord Rama, who was encamped with his army on the other shore, cried thus:-

'O Rama' thus he cried, I'm Vibhishan, Ravan's brother, see ... I seek your grace, troubled by him, you are a sure refuge of the poor and weak. From Lanka leaving behind friends, and wealth I fly. And reft of all relies on you only. On you alone my kingdom, joys and life depend. (Ramayana,VI,19.)

I left my children and my wife  
And fly to Raghu's son for life. (Ramayana,VI,17.)

And yet the Vanar-chiefs of Lord Rama said to Him, "Rama! We wait your order. All your foes shall cease to live. Command us, mighty king, all these shall fall upon the earth lifeless!"

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

(Ramayana,VI,17.)

On hearing this, Dhanurdasa stood up and cried:- “Godsire, if Vibhishana, who left wife, children and all in order to seek refuge with Rama, deserved to be stoned by Rama’s Vanar-chiefs, how much more indeed do I deserve that treatment,-I, who have made no renunciation at all like Vibhishana!” “Peace,” cried Ramanuja, “Listen to me, my son, I will unfold to you the secrets of salvation. Sri Mahalakshmi, the spouse of Lord Narayana, ever stands by Him as our Mother mediator. She is the personification of the most exalted attribute of God, viz, Grace or Mercy. When our lord through Sri is over anxious to ‘shower His mercy unstintingly on His erring children on earth, what fear is there for us?”

We have an unbroken chain of apostles, (Alvars & Acharyas) reaching down to us from God, of which the first link is God and His Grace, Sri the next. St. Sathagopa is the next important link; and he has declared in unmistakable terms that he has obtained Heaven (moksha). If he has won it, Nathamuni has won; If Nathamuni has won, Yamuna has won; Yamuna winning, my next guru above me, Mahapurna, has won. If Purna has won, I have surely won. When I have, you have all indeed won. Take comfort then from this thought. Dvaya Mantra, which I have taught you declares, as you are aware,the eternal unity of God and His Grace, Sri; and an unbroken chain binds God and His creatures in one bond, from which it is impossible to escape and stand aloof. With me goes my flock. What I share, it undoubtedly shares. The areca tree is watered by the gardener, but the plantain trees round it take the moisture as well. I and my temple are linked together for one testing. My destiny shall invariably be its destiny. When Vibhishana was after all allowed to approach Lord Rama, no separate invitation to the four Rakshasa-men, who accompanied him, was needed, nor when the vanar-chiefs wished to drive him away did they think of driving those four persons separately. In other words the four persons counted with Vibhishana as one, in gains or losses. Even thus counts my flock with me. Hence son! You may rest assured that if Heaven is mine, it is thine without question. As St. Bhaktisara has said; the flock has even more merit than the shepherd. Satrugna has more merit in following Bharata, than Bharata serving Lord Rama; St. Madhurakavi than St. Sathagopa; St. Andal than St. VishnuChitta, her father, and so forth.

Hence Amudanar in his immortal work Ramanuja Nuttandadi, sung daily by all the Vaishnavas and in all the Vishnu Temples, testifies to Ramanuja’s greatness as saviour of man kin. Thus:-

“Our elders declared that God dwells in His Holy Shrines in heaven and on earth, but His Holiest Shrine is the Holy Heart of Ramanuja. Hence we worship God by worshipping Ramanuja; by resorting to Ramanuja we shall have resorted to all the Holy Shrines.”

Nadadur Ammal declared that the way to salvation not by actions (karma), not by knowledge (jnana), not by devotion (bhakti), not by faith (prapatti), but by implicit trust placed in Ramanuja; and this was the ultimate truth proclaimed to all by Amudanar in his Ramanuja Nuttanandadi.

Jai Srimannarayana!

Jai Srimannarayana!

“Here are two Holy Names,” Kuresa often said, “namely, Na-ra-ya-na and Ra-ma-nu-ja, each is made up of four syllables. But Narayana as denoting God, can both save and damn, but Ramanauja as Saviour; can only save. This consists our stay, strength and safety.

“Ramanuja” exclaimed Amudanar, it matters not where I am, hell or heaven, but let your Beauteous Figure haunt me ever. To this bliss, I will forego even the Lord whom you can’t show upon your hand. Where those great souls Ramanuja’s servants dwell, that is my Empyrean (highest abode). “Ramanuja” said he addressing him directly, “My very bones may split in agony, but let me at all times and all places indulge in love for your servants.” It is chronicled that so addressed, Ramanuja looked on Amudanar with eyes beaming with benevolence and passed on. And Amudanar ended his hymnal by the verse:- I seek Sri, the spouse of Ranga, that she may bless me with the bliss of crowning my head with the lotuses (blooms) of Ramanuja’s Feet. Bless me with a heart that abounds with ever increasing love on Ramanuja’s lotus feet.

Lord Ranaga declared: “Both Heaven and Earth are granted to you, Ramanuja!”

One day St. Kulasekhara’s verse was being read. This meant that when Rama left Ayodhya for the woods, the whole Ayodhya’s kith and kin of Rama accompanied him. But someone in the auditory objected. “They only accompanied a little way off and then returned. How then did this Saint say they accompanied him throughout?”

Ramanuja answered: ‘When Lakshmana who said: “All services I shall do” followed, it is as if all followed, referring to himself thus.

That was the greatness of Ramanuja.

Jai Srimannarayana!