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Divine Grace and Human Action
in the Thought of Rāmānuja

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DIVINE GRACE AND HUMAN ACTION

IN THE THOUGHT OF RĀMĀNUJA

BY

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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And with equal certainty we know from Scripture that this Supreme Lord, when pleased by the faithful worship of his Devotees - which worship consists in daily repeated meditation on Him, assisted by the performance of all the practices prescribed for each caste and asrama - frees them from the influence of [avidyā] which consists of karman accumulated in the infinite progress of time and hence hard to overcome; allows them to attain to that supreme bliss which consists in the direct intuition of His own true nature: and after that does not turn them back into the miseries of Samsāra.

Sribhasya 4.4.22

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PREFACE

The incentive for this study of Rāmānuja's doctrine of grace was provided in courses with my advisor, Professor Klaus K. Klostermaier, whose teaching first aroused my interest in the history of religions as a whole, and in the theme of liberation within the context of Hinduism, in particular. What first attracted me to Rāmānuja's writings was the fact that among Hindu schools of thought, the Śrī Vaisnavism which he represents, has the greatest similarity to Christian ideas. Because of the importance of the theme of grace in Rāmānuja's theism, as well as in most theistic religions, I saw his thought as a particularly suitable source for new perspectives on interreligious dialogue. This prompted me to carry out a study in which I compared Rāmānuja's doctrine of grace, with that of Saint Augustine. In the course of my research, I became aware that much still remains to be done in interpreting Rāmānuja's thought. I found that many secondary sources concern themselves mainly with his polemics with opposing religious philosophies, and that very few deal exclusively with specific areas of his theism, such as his doctrine of grace.

The importance of Rāmānuja's doctrine of grace lies in the fact that in his articulation of Vaisnava Vedānta, he was the first to develop a coherent philosophical basis for the belief in liberation through grace, which belief

had always been an important aspect of Vaisnavism. However, Rāmānuja does not present this doctrine systematically as such. It is dispersed throughout his writings, and receives the most extensive treatment in his Gītābhāṣya. No monograph has yet been published which brings together all the separate facets of Rāmānuja's thought concerning the functions of divine grace and human action in the process of liberation. Modern writers such as N. S. Anantharangachar, Bharantan Kumarappa, K. D. Bharadwaj, P. N. Srinivasa-chari and M. Yamunacharya, have all commented on the subject of grace in the context of discussions on Rāmānuja's thought concerning prapatti or the path to liberation in general. Not only do these not treat the subject of grace comprehensively, but Anantharangachar and Srinivasa-chari also do not distinguish between Rāmānuja's thought on grace, and that of commentators who interpreted Vaiṣṇava Vedānta after Rāmānuja.

Grace continued to be a central concern for later commentators, all of whom claimed Rāmānuja as the authoritative source of their interpretations. However, a significant number of these commentators shifted away from Rāmānuja's emphasis on the importance of both grace and action, and some negated the usefulness of action altogether. Therefore, to do justice to Rāmānuja's doctrine, it must be examined first on the basis of what is stated in his own writings, apart from the interpretations of later commentators.

The purpose of this thesis is to present, on the basis of Rāmānuja's major writings, a survey of the main elements of his thought concerning the role of divine grace and the necessity for human action, in the process which leads to liberation. The first chapter provides a brief sketch of Rāmānuja's life and times, and of the sources of the religious philosophy which he articulates. This chapter also gives a review of his writings, and a statement of the basic elements of Viśistadvaita epistemology. The next three chapters explain the metaphysical principles of this system of thought. Chapter 2 deals with the nature of the Supreme Being as qualified by his modes and attributes. The third chapter describes the essential nature and capacities of the soul, and its condition of bondage in the world dominated by the law of karma and rebirth. In order to show the soul's position of dependence upon grace, chapter 4 discusses the relation between God and the soul.

Chapter 5 on the modes of grace, delineates the ways in which the Lord makes liberation possible. For the purpose of showing the relationship between human action and the operation of grace, chapter 6 describes the progressive disciplines of Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga which constitute the path to release. Chapter 7 discusses the ambiguities of Rāmānuja's position with regard to points brought up by later disputes, on the subject of prapatti.

The format of this thesis is based on Kate L. Turabian's A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973). A Manual of Style for Authors, Editors and Copywriters, 12th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), has been referred to with regard to the citation of references within the text. All references to the translations of Rāmānuja's works, are contained in the text, except in a few cases where translations have been given from sources other than those regularly used in the text. A list of the abbreviations used in the text, is given on page

CHAPTER I

Introduction

A. Preliminary Remarks

In this study I have attempted to interpret as intelligently and sympathetically as possible, a major thinker of a religion which is outside of my experience. Approaching this subject from the viewpoint of the Christian tradition requires constant vigilance against the tendency to superimpose Christian concepts upon Rāmānuja's thought. For this reason, many terms which are used to express the Christian notion of grace, have been avoided. At the same time, the use of familiar concepts and terms is unavoidable and necessary in any attempt to speak about and understand the concepts of other traditions. This is particularly true when English terminology is used to interpret Sanskrit sources. In many instances there is no direct translation for specific terms or concepts which arise from Hindu religion and culture. To use English terms which are roughly equivalent is in many cases misleading.

The general method with regard to translation will be as follows. In instances where a Sanskrit word can be translated with a word or a short phrase, the translation will

be given in the text. If a specific term is an integral part of a particular discussion, its meaning will naturally be incorporated into the text. In the case of terms for which there are no accurate or even nearly equivalent English words, translations are given in the Glossary. In such instances, only the Sanskrit term will be used in the text.

Apart from chapter 7, this thesis is confined to the discussion of Rāmānuja's major works, namely: the Śrībhāṣya, the Gitabhāṣya, the Vedārthasamgraha, the Vedāntadīpa and the Vedāntasāra. With the aid of secondary sources which attempt to interpret these works, I have tried to present as accurately as possible what the texts themselves say. Apart from a few isolated instances, no effort has been made here to interpret Rāmānuja's thought in the light of later commentators. One instance in which authoritative later commentators have been considered, is the chapter on prapatti, which attempts to deal with the ambiguities of Rāmānuja's position on points raised by later commentators. Here the two main sources referred to are Lokācārya's Mumuksupadi and Satyavrata Singh's study of Vedānta Deśika. The Yatīndramatadīpikā of Śrīnivāsadāsa has been referred to in an attempt to clarify Rāmānuja's position on the arcā form of Brahman, as well as to explain certain terms which Rāmānuja uses but does not define.

Lokācārya's Tattvatrya has also been referred to on points of terminology.

B. Rāmānuja (1017 - 1137 A.D.)

1. Historical Context

In South India, the period from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries was one which saw the crystallization of the Tamil culture as well as the establishment of classical standards in the fine arts, religion and social institutions.¹ The predominant dynasty under which this culture flourished during the eleventh and twelfth centuries was that of the Colas, whose capital was at Gangaikondacholapuram. Other prominent dynasties in the Deccan with whom the Colas vied for power, were the Yadavas to the north, the Hoysalas of Mysore in the west, and the Kakatiyas to the east.

Rāmānuja's life spread over the reign of three Cola kings: Koluttunga I (A.D. 1070-1118), Vikrama Cola (A.D. 1118-1135), and Koluttunga II (A.D. 1123-46).² When Koluttunga I persecuted Rāmānuja, he fled to the kingdom of the Hoysala ruler, Visnu Vardhana. The Colas were predominantly Śaivite, while the Hoysalas were known as patrons of Jainism. However, it was common for these rulers to patronize more than one religion. The same Cola king who persecuted Rāmānuja, is known to have made endowments

to the Vaisnava temple at Śrīrangam.³ Visnu Vardhana converted to Vaisnavism, due to the influence of Rāmānuja, and built a Vaisnava temple in Mysore.⁴

Religion was dominated, both in North and South India, by the rival sects of Vaisnavism and Śaivism.

Because of their influence, Buddhism and Jainism, though still in evidence, were on the wane. Both Vaisnavism and Śaivism were influenced by Tantric ideas and practices.

In the case of Vaisnavism, however, Tantric influence was stronger in North India, while in the south, the bhakti religion of Śrī Vaisnavism became increasingly predominant.⁵ This sect worshipped Visnu as the Supreme Lord, in conjunction with his Consort, Śrī.

Modern Vaisnava Vedānta began with the Śrī Vaisnava acāryas (teachers) of Śrīrangam, who sought to give a theistic interpretation to Vedānta, through the synthesis of sectarian Vaisnavism with Vedānta philosophy. This theistic emphasis was in opposition to the monism of Śankara's Advaita, which had placed Vedānta at the forefront of philosophy.⁶

The first acārya was Nathamuni, a man learned in Vedānta, who collected the hymns of the Ālvārs and elevated them to the status of śruti.⁷ His successor was Yāmunācārya, whose writings are the earliest remaining systematic exposition of Vaisnava Vedānta.⁸ The third

great ācārya was Rāmānuja, whose significant achievement was the systematic articulation of Vaisnava Vedānta, based upon the foundation laid by his predecessors.

2. Rāmānuja's Life and Work

Rāmānuja is regarded by the Hindus as the leading exponent of theistic Vedānta. He was born in 1017 A.D. in Śrī Perumbūdūr, a town 26 miles from Madras in the northeastern part of the Tamil Country.⁹ He received his early training from Yādavaprakāśa, a teacher of Vedānta, who may have been a monist. Certain disagreements which arose between Rāmānuja and his teacher on points of doctrine, led eventually to Rāmānuja's break with Yādava and his association with the disciples of Yāmuna at the Visnu temple in Kāncīpuram.

It is said that before this, Yāmuna had seen Rāmānuja and chosen him to be his successor. However, Yāmuna died without ever meeting Rāmānuja. At Yāmuna's death, Rāmānuja committed himself to taking up Yāmuna's unfinished work of converting the people to Vaisnavism, and of writing a commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras according to Viśistādvaita. Following this, he studied with Yāmuna's disciple, Tirukacci Nambi, until his initiation into the Vaisnava sect by Periya Nambi, an ācārya at Śrīrangam.

After separating from his wife to become a sannyāsin (ascetic), Rāmānuja began to gather his first disciples at Kāncī. Eventually he was called to Srīrangam by Yāmuna's disciples, to become their leading ācārya.

In the following years, Rāmānuja wrote his treatises on Vaisnava Vedānta, carried on his functions as chief ācārya and overseer of the temple at Srīrangam, and travelled widely throughout India. Both in South India and elsewhere, he debated with leading teachers of Advaita Vedānta, propagated Sri Vaishnavism, and attempted to reform temple worship by establishing the ritual system of Pāncarātra in Vaisnava temples. During an unknown period of years, Rāmānuja lived in exile in Mysore, due to the persecution of the Saivite Cola King, Kulottunga I. He then returned to Srirangam where he is said to have lived for 11 or 12 years until his death in 1137 A.D.

It is said that Rāmānuja ruled over 74 episcopal thrones, and numbered among his disciples, 700 ascetics, 12,000 monks, and 300 nuns. He is thought to have had 74 personal disciples whom he appointed as missionaries to spread the Sri Vaishnava religion.¹⁰ The traditions's intellectual movement was carried on by scholars from among Rāmānuja's immediate disciples, and by his later successors, all of which claimed him as the authoritative

source of their interpretation of Vaisnava Vedānta.

Today, Vaisnavism is a living tradition which claims at least as many adherents as any other major religion in India. It is a rich composite of mythology and theology drawn from various traditions, the sources of which can be traced back as far as the Bhagavata religion of Vāsudeva of the second century B.C.¹¹ Vaisnavism has many sects and schools, but their common characteristics are bhakti, the worship of Visnu as the Supreme Lord and Saviour, and the belief in salvation through grace.

C. The Sources of Rāmānuja's Thought

It is important to understand the thought of Rāmānuja in its proper perspective in relation to earlier exponents of Vedānta, the background of Śrī Vaisnavism, and the influence of his immediate predecessor. The school of Vaisnava Vedānta of which Rāmānuja became a member, and finally its first great systematic exponent, had its roots in the combined influences of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, the popular religious literature of the Ālvārs, and Vedānta. From Pāñcarātra comes most of the ritual and the vyūha-doctrine, from the Ālvārs come deep bhakti and surrender to God, from Vedānta comes jñāna and a spiritualistic conception of mokṣa. All of these influences are

evident in Rāmānuja's Śrī Vaiṣṇavism.

Rāmānuja does not see himself as originating any new system of thought, but rather as giving the true interpretation of Vedānta, as understood by the ancient masters who interpreted the Vedānta Sūtras before the time of Śankara. Rāmānuja's concern is to establish that his interpretation is the correct one, and that it is in line with that of the ancient masters.¹² At the beginning of the Sribhāṣya he states that he will follow Bodhāyana's interpretation of the Vedānta Sūtras (SBh 1.1.1, 3).¹³ In the Vedārthasamgraha he lists among others, Tāṅka and Dramida, two masters who are known to have written commentaries on the Chandogya Upanisad (Ved S para. 93, 250-51).¹⁴ Rāmānuja quotes from these sources repeatedly in his Vedārthasamgraha and Sribhāṣya.

Rāmānuja himself acknowledges the foundation already laid by Yāmuna for his own articulation of Vedānta. At the beginning of the Vedārthasamgraha (para. 2, 183-84), he says that Yāmuna has already dispelled the erroneous teachings which are contrary to revelation.¹⁵ The erroneous teachings to which he refers are the Advaita Vedānta of Śankara and the Bhedābheda philosophies of Bhṛṭṭa Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa.¹⁶ Rāmānuja considers all of these systems to have misinterpreted the Vedānta Sūtras. After a lengthy

argument against them in the Vedārthasamgraha, he declares:

I have arrived at the conclusion that this is the doctrine of the scriptures after a painstaking study not only of the endless number of all the various śrutis, but also of the commentaries on them which have been accepted by judicious scholars (para. 83, 241).

In his own articulation of Vedānta, Rāmānuja seeks to give a theistic interpretation of the two Mīmāṃsās of Karmakānda and Jñānakānda as constituting a single discipline of the worship of Brahman, and to bring about a synthesis between this interpretation and the popular bhakti religion of Vaisnavism. Along with the Vedas, which are śṛuti, Rāmānuja uses smṛti liberally to substantiate his views. In keeping with the rule of Karma Mīmāṃsa Sūtras 1.1.3, he accepts smṛti as scripture, on the basis that it has been commissioned by Brahman to corroborate and clarify the Vedas. In this sense then, the smṛti to which Rāmānuja refers, is for him śṛuti. Where smṛti seems to contradict śṛuti, however, śṛuti must be taken as the final authority (SBh 2.1.1, 408-11). The smṛti to which Rāmānuja refers most often are the Bhagavadgītā and the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. Along with these, the influence of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas must also be taken into consideration.

The main emphasis of the Bhagavadgītā is upon a personal deity who can be attained through the devotion of bhakti, in conjunction with ritual action. This is also the emphasis of Viśistādvaita, which reacted against the

monism of Sankara and adhered instead, to a religion of devotion to a personal Brahman and worship through ritual action. The Bhagavadgītā therefore, is in line with Rāmānuja's concern to integrate the principles of Visistādvaita into Vedānta. It is upon the foundation of the Bhagavadgītā and the Sri Vaisnava tradition of loving devotion, that Rāmānuja builds his theology of Brahman as the raksaka, the redeemer who liberates man by his grace.

The hymns of the Ālvārs, which were collected by Rāmānuja's disciples at his request, already show a knowledge of the Kṛṣṇa legends found in the Viṣṇu and Bhagavata Purāṇas. Both these hymns and the Purāṇas contributed to Rāmānuja's thought.¹⁷ Referring to the Matsya Purāna's four-fold classification of the Purāṇas, he says the Viṣṇu Purāna is of the highest, authoritative class, in accordance with which all other Puranas must be interpreted (Ved S para. 94, 251-53; para. 111, 264).¹⁸ He states that it gives information only on a certain aspect of the nature of Brahman, and that is his aspect of accessibility as represented by Viṣṇu. In this form he pervades the universe, which is his body, and he descends in the form of avatārs into the empirical realm for the benefit of all beings (Ved S para. 110-13, 262-66). This aspect of the nature of Brahman is all-important for Rāmānuja's doctrine of grace.

The influence of the Pāñcarātra doctrine upon Vaisnavism before Rāmānuja, has already been stated. Yāmuna accepted the Pāñcarātra Āgamas as being the direct utterance of Brahman and wrote his Agamaprāmānya in their defence. Rāmānuja's view of the Pāñcarātra doctrines as given in the Srībhāṣya,¹⁹ is in line with that of Yāmuna. After a lengthy argument in their favour, Rāmānuja concludes that the Pāñcarātra texts are of divine origin, and that they teach the nature of Brahman and how he may be attained, in accordance with the Vedas (SBh 2.2.40-43, 523-31). Though Rāmānuja does not quote the Pāñcarātra Samhitās explicitly, later discussions will show their influence upon his views of the five-fold form of Brahman, and of ritual worship.

It has already been stated that Yāmuna's writings comprise the earliest extant systematic exposition of Vaisnava Vedānta. As such they are the earliest known record of the introduction of bhakti into Vedānta. In his works, Yāmuna also articulates the basic ontological principles of the personal nature of Brahman, and of the self-conscious nature of the ātman who is distinct from, as well as a part of Brahman (Ved S intro. 43-44).²⁰ In describing this relationship, he uses the analogy of the relation between the soul and the body. The relationship which this analogy expresses became the basis for Rāmānuja's

interpretation of divine grace in relation to human action.

D. The Writings Attributed to Rāmānuja

In his Yatiraja-Vaibhava, Rāmānuja's disciple Andhrapurna, attributes nine works to Rāmānuja.²¹ The same list is given in a verse of the Divya Sūri Carita, a poetic history of the Śrī Vaisnava saints and teachers, which appears to be the work of another Rāmānuja's immediate disciples.²² The major works listed are the Śrībhāṣya, the Vedārthaśaṁgraha, the Bhagavadgītābhāṣya, the Vedāntadīpa, and the Vedāntasāra. The shorter works are the Nitya-grantha and three poetical works called the Sarana-gati-gadya, the Śrīrangagadya and the Vaikuntha-gadya. These last three works are also referred to as the Gadyatraya.

The chief translations of these works which have been used for this study are as follows: Śrībhāṣya--The Vedānta-Sūtras, with the Commentary by Rāmānuja, by George Thibaut; The Gītābhāṣya of Rāmānuja, by M. R. Sampatkumaran; Rāmānuja's Vedārthaśaṁgraha, by J. A. B. van Buitenen; Vedānta Deepa of Rāmānuja, by K. Bhashyam; The Vedāntasāra of Bhagavad Rāmānuja, by V. Krishnamacharya and M. B. N. Ayyangar; Śrī Bhagavad-Rāmānuja's Sarana-gati Gadya, with the Commentary of Sudarśana Bhaṭṭa, by

K. Bhashyam.

In order to establish himself as an authority, a Vedānta ācārya must write commentaries on the Upanisads, the Bhagavadgītā, and the Vedānta Sūtras. Though Rāmānuja wrote no formal commentary on the Upanisads, the Vedārthasamgraha is considered to be his equivalent of an Upanisad Bhāṣya. It is intended to explain various topics which Rāmānuja feels must be understood in order to grasp the true meaning of the Upanisads. The meaning of the title of this work is "the summary of the meaning of the Vedas." The Vedārthasamgraha engages in polemics with Bhāskara, Yādavaprakāśa and the Advaitins. The topics which it discusses are ontology, the nature of ritual action as stated in the Karma Mīmāṃsā, the transcendent bodily form of Brahman, the divine origin of the Vedas, and the nature of bhakti.

The Bhagavadgītabhāṣya is the second in length of Rāmānuja's works. It is based on the interpretation of the Bhagavadgītā which Yāmuna gave in brief outline in his Gītarthasamgraha.²³ The doctrines of the Gītabhāṣya are essentially those of the Vedārthasamgraha and the Sribhāṣya. However, its emphasis is upon the devotion of bhakti, and upon those facets of the nature of Brahman which bear most directly on his role as redeemer.

The Śrībhāṣya, which is Rāmānuja's longest work, is a commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras. Since Śankara also wrote an extensive commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras, this work is particularly important to Rāmānuja's purpose of establishing the doctrines of Vaisnava Vedānta against those of Ādvaita. According to Rāmānuja, the first two adhyāyas of the Sūtras "set forth the essential nature of Brahman" (SBh 3.1.1, 584). The third adhyāya teaches the disciplines of devotion and meditation as the path to Brahman, and the fourth adhyāya states the result of these disciplines, which is the knowledge of Brahman (SBh 4.1.1, 715-16). This comprises Rāmānuja's interpretation of the traditional division of the Sūtras into three parts: tattva (metaphysics), the nature of Brahman and other entities; hita, the means to attain Brahman; and puruṣārtha, the nature of the goal to be reached. The Śrībhāṣya as a whole is a basic source for most of Rāmānuja's doctrines. The Vedāntadīpa and Vedāntasāra are briefer commentaries on the Vedānta Sūtras.²⁴

The Gadyatraya, which is said to have been written near the end of Rāmānuja's life, consists of devotional hymns in the form of prose poetry. The Sarāṇāgatigadya is a dialogue between Rāmānuja and the divine couple, Lord Nārāyaṇa and his Consort Śrī. The Śrīrangagadya is a prayer of surrender to Lord Ranganātha, the image of the

deity in the Srīrangam temple. The Vaikunthagadya is the account of a vision of Vaikuntha, the eternal dwelling place of Lord Visnu. It is intended as a subject of meditation for one who has obtained release through prapatti. The Nityagrantha is a manual for private worship.

E. Epistemology

Viśistādvaita recognizes three pramāṇas or means of valid knowledge (pramaṇa). These are perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), and verbal or scriptural testimony (sabda). Pramaṇa must satisfy two conditions; it must reveal the existence of an object, and it must serve some practical purpose. Therefore pramaṇa is "that which favours the practical interests of life as they really are."²⁵

Perception presupposes two things; the object of perception, which is not a construct of the mind but something independent of it, and the conscious subject who perceives the object. Consciousness operates through the sense-organs and the manas to reveal the object to the subject. The perception of the object is of two kinds: indeterminate and determinate (SBh 1.1.1, 41-42). Indeterminate perception is the subject's first cognition of the object and its attributes.

Determinate perception is the subsequent perception of an object of the same generic class, which causes the subject to realize that all objects of the same class have the same attributes. The perception of objects with attributes also reveals to the subject, itself as different from the objects.

This difference between subject and object has an important metaphysical significance. According to Advaita, the difference between subject and object is purely phenomenal, because the Highest Brahman is the one and only reality. All appearances of plurality are the products of maya.²⁶ Rāmānuja, on the other hand, considers the difference between subject and object to be a real, or irreducible difference (SBh 1.1.1, 39-40). The reason for his insistence upon this difference, is that it demonstrates that Brahman and the ātman are not identical, but distinct. When the ātman directs its consciousness toward Brahman in release, it is not submerged in Brahman, but rather, it becomes fully aware of him. While a part of this new awareness of Brahman is the ātman's recognition of its essential unity with Brahman as his mode, the fact that the ātman is conscious of Brahman, is proof that he still retains his individuality as a conscious subject (SBh 4.4.4, 758-59).

However, to the unreleased ātman in samsāra,

consciousness reveals only partial reality. The knowledge of Brahman cannot be gained through perception, either of the sense organs or of the manas. The sense organs give knowledge only of what relates to objects already known, and to the experience of pleasure or pain. The manas cannot conceive of what is not previously known through the sense organs (SBh 1.1.3, 162).

Inference is based upon perception and therefore is also possible only in relation to the sense organs and objects already known. It is based upon repeated observations of phenomena and upon the invariable concomitance between two known objects. No such concomitance can be proved between the world and an unknown creator. No amount of observation of known objects can inform one of the attributes of an unknown object. Therefore Brahman cannot be known through inference (SBh 1.1.3, 170-73).

Scripture is the only source of the knowledge of that which lies beyond the range of the senses. It is the eternal, direct revelation of Brahman and the only means by which the attributes of his nature can be known (SBh 1.1.3, 173). The Vedas,

. . . in the form of vidhi, arthavāda and mantra, denote the proper form of Nārāyaṇa, who is the Supreme Brahman, and the manner in which he is to be propitiated, and finally the particular results that follow when he is propitiated. The entire body of [revelation] called Veda, which gives

rise to the knowledge of the Supreme Person, his proper form, of the propiation of him, and of the fruit thereof, is eternal (Ved S para. 139, 294).²⁷

The three topics of scripture, tattva, hita, and purusārtha, all deal with one and the same subject, which is Brahman. Liberation or man's highest goal consists in the knowledge of Brahman. Therefore that portion of the Vedas which concerns worship or action (Pūrvamīmāṃsāśtras), deals essentially with Brahman, for it is through worship that the knowledge of him may be attained (SBh 1.1.1, 19). Hence this portion of the Vedas, and that portion which concerns the nature of Brahman who is the object of worship (Uttara-mīmāṃsā), constitute one cohesive whole. The purpose of this revelation is to provide the knowledge of those things which cannot be gained through any other means of knowledge. Since this knowledge is essential for liberation, the scriptures fulfill the criterion for pramaṇa in that they serve the highest purpose of man (SBh 1.1.4, 174).

CHAPTER II

The Nature of Brahman

Rāmānuja's articulation of the nature of Brahman is in the context of a polemic with the Advaita of Śankara, which had established itself as the leading interpretation of Vedānta. According to this school, the Highest Brahman, is pure Being. That is, it is pure intelligence and entirely devoid of qualities or attributes (nirguna Brahman).¹ It is the one and only reality which is present in all the forms of the world. The appearance of the world and of sentient beings, is due to māyā, a principle of illusion which is associated with Brahman. Thus māyā constitutes upādāna, the material cause of the world. Under the guidance of Īśvara, or the lower Brahman, it modifies itself into the world of individual existences distinguished by name and form.² However, since the plurality of sentient beings and non-sentient matter is only the product of illusion, it is not truly real. Brahman exists in all these forms, as the one indivisible reality.

It is in opposition to this interpretation of Vedānta that Rāmānuja seeks to establish the position of Visistādvaita,³ which holds that the Highest Brahman, who

is Bhagavān or the Lord, is qualified by his modes and innumerable auspicious attributes (saguna Brahman) (SBh 1.1.1, 78-102). He is the one all-embracing being, the highest Self, who comprises within himself the plurality of the tattvas (principles),⁴ of sentient beings (cit) and non-sentient matter (acit). These three tattvas--Brahman, sentient beings and non-sentient matter--are all real, and distinct from each other. At the same time, they are bound together in an inseparable unity.

This relationship of difference in union is analogous to the relation of a mode to its substance. Brahman, who is both cause and effect, has sentient beings and non-sentient matter, as his modes (SBh 1.1.1, 142). He is the material cause out of which the universe of matter and intelligent beings evolve. He is also the efficient cause by whose will creation is initiated and ordered (SBh 1.4.23, 396-400). Before creation the material universe exists in a subtle state, undifferentiated by name or form, as Brahman's prakrti. Prakrti is a non-intelligent principle, which is part of the body of Brahman (SBh 1.4.11, 370). Sentient beings also exist in Brahman before creation, in this subtle state as Brahman's prakrti. This amorphous mass which is prakrti is "the seed of all that lives." Therefore when it is united with Brahman before creation,

Brahman is in his causal state (SBh 1.1.1, 141). At the time of creation, the material world and living beings evolve by the will of Brahman, from prakrti, and acquire forms and individuality. But these forms are simply new modes of the causal substance, which is Brahman. Rāmānuja says:

. . . texts such as 'He desired, may I be many' (Taitt. Up. II, 6); 'It thought, may I be many; it evolved itself through name and form' (Kh. Up. VI, 2), teach that Brahman through its mere wish, appears in manifold modes (SBh 1.1.1, 143).

This relationship between the mode and its substance can also be explained through the analogy of the soul's relation to the body. Each body is individualized by the particular soul to which it belongs, but is not identical with it. The soul is eternal and can exist apart from the body, but the body is merely the mode by which the soul is qualified in samsara. In the same way, cit and acit constitute the body of Brahman, who ensouls them. As such, they are the modes by which he is qualified (SBh 1.1.1, 136-138).

Brahman is further qualified by innumerable qualities and auspicious attributes. The qualities to which Rāmānuja refers, include both the six qualities (sadgunas) listed in the Visnu Purāna, and the five given in the Upanisads. The Upanisadic qualities are true being (satya), knowledge or consciousness (jñāna), bliss or beatitude

(ānanda), stainlessness or purity (amalatva) and infinity (anantatva). The qualities given in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa are knowledge (jñāna), untiring strength (bala), sovereignty (aisvarya), immutability (virya), creative power (sakti) and splendor (tejas).

All of these qualities are constituent of the being of Brahman. Rāmānuja usually uses the term svarūpa in relation to the Upanisadic qualities. Svarūpa may be translated as "essential or inherent nature" or as "one's own proper form," form being the principle of individuality (Ved S 184, n. 20). Rāmānuja also uses the term svabhāva, which is "one's own proper being or essence." Later commentators take svabhāva to refer to qualities other than the five Upanisadic qualities, or auspicious attributes (kalyāṇagunas).⁵

Rāmānuja's usage of these terms is rather fluid, and though he uses svarūpa in relation to the group of five qualities, he occasionally uses it for other qualities as well. For example, in the Vedārthasamgraha he includes the divine attendants and abode within the essential nature of Brahman, along with such qualities as knowledge, strength and sovereignty (Ved S para. 132, 288). In Gitābhāṣya 18.73 he says that the essential nature of Brahman consists solely of auspiciousness (GBh 532). In most cases however,

Rāmānuja makes a distinction between the Upanisadic qualities, and other qualities, which he usually refers to as auspicious attributes. One such example is the following portion from the introduction to the Gitābhāṣya:

Srī's Consort, who is entirely auspicious and utterly opposed to everything defiling, and whose essential nature is wholly knowledge and bliss;

Who is an ocean of auspicious attributes of matchless excellence inherent in His nature, the first six of which are knowledge, untiring strength, sovereignty, immutability, creative power, and splendor;⁶

Also in this introduction, as well as in Srī-bhāṣya 3.3.13 (638), Rāmānuja names yet a third group of attributes which he clearly distinguishes from the Upanisadic qualities. This last group, which consists of such attributes as compassion and love, denote the attitude of Brahman toward finite beings.

The nature of the distinction between the Upanisadic qualities on the one hand, and the sadgunas of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and all other auspicious attributes on the other, appears to be that the first group constitutes the transcendent essential nature of Brahman in and for himself, while the second refers to Brahman in his relation to the universe and to finite beings. Such a distinction is supported by Rāmānuja's statement in the Vedārthaśaṅgraha that the Viṣṇu Purāṇa gives information about only a

certain aspect of Brahman's nature, which aspect is that of his accessibility to the world (Ved S para. 110, 262-63). At the same time, the fact that Rāmānuja refers to all these qualities as constituting the nature of Brahman, can be seen as evidence of his concern to present the scriptures as a cohesive whole. In keeping with this aim, he attempts to integrate the qualities given in the Visnu Purāna and in the Upanisads, and to present them as constituting a single, Supreme Brahman.⁷

A. The Transcendent Nature of Brahman

The first of the Upanisadic qualities of Brahman is true being or abiding reality (satya). Brahman is the ground of all reality in that he is the only reality which never changes. Rāmānuja writes:

The term 'True' expresses Brahman in so far as possessing absolutely non-conditioned existence, and thus distinguishes it from non-intelligent matter, the abode of change, and the souls implicated in matter; for as both of these enter into different states of existence called by different names, they do not enjoy unconditioned being (SBh 1.1.2, 159-60).

While the material world and finite beings are subject to evolution, Brahman is not subject to any such change because he is not associated with karma. Neither his essential nature nor his auspicious attributes are subject to change (Ved S para. 14, 191). Therefore he is the

"True of the True" (SBh 3.2.21, 616).

Brahman is also the ground of all reality in that all things originate with him and all things return to him. He is the only creator and all material and spiritual entities are reabsorbed into his prakrti at the end of a kalpa (GBh 7.12, 204). All finite beings also return to him in the highest sense when they recognize their ontic relation to him and are united with him forever in bliss (SBh 1.1.13, 209-210).

The second quality is knowledge (jñāna). Rāmānuja holds that the knowledge of Brahman is not pure distinctionless consciousness as Śankara would have it. Rather, "Brahman's proper form is designated by knowledge as its defining attribute, but it is not mere knowledge itself" (Ved S para. 24, 199). This attributive knowledge is of a two-fold nature. To illustrate this, Rāmānuja cites the case of fire, which exists both as light, and as luminous substance, or the source of light (SBh 1.1.1, 81). As fire is the substrate of light, so knowledge as a substance, is the substrate or cause of cognition.⁸ Through cognition or attributive knowledge, Brahman is both self-luminous or self-conscious, and the knowing subject of all entities other than himself.⁹

Rāmānuja says that the creation of the world

presupposes that Brahman has knowledge or intelligence as an attribute. This is so because only an intelligent being can think and the scriptures teach that "In the beginning the Self was all this; there was nothing else whatever thinking. He thought, shall I send forth worlds? He sent forth worlds'" (SBh 1.1.11, 206).

The knowledge of Brahman is "permanently non-contracted intelligence" (SBh 1.1.2, 160). Unlike the knowledge of the jīvātmān, the knowledge of Brahman is not dependent upon the aid of sense organs, nor is it ever contracted because of association with a body, or with karma. His knowledge is eternal and all-pervasive.

By the quality of bliss (ānanda), says Rāmānuja, ". . . we understand a pleasing state of consciousness. Such passages as 'consciousness, bliss is Brahman,' therefore mean 'consciousness - the essential character of which is bliss - is Brahman'" (SBh 1.1.1, 84). As in the case of knowledge, Brahman enjoys bliss as a conscious subject.

Brahman is also characterized by infinity (anantatva). Rāmānuja says the term "infinite" denotes that,

. . . whose nature is free from all limitation of place and time and particular substantial nature; and as Brahman's essential nature possesses attributes, infinity belongs both to

the essential nature and to the attributes (SBh 1.1.2, 160).

He transcends all limitations and his perfections are countless.

Brahman is also infinite in that all material and spiritual entities are his modes. Nothing exists apart from him (Ved S para. 6, 187). Both his attributes and his modes manifest themselves through the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe, which are accomplished by his infinite will and power alone (SBh 1.1.2, 156).

The last of the Upanisadic qualities is purity or stainlessness (amalatva). Rāmānuja emphasizes the importance of this quality both by including it in all of his descriptions of the divine nature, and by stating that it must be included in every meditation on Bhagavān (SBh 3.3.34, 654). Brahman is essentially antagonistic or opposed to evil, which implies that his character is the opposite of grossness and all such qualities which belong to the empirical world (SBh 3.3.33, 653).

Brahman is free from evil both in his transcendent realm and in his presence within the world, and within the jīvatman. In the latter, he is free from evil because he is not afflicted with karma (SBh 1.1.1, 239; 3.2.20, 614-15). He is also free from evil in the bodies which he

assumes for the benefit of his devotees. These bodies are not of the nature of those in samsāra, but are of Brahman's own divine nature, and therefore are also not affected by karma (GBh 4.6, 115).

All these defining qualities emphasize the transcendence of Brahman, and describe him as he is, in and for himself. They show him to be totally superior to finite beings in every way. Rāmānuja emphasizes this point by explaining the sense in which these qualities do not belong to the jīvātman. As true being, Brahman possesses absolutely non-conditioned existence and is thus distinguished

. . . from non-intelligent matter, the abode of change, and the souls implicated in matter; for as both of these enter into different states of existence called by different names, they do not enjoy unconditioned being (SBh 1.1.2, 159-60).

Infinity excludes even eternally free souls, who, though they exist in Brahman's transcendent realm forever, do not share in the infinity of his essential nature and attributes (SBh 1.1.2, 160). The bliss of Brahman is different from the bliss of the ātman, in that it consists of Ānandamaya or "fullness of bliss." The jīvātman ". . . enjoys only a small share of very limited happiness, mixed with endless pain and grief" (SBh 1.1.13, 213). The knowledge of the jīvātman which becomes contracted by

karma, is also different from the knowledge of Brahman, which is eternally uncontracted.

B. Brahman in Relation to the Universe

Bhagavān is immanent within the universe as its ensouling and actuating principle. The sadgunas of the Visnu Purāna indicate one aspect of his nature in this regard, which is that of his complete sovereignty and lordship. Rāmānuja usually refers to these attributes as a group and he never defines them individually (Ved S para. 42, 214; SBh 1.1.1, 87). Lokācārya defines them as knowledge (jñāna), power (bala), lordship (aisvarya), strength (sakti), heroism (virya) and effulgence (tejas).¹⁰ According to another definition of later Śrī Vaisnavism, they are defined as follows:

Jñāna (knowledge) is direct and simultaneous knowledge of all things. Bala (strength) is the capacity to support everything without even being fatigued (or, by His mere will). Aisvarya (sovereignty or lordship) is unchallenged rule over all. Virya (valor) is the quality of immutability in spite of being the material cause of the mutable creation (virya may alternatively be given the above definition of bala). Sakti (power) is given two alternative meanings: (1) the power of being the material cause of all, or (2) the power to make possible what is impossible for others. Tejas (splendor) likewise has been given two definitions: (1) self-sufficiency, not requiring any external aid, or (2) the quality of overpowering others by His splendor.¹¹

All of these qualities indicate that in his relation to the universe, Bhagavān remains transcendent and supreme. He is the originator and sustainer of the world, and the one in whom the world subsists. He is the universal Lord and the paramount Sovereign (Ved S para. 110, 263).

The second aspect of Brahman's relation to the universe, is expressed by the auspicious attributes which indicate his attitude toward the world. The four attributes to which Rāmānuja refers most often in relation to this aspect of the nature of Bhagavān, are listed in the introduction to the Gitābhāṣya.¹² These are: compassion (dayā), gracious condescension (sauśilya), forgiving and protecting love (vātsalya), and generosity (audārya). Lokācārya relates these qualities directly to the six qualities of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa by saying that qualities such as affection are due to Brahman's qualities of knowledge, power and lordship. For example, knowledge is for the ignorant, and power is for the weak.¹³

These attributes denote Brahman's gracious and loving attitude toward his creatures and his desire that they shall obtain liberation. In Rāmānuja's context, dayā implies the inability to endure the suffering of others and the disregard for one's own gain (GBh 16.1-3, 438-39). The Lord expresses vātsalya to those who recognize

their dependence upon him and take refuge in him as the only means to liberation. Audārya implies Brahman's generous acceptance of the devotion and gifts of worship offered to him by unworthy beings.¹⁴ In Gitābhāṣya 9.29 (270) Rāmānuja explains that Brahman overlooks the human imperfections of those who worship him with loving devotion, even to the point that he regards them as his superiors.

Because the Lord desires man's liberation, he reveals himself to those who seek him. In his introduction to the Gitābhāṣya, Rāmānuja relates the four attributes described here, to the saving action of the Lord, through the different forms of his presence within the world. The particular form to which he refers is that of the avatāra. In this form, Brahman is present within the world,

. . . to provide a refuge for those who resort to him, even for such creatures as we, by becoming a visible object to all mankind and accomplishing such divine feats as captivate the hearts and eyes of all creatures high and low.¹⁵

Chapter 5 describes other forms in which Brahman is present within the world. The purpose of the Lord's accessibility through all his descents and manifestations, is the liberation of finite beings. In these forms he reveals himself as the loving and compassionate saviour.

Together, the three groups of qualities discussed here, portray the two aspects which constitute the nature of Brahman. On the one hand, he is transcendent and supreme, and on the other, he is immanent and accessible. He is a loving personal being who feels compassion for finite beings in samsāra. Out of love, he reveals himself and gives assistance to those who seek him.

CHAPTER III

The Ātman

A. The Essential Nature of the Ātman

It has already been stated that the ātman is related to Brahman as his mode. The reality of the ātman, therefore, is dependent upon the reality of Brahman. However this does not negate the distinct individuality of the ātman. As the characteristics of a mode are different from those of its original substance, so also the ātman has its own essential nature which is different from that of Brahman. Rāmānuja cites as examples, pots or ornaments which have characteristics different from the clay or gold of which they are made (SBh 2.1.15, 453-56). Furthermore, it has already been shown that Brahman is superior in every way to all other beings. It follows therefore, that the ātman, being a real sentient being, must also have its own distinctive nature.

1. The Ātman is Eternal

The ātman, which is not made up of perishable elements, is distinct from the body which it inhabits. At the death of the body, the ātman returns to its subtle

state as the prakrti of Brahman, where it exists eternally from one creation to another (SBh 2.3.18, 542; GBh 9.7-8, 251-53). If its karma has not been exhausted, it will be united again at the next creation, with a body in keeping with its karma. But unlike the body, its essential nature does not undergo such changes as growth and death.

2. The Ātman is Characterized by Knowledge

Like Brahman, the ātman is characterized by knowledge, in the sense that it is the possessor of consciousness, or the substratum by which consciousness is generated (SBh 1.1.1, 56-61). Therefore knowledge is the essential property of the ātman or "an attribute describing its proper form" (Ved S 186, n.36). The essence of the ātman can be said to be knowledge only in the sense that the substance of which consciousness is the quality, is the essential property of the ātman.

This substantive knowledge is always qualified by attributive knowledge, through which the ātman is the knowing subject to whom the object is revealed through cognition. The knowing subject and the inward self or ātman, are identical. Therefore substantive and attributive knowledge are inseparable. This is proved by the fact that the "I" who is the subject which can say "I know," is

also the subject who seeks release from samsāra. No one, says Rāmānuja, would seek release if it implied the annihilation of the "I," for it is precisely the "I" who wants to ensure that it will be freed from pain and experience the bliss of Brahman forever. No one would exert himself in order to become pure, distinctionless consciousness which is incapable of the enjoyment of the self-conscious "I" (SBh 1.1.1, 58).

The knowledge of the ātman is subject to change in accordance with its karma. Bad karma causes the ātman to be ignorant of its true nature (Ved S para. 43, 215). As a result it identifies itself with the body which it inhabits, and is ignorant of its relation to Brahman. The ātman has the capacity, however, to attain complete, unblemished knowledge, by following the path which leads to liberation.

3. The Ātman and the Bliss of Brahman

The ātman is also said to be characterized by bliss. Rāmānuja qualifies this, however, by saying that the bliss of the ātman is essentially the bliss of Brahman, who dwells within the self. That the jīvātman in samsāra does not enjoy pure bliss is obvious from the fact that it suffers pain and sorrow. Unlike the unqualified

ānandamaya of Brahman, the bliss of the jīvātman increases and decreases in relation to the karma of the individual (SBh 1.1.21, 239). While the ātman has as its characteristic, the capacity to enjoy complete bliss upon release from samsāra and union with Brahman, it is Brahman who is the source of this bliss, and not the ātman (SBh 4.4.1, 755).

In speaking of what the jīvātman seeks to attain in release, Rāmānuja says, "This true nature of the Self, free from all avidyā, which the text begins by presenting as an object to be attained, is thereupon declared to be the Self consisting of bliss" (SBh 1.1.13, 210). Here the first self referred to is the ātman and the second is Brahman. What Rāmānuja means is that the ātman, who is essentially a mode of Brahman, attains union with him, upon release from samsāra. Therefore he can be said to attain Brahman, as well as bliss, which is the essential nature of Brahman.

4. The Ātman is Anu

Rāmānuja says the ātman is minute (anu). He offers as proofs numerous references from scripture which state that the ātman can pass "'through the eye or the skull, or through other parts of the body' (Bri. Up. IV,



4, 2)" (SBh 2.3.20, 546), that it abides within the heart, and that it "'is to be known as part of the hundredth part of the point of a hair divided a hundred times,' (Svet. Up. V, 9)" (SBh 2.3.23, 548). The reason for Rāmānuja's emphasis upon the minute nature of the ātman is to show that each ātman is totally an individual entity, limited each to its own body, and is not part of a universal consciousness (SBh 2.3.32, 552-53). At the same time, all ātmans are equal insofar as their essential nature consists of knowledge (SBh 1.1.1, 96). All inequality of individuals is due solely to the material bodies in which they dwell, which bodies are the result of karma.

B. The Jīvatman in Samsāra

1. The Function of the Ksetra

The Bhagavadgītā states that when prakṛti evolves from its subtle state into name and form, each ātman becomes connected with a ksetra. The ksetra is the field of the indwelling ātman, which is itself an evolute of prakṛti, but is distinct from the ātman (GBh 13.4, 369).¹ It consists of the body, the sense organs, and the objects of the senses, or in other words, all the faculties

necessary for the jīvātman to function and experience existence in the world.² The purpose of the ksetra is to serve as the instrument through which the ātman may experience pleasure and pain, as reward and punishment for good or evil works (GBh 13.6, 371-72).

2. The Influence of the Gunas

The association of the ātman with the senses binds it to the three gunas, which also evolve from prakṛti. The gunas fetter the ātman, which is in itself free and pure, to the desire for the experience of the pleasures of the senses (GBh 5.12, 150).³

The gunas are of three kinds. The highest and most desirable of the three gunas is sattva which binds the jīvātman by implanting in it an attachment to knowledge and happiness (GBh 14.6, 401). When the jīvātman is nearing release, this guna has become predominant. Rajas, the second guna, is the cause of passion, desire for sense-objects, and the attachment to persons and action for the satisfaction of the senses (GBh 14.7, 402). The attachment to action is caused by the desire to satisfy the senses of the body. Therefore the actions which result, bind the jīvātman to the body. If this guna persists until death, the jīvātman will return again to

a body to experience the merits of its actions. Tamas causes delusions or perverse knowledge such as thinking that wrong knowledge is right knowledge. It binds the soul through slothfulness and inertia, through fear, grief and dejection (GBh 14.8, 403-04). It is the most negative and the lowest of the three gunas.

Which of the three gunas will be predominant in the embodied self is determined by the deserts of the individual's past karma. The dominant guna in turn determines the particular senses to which the jīvatman will be bound. If the dictates of the senses lead it to commit evil actions, it will experience pain, and if it commits good actions, it will experience pleasure. Whether the actions of the jīvatman are considered good or evil is determined by the moral law of Brahman, and it is Brahman who allows the individual to experience pleasure or pain according to the deserts of its actions (SBh 2.2.3, 487; 3.2.27, 625).

It cannot be said however, that Brahman is the cause of pain, for pain is the result of wrong action and the choice of the action belongs to the jīvatman. That the jīvatman is alone responsible for its actions is clear from the statement that Brahman has provided the jīvas with "bodies and sense-organs capacitating them for entering on such work and the power of ruling those bodies

and organs;" (SBh 2.2.3, 488). If this were not so, says Rāmānuja, then all scriptural injunctions and prohibitions would be meaningless (SBh 2.3.40, 556-57). Even the gunas cannot be said to restrict the choice of the jīvātman, for the dominant guna within an individual is the result of his past actions, and thus of his own free choice. The individual has the freedom to choose either good or evil action. If he chooses good action, Brahman blesses him, and if he chooses evil action, Brahman punishes him, but the choice of action is his own.

The jīvātman also has the power of enjoyment (bhoktrtvā) of worldly pleasures, which are the fruits of good action (GBh 13.22, 387). Both agency, or the choice of action, and enjoyment, belong to the jīvātman only through its association with the body. The body is the instrument by which the individual carries out actions and by which it experiences the fruits of these actions. Pleasure and pain serve as reward or punishment for the actions chosen. The reward of pleasure encourages the individual to continue the performance of good actions, which in turn results in good karma. Punishment engenders the desire for release from pain and directs the jīvātman towards actions which will be rewarded with pleasure rather than pain.

3. Knowledge in Samsāra

In samsāra, the knowledge which is the essential nature of the jīvātman is in a contracted state. This is due to avidyā which is the result of karma. Avidyā is ". . . a concrete lack of knowledge in the samsāric being of the fundamental autonomy of its individual ātman as a spiritual entity of unlimited knowledge subject to the supreme Spirit" (Ved S 185, n. 2). Rāmānuja says that essentially, avidyā has the form of prakṛti, the function of which is to hide from the ātman the nature of Brahman, and to create the illusion that its own nature is enjoyable (GBh 7.14, 207). In this condition, the ātman identifies itself with the body, not knowing that it is not an independent entity, but a mode of Brahman. Because of its identification with the body, it is attached to the objects which the senses desire, and all its actions are directed toward the appeasement of those desires. This combination of the lack of the knowledge of the true nature of the ātman, and the desires of the senses, bind the jīvātman to samsāra. In order to obtain liberation, it must learn that its true identity is in its relation to Brahman.

CHAPTER IV

The Relation Between Brahman and the Ātman

Rāmānuja explains the relation of Brahman to the jīvātman, primarily through the mode/substance and body/soul analogies already mentioned. The same features of dependence and unity in difference are brought out under both analogies. The body/soul analogy is the primary one, however, for in it Rāmānuja's concept of the dependence of the jīvātmān upon Brahman is the most clearly demonstrated.

The material body has its existence and purpose entirely in and through the soul. When the soul is separated from the body, the body perishes. But the body is necessary for the soul in samsāra, and is in keeping with the karma of the soul by which it is inhabited. Therefore it is the qualifying or distinguishing mode whereby a soul in samsāra is identified with a class or species of beings. In this union of soul and body, the soul is the ruling principle upon which the body is wholly dependent for its capacity to function. In the same way, says Rāmānuja, Brahman is the inner self, or the soul of the jīvātman (GBh 13.2, 355-56).

Rāmānuja's definition of the body provides the three main categories under which he describes the relation of the jīvātman to Brahman. The body is that which is supported by, ruled by, and dependent upon the soul, whose mode it is (Ved S para. 76, 235). Analogously, Brahman is the support and the jīvātman is the supported, who is incapable of existence apart from Brahman. Brahman is the ruler and the jīvātman is that which is ruled. Brahman is the master, and the jīvātman is totally dependent upon him.

A. The Ontic Relation Between Brahman and the Jīvātman

1. The Relation of Union

The first part of this relationship, that of the supporter and the supported, describes the ontic relation between Brahman and the jīvātman. Brahman is the ādhāra and the jīvātman is the ādheya. The meaning of ādhāra is support, substratum, or container. Ādheya is that which is to be supported or contained. This relationship is based on the understanding that Brahman is Being itself and the ground of all finite beings, in that all beings have their source in him.¹ Because Brahman as the cause, is merely transformed as the effect, into another mode of

being, he is not separated from the jīvātman, but remains a part of it, to support and sustain it. This aspect of being the supporter is Rāmānuja's main emphasis in his concept of Brahman's ontic relation to finite beings. He expresses this concept in the following passage:

That which is denoted as 'Being,' i.e. the highest Brahman which is the cause of all, free from all shadow of imperfection, &c., resolved 'to be many'; it thereupon sent forth the entire world, consisting of fire, water, &c.; introduced, in this world so sent forth, the whole mass of individual souls into different bodies divine, human, &c., corresponding to the desert of each soul--the souls thus constituting the Self of the bodies; and finally, itself entering according to its wish into these souls,--so as to constitute their inner Self--evolved in all these aggregates, names and forms, i.e. rendered each aggregate something substantial (vastu) and capable of being denoted by a word. 'Let me enter into these beings with this living Self' . . . means 'with this living me,' and this shows the living Self, i.e. the individual soul to have Brahman for its Self. And that this having Brahman for its Self means Brahman's being the inner Self of the soul (i.e. the Self inside the soul, but not identical with it), Scripture declares by saying that Brahman entered into it (SBh 1.1.13, 226).

Here the finite being's total dependence upon Brahman is shown by the continued presence of Brahman within it after creation. As the soul abides in the body, Brahman abides within the jīvātman as the inner self. In the same way that the body has existence because of the presence of the soul within it, so also the jīvātman exists because of the indwelling presence of Brahman. As the

body cannot function apart from the actuating presence of the soul, so also the jīvātman cannot function without the actuating presence of Brahman.

In Gītabhāṣya 7.19 (213), Rāmānuja sums up the jīvātman's total dependence upon Brahman by stating that it is dependent upon Brahman for its essential nature, its continued existence and all its functions and activities, both in its causal and in its effected state. Therefore, says Rāmānuja, ". . . you terminate in this Supreme Spirit [and are incapable of separate existence and activity]" (Ved S para. 20, 195).

2. The Relation of Difference

The body/soul analogy also gives scope for clarifying the nature of the distinction between Brahman and the jīvātman. Just as the soul, though it abides in the body, is not identical with it, so Brahman is "the Self inside the soul, but not identical with it" (SBh 1.1.13, 226).

Rāmānuja uses two arguments to show that the jīvātman, as well as Brahman who dwells within him, each retain their individual natures. The first argument is based on Taittiriya Upanisad 2.5 which states "'Different from this Self, which consists of Understanding, is the

other inner Self which consists of bliss'" (SBh 1.1.13, 209). Rāmānuja says that the self which consists of understanding is the jīvātman, and the inner Self is Brahman. As has already been stated, Rāmānuja holds that any measure of bliss which the jīvātman possesses, belongs essentially to Brahman. That the jīvātman who is not characterized by bliss in and of himself, nevertheless possesses some measure of bliss, is proof of both the presence of Brahman within him, and of the distinction of their individual natures (SBh 1.1.13-1.1.18, 230-236).

The difference between Brahman and the jīvātman is also shown by the argument which Rāmānuja gives to prove that Brahman, while abiding within the jīvātman, is not contaminated by the evils and impurities which adhere to the latter. This argument has four points. The first centres around the fact that the material world which is the object of enjoyment, and finite beings who are the enjoying subjects, and Brahman who is the ruling principle, each remain distinct, though they are bound together in one aggregate whole (SBh 1.1.1, 138-45). It is impossible, says Rāmānuja, that the nature of material things such as stones and plants which are subject to constant change, should be confused with the nature of Brahman who is changeless and perfect. It is just as

impossible that,

. . . the individual soul, which is liable to endless suffering, and a mere wretched glow-worm as it were, should be one with Brahman who, as we know from the texts, comprises within himself the treasure of all auspicious qualities" (SBh 2.1.23, 469).

Rāmānuja uses a many-colored piece of cloth to illustrate his point. The cloth is woven of many differently colored threads, but each color is bounded by an area of white threads, so that none of the colors become confused with each other. At the same time they comprise one piece of cloth. In the same way that each thread retains its own characteristic color, there is no confusion of the characteristic qualities of change, suffering and perfection which belong to the material world, finite beings and Brahman respectively (SBh 1.1.1, 142).

The second point of Rāmānuja's argument is based on the fact that the essential nature of the soul is not affected by the characteristics of the material body. It is not touched by the changing states of the body, such as infancy, youth and death. Just so, "not a shadow of imperfection" attaches itself to Brahman, though he dwells within the jīvatman as its Inner Self (SBh 1.1.13, 228-29).

The next point has already been stated in part, in relation to Brahman's essential quality of purity.

Brahman is not touched by evil because he is not subject to karma. "That a soul experiences pleasures and pains caused by the various states of the body is not due to the fact of its being joined to a body, but to its karma in the form of good and evil deeds" (SBh 2.1.14, 428).

Therefore, since the body is not the source of evil, Brahman who has the jīvatman as his body, but has no karma, is also not touched by evil.

Moreover, Brahman is the Lord of karma, who causes the jīvatman to experience pleasure and pain as reward and punishment for its deeds. Rāmānuja cites a parallel to Brahman, of an earthly ruler who metes out punishment to a disobedient servant. It is the servant and not the ruler who experiences in his body the prescribed punishment. Just as the ruler does not suffer the pain of his disobedient servant, so Brahman also is not affected by the evils which result from the karma of the jīvatman (SBh 2.1.14, 428).

Rāmānuja gives another example of a prince who is not troubled by the mosquitoes and miscellaneous discomforts of the place in which he dwells, because all comforts are provided for him by his servants, who fan away the mosquitoes, etc. Even as he, though staying in an unpleasant place,

'... rules the countries for which he cares and continues to enjoy all possible pleasures, such as fragrant odours and the like; so the Lord of creation, to whom His power serves as an ever-moving fan as it were, is not touched by the evils of that creation, but rules the world of Brahman and the other worlds for which He cares, and continues to enjoy all possible delights' (SBh 2.1.14, 429).

This illustration implies not only that Brahman remains untouched by the evils of the beings within which he dwells, but that he dwells simultaneously in a totally different, much higher realm, and that he "is by nature such that He cannot catch even a whiff" of evil.² All the same, he continues to pervade and control the transient realm which is afflicted by evil, and "for which He cares."

Rāmānuja's fourth point for the continued perfection of Brahman despite his relation to the jīvātman, again emphasizes Brahman's complete supremacy even in his association with the world. There is no contradiction, says Rāmānuja, in the fact that Brahman remains perfect and antagonistic to all evil, for the imperfections belong to the jīvātman which is Brahman's body, and thus merely his mode. Brahman's identity with these modes does not detract from his glory, but rather the modes attest and add to his supreme and lordly power and excellence (SBh 1.2.1, 260-61).

The ontic relation between Brahman and the jīvātman

may be summed up, therefore, as one of "difference in union" (Ved S 258, n. 226). While Brahman is the inseparable ruling principle of the jīvātman, Brahman and the jīvātman each retain their essential natures and attributes, as do the soul and the body. For Rāmānuja the nature of this relationship is the basis for the entire existence of the jīvātman in samsāra, and for every transaction between Brahman and the jīvātman.

B. The Inner Ruler and That Which is Ruled

The second relationship under the body/soul analogy is that between the ruler or controller (niyantā) and that which is ruled (niyāmya). Brahman is the ruler and the jīvātman is that which is ruled. The ordinary meaning of the term niyantā is "the one who restrains."³ John Carman hints at a most important aspect of Brahman's presence within the jīvātman when he says that Rāmānuja's use of the word niyantā is not so much in the sense of restraint as in the sense of the positive action of ruling. Brahman is not a passive presence, but a dynamic being who participates in the affairs of the world by intervening actively on behalf of the good and against evil. He is also an active ruling and guiding presence within the jīvātman (SBh 1.2.19, 279-81).

As the soul is the ruling or controlling principle of the body, so Brahman is the antaryāmi, the controller within, or the Inner Ruler of the jīvātman, directing and guiding it in all its actions (Ved S 185, n. 22; GBh 9.5, 249-50). Rāmānuja defines four ways in which Brahman actively controls the career of the jīvātman in samsāra:

The divine Supreme Person, all whose wishes are eternally realized, having engaged in sport befitting his might and greatness and having settled that work is of a twofold nature, such and such works being good and such and such works being evil, and having bestowed on all individual souls, bodies and sense-organs capacitating them for entering on such work and the power of ruling those bodies and organs; and having himself entered into those souls as their inner Self abides in them, controlling them as an animating and cheering principle. The souls, on their side, endowed with all the powers imparted to them by the Lord and with bodies and organs bestowed by him, and forming abodes in which he dwells, apply themselves on their own part, and in accordance with their own wishes, to works either good or evil. The Lord, then, recognizing him who performs good actions as one who obeys his commands, blesses him with piety, riches, wordly pleasures, and final release; while him who transgresses his commands he causes to experience the opposite of all these (SBh 2.2.3, 488).

First Brahman equips the jīvātman with a body with which to carry out action, and the powers necessary to determine its own actions. Secondly, he enters the jīvātman as its animating principle, who makes action possible, and who is in fact the agent and the doer of action. However,

he gives the self permission to act on the basis of its own decisions. He then rewards or punishes good or evil actions in order to reinforce good and discourage evil. The purpose of the Inner Ruler in all of these things is the jivātman's liberation. His all-important role in the process which leads to release, will be expanded upon in chapters 5 and 6.

C. Sesin and Sesa

The third relationship under the body/soul analogy is that of the sesa and the sesin. The sesin, who is Brahman, is the "principle element to which other elements are accessory." The sesa is that which is necessary to the sesin, "subservient to him, totally and inseparably dependent on him, serving his eminence" (Ved S 183, n. 3). Both sentient beings and non-sentient matter are sesa to Brahman.

All the analogies already given for the relationship between Brahman and the jivātman--of the soul and body, the mode and its substance, and the Inner Ruler and that which is ruled--are summed up in this relationship of the sesa and the sesin. Rāmānuja explains the inter-relation of all these analogies in the following passage:

The relation between soul and body means the relation between substratum and dependent entity incapable of functioning separately, between transcendent controller and thing controlled, between principal and accessory. In this relation the one term is called ātman or 'soul' because this is the one who obtains an object since he is in all respects the substratum, the controller and the principal; the other term is called body, i.e. form, because it is a modification that is inseparably connected since it is in all respects dependent entity, thing controlled and accessory. For such is the relation between the individual soul and its body (Ved S para. 76, 235).

The jīvatman is subsidiary or subordinate to Brahman by virtue of the fact that Brahman is the creator and source of all beings (GBh 7.6, 200-01). As such, the sole function of the sesa is to serve the purposes of the sesin. And the intended purpose for which the sesa is created is that it should glorify the creator and manifest his transcendent power (Ved S para. 121-22, 274-75).

The relationship between sesa and sesin is reciprocal, however. Not only does the sesa benefit the sesin, but the sesin also benefits and cares for the sesa. Using the analogy of the master and servant relationship, Rāmānuja says that not only does the servant serve the master, but the master is also capable of activity which is intended to benefit the servant. For example, the master feeds the servant, or in other words, sustains his existence (SBh 1.1.1, 153). What is more, the servant cannot exist

without the sustenance of the master, for he is in all respects, a dependent entity.

That the jīvātman is dependent upon Brahman has already been demonstrated in his ontic relation to him, and in his relation to the Inner Ruler who is the agent and doer of action. The jīvātman's complete dependence upon Brahman for his support is also Rāmānuja's main emphasis in the sesa-sesīn relationship. The sēsīn is the Inner Ruler who supports and directs all the activities of the sesa. It is only when the jīvātman recognizes his complete dependence upon Brahman, that he becomes cognizant of the fact that he is also dependent upon Brahman for his liberation from samsāra (GBh 18.42, 507-08).

The following chapters will demonstrate that the dependence of the sesa upon the sesīn is the key to Rāmānuja's synthesis of divine grace and human action, and that this relationship informs every stage of the path which leads to liberation. The knowledge of the nature of the ātman and of Brahman, and of their proper relationship, which is necessary for liberation, consists in the knowledge of the sesa's dependence upon Brahman. The purpose of the disciplines which comprise the path to liberation, is to lead the jīvātman to the knowledge of this dependence.

The aspect of service is involved in the śesa-
śesin relationship, in the sense that when the jīvātman realizes that Brahman is the agent, the doer and the only means to release, his desire to render worship and devotion to Brahman, rather than his desire for sense-objects, becomes his motive for action. For such a devotee, worship as service becomes his highest joy (GBh 7.16-17, 209-210). To those who object that this is not possible, Ramanuja replies that they labour under the misconception of the identity of the ātman. If the jīvātman thinks its true identity is with the body, then it will desire the pleasures of the body. But if it recognizes that its true nature lies in its dependence upon Brahman, then service will become a pleasure. Service is a dog's life only when one serves an unworthy master. Such is the service of the senses. The enlightened jīvātman will know that only Brahman merits the devotion of all beings, and so he will render this devotion of his own volition, because it is his joy to do so. It is through this worship that he contributes to the excellence of Brahman, and fulfills the function of his śesa-hood.

CHAPTER V

The Modes of Grace

Beginning with creation itself, Brahman voluntarily takes action to accomplish the release of the jīvatman from samsāra. Having created the world and joined the jivas with bodies so that they may destroy the effects of past karma with good works, Brahman then uses the operation of the law of karma as his instrument to direct individuals toward liberation. Through the scriptures He provides the knowledge of the way by which release may be accomplished. Through his descents and manifestations in the empirical universe, he intervenes in the lives of individuals, and in the affairs of the world as a whole, to ensure that righteousness will triumph over evil. As the Inner Ruler, he abides in the heart of every individual for the purpose of guiding him to final release. These ways in which Brahman takes action to accomplish the release of the jīvatman from samsāra, are the modes by which he makes his grace operative on behalf of the jīvatman. A closer examination of each of these modes is necessary for an understanding of the relationship between grace and human action.

in the process of release.

A. Creation as a Mode of Grace

The act of creation is a mode of grace in that through it Brahman provides jīvas with the means to obtain release from the bondage of karma. Rāmānuja explains this clearly in the following passage:

In the beginning, at the time of creation, He, the Lord, the Lord of all created beings, beheld all beings, helpless on account of contact proceeding from time immemorial with non-intelligent matter, excluded from the distinctions of name and form, dissolved within Himself, unfit to realize the objects of human pursuit and almost inanimate. He, the supremely merciful, through a desire to redeem them, placed them in the state of creation . . . along with sacrifices, with a view to the performance (by them) of the sacrifices in the form of His worship. (And He) said thus: 'By this sacrifice may you multiply: that is, effect your increase and prosperity. Let this sacrifice yield you the desire called mokṣa which is the highest end of life as also other desires which are in conformity with it (GBh 3.10, 83).

His love for unreleased jīvas prompts Brahman to provide them with a way to eternal release. He does so by creating the world and uniting the jīvas with bodies within it.¹

The destruction of evil karma, and the knowledge of the ātman and its relation to Brahman, are the indispensable prerequisites to release. Through the creation of the world Brahman has provided the jīva with the faculties necessary for obtaining both of

these goals. Before creation, the jīva abides in Brahman, but it is unable to enjoy the bliss of Brahman because it does not have the right knowledge of him. It does not have this knowledge because it is bound by the beginningless karma which adheres to the unreleased jīva, and obscures the knowledge of its relation to Brahman.

The destruction of evil karma and the knowledge of the ātman and of Brahman, require right action. Since the jīva has the capacity for action only in the body, conjunction with the body is necessary for it to be able to gain knowledge. This is why Rāmānuja says that prakṛti is "the means for the experience of pleasure and pain, and for final release of intelligent souls" (SBh 1.4.2, 370). Brahman, who has determined what actions are evil and what actions are good, has bestowed on all jīvas, bodies, sense organs, and the power of agency with which to rule over them. Through the capacities thus endowed, the jīvatman is able to choose what actions he will perform, and to execute them. Those who perform good actions, that is, actions which are in obedience to the commands of Brahman, he blesses with piety, worldly prosperity and final release. Those who perform evil actions, he punishes with the opposite of these (SBh 2.2.3, 488). Brahman's purpose in this process is to encourage good works so that evil karma may be destroyed, and thus

"ever to increase happiness to the highest degree" (SBh 2.2.3, 488). Therefore prakrti is a means of grace in that through it, evil karma which is the obstacle to obtaining the knowledge of Brahman, is destroyed.

Prakrti is also the instrument through which the jīva is able to perform the actions required in the disciplines which lead to liberation. These disciplines lead to the worship of Brahman, which alone results in the direct knowledge of him.

Rāmānuja emphasizes the sanctity of the body and of the world as a means of grace, by pointing out that secular work must be performed for the purpose of preserving life in the body. "The support of the body has necessarily to be carried out until the means (for the realisation of the self and then of Brahman) are fully gone through" (GBh 3.8, 80). For this reason Rāmānuja objects to the view that one must renounce life in the world and become an ascetic in order to obtain liberation (SBh 3.4.17-19, 693-94). What is more, it is the individual's duty (dharma) to perform those works which are assigned in the scriptures for his station in society, and his stage in life (GBh 18.42, 507). The next chapter will show in what sense Rāmānuja does teach renunciation, but he certainly does not advocate withdrawal from

the world as such. The world is good insofar as it is the gift of grace, and the means through which it is possible for the jīvatman to perform those actions which lead to liberation.

B. The Scriptures as a Mode of Grace

Every means of knowledge has a practical purpose. The purpose of Brahman's scriptural revelation, is to teach man how to reach his highest goal (SBh 1.1.4, 174-75). The purpose of smṛti is further proof of Brahman's desire to make this goal attainable for everyone.

Rāmānuja says smṛti was written by the instruction of Brahman in order to clarify śruti, and to ensure that its revelation is made accessible to all men in every age (Ved S para. 139, 294).²

The individual who aspires to liberation must study the scriptures with the help of a qualified teacher. Thus he will gain the knowledge of the three truths already discussed, which are: the nature of Brahman, the nature of the ātman, and their relation to each other. He will also acquire a fourth element of knowledge which will be dealt with in the next chapter. This concerns those actions which are required of the one who desires release. The mumūksu must have the knowledge of all these things in order to be able to practice the disciplines

which lead to liberation. However, this knowledge constitutes only the indirect knowledge of Brahman. By learning the mere sense of the texts, the mumuksu acquires only the basic theological knowledge which is necessary in order to gain the direct knowledge of him. It is only through obedience to the injunctions and the practice of the prescribed disciplines, that the mumuksu obtains liberation, which consists in the direct, experiential knowledge of Brahman. Nevertheless, the knowledge of the texts is indispensable, because they are the only authority on what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, in order to obtain this goal (SBh 1.1.1, 18-19; 1.2.3, 284-85).

C. Grace and the Law of Karma

In Rāmānuja's theology, the law of karma does not operate merely as a mechanistic system whereby certain actions inevitably reap specific rewards. What fruits will be reaped by certain actions is not determined by the actions themselves. Rather, Brahman has stated in the Scriptures which works please or displease him, and that punishment or reward will be meted out accordingly:

It is the Veda which gives information as to good and evil deeds, the essence of which consists in their pleasing or displeasing the

Supreme Person, and as to their results, viz pleasure and pain; which depend on the grace or wrath of the Lord (SBh 2.2.3, 487).

Since the Scriptures give explicit instructions as to what actions to perform in order to please Brahman, it cannot be said that punishment is handed out arbitrarily or unfairly. Brahman himself metes out reward and punishment according to a stated code of good and evil actions, which has a specific end in view--the release of the individual from samsāra. Rāmānuja says emphatically:

For it is he only - the all-knowing, all powerful, supremely generous one - who being pleased by sacrifices, gifts, offerings, and the like, as well as by pious meditation, is in a position to bestow the different forms of enjoyment in this and the heavenly world, and Release which consists in attaining to a nature like his own. For action which is non-intelligent and transitory is incapable of bringing about a result connected with a future time (SBh 3.2.38, 625).

It is not the action which determines the reward or brings about release, but the will of Brahman.

For this reason, grace and the law of karma are inseparably bound together, and grace acts strictly in accordance with the law of karma. Those who perform good actions and obey his commands, Brahman blesses with worldly pleasures, success in the disciplines which lead to liberation, and final release from samsāra. Those who transgress his law, he punishes with repeated rebirths into samsāra. Not to do so, would be to condone

the breaking of the law (SBh 2.2.3, 488). Brahman is bound, by his own perfection, to punish evil. He is not only gracious and merciful, but also just and pure, and therefore requires that those who seek knowledge of him, must also purify themselves by obedience to his commands.

In punishing those whose deeds displease him, Brahman is also acting for their benefit by checking their tendency to transgress his laws. Only the individual who has purified himself through deeds pleasing to Brahman, is able to acquire the knowledge of Brahman.

Rāmānuja writes:

That passion and darkness veil the knowledge of truth while goodness on the other hand gives rise to it, the Divine one has declared Himself, in the passage 'From goodness springs knowledge' (Bha. Gi XIV, 17). Hence, in order that knowledge may arise, evil works have to be got rid of (SBh 1.1.1, 18-19).

On the assumption that punishment for evil action causes the individual to turn to good action, punishment is an act of grace in that it spurs him on to the purity of action required so that knowledge may arise.

In this system of reward and punishment, Brahman cannot be charged with partiality, because all jīvas have received at creation, the same capacities for determining their own actions. By dealing with individuals strictly

in accordance with the actions which they choose, their freedom of will is maintained. At the same time, Brahman is preserved as the upholder of righteousness, as well as the gracious saviour who is present to aid and reward those who seek to please him.

The operation of the law of karma then, is the means which Brahman employs, out of love for the jīvātman, to lead it to the knowledge of himself. Though karma is a beginningless principle, reward and punishment are meted out by Brahman himself, with a view to increasing the happiness of the jīvātman. Therefore Brahman can be said to adopt the workings of karma as a means for the operation of his grace in the world.

D. Brahman's Descents and Manifestations as Modes of Grace

Brahman descends to manifest himself within the empirical realm in order to assist the efforts of his devotees to attain him. According to the Pāñcarātra system, Brahman assumes three bodily or visible forms upon the earth, which are the vyūha, vibhava and arca forms. Rāmānuja clearly accepts the Pāñcarātra doctrines on the vibhava and vyūha forms of Brahman. He states that he who worships the vibhava form of Brahman, attains

the vyūha, and from the worship of this form, he attains Brahman in his para, or subtle transcendent form in which he dwells in Vaikuntha.³

1. The Vyūha Form

The vyūha form in the Pāñcarātra tradition is the division of the Supreme Brahman into four forms. Rāmānuja says that Vāsudeva, the first of the four forms, is Brahman himself, in what appears to be his para form. The three subordinate vyūhas, Sankarsana, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha are:

... mere bodily forms which the highest Brahman voluntarily assumes. Scripture already declares, 'Not born he is born in many ways,' and it is this birth - consisting in the voluntary assumption of bodily form, due to tenderness towards its devotees - which the Bhagavata system teaches (SBh 2.2.42, 525-26).

These three deities preside over the individual selves, the manas and the ahamkāra respectively (SBh 2.2.42, 526). Collectively, their purpose is to aid the efforts of the devotee to obtain the knowledge of Brahman.

2. The Arcā Form

In the arcā form, Brahman abides within consecrated images for the purpose of fostering the worship of his devotees. Though Rāmānuja does not give an exposition of

the arcā form in particular, there is evidence to show that he does accept this form of Brahman. The evidence rests upon well-known Śrī Vaisnava tradition, both pre- and post-Rāmānuja, upon the present-day practices of a living tradition, and upon the fact that Rāmānuja accepted the Pāñcarātra writings as scripture.

Pāñcarātra worship presupposes image worship.⁴ It is commonly accepted that Rāmānuja carried out temple reform in south India by establishing the system of worship given in the Pārāmēśwara samhitā of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas.⁵ This samhitā deals with both the making and consecration of temple images, as do a large portion of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas as a whole. It is also said that Rāmānuja installed specific images in the temple at Śrīrangam, and his biographies mention numerous instances in which he worshipped images at the temples which he visited in his travels about India.⁶

In the Pāñcarātra conception, Visnu descends and enters into consecrated images with "a subtle ('divine', 'non-natural') body."⁷ The Yatīndramatadīpikā, a seventeenth century interpretation of Rāmānuja's teachings, defines the arcā form of Brahman as:

... . that special form which, without remoteness of space and time, accepts for its body (any) substance chosen by the devotees, and 'descends' into it with a non-material body; (He) becomes

dependent on the worshipper for bath, food, sitting, sleeping, etc.; (He) bears everything and is replete (with knowledge and other attributes); (He) is present in houses, villages, towns, sacred places, hills, etc.⁸

The Gitābhāṣya yields a number of references which reinforce the fact that Rāmānuja accepts this concept of image worship. In Gitābhāṣya 4.11 (119) he interprets the words of Kṛṣṇa as follows:

Not merely do I bestow protection on those who wish to seek refuge in Me by incarnating in the forms of gods, men etc. But also, whoever, desirous of taking refuge in Me, 'howsoever', in whatever manner, conceiving of Me in accordance with their own desires, take refuge in Me, that is, resort to Me - I render them favour 'even so', that is, in the manner desired by them. (The meaning is that) I show Myself (to them) (GBh 4.11, 119).

Rāmānuja makes it plain that he is here not speaking of either the vyūha or vibhava forms, and it is logical to conclude that he is referring to the arcā form of Brahman.⁹ The reference to the fact that Brahman acknowledges those who take refuge in him, in whatever manner or form they conceive of him, is in keeping with the Yatīndramatadīpika's statement that Brahman accepts as his body, any form which the devotee chooses. Gitābhāṣya 9.26 (267) states that Brahman enjoys such offerings as leaves, flowers, fruit or water. Gitābhāṣya 9.34 (274-75) and 12.10 (344-45) refer to acts of homage, bowing down, and offerings of enjoyment such as incense, sandal wood paste, garlands of

flowers and food. All such offerings are commonly made to images in Śrī Vaisnava worship. They are part of the devotee's duties in caring for the image, as indicated in the passage from the Yatindramatadīpikā.¹⁰

Such acts of worship are also in keeping with Rāmānuja's emphasis upon ritual action as an aid to the devotee's development toward higher devotion. In Gītabhāṣya 12.10 he interprets the text to mean that those who are incapable of higher meditation, or steady remembrance of the qualities of Brahman (see p.), shall perform such acts of worship as have been mentioned in these passages from the Gītabhāṣya.

3. The Vibhava Form

In his vibhava form, Brahman manifests himself in the forms of different classes of beings, whether of gods, men or other beings. Rāmānuja does not discuss much of the information on avatāras given in the Purāṇas or the later Śrī Vaisnava manuals, which deal with the number of avatāras and their primary or secondary nature.

Of the ten primary avatāras listed in the Yatindramatadīpikā¹¹ he mentions only Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.

There are four main points, however, which Rāmānuja stresses repeatedly in his expositions on avatāras. The first three of these points are explained in Gītabhāṣya

4.9 (118) and 9.11-12 (255-57). These are that Brahman descends into bodily forms in order to become a refuge for those who seek him, that the bodies in which he dwells are not the result of karma or prakrti, and that the devotee must recognize the presence of Brahman in these bodily forms and the purpose of his descents, in order to attain him (Ved S para. 113, 265-66; SBh 1.1.21, 240). The fourth point is that Brahman chooses to descend and become a refuge for his devotees because of his attributes of mercy and compassion. This point is mentioned in Gitābhāṣya 9.11 and in the Srī Bhāṣya, where Rāmānuja writes that Brahman individualises his divine form ". . . so as to render it suitable to their apprehension - He who is a boundless ocean as it were of compassion, kindness and lordly power" (SBh 1.1.21, 240).

Rāmānuja gives his fullest exposition of avatāras in Gitābhāṣya 4.5-9 (115-118), in his interpretation of Kṛṣṇa's explanation to Arjuna of the purpose for his descent. Besides the points already mentioned, this passage stresses that Brahman descends in the form of avatāras of his own free will, and at such times as he deems expedient to accomplish his purposes. Here three purposes for his descents are given. The first is to aid the efforts of the virtuous who seek him, so that they may

attain him as their refuge. Because Brahman's name, form and deeds are beyond their comprehension, and because they cannot bear separation from him, he descends to earth in order to protect them, to reveal to them his essential nature, and to allow them to see his works and hear his words.

Secondly, Brahman descends in order to destroy evil-doers. This is not an act of cruelty but of mercy, in that the evil-doer is thus saved from further acts of sin. Brahman resorts to this means of terminating the individual's evil tendencies when all other methods of reproof have failed.¹²

The third purpose for Brahman's descents is the restoration of the Vedic dharma; ". . . of that which ought to be done, as determined by the arrangement of the four castes and four stages of life, and taught in the Vedas" (GBh 4.7, 117). This purpose has already been implied by the first two, of the protection of the good and the destruction of evil. All three purposes are summed up in the fact that Brahman descends to establish righteousness, and to reveal himself as the protector of righteousness, before the eyes of the world. This he does by appearing in visible form so that men are able to see his deeds and hear his words. By revealing his power in this way, Brahman shows himself to be not only the sole

object worthy of worship, but also the only one who has the power to grant that which the devotee seeks through worship. By fostering the devotion of the devotee in this way, Brahman has accomplished the purpose of his descent, for the Vedic dharma, or righteousness, consists in the worship of Brahman (GBh 4.8, 117-18).

4. The Antaryāmin Form

None of the three forms of Brahman discussed so far, play as important a role in Rāmānuja's thought as does Brahman's antaryāmin form. This form is the omnipresent Inner Ruler who has already been discussed in chapter 4. Rāmānuja explains the presence of the Inner Ruler in his discussion of the text from Chāndogya Upanisad 8.1.1 which reads:

'Now in that city of Brahman there is the palace, the small lotus, and in it that small [akāsa (space)]. Now what is within that small [space] that is to be sought for, that is to be understood' (SBh 1.3.13, 314).

Rāmānuja says that the city referred to here is the body of the devotee and that the small lotus is the heart, or the palace. Within the palace is the small space where the Inner Ruler abides. The Inner Ruler, then, is the presence of Brahman himself with all his qualities and attributes, dwelling within the hearts of men (SBh

1.3.13, 316-17).

The primary purpose of the presence of the Inner Ruler is to bring to fruition the efforts of the mumuksu to obtain release. It has been stated that the Inner Ruler is the ruling and guiding principle of all the individual's actions. As such, he is also the one who assists and guides the mumuksu's efforts at every stage of the way to release. Through Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga the mumuksu realizes that he is essentially dependent upon Brahman who is the Inner Ruler. Seeing this, he also realizes that this Supreme Person is the only one who is worthy of worship and the highest goal to be attained. The mumuksu then directs his meditation entirely toward Brahman, knowing that it is the Inner Ruler who will bring him to his goal. Rāmānuja states that Brahman himself says:

'I am the origin of all, everything proceeds from me; knowing this the wise worship me with love. To them ever devoted, worshipping me in love, I give that means of wisdom by which they attain to me. In mercy only to them, dwelling in their hearts, do I destroy the darkness born of ignorance, with the brilliant light of knowledge' (Bha. Gi. X, 8; 10-11) (SBh 2.3.41, 558).

In another passage Rāmānuja declares:

As the universal inner Ruler that Self brings about the meditation of the Devotee also; for the Sūtra (11, 3, 41) expressly declares that the activity of the individual soul depends on the Supreme Person. Being the means for

bringing about the meditation and the goal of the meditation, that same Self is the highest object to be attained (SBh 1.4.1, 356).

The following chapters will demonstrate further, the role of the Inner Ruler as the ultimate goal and the means to the goal.

CHAPTER VI

The Path to Liberation

A. The Usefulness of Action

1. Knowledge, Action and Devotion

The path to liberation is a synthesis of knowledge, action and devotion. Knowledge is both the basis for, and the result of right action (GBh 4.33-34, 135-37). With the knowledge gained from the scriptures, of the nature of Brahman, of the ātman and its relation to Brahman, of the nature of right action and the result of such action, the mumuksu is equipped to enter into the way which leads to the direct knowledge of Brahman.

The result of action lies not in the act itself, but in the desire or the intention with which the act is performed. That is, the doer of the action reaps that which he desires to obtain by it (GBh 9.24, 265). The Bhagavadgītā lists three groups of people who perform action for three different reasons (GBh 7.16, 209). The aisvaryaṛthin aspires to prosperity in the world. The kaivalyāṛthin desires the vision of the ātman as distinct from prakrti. The jñānin is the one who seeks the direct knowledge of Brahman. This is the man of wisdom, who,

says Rāmānuja, aspires to the best goal.

The knowledge which the jñānin desires is the direct intuitive or experiential knowledge which is possible only through the worship (upāsana) of Brahman. Rāmānuja says the Upanisadic use of the word knowledge implies worship, and conversely, worship is characterized by knowledge; that is, the knowledge of Brahman consists in worship (SBh 1.1.1, 15). Worship in Rāmānuja's context, implies action. The injunctions of the scriptures teach those actions which are instrumental for attaining the knowledge of Brahman (SBh 1.1.4, 198-99).

Here Rāmānuja is in direct opposition to Śankara, who holds that liberation is possible not through action, but through pure knowledge alone.¹ Release cannot be the result of action says Śankara, because the fruits of action are temporal, whereas release is eternal. Nor can it be the result of religious merit, gained by action. Merit and demerit are the cause of pleasure and pain, which are possible only in the embodied state. Release on the other hand is not subject to pleasure or pain, because it is an eternally and essentially disembodied state. Action is also not necessary for purification, for release is nothing but being Brahman, to whom no excellence can be added. Therefore all that is necessary for release is the removal

of the ignorance of one's identity with Brahman. Because the self is already one with Brahman, release is not something which can be attained through action.

Rāmānuja on the other hand, approaches the problem of liberation from the premise that man is not identical with Brahman but is distinct from him as a mode is distinct from its original substance (SBh 1.1.16, 233). One of the differences between the mode and the substance, is that man, unlike Brahman, is not pure. But neither are purification or liberation the direct results of action or merit. Rāmānuja's answer to the classical problem of action versus inaction, or merit versus grace, lies in his formulation of how action is instrumental in leading the mumuksu to the knowledge of Brahman, by making him receptive to grace.

2. Action as Preparation for Yoga

Action is the preparation or the grooming process which readies the mumuksu for devotion. Even as a horse, says Rāmānuja ". . . requires attendants, grooming &c., so knowledge although itself the means of Release, demands the co-operation of the different works" (SBh 3.4.26, 700). The path to liberation, which consists of Karmyoga and Bhaktiyoga, is this grooming process. Through it the

mumuksu learns the proper attitude in which action must be performed in order to obtain liberation.

Actions which are enjoined in the scriptures according to his caste and stage in life, are the individual's duty (dharma).² Preparatory to Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga, is his performance of those actions which are his duty (GBh 18.45, 510-11). For the first three castes, the scriptures prescribe the performance of ritual worship and the cultivation of spiritual qualities³ (GBh 18, 42-44, 507-10). Through the development of spiritual qualities, the mumuksu will begin to learn to restrain and discipline the manas (SBh 3.4.27, 701). The manas of the unreleased jīvatman are attached to sense objects due to its identification with the body. In this condition the jīvatman desires only the gratification of the desires of the senses, by which it continues in bondage to the body (GBh 6.6, 168). In order to wean the manas away from the sense organs, it must be trained to turn away from sense objects completely. This discipline of the body and of the mental faculties is begun by the cultivation of spiritual qualities.

Rāmānuja gives several different lists of qualities which "are worthy of being acquired on account of their being the means for obtaining the knowledge of the self"

(GBh 13.7, 372).⁴ Those qualities to which Rāmānuja refers most often are listed together in the Vedārtha-samgraha (para. 91, 248). They are: sama, dama, tapas, sauca, ksama, arjava, bhayābhayasthanaviveka, dayā, and ahimsā.

The first four qualities are defined in Gitābhāṣya 18.42 (507). Sama is controlling the external organs of sense. Dama is controlling the manas. Tapas is the "disciplining of the body by way of restricting enjoyments as taught in the sāstras." Sauca is the purity necessary "for carrying out the rituals enjoined in the sāstras." Ramanuja defines it further as "the fitness of the mind, speech and body, as laid down in the sāstras, for the knowledge of the self and its attainment" (GBh 13.8, 373). Ksama is forgiveness or freedom from agitation toward those who cause suffering to oneself (GBh 16.3, 439-40). Arjava is integrity, honesty, or "'a manifestation of outward behaviour toward others which is consistent with the mind'" (GBh 18.42, 508).⁵

Bhayābhayasthanaviveka means to distinguish between that which one should be afraid of and that which one should not be afraid of (GBh 10.5, 281-82).⁶ Dayā is compassion or "not being able to remain unmoved by the sufferings of all beings" (GBh 16.1-3, 438-39). "Freedom

from inflicting injury (ahimsā) is abstinence from hurting others" (GBh 16.1-3, 438-40).

These and all the other spiritual qualities which Rāmānuja enumerates, assist in drawing the jīvātman away from the agitation of mind, body and emotions which arises from the pursuit for gratification of the sense organs. By thus disciplining the manas, the mumuksu begins to develop the calm composure of mind and body which is necessary for the disciplines of Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga.

The accomplishment of these initial steps in restraining the manas, is brought about not by the self-effort of the individual, but by the grace of Brahman.

According to Rāmānuja, Krishna says:

These and such other mental states of all beings - these activities of the mind giving rise to energetic work and renunciation - are from Me alone. That is, they are such as rest on My will (GBh 10:4-5, 282).

The efforts which the individual makes to acquire these qualities, are pleasing to Brahman and cause him to destroy the mental states which obstruct calmness and concentration of mind. The mumuksu must first apply his mind and will to the development of spiritual qualities, and when he does so, Brahman causes his effort to succeed.

3. The Meaning of Renunciation With Regard to Action

Turning the manas away from sense objects, and

toward Brahman, is instrumental for the development of the proper attitude in which action must be performed in Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga. This proper attitude consists in the mumuksu's renunciation of the agency, doership, and fruit of action, while continuing to perform those actions which are his duty. Turning the manas away from sense objects, leads to the renunciation of the temporal fruits of action, which is the first step in the mumuksu's three-fold renunciation of action. The purpose of the renunciation of fruits, is actually a restatement of the purpose for the discipline of the manas. It is not action, but the desire for the fruits of action, or sense objects, which binds the jīvatman to samsāra by reinforcing its identification with the body. Furthermore, actions reap the fruits which are desired by the doer of action. Therefore, in order that the knowledge of Brahman may arise, the desires of the mumuksu must be redirected toward that goal, by renouncing the desires for the temporal fruits of action (GBh 9.24, 265). This sets in motion the process which is perfected through Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga, of the complete three-fold attitude of renunciation with regard to action.

Essentially, this process of renunciation is for the purpose of revealing to the individual, his complete

dependence upon Brahman for the performance of all his actions, and for the fruits thereof. The realization of this dependence, results in the recognition that Brahman is in fact the only means for liberation. Seeing this, the devotee resorts to Brahman for grace to perform the actions which are commanded of him, and for final release. This approach to Brahman in the attitude of complete dependence is called prapatti. By resorting to Brahman, the individual is released from the bondage of the body, that is, from the desire to perform action in order to appease the senses. Thus he is freed to direct the manas completely toward Brahman, so that all his actions take on the form of worship and devotion.

The fact that such acts of worship result from the individual's recognition of his dependence upon Brahman, removes the connotations of self-effort and merit in relation to action. Thus it is by this concept of dependence that the unity between knowledge, action and devotion is brought about. Action is the instrument through which the devotee's recognition of his essential dependence upon Brahman for the performance of action, arises. This recognition results in devotion and worship, which in turn leads to the knowledge of Brahman.

Rāmānuja's concept of the usefulness of action for bringing about the mumukṣu's reliance upon Brahman,

informs every aspect of the path which leads to liberation. The performance of action in the form of Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga constitutes the way which leads to the three-fold renunciation in relation to action, and finally to the performance of action as worship.

B. Karmayoga--the Discipline of Action

The mumuksu is prepared to proceed to Karmayoga when he has acquired the knowledge of the scriptures, and has begun to discipline the manas through the observance of his duties and the development of spiritual qualities. Action in Karmayoga consists of the performance of obligatory, optional and occasional ritual observances (karman) prescribed in the scriptures for one's particular caste and stage in life.

The goal of Karmayoga is the realization of the true nature of the ātman. This is possible only through the purification of the manas of the desire for sense objects, which in turn is possible only through the realization of the nature of the ātman. In order to escape from this vicious circle the mumuksu must make the initial effort to turn the manas away from sense objects or the fruits of action, and direct it instead, toward Brahman. This fixing the manas upon Brahman signifies the mumuksu's

recognition that it is not self-effort, but Brahman who conquers the manas. When the individual resorts to Brahman in this way, Brahman burns away the sins of past karma. This action destroys the impurities which cause the manas to be attached to sense objects, and allows the mumuksu to see the ātman as distinct from the body (GBh 2.60-61, 64-65).

Seeing this, the mumuksu also realizes that the agency, doership and fruit of action are all a part of his attachment to the body, as a result of karma. This knowledge matures into the recognition that in fact it is Brahman who is the agent, the doer and the fruit of action (GBh 18.4, 477). The individual comprehends that the jīvatman is the body of Brahman, who ensouls him and is his actuating principle. Realizing this and desiring release from the body, he gives up agency, doership and the fruit of action; that is, he attributes all of these to Brahman, and thus is able to act without personal attachment to action. Such a person, while continuing to perform karman, but knowing that essentially it is not he but Brahman who acts, is no longer in bondage to the misconception that the ātman is one with the body (GBh 5.10, 148). This is the meaning of the renunciation of action, and the proper attitude in which all action must be performed in Karmayoga as well as in Bhaktiyoga.

While the immediate purpose of Karmayoga is the realization of the ātman, it also serves to orient the individual toward Brahman. His recognition that Brahman is the agent and the doer of action, is in fact his recognition of his sesa-hood, of his complete dependence upon Brahman. Therefore actions which are performed in the attitude of renunciation, become acts of worship of Brahman, who makes all action possible. Rāmānuja says that worship is the activity which arises naturally from dependence (GBh 9.34, 273-76).

In the context of renunciation, all actions become acts of worship, whether ritual observances, work for the purpose of maintaining the body, or the performance of one's social duties (GBh 9.27, 268-69; 18.42, 508). That renunciation does not imply the cessation of action itself, is obvious for the reasons already stated; that the performance of karman is commanded of the individual until death (GBh 18.5, 477-78), and that the performance of action is necessary for the maintenance of the body, which is the instrument of release.

C. Arguments Against Jñānayoga

Rāmānuja also discusses Jñānayoga, but does not consider it an essential discipline for the way to release,

and in fact, does not recommend it.⁷ However, a brief look at his views on the subject will serve to emphasize the points of Karmayoga which he sees as unique and indispensable for the purpose of release.

Jñānayoga is an entirely meditative discipline which advocates complete renunciation of all worldly activity.⁸ Its aim is the same as that of Karmayoga, which is the realization of the ātman. But its emphasis upon the renunciation of action is the exact opposite of Rāmānuja's emphasis upon the usefulness of action for the purpose of obtaining release.

Rāmānuja raises the following objections to the emphasis of inaction in Jñānayoga. Because it is based on the control of the senses through self-effort, the individual is caught in the vicious circle of sense control and acquiring the vision of the ātman, each of which cannot be achieved without the other. Without focusing the manas upon Brahman, and performing works which please him and invoke his grace, it is impossible to break the circle (GBh 2.60-61, 64-65).

Furthermore, because the mind dwells continuously upon the sense-objects in its effort to become detached from them, the attachment will only become more pronounced. What is more, without works, there is no means of destroying the effects of past karma which bind the manas to the

senses (GBh 2.63, 65-66). The only solution lies in resorting to Brahman as in Karmayoga. The key is not in self-effort, but in resorting to Brahman for aid (GBh 6.64; 66, 66-68).

Rāmānuja also notes that it is not action, but the desire for the fruit of action, which binds the jīvātman to samsāra. So long as the attachment of the manas to the fruit of action has not been destroyed, the jīvātman will continue to desire the gratification of the senses, even though he forces himself to refrain from action. The more he tries through self-effort to refrain from action, the more he will desire its fruits. Thus, becoming ever more entrenched in the bondage of the senses, he will finally be destroyed (GBh 3.33-34, 103-04).

What is more, it has already been shown that action is necessary in order to sustain the body. The body is necessary for the performance of all that is required in the Scriptures in order to obtain release, and it is obviously needed also for the performance of Jñanayoga. Therefore complete inaction is impossible (GBh 3.8, 80-81). It has also been stated that the performance of karman is the duty of the embodied ātman, and may be terminated only when the ātman is released from samsāra.

Finally, the element of knowledge to which Jñanayoga aspires, the knowledge of the ātman, is also the result of

Karmayoga. Therefore Karmayoga is all that is needed to prepare the mumuksu for Bhaktiyoga (GBh 3.8, 79-81).

D. Bhaktiyoga--the Discipline of Devotion

Rāmānuja includes two distinct stages of devotion within the discipline of Bhaktiyoga. The first is Dhyānyoga, or the discipline of worship, which leads to the vision of the true nature of the ātman. The second stage of parabhakti, is exclusive devotion to Brahman, the sole object of which is to attain him alone. Both stages consist essentially in the worship of Brahman.

1. Dhyanayoga--the Discipline of Worship

a. Ātmadarsana

Dhyanayoga is the discipline which aims at the complete cessation of the action of the senses. The goal of this discipline is the vision of the true nature of the ātman, or the state of ātmadarśana. As in Karmayoga, the object toward which the manas must be directed, in order to wean it away from sense objects, is Brahman. The vision of the ātman is only a stage in the continuous process, the final goal of which is to attain Brahman himself. Therefore every stage of the process must be oriented toward him. All worship must concentrate upon

the object which the individual desires, for he will attain that which he worships (SBh 4.3.14, 753).

Furthermore, Brahman is the only object worthy of worship because he is the only "perfect object" who is free of all sin and impurity (SBh 1.1.1, 89). If the goal is to purify the manas, the object upon which it concentrates must also be pure. Above all, Brahman himself is the only means of attaining the goal. When the manas is fixed upon him as its subject, he who is the Inner Ruler will burn away all impurities, such as the attachment of the manas to sense objects (GBh 2.61, 64-65).

As the mumuksu has learned through the practice of Karmayoga, Brahman is essentially the agent who accomplishes all things. So Dhyānayoga also cannot be perfected through the self-effort of the devotee. It is only the grace of Brahman, the Inner Ruler, which brings the efforts of the mumuksu to fruition. Rāmānuja cites the analogy from Katha Upanisad 3.3-9 which speaks of the mumuksu as the master of a chariot, the body as the chariot, the buddhi as the charioteer, the manas as the reins, and the outward senses as the horses. The Inner Ruler, who is both the means and the goal of the journey, enables the mumuksu to control his chariot and to reach his goal (SBh 1.4.1, 355-56).

Rāmānuja indicates four stages in the perception of the ātman. In the first stage the mumuksu recognizes that, the fact that the ātman is distinct from prakṛti, is true for all beings. He sees that when separated from prakṛti, all beings are alike and are like himself, all having knowledge as their essential nature (GBh 6.29, 180). Following this the mumuksu realizes that when the individual ātman is free from karma and sin, it is like Brahman in nature. This vision of the likeness of Brahman to himself, is never lost to the devotee, even as Brahman's special regard for him as a yogin, never fails (GBh 6.30, 181, n. 300). It leads to the perception of the oneness of all things because of Brahman's omnipresence within them all, and wipes away the differences of the material world, which are based only on prakṛti (GBh 6.31, 181). The final stage of vision is reached when, seeing all beings in their essential nature, the yogin becomes indifferent to joy, grief or pain (GBh 6.20-23, 176-77; 6.32, 182).

The most important aspect of ātmadarśana is that the yogin sees himself as the sesa of Brahman. The basis for this vision has already been established through the experience of Karmayoga in which Brahman himself is seen to be the agent and doer of all actions. When the mumuksu sees that he also cannot achieve ātmadarśana through self-effort, and resorts to Brahman for grace, in an attitude

of total dependence (prapatti), he sees the true nature of the ātman. The essence of this nature is that it is the sesa of Brahman (GBh 18.54, 516-17).

The mumuksu's vision of his essential nature, frees him from his identification with the body, and the manas is released from its attachment to sense objects. This is the state of "being free from all activity." That is, the individual is free from the desire to perform action in order to gratify the senses (GBh 18.49, 514). One who has achieved this state of detachment will be indifferent to heat or cold, happiness or misery, honor or dishonor; he will be completely free of the desire for material wealth and will not be bound by friendship or disturbed by the hostility of his enemies. In short, he will be totally indifferent to everything except the goal to which he aspires (GBh 6.7-9, 169-71). Realizing his sesa-hood, the devotee sees that as the only means to the goal, Brahman is also the only object worthy of worship (GBh 7.19, 211-12). With his manas released from sense objects, he is free to direct all his desires toward Brahman. In fact, worship with devotion, will arise spontaneously (GBh 12.11, 345).

b. Kaivalya

Rāmānuja indicates that the individual who attains ātmadarśana, is eligible, so to speak, for release. That

is, he will not return to samsāra after release from the body. Though Rāmānuja does not state the connection, the one who chooses release at the stage of ātmadarśana, appears to be the kaivalyārthīn. Rāmānuja defines him as,

... one who desires to realize the real nature of the self, in a state of separation from prakrti. He is described as one who wishes to procure knowledge, because knowledge alone is his essential nature (GBh 7.16, 209).

Rāmānuja says that the one who has reached this goal: (1) realizes the ātman to be different from prakrti, (2) sees the ātman to be similar in form to Brahman, and (3) has Brahman as the object of his meditation (GBh 8.11-13, 230-32; 8.15-22, 233-41; 12.3-5, 340-42). All these qualifications are also included in the state of ātmadarśana, but the last two stages of ātmadarśana are not included. The vision of the ātman as the sesa of Brahman is also not mentioned. The qualification for release at this stage, appears to be the fact that the mumuksu meditates with Brahman as his object. The difference between him and the jñānin who proceeds on to Bhaktiyoga, is that the kaivalyārthīn attains the vision of the ātman as ensouled by Brahman, while the jñānin attains the vision of Brahman himself (GBh 8.22, 241, n. 407). Rāmānuja says that the jñānin is the superior devotee,

and that Bhaktiyoga is more easily attained than kaivalya (GBh 12. 3-7, 340-43).

2. Parabhakti--Higher Devotion

a. The forms of worship

The spontaneous desire to worship Brahman, which arises from ātmardarśana, leads to higher devotion. In his commentary on Gītābhāṣya 18.65, Rāmānuja gives a comprehensive description of this stage of Bhaktiyoga, which provides all the essential elements for this discussion. It reads as follows:

What is enjoined in Vedānta texts such as, 'I know this great Person of sunlike lustre who is beyond the prakṛti . . . who thus knows Him becomes here like unto a released self: there is no other path for the attainment of final release' (Taittiriya Up. 3.12.7), is knowledge (vedana) (of the Lord): it can be expressed (more specifically) by the words, 'meditation' (dhyana) and 'worship' (upāsana): it is of the form of direct vision: in it is continued remembrance: and it is inexpressibly dear. This (knowledge) is enjoined here (when the direct means to final release has to be taught) in 'Be one whose mind is placed on Me.'

Be My devotee. The meaning is: as one to whom I am inexpressibly dear, hold Me in continuous remembrance . . . Be my worshipper.

Be absorbed in worshipping Me who am inexpressibly dear to you. Worship is the behaviour proper to complete subservience to and absolute dependence (on the Lord).

Prostrate before Me. Prostration is bowing down in submission (with the mind as well as

with the body). The meaning is: 'Be very humble and submissive before Me with inexpressible love' (GBh 18.65, 524-25).

Parabhakti is worship (upasāna) which has the characteristics of steady remembrance (dhyāna) and devotion (bhakti). (See also SBh 1.1.1, 16; 4.1.1, 716.) This includes continued acts of worship, for action is no less important in Bhaktiyoga than in Karmayoga. In fact, it is in Bhaktiyoga that action acquires fully, its intended purpose of having no other object than Brahman. Combined with these acts of worship is steady remembrance which is worshipful meditation upon the nature of Brahman, according to the descriptions given in the Upanisads (Ved S para. 88, 246). It is the fixing of the manas upon Brahman without interruption, "like a steady stream of oil" (GBh 9.34, 274). This is made possible by the cessation of the manas with regard to sense objects. With such distractions eliminated, the manas is free to concentrate wholly upon Brahman.

Each individual description of Brahman in the Upanisads, concentrates upon a particular mode of Brahman. Since the qualities of Brahman are numberless, it would be impossible to meditate upon them all. The devotee is released from this difficulty by the prescription of specific meditations, from which he may choose any one (SBh 3.3.58, 671). However, the qualities of Brahman

which Rāmānuja says ". . . are 'equal to the thing,' i.e. which are attributes determining the essential character of the thing, are therefore necessarily entering into the idea of the thing," and must be included in every meditation (SBh 3.3.15, 638). These are the Upanisadic qualities already discussed (see p.27-8). The remaining attributes of Brahman are to be included only in those meditations in which they are specifically mentioned.

The specific meditation which Rāmānuja mentions more than once is in keeping with his general emphasis upon the Inner Controller. It is taken from Chāndogya Upanisad 8.1, which speaks of Brahman as dwelling within the lotus of the heart (see p. 77). Here the devotee is enjoined to meditate upon the Inner Controller within the heart, along with such qualities as the power to realize all its desires, containing all things within itself, and being free from evil, old age and death. Rāmānuja says that those who know this Inner Controller and these qualities, ". . . through the grace of that very same highest Self, obtain all their wishes and the power of realising their purposes (SBh 1.3.13, 314-17; 1.1.12, 206-09; 3.3.38, 660-62).

In certain of his discussions on steady remembrance of Brahman, Rāmānuja also includes descriptions of the bodily form of Brahman (GBh 9.34, 274).⁹ A passage from

the Visnu Purāna¹⁰ elucidates Rāmānuja's rather sketchy references. Here dhyāna is described as concentration of the mind upon the visible form of Visnu, to the point where this image is retained in the mind at all times. Rāmānuja's description of this form closely follows the description of the Purāna. His references in the same passage, to the giving of gifts such as flowers and food, and in Gitabhāṣya 18.65, to prostration, also indicate that such meditation is carried on before the consecrated image.

Rāmānuja says that the result of steady remembrance of Brahman is "a state of extremely lucid perception which is immensely and overwhelmingly dear to the devotee," and which has the character of seeing or intuition (Ved S para. 141, 296; SBh 1.1.1, 15). It is devoted worship ". . . which by constant daily practice becomes ever more perfect, and being duly continued until death, secures final release" (SBh 3.4.26, 699).

b. The attitude of worship

Worship is the result of the devotee's recognition of his sesa-hood and his acknowledgement of his complete dependence upon Brahman. Seeing that Brahman alone is the means to release, he demonstrates his resort to Brahman through worship. Rāmānuja emphasizes this aspect of

dependence in both Gitābhāṣya 9.34 and 18.65. In Gitābhāṣya 18.66, he elaborates upon the necessity for the devotee to approach Brahman in the attitude of prapatti, both for the performance and the success of Bhaktiyoga. He interprets Kṛṣṇa to say:

... in order to succeed in starting bhaktiyoga, surrender, finding refuge with me alone, who am supremely merciful, who am the refuge of all persons . . . , and who am the sea of parental solicitude for those dependent on me.

I shall release you from all sins . . . which are opposed to the commencement of (the discipline) of devotion (GBh 18.66, 527-28).

It is this attitude of resorting to, or seeking refuge with Brahman as the only means, which causes him to give the devotee grace to accomplish his goal.

When the devotee learns that in fact he can do nothing without the assistance of grace, Brahman reveals to him the knowledge of himself. The Inner Ruler within the heart, fosters the devotion of those who seek union with him, and brings it to fruition. According to Rāmānuja, Kṛṣṇa says:

In order to show favour to them alone, I who am seated in their mental structure, that is, established in their mental state as the object of thought, and making manifest the host of My auspicious qualities, by means of the shining light called knowledge relating to Me, destroy the darkness, which is opposed to knowledge, which is born of ignorance in the form of old karma and which consists of addiction to objects other than Myself (GBh 10.10-11, 285-86).

The key to the relationship between divine grace and human action, is that action is useful only insofar as it furthers the devotee's realization of his complete dependence upon grace. Therefore all the difficulties along the path which lead to Brahman, are overcome only by grace (GBh 18.58, 520).

c. The result of worship

The knowledge which arises from such worship is the direct knowledge of Brahman. This is the knowledge which cannot be gained through the knowledge of the scriptures alone (SBh 1.2.23, 284-85). The purpose of worship is to lead the devotee beyond the sense of the texts, to the direct experience of Brahman through the perception of the manas. This direct perception of Brahman being the means of release, and release being the subject of the scriptures, the scriptures are fulfilled by the knowledge gained through worship. Rāmānuja indicates the inseparable relationship between direct knowledge and worship when he says, ". . . the teaching of Scripture is conveyed by means of the term 'knowing' (vedana), which is synonymous with meditating (dhyāna, upāsanā)" (SBh 4.1.3, 715-16).

Such knowing is not the result of pure knowledge. The knowledge of the scriptures must be experienced through

its application to life. This experience takes place through action, by which the mumuksu realizes his inability to free himself from the desire for sense objects and the bondage of the body. Thus his dependence upon Brahman is revealed to him, and seeing him as the only means, he desires nothing but direct communication with him. This communication takes place through acts of worship and devotion. Brahman reveals himself in response to the devotee's desire as evidenced by his worship. Therefore the direct knowledge of Brahman is the knowledge of experience.

To attain this knowledge of Brahman is to enjoy a personal relationship with him, of love. The devotee who loves Brahman with exclusive devotion, becomes the beloved of Brahman. When Brahman himself can no longer bear to be separated from the devotee, he causes him to be released by his grace. According to Rāmānuja, Kṛṣṇa says:

For you are dear to Me. It has already been declared, 'For I am inexpressibly dear to the man of wisdom and he too is dear to Me' (7.17). In regard to him whose love for Me is very great, My love for him also becomes very great. Therefore, unable to bear separation from him, I cause him to attain Me (GBh 18.65, 525-26).

In this union of love, the devotee also experiences the bliss of Brahman, albeit, not the full measure of bliss which he will obtain after release from the body. Because

Brahman is bliss, the knowledge of him is also bliss (Ved S para. 142, 296-97).

E. Summary of Grace and Action in Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga

Through Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga, action is lifted from the context of self-effort and merit, to that of spontaneous devotion. As such it is the indirect means to liberation. It is the way or the path which the mumuksu must follow in order to become receptive to grace. The primary obstacle which impedes the work of grace is the mumuksu's illusion of his own self-sufficiency and his independence from Brahman. To be receptive to grace is to resort to Brahman as the only means. At every stage of Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga, the mumuksu learns the futility of self-effort, and is brought closer to complete reliance upon Brahman. Thus the usefulness of action is in bringing him to this state. Neither grace nor release are obtained directly through action, but only through prapatti or resorting to Brahman.

Properly speaking, Brahman himself is both the means (upāya) and the goal (upeya) (SBh 1.4.1, 356). At every stage of Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga, it is Brahman in his grace who grants the mumuksu the object of his action, be it cleansing from sin, the discipline of the

manas, the realization of the nature of the ātman, or the knowledge of Brahman himself. Rāmānuja says Brahman is:

... the passage way, the inner ruler, who is the inner Ātman of all - since the activity of all extending as far as the ātman, as stated, depends on the will of Him; He, by being the Inner Ruler of all, is also the perfector of upāsanā; . . . He alone is the ultimate means for accomplishing the upāsanā which is to be brought under control and is the supreme object to be attained; . . . and the controlling of Him (the getting of His help) is only through taking refuge (śaranāgatireva) in Him (ŚBh 1.4.1, 356).

Liberation is Brahman's election and gift to those whom he chooses. Brahman chooses those who desire nothing else than union with him. Quoting Mundaka Upanisad 3.2.3 and Bhagavadgītā 7.17, Rāmānuja says:

From the specifying text: 'He whom He chooses may attain Him,' we understand from the clause: 'whom He chooses' that one must be elected and that the most beloved one is elected. The most beloved of the Lord is he in whom boundless and absolute love for the Lord has been inspired: this is stated by the Lord in: 'For I am exceedingly beloved of the knower and he is beloved by me' (Ved S para 144, 299).

The knower is one who has attained the knowledge of Brahman through Bhaktiyoga. Of such a devotee Krisna says:

Unable to put up with his separation (from me), I Myself want him. The meaning is that I Myself give him that progress in his worship which is required for attaining Me, the destruction of all obstacles thereto and the condition of My being extremely dear to him (GBh 8.14, 233).

Brahman chooses those who follow the path which is laid out in the Scriptures. The choice to embark upon the path falls to the individual, but it is Brahman who gives the grace to persevere and to attain the goal.

F. The Condition of the Released Jīva

While in samsāra, the devotee does not yet enjoy Brahman as directly and as fully as he will when he has been permanently released from the body. While in the body he obtains release only in the sense that he attains "the cessation of what impedes it" (SBh 1.1.4, 187). The jīva must remain in the body until the fruits of its karma, which Brahman willed before the devotee began to propitiate him, have been exhausted. While in the body, the plurality which is the result of prakṛti still persists, even though the devotee has realized that Brahman and not plurality, is eternal. Complete union with Brahman can only be attained when the jīva has escaped the plurality of prakṛti (SBh 1.1.4, 186-87; 1.2.12, 270-71).

Having thrown off prakṛti and the bondage of karma, the jīva manifests the following qualities. It is free from evil and enjoys uncontracted knowledge. Being free from the pleasure and pain caused by the desires of the sense-organs, it enjoys the unlimited bliss of Brahman

(SBh 4.4.3, 757-58). It is free from old age, death, grief, hunger and thirst. Its desires and thoughts realize themselves spontaneously (SBh 4.4.3, 757). Thus it is capable of entering many different bodies for the enjoyment of pleasures. These bodies are not the result of karma, however, and therefore cannot bind the jīva (SBh 4.4.13, 15, 765). The jīva also enjoys all the worlds of Brahman's creation. Though these bodies and worlds are of the sphere of change, they are also the manifestations of Brahman's glory, and it is in this context that the released jīva enjoys them (SBh 4.4.18-19, 767-68). It sees itself as equal with all other released jīvas, for its view of plurality in the universe has been dispelled "by the recognition of the absence of any existence apart from Brahman" (SBh 1.4.22, 395).

The essence of the jīva's condition in release from the body, is that it now experiences in the fullest sense, its true nature as a mode of Brahman (SBh 4.4.5, 759). That it continues to be dependent upon Brahman is proved by the fact that, while the qualities which the jīva possesses in release are those of his own nature, "they are permanent insofar as the Lord Himself on whom they depend is permanent" (SBh 4.4.21, 769). Furthermore, the qualities which it possesses are like the qualities of Brahman, but they are not all the qualities of Brahman.

The jīva remains minute and does not share in the all-pervading omnipresence of Brahman, or in his creative and universal ruling power (SBh 4.4.13-14, 764).

What it does share to the fullest extent is the supreme bliss of Brahman. In release the jīva obtains the goal which has been the object of its devotion in samsāra--the direct experience of the blissful and perfect nature of Brahman. Having obtained the object of its love and devotion, and desiring nothing more, it never returns to samsāra. Brahman for his part, having taken to himself, the devotee whom he greatly loves, will not turn him back into samsāra (SBh 4.4.22, 770-71).

CHAPTER VII

Prapatti and the Gadyas

A. The Problem

No discussion of Rāmānuja's doctrine of grace is complete without the consideration of his position on prapatti and saranāgati. This subject is complicated by the fact that certain modern scholars have challenged the claim made by Rāmānuja's successors, that the Gadyatraya was written by Rāmānuja, and that it contains his teaching on prapatti. This challenge is made on the basis of the discrepancies which they see between the Gadyatraya and Rāmānuja's major works. Any attempt to settle this question will require much more extensive research into the work of Rāmānuja's immediate disciples, than has been done to date. In the mean time, the Gadyas and the doctrine which they appear to contain, cannot be so easily dismissed, as having no relation to Rāmānuja's major undisputed works. The purpose of this discussion, is merely to state the differing views on prapatti, and to show how the concept of prapatti as given in the Sarangātigadya, and the Srīrangagadya, is related to the same concept as it appears in Rāmānuja's major works.

Neither the Vaikunthagadya nor the Nityagrantha are included in this discussion, for they do not deal directly with prapatti.

It has already been stated that prapatti is surrendering oneself to Brahman, or resorting to him for grace in order to obtain liberation. Saranāgati is a formal ritual act of prapatti through the recitation of prescribed mantras. Sri Vaisnava writers trace the origins of prapatti back to the Taittiriya, Katha and Śvetāśvatara Upanisads and to the Ahribudhnya-samhitā, Lakṣmī Tantra and Bharadvāja-samhitā of the Pāñcarātra literature.¹ Within the two centuries following Rāmānuja's death, his followers split into two groups, because of the different emphasis which they gave to the doctrine of prapatti. Both of these groups differed from the teaching of Rāmānuja's major works, in that they believed prapatti to be a means to liberation, independent of bhakti.

B. The Textual Evidence

In none of his major works, does Rāmānuja teach prapatti or saranāgati according to the interpretation of these two schools. However, the previous chapter has shown that he does consider prapatti as absolutely necessary for the removal of the obstacles to Karmayoga and

Bhaktiyoga. At the same time, all the major works state that these two disciplines constitute the way to liberation. A review of some key passages from the Gītābhāṣya, the Vedārthaśamgraha and the Śrībhāṣya, will serve to reinforce these two points.

In Gītābhāṣya 7.14 (207-08), Rāmānuja states that the gunas cannot be overcome without taking refuge in Brahman. This statement is made, however, in the context of a discussion on the superiority of the jñānin as compared to the kaivalyārthin. In verse 19 (212) he equates the devoted worship of the jñānin, in the form of Bhaktiyoga, with prapatti.

Rāmānuja gives two interpretations of Bhagavadgītā 18.66. The text says: "Completely renouncing all dharmas, seek Me as refuge. I will release you from all sins. Do not grieve." Rāmānuja's first interpretation reads:

Renouncing all dharmas which consist of Karmayoga, Jnānayoga and Bhaktiyoga, which constitute the means for the highest good (of salvation), and which are being performed with great love as My Worship according to qualification - (renouncing them all) with the complete renunciation of the sense of agency, possessiveness in works, fruits and such other things, . . . continuously think of Me as the agent, the object of worship, the goal of attainment and the means (526).

This passage concludes with:

I will release you from all sins. That is, I will release you from all sins which stand in

the way of the attainment of Myself, and which consist of countless acts of doing what ought not to be done and omissions to do what ought to be done, piled up from time without beginning. Do not grieve (527).

A portion of the second interpretation reads:

. . . in order to succeed in starting Bhaktiyoga, surrender, finding refuge with Me alone, who am supremely merciful, who am the refuge of all persons without taking into consideration the differences among them (relating to such things as birth, education and so on), and who am the sea of parental solicitude for those dependent on Me.

I shall release you from all sins . . . which are opposed to the commencement of (the discipline of) devotion. Do not grieve (527).

By either interpretation, Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga constitute the way to liberation. At the same time, the performance of these disciplines is possible only when the individual recognizes the futility of self-effort and seeks the assistance of the Lord in the attitude of prapatti.

The same concept of action with renunciation is discussed in Gitābhāṣya 18.57-61 (519-22). Then in verse 62 (522-23) Rāmānuja states that avidyā cannot be overcome by self-effort, but only by taking refuge in Brahman with all one's heart, thought and feeling. In verse 63 he concludes the discussion by saying:

Thus, in this way, you have been taught everything to be learnt by those aspiring for salvation and more mysterious than all mysteries - that which relates to Karmayoga, that which relates to Jñānayoga and that which relates to Bhaktiyoga. After considering this fully, in

whatever manner you wish (to act) according to your qualification, act accordingly (523-24).

All these passages indicate that prapatti in the sense of the Gitābhāṣya, is the attitude in which Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga must be performed. It is that approach to Brahman which presupposes the true knowledge of the ātman as having its sole essence in being a sesa of Brahman, while realizing that it is Brahman who is both the goal and the means to reach the goal.

The Vedārthasamgraha also teaches prapatti in the context of Bhaktiyoga. In paragraph 78 (23), Rāmānuja states that it is impossible for the individual to obtain release without Bhagavatprapatti. Then in the same passage he states that upāsana is the path which leads to Brahman. In paragraph 91 (248-50) he summarizes all the steps which lead to parabhakti, stressing the aspect of taking refuge in Brahman at each stage. At the same time he is clear that it is the worship of bhakti which invokes the grace of the Lord.

Many passages of the Sribhāṣya state that the worship of bhakti is the way to release (e.g. SBh 1.1.1, 15-17; 1.1.4, 199). One passage also refers to taking refuge in connection with worship (SBh 1.4.1, 344-57). Here Rāmānuja is discussing Katha Upanisad 3.9-11 which compares the devotee to the driver of a chariot and the

senses to the horses. In the same way that the driver attempts to control his horses in order to reach his goal, so the devotee also strives to control the senses. But, says Rāmānuja, the senses can be controlled only by taking refuge in, or seeking the help of the Inner Ruler who dwells within the heart and makes worship possible.

It is clear from all these passages that prapatti is the essential ingredient at every stage of Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga, through which the devotee attains his goal. Prapatti is the natural result of the mumuksu's discovery that he is neither the agent nor the doer of action, and that as the sesa of Brahman, he is totally dependent upon him for liberation. Only when Brahman is approached in this attitude of complete dependence, does he grant the devotee his goal. Furthermore, the manner in which to demonstrate one's attitude of prapatti, is through worship or bhakti. Brahman releases those who through continued acts of worship, acknowledge him as the only means for liberation. Prapatti in the sense of these texts, is inseparable from bhakti, and conversely, bhakti is impossible without it. There is no mention that liberation may be obtained through prapatti alone.

The Gadyatraya as a whole is believed to be illustrative of the three mantras of the Rahasya-traya: the Tirumantram, the Dvayam and the Carama Sloka. These are

regarded as the "three secrets" which according to Śrī Vaisnavism, contain the core of what the scriptures teach concerning liberation. The Saranāgatigadya is regarded as the principle of the three Gadyas. The Śrirangagadya is a hymn of surrender to Lord Ranganātha which reiterates the desires expressed in the Saranāgatigadya. A brief examination of the latter will clarify the points which have led later commentators to believe that the Gadyas present a different position on prapatti than do the major works.

In his dialogue with Lord Nārāyaṇa and the Consort Śrī, Rāmānuja expresses his complete self-surrender to the Lord. At the opening of the hymn, he surrenders himself to the mercy of Śrī and asks for her blessing in his act of seeking refuge with the Lord (SarG st. 1-2, 7-8). Then follows a lengthy invocation in which he praises the excellent qualities of Brahman and the beauties of his form. Next Rāmānuja asks for the forgiveness of his sins and for assistance in overcoming the obstacles of the gunas (SarG st. 13-14, 35-37). In stanza 15 he quotes Bhagavadgītā 7.17-19 and prays that he might become such a jñānin as is described in these verses. He then asks to be endowed with parabhakti as described in Bhagavadgītā 8.22, 11.54 and 18.54. The prayer concludes as follows:

Make me also endowed with constant parabhakti, parajñāna, and paramabhakti. I pray that I may become Thy servant in ever constant service to Thee - I having acquired the experience of the Lord, i.e., full and clear and constant, highly desired, having no other object in view and produced by parabhakti, parajñāna and paramabhakti, a service which is the result of the great urge to perform services of all forms suited to the conditions and circumstances of the moment, which are produced by the unlimited love and devotion to Thee arising out of the experience as stated above (SarG st. 15, 40-41).

The Lord's reply is that because of his act of self-surrender, the obstacles which prevent Rāmānuja from obtaining what he desires will be removed. Then he will receive the direct vision of Brahman and the state of eternal servitude (SarG st. 17, 48).

C. The Opinions of Interpreters

The three main elements of this Gadya which do not appear in Rāmānuja's major works are: the phrase parabhakti-parajñāna-paramabhakti, the term nityakaimkarya, and the statement that the recitation of the Dvaya mantras will result in the direct vision of Brahman.

Parajñāna (higher knowledge) and paramabhakti (highest devotion) which Rāmānuja prays for in the Saranāgatigadya are not mentioned in any of his other works. These speak only of parabhakti as supreme devotion. It is equated with the direct knowledge of Brahman as a

result of continuous worship of him. Some later commentators interpret parabhakti as the devotee's longing for an everlasting vision of Brahman, before its accomplishment.² In his commentary on the Sarāṇagatigadya, Sudarśana Bhatta states that prapatti stands in the place of parabhakti, because through his act of surrender Rāmānuja has become a prapanna.

So he does not intensely pray for parabhakti but, only for the other two, i.e., parajñāna and paramabhakti so as to be obtainable by him during his life time here. Even in the case of a person engaged in Bhaktiyoga, these two are obtained by him during the time his connection with the body continues. They are, however, upaya (means) for salvation in his case. But in the case of a Prapanna they are not Upayas but really gains (upeyas) obtainable just before Mokṣa (SarG 38-39).

Robert Lester holds that the phrase parabhakti-parajñāna-paramabhakti, as well as the term nityakaimkarya, "represent a clear evolution of theological concept beyond Rāmānuja's commentaries."³ He says that service in the major works, has the form of bhakti, and applies only to the state of samsāra. Vedānta Deśika interprets service as consisting of both action in the attitude of renunciation with regard to fruits, and nityakaimkarya or "selfless love and service to God and to all the Divine manifestations."⁴

Pillai Lokācārya, the leader of the Tengalai (Southern) school which resulted from the dispute between

Rāmānuja's followers, expresses his position on prapatti in his interpretation of the Rahasya-traya, which interpretation he believes to be in keeping with that of Rāmānuja.⁵ Lokācārya holds that grace is completely uncaused, and that the only purpose of prapatti is in the removal of that which impedes the work of grace. What impedes it is the individual's efforts to attain release. For Lokācārya, prapatti consists in the passive acceptance of grace. The devotee must cease to concern himself with how he may be saved and simply surrender himself to the mercy of Brahman. In this recognition of his dependence upon Brahman, the obstructions to grace are removed, and Brahman exerts his will to save him.⁶ Therefore grace, and not prapatti, is the means of liberation.

Vedānta Deśika, the leader of the Vadagalai (Northern) school, teaches that prapatti is an aid to, and the culmination of Bhaktiyoga, as well as an independent way to release.⁷ Prapatti is an easier means for those who are incapable of bhakti, because of caste, ignorance of the scriptures, or the inability to endure the process of Bhaktiyoga. It is for anyone who wants it.⁸

Vedānta Deśika holds that the Saranāgatigadya is illustrative of liberation through a single act of saranāgati which consists of the ritual recitation of

the Dvaya mantras.⁹ The particular passage which appears to reinforce this interpretation reads as follows:

Even though you are without all the things prescribed as the means (upāya) to obtain this service to Me, even though you are overcome by countless sins which are obstacles to exclusive and endless parabhakti, parajñāna, and paramabhakti at My two lotus-like feet, since, by whatever mode, you have uttered the two (dvya), to you only, by My compassion alone (eva), the obstacles to exclusive and endless parabhakti, parajñāna, and paramabhakti at My two lotus-like feet will be completely destroyed, together with their causes; exclusive and endless parabhakti, parajñāna, and paramabhakti to My two lotus-like feet are obtained by My grace; just as you are (you will have) a direct vision (of Me) by My grace alone (SarG st. 17).¹⁰

According to Vedānta Desika, this Gadya teaches that the performance of Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga is not required of the individual who seeks release through the performance of śaranāgati.¹¹ However, he does not mean that the prapanna who has obtained liberation through this ritual act, shall cease all acts of worship. Like Rāmānuja, Vedānta Desika teaches the performance of one's duties, and prescribed acts of worship, without attachment to agency, doership and the fruits of action.¹²

Modern scholars are not in agreement as to whether or not the Gadyas teach prapatti as an independent way to release. John Carman holds that the obvious interpretation of the Saranāgatigadya is that śaranāgati is taught not as an independent means, but as an aid to bhakti. In

order to avoid this interpretation, later commentators interpret parabhakti to be the goal rather than the means.¹³ Carman states that the emphasis of the Gadyas is at least as different from that of the later schools of Śrī Vaisnavism as it is from Rāmānuja's major works. He suggests that the notion of surrender in the Gadyas may be seen as an intermediate position between the two.¹⁴

In his discussion of the Śaranāgatigadya, Professor M. Yamunacharya also implies that it is illustrative of prapatti as an aid to bhakti. He stresses the personal nature of the Gadya, and says that in answer to Rāmānuja's prapatti,

The Lord assures his devotee not to waver in his faith but rest assured in the certainty of the presence of the Lord with him through all the vicissitudes of life. The Śaranāgati-Gadya brings to us a revelation of Rāmānuja's impassioned religious consciousness and his vivid sense of the personal presence of God.¹⁵

This statement implies that the Gadya portrays a single spiritual experience in a long life of continuous devotion.

S. S. Ragavachar on the other hand, insists that in the Rāmānujin tradition, prapatti can be both an instrument for removing the obstacles to bhakti and an independent way to liberation. He holds that in the Gitābhāṣya Rāmānuja merely conforms his exposition of prapatti to the position taken by the Bhagavadgītā.¹⁶ The Śaranāgati-gadya is a third variation, he claims, of Rāmānuja's two

interpretations of Bhagavadgītā 18.66. In the first interpretation prapatti is,

. . . an aspect of bhakti. On the second it destroys the impediments to the emergence of bhakti. On the third interpretation embodied in the Gadya, it destroys the impediments to release.¹⁷

This third interpretation is expressed in nearly the same words as the Gadya's, in the Asta-sloki of Parāśara Bhatta, a contemporary and disciple of Rāmānuja.¹⁸

Robert Lester takes the most extreme position in the opposite direction, by completely dismissing the possibility that the Gadyas belong to Rāmānuja. After a lengthy comparison of the Saranaṅgatigadya with Rāmānuja's major works he states:

It needs only to be said that there is a basic discrepancy between the two. If we interpret the Bhagavadgītā passages alluded to or quoted in the Gadya, in line with Rāmānuja's Gitābhāṣya, they would be in direct conflict with the overall tenor of the Gadya. There are a few statements in the Gadya which lead us to believe that something besides a mere utterance of 'taking refuge' is necessary in order to gain the highest goal, but the author finally makes it quite clear that, in fact, such an utterance is sufficient. Even if we could admit that something more is involved - that śaranaṅgati is here, in some sense, only auxiliary (anga) to bhakti, that in such a devotional outpouring there is bound to be exaggeration due to deep religious feeling - we cannot reconcile such 'mantric' saranaṅgati with Rāmānuja's view. Rāmānuja neither considers the act of taking refuge as in itself qualifying one for supreme bliss, nor does he use derivatives of prapad and saranam ā-gam with reference to a distinct act involving such utterance.¹⁹

D. Suggestions for an Interpretation of the Gadyas

With regard to the phrase parabhakti-parajñāna-paramabhakti, if parabhakti is taken to be the means and not the goal, as it is in Rāmānuja's major works, then there is no contradiction between it and the two latter terms of the phrase. Parajñāna and paramabhakti may be seen merely as progressively higher stages of devotion and of the experience of Brahman. Rāmānuja's reference to this sequence may then be interpreted as his expression of his desire for ever increasing devotion, and as an extension of his teaching of parabhakti in his major writings. Regardless of which interpretation of this phrase is adopted, bhakti remains as the stated object of Rāmānuja's act of prapatti.

Though the major writings do not mention nityakainkarya or eternal service after release from samsāra, Rāmānuja does say that the jīva's dependence upon Brahman continues after release (SBh 4.4.22, 759). The aspect of dependence is his main emphasis in relation to the sesa, but he also indicates the aspect of service in his statement that the function of the sesa is to manifest the glory of Brahman. The sesa fulfills this function through worship. Rāmānuja equates the devoted worship

of bhakti with the joyful service of one whose only delight is in devotion to his master (Ved S para. 142-44, 296-99; para. 78, 237-38). Therefore the concept of nityakaimkarya is not in contradiction to the major works, and in fact can be interpreted as an extension of their teaching on 'sesa'-hood.²⁰

The references in the Gadya to the passages from the Bhagavadgītā can be used to counter the argument that the Gadya demonstrates prapatti or saranāgati as an independent way to release. In his interpretation of Bhagavadgītā 7.17-19 in the Gitābhāṣya, Rāmānuja clearly indicates that one becomes a jñānin through the devotion of bhakti. The context of the discussions of Bhagavadgītā 8.22, 11.54 and 18.54, is that of the discipline of bhakti. In each case, Rāmānuja states that devotion is the way to liberation. Other than the statement of Brahman, that the recitation of the mantra will yield the vision of Brahman, there is no other explicit statement in the Gadya which can be interpreted as a reversal of Rāmānuja's view of the necessity for Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga. Though the request for the higher forms of bhakti may be taken to indicate that this has not been preceded by the disciplines of the Gitābhāṣya, it is inconceivable that Rāmānuja's life was anything else than a constant process of devotion. A more likely interpretation of the Gadya is that it constitutes

his personal expression of his inability to achieve his goal in his own strength, and of his complete dependence upon Brahman to bring his efforts to fruition. Brahman's reply then indicates that he will receive grace to achieve the highest level of bhakti. This interpretation is supported by Professor Yamunacharya's designation of the Saranāgatigadya, the "Swan Song of Rāmānuja." He says that it expresses the "fervour of the human soul throbbing with deep love and surrender to its Master," and "the consummation devoutly wished for by every true devotee."²¹

The style in which the Gadyas are written, and the context in which they were conceived, also support this interpretation. The fact that they are in the form of prose poetry, suggests that they are not intended as systematic expositions of doctrine; as are Rāmānuja's commentaries. According to tradition, the Saranāgatigadya resulted from Rāmānuja's discourse with the divine couple during an ecstatic trance,²² and the Srirangagadya is a personal act of worship before the image of the deity. As such, these works are obviously spontaneous expressions of mystical experiences. Carman points out that such works must be considered in the light of "the living traditions of the sect, especially as they are expressed by the previous line of teachers."²³ Yāmuna, upon whose major works Rāmānuja's dependence has already been stated,

also wrote hymns to which the Gadyas show a similarity. Professor van Buitenen, who agrees that the poetical and mystical nature of the Gadyas is significant, also points out that there are marked similarities between them and the introduction to Rāmānuja's Gitābhāṣya, as well as to his commentary on Gitābhāṣya 9.34 (Ved S intro. 32). Rāmānuja's recitation in these passages of the excellent qualities of Brahman's nature and form, resembles the invocation of the Sarāṇagatigadya.

No conclusive judgment of Rāmānuja's position on prapatti can be arrived at on the basis of his writings alone. This will require research far beyond the scope of this thesis, into the works of Rāmānuja's immediate disciples and his later successors. All that can be said here is that the interpretation of the Gadyas as Rāmānuja's personal acts of prapatti, in aid of bhakti, appears to be just as logical as the view that they advocate prapatti as an independent way to liberation. In light of the foregoing discussion of the Sarāṇagatigadya, it is not difficult to see why the later schools made a doctrinal issue out of what Rāmānuja intended merely as a hymn of personal expression.

Whatever his position on prapatti, the importance of bhakti remains, even in the Gadyas. Most later schools also did not intend to eliminate bhakti as a means to

liberation, but merely to establish prapatti as an alternative means. If the present-day practice of the living tradition of Sri-Vaisnavism can be called upon as evidence, then the importance of bhakti is attested to by the fact that it is generally considered to be the way for the majority, while prapatti or saranāgati are for those who take sacred orders.

CONCLUSION

Rāmānuja's synthesis of the role of divine grace and of human action, through his formulation of the concept of the three-fold renunciation of action, is based upon the nature of the jīvātman's ontic relation to Brahman. The jīvātman is the body of Brahman, who ensouls him and is his actuating principle. Brahman is the support apart from which the jīvātman cannot exist. He is the Inner Ruler who directs all the individual's activities and functions. Without his grace and guidance, the efforts of the mumukṣu to obtain liberation would have no affect. Brahman is the sēsin in relation to whom all beings are sēsa. As such, they are absolutely dependent upon him for all their activities and for final liberation.

Because he desires the liberation of the jīva from the bondage of karma, Brahman takes the initial action, through creation, to bring this about. In creating the world and uniting the jīvas with bodies, he provides them with all the faculties necessary for the purpose of following the path to liberation. Through the scriptures, he provides the knowledge which is the indispensable prerequisite for following the path. From the scriptures the mumukṣu may acquire the knowledge of the nature of Brahman, of the nature of the jīvātman and his relation to Brahman, and of what action leads to release.

Through various modes of grace, Brahman continues to promote the liberation of the jīvatman in samsara. He uses the operation of the law of karma as an instrument of his grace. On the basis of the injunctions of the scriptures as to what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, Brahman metes out punishment and reward for the purpose of directing the individual toward right action. By descending and residing within the empirical realm in his vyūha, vibhava and arca forms, he assists and manifests himself to those who seek him. As the Inner Ruler, he guides and brings to fruition their efforts to obtain liberation.

Liberation is possible only for those who understand that the essential nature of the ātman consists of its dependence upon Brahman. The purpose of following the disciplines of Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga, is that the individual may gain the knowledge of that relationship. The four basic requirements of these disciplines are, the purification of the manas, the renunciation of the agency, doership and fruits of action, acts of worship and devotion, and prapatti. These form a continuous discipline through which the mumuksu learns of the essential nature of his bondage, and his inability to free himself. Thus he comes to the realization that he is not capable of any action at all, apart from the assistance of Brahman, and that release is not the result of self-effort. This experience through action, of his dependence upon Brahman, and of the mercy and enabling grace of Brahman, leads the devotee to

the point at which he resorts to Brahman as the only means for liberation.

Therefore, action can be said to be the indirect means to release through which the individual becomes receptive to grace. It is the way or the path to liberation in that it constitutes the disciplining and purifying process which prepares the individual for the realization of his proper relation to Brahman in which he depends on him for release. However, it is the enabling power of grace which makes it possible for the mumuksu to follow the path; and it is grace which grants liberation to those who recognize it as being the gift of grace. Grace is the direct means, therefore, or the agent through which liberation is affected. Nevertheless, human action is as essential to the process as grace is.

It cannot be said however, that release is the result of action or self-effort, because the key to the usefulness of action lies in the individual's dependence upon grace for the performance of action. Rāmānuja's articulation of the combined functions of grace and action is based upon this concept of dependence which is inherent in the Viśistadvaita view of the ātman's ontic relation to Brahman. The nature of this relationship makes it possible for Rāmānuja to formulate a doctrine of grace according to which the individual must take responsibility for the duties which are clearly assigned to him; but because these duties

can be performed only through dependence on grace, action is elevated from the context of merit and self-effort, and is transformed into the devotee's expression of his dependence upon grace as the essential means for liberation.

Rāmānuja's doctrine of grace is the source to which his successors and all later Vaisnava commentators referred as the authority for their interpretations of Vaisnava Vedānta. As such, the importance of a clear understanding of Rāmānuja's thought lies partly in the fact that it is the starting point for the extensive study which still needs to be done on these later writers. As indicated in the chapter on prapatti, the subject of grace continued to be a central concern for them, but an important shift in emphasis took place, concerning the importance of grace and action in the process of liberation. Many commentators give evidence of a greater stress on grace apart from action, and a moving away from Rāmānuja's position on the usefulness of action in relation to grace. This trend is already evident in the writings of his immediate disciples, Arulālā Perumāl Emberumānār and Kūrattālvān, as well as in the work of Parāśara Bhāttar, Rāmānuja's successor at Śrīrangam.¹

The same trend is also present among the commentators who wrote within the two centuries after Rāmānuja. It has already been stated that though the differing interpretations of prapatti given by Lokācārya and Vedānta Desika resulted in the schism between the two schools of

Sri Vaisnavism, both of them advocate prapatti as an independent means to liberation. Vedānta Deśika, however, takes a more moderate position, while Lokācārya completely negates the usefulness of action. Sudarśana Suri, who was the most important commentator on Rāmānuja before Vedānta Deśika, and who wrote a commentary on the Gadyas, also regards prapatti as a way to liberation independent of the disciplines of Bhaktiyoga. Periya Āccān Pillai, another commentator on the Gadyas, states that prapatti must replace the way of devotion which relies on self-effort.² Śrīnivāsadāsa, the seventeenth century commentator on Rāmānuja, holds that both bhakti and prapatti are ways to release.³

It is not difficult to see that in some ways Rāmānuja's writings give room for the interpretations of these commentators. His emphasis on prapatti in conjunction with bhakti, in particular, lends itself rather easily to their views. At the same time, in his major works, Rāmānuja is clear on the necessity for the purifying and disciplinary process of action. How these later writers justified their interpretations in the face of this fact, is a question for future study. Included in this question, of course, is the problem of the interpretation of the Gadyatraya, and what later commentators take it to indicate about Rāmānuja's position on prapatti. This whole topic

will require research, not only into the works of Rāmānuja's successors, but also into the sources of earlier Vaisnavism, such as the Pāñcarātra tradition and that of the Ālvārs. Rāmānuja's interpretation of the relation between grace and action in the process of liberation, as given in his major works, is inseparable from any investigation into either of these questions.

A number of further ambiguities in relation to Rāmānuja's doctrine of grace remain to be clarified. One is the question of whether or not he considered liberation to be possible for all four castes, or only for the three higher castes. Some modern scholars have taken Rāmānuja's commentary on Sūtra 1.3.32, as his definitive position on this question. Here he says that Śūdras cannot gain the knowledge of Brahman because they are barred from the study of the scriptures (SBh. 1.3.32, 337-39). There are many factors, however, which support a strong argument to the contrary. For example, Rāmānuja's commentaries on this Sūtra, in the Vedāntadīpa, the Vedāntasāra, and the Śrībhāṣya, are the only instances in which he states explicitly, that Śūdras are excluded from the knowledge of Brahman. While it is clear that he considers the knowledge of the scriptures as necessary for the successful performance of Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga,

in the Gītābhāṣya he states that all are eligible for release (9.3, 273), and that what is required is devotion and the performance of one's duty in accordance with one's station in life (18.55, 511). One could argue that he is simply following the emphasis of the Bhagavadgītā, but the same could be said of his interpretation of the Sūtra. The fact that the Vedārthasamgraha also stresses devotion as the way to release, and quotes from the Bhagavadgītā in this regard, indicates that Rāmānuja's sympathy is with the position of the Bhagavadgītā (Ved S 91-92, 248-50). This and other arguments could be developed to support this view.

Further study into the details of Rāmānuja's doctrine of grace will necessitate a study of the key concepts which Rāmānuja uses, in order to come to an approximation of interpretation of these terms, in accordance with his usage and context. Such a study would also be helpful for the interpretation of the commentaries of Rāmānuja's successors.

Another topic which deserves further elaboration is that of Rāmānuja's total concept of the forms of worship in relation to Bhaktiyoga. Some western scholars have tended to interpret Rāmānuja's bhakti entirely in the

context of the disciplines of yoga, and of the mental process of meditation. This is a misleading interpretation, and is probably at least in part the result of the fact that Rāmānuja says little about image worship or the mechanics of ritual worship as such. Some have taken the few remarks that he does make on this subject, to indicate that he sees these rituals only as lower forms of worship for those who cannot attain meditation. The fact is, however, that for Vaisnavism, worship or meditation upon the qualities of Bhagavān, are always in the context of image worship. The image embodies the presence of the Lord, and the devotee's devotion to him is acted out through the care and worship of the image. To divorce Rāmānuja's Bhaktiyoga from this context, is to miss much of his total concept of devotion and worship.

Besides the importance of Rāmānuja's doctrine of grace to the study of Vaisnavism as a whole, an important application for Western scholars, of studies such as this one, is that of the continued development of interreligious dialogue. Rāmānuja's Śrī Vaisnavism is an especially suitable subject for this purpose, because of the fact that among Hindu schools of thought, it provides the closest comparisons to Christian concepts. The outstanding similarity between these two traditions, is the fact that

both believe liberation to be possible only through the descent of Supreme grace. This and many other apparent similarities, provide a strong basis for dialogue.

Such dialogue would contribute to a better Western understanding of Hindu theism and of Hinduism as a whole. In the past the monism of Sankara has been regarded in the West as the most important and typical form of Indian religious philosophy. In the last two decades, progress has been made to correct this one-sided view of Hinduism, but much still remains to be done to increase our awareness and understanding of theistic Hinduism. Dialogue, and specific studies of theistic Hindu thinkers, will both contribute to this process. Dialogue could also be useful in another way. It could bring new perspectives to Christian concepts, and thus cause Christians to look more closely at their own tradition, and perhaps, to evaluate it in a new light. One of the purposes of studies such as this one of Rāmānuja's doctrine of grace, is to contribute to this process of interreligious communication.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹ Romila Thapar, A History of India (1966; reprint ed., Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 194.

² Ibid.

³ N. Jagadeesan, History of Sri Vaishnavism in the Tamil Country (Post-Rāmānuja) (Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1977), pp. 287-88. Some sources are doubtful about whether it was Kulottunga I or Kulottunga II who persecuted Rāmānuja. See John B. Carman, The Theology of Rāmānuja: an Essay in Interreligious Understanding (London: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 45. Jagadeesan presents a lengthy argument to show that the persecuting king was Kulottunga I. See History of Sri Vaishnavism, pp. 283-290.

⁴ Surendranath Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, 5 vols. (Cambridge: University Press, 1922; 1st Indian ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1975), 3:104.

⁵ R. C. Majumdar, gen ed., The History and Culture of the Indian People, A. D. Pusalker, assist. ed., 11 vols. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhava, 1957), vol. 5: The Struggle for Empire, with a foreword by K. M. Munshi, pp. 402-04.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 459-60.

⁷ Dasgupta, History, 3:94-96.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 97-100.

⁹ Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, p. 27. For details of Rāmānuja's life, see pp. 24-48; Dasgupta, History, 3:10-104; Swami Ramakrishnananda, Life of Rāmanuja (Madras: Sri Rama-krishna Math, 1959).

¹⁰ Jagadeesan, History of Śrī Vaishnavism, pp. 46-47.

¹¹ Remchandra Raychaudhuri, Materials for the Study of the Early History of the Vaishnava Sect, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1975), pp. 13-18.

¹² George Thibaut endorses Rāmānuja's claim that Sankara's interpretation of the Vedānta Sūtras distorts their meaning in The Vedānta Sūtras, with the Commentary of Rāmānuja, translation. Sacred Books of the East, vol. 48 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904; 2nd reprint ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsi das, 1966), intro., pp. ix-xi; and The Vedānta Sūtras, with the Commentary of Sankara, translation. Sacred Books of the East, vol. 34 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890; New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1962), Pt. 1, intro., pp. ix-cxviii.

¹³ Little is known of the work of Bodhāyana and it appears that the only fragments which remain are those quoted by Rāmānuja in SBh 1.1.1; 1.1.10; 1.2.1; 1.3.7; 1.3.32. It is thought that Śankara knew this author by the name of Upavarsa, and Yāmuna may have referred to him as well. Dasgupta, History, 3:105-109. J. A. B. van Buitenen, Rāmānuja's Vedārthasamgraha, introduction, critical edition and annotated translation (Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, 1956), intro., pp. 18-24; 29-30; for collected fragments of Bodhāyana's works, see Appendix, pp. 301-302.

¹⁴ Taṅka wrote a commentary on the Chandogya Upaniṣad, and Dramida in turn wrote a commentary on Taṅka's work. Śankara also refers to Dramida, and Bhāskara refers to both of these authors. No dates can be fixed for either of them. See J. A. B. van Buitenen, Vedārthasamgraha, intro., pp. 24-29; 29-30; for collected fragments, see Appendix, pp. 302-309.

¹⁵ Yāmuna attacks Śankara and Bhāskara in his Siddhitraya. See J. A. B. van Buitenen, Vedārthasamgraha, p. 183, n. 8; On Bhāskara and Rāmānuja see Dasgupta, History, 3:192-95.

¹⁶ Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara's dates appear to be some time between 750-950 A.D. In his commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras he refuted Śankara's theory of māyā. He held that creation

was the result of the modification of Brahman by its own powers. He agreed with Pāñcarātra doctrine which stated that Vāsudeva was both the material and instrumental cause of the world. See Dasgupta, History, 3:1-3. Dasgupta says the Yādavaprakāsa whom Rāmānuja refutes, was probably Rāmānuja's early teacher of Vedānta (156). Another source states without question that this is so, and that Rāmānuja later converted him to Vaisnavism. Munshi, History and Culture of the Indian People, 5:317. Yādavaprakāsa held the view that Brahman constitutes the world in his own essence, and is identical with it (Ved S para. 58, 225).

¹⁷ Dasgupta, History, 3:80-81.

¹⁸ Rāmānuja refers here to Matsya Purāṇa 290, 15, which classifies the Purāṇas according to the day of Brahma's life on which they were promulgated. Some belong to the day when sāttva was predominant, some when tamas were predominant, some to the day when rajas were predominant, and some to the day when the gunas were mixed. The sāttvika purāṇas are authoritative and decisive in case of conflicts between any of the purāṇas. J. A. B. van Buitenen, Vedārthasamgraha, intro., p. 34.

¹⁹ M. Narasimhachary, Āgamaprāmāṇya of Yāmunācārya (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1976), pp. 14-15.

²⁰ J. A. B. van Buitenen, Vedārthasamgraha, pp. 43-48; Dasgupta, History of Indian Philosophy, 3:139-55.

²¹ A. Hohenberger, Rāmānuja: ein Philosoph indischer Gottesmystik (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1960), p. 6.

²² Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, p. 49.

²³ J. A. B. van Buitenen, Rāmānuja on the Bhagavadgītā, condensed translation of Gītābhāṣya with introduction and notes (Delhi: Motilal Banarsiādass, 1968), intro., pp. 9-12.

²⁴ For J. A. B. van Buitenen's discussion on whether or not Rāmānuja wrote these two works, see his Vedārtha-samgraha, intro., pp. 31-32. For John Carmans' discussion of J. A. B. van Buitenen's remarks, see his Theology of Rāmānuja, pp. 57-60.

²⁵ Srinivāsadāsa, Yatīndramatadīpikā, Sanskrit text with English translation and notes by Swāmī Ādidevānanda, with a forward by P. N. Srinivasachari (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1949), p. xi.

²⁶ Thibaut, Vedānta Sūtras, with the Commentary of Śankara, vol. 34, pt. 1, 1.1.1, pp. 3-4.

²⁷ The Vedas are divided into three categories: mantra indicates the thing to be done or performed (in a rite); vidhi are injunctions or "those portions which prescribe or enjoin the performance of certain rites to secure certain results;" arthavāda are "those portions which explain, describe or generally add to the injunctions." J. A. B. van Buitenen, Vedārthasamgraha, intro., p. 51; Srinivāsadāsa, Yatīndramatadīpikā, pp. 41-42.

CHAPTER II

¹ Thibaut, Vedānta Sūtras with the Commentary of Śankara, vol. 34, pt. 2, 3.2.16, p. 156.

² Ibid., 2.1.27, p. 352.

³ Viśistādvaita--or viśistasya visistarūpam advaitam--"monism of the differenced, unity of the universe's spiritual and non-spiritual substances with and in God whom they modify by constituting His body." J. A. B. van Buitenen, Rāmānuja on the Bhagavadgītā, p. 1, n. 1.

⁴ Tattva can be translated as "true or real state, truth, reality," "a true principle," or "an element or elementary property." In this case "reality" is not a good translation because that would imply that cit and acit are realities completely apart from Brahman. According to Viśistādvaita, they are real and distinct, but they are also inseparable from Brahman.

⁵ Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, p. 91. For Carman's remarks on the distinction which Rāmānuja makes between svarūpa and svabhava, see pp. 92-97.

⁶ Carman's translation, Ibid., p. 77.

⁷ Bharatan Kumarappa holds that Rāmānuja's concept of the divine nature is based fundamentally upon the sadgunas as given in the Visnu Purāna, along with its emphasis upon love as an aspect of the divine nature. He says that Rāmānuja is simply reading his sectarian views into the Upanisads, and interpreting their definition of Brahman on that basis. The Hindu Conception of the Deity: as Culminating in Rāmānuja (London: Luzac and Co., 1934), pp. 185-91. John Carman disagrees with Kumarappa's view, pointing out that as a Vedānta scholar Rāmānuja takes the Upaniṣadic definition seriously. He says that by referring to both of these groups of qualities, plus the attributes of compassion, etc., Rāmānuja is defining the divine nature both as it is in its essential nature, without reference to any other entity, and as it is in relation to finite beings and the world. For Carman's full discussion of this subject, see Theology of Rāmānuja, pp. 77-97; 204-207.

⁸ Śrīnivāsadāsa, Yatindramatadīpikā, p. 90.

⁹ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁰ B. M. Awasthi and C. K. Datta, The Tattvatraya of Lokācarya: a Treatise on Viśistādvaita Vedānta (Delhi: Prakashan, 1973), p. 61.

¹¹ Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, p. 163.

¹² See Carman's translation, Ibid., p. 78.

¹³ Awasthi, Tattvatraya, p. 49.

¹⁴ Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, pp. 192-93.

¹⁵ Carman's translation, Ibid., p. 78.

CHAPTER III

¹ The ksetra is produced by: (1) the five great elements (earth, water, fire, air and space), (2) the ego (ahamkāra), (3) the intellect or the cosmic principle

(buddhi), (4) the basis of individual intellects (mahan), and (5) the root-principle of all material existence (avyakta). From these raw materials are formed the eleven senses and the objects of the senses. S. S. Raghavachar, Introduction to the Gītā Bhāṣya (Mangalore: Mangalore Trading Association, 1957), p. 151.

²The senses consist of five cognitive organs, five organs of action or motorial senses and the manas. The objects of the senses are sound, touch, color, taste, and odour.

³The ātman is of itself pure and sinless (GBh 13.4, 368; 14.19, 410). The jīvātman's entanglement in samsāra is due essentially to karma which leaves a residue upon the ātman. Rāmānuja says that the wrong perception of the self as being one with the body "is brought about by its being wrapped around by the ignorance consisting of karma; it is not brought about by its essential nature" (GBh 13.12, 377).

CHAPTER IV

¹Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, p. 134.

²Ibid., p. 132.

³Ibid., p. 136.

CHAPTER V

¹For this purpose of creation in relation to līlā (divine sport), see Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, pp. 117-22.

²V. R. S. Chakravarti, The Philosophy of Rāmānuja (Viśiṣṭādvaita) (Madras: By the Author, 24 Kasturi Ranga Iyengar Road, 1974), pp. 8-9.

³For a detailed description of the five forms of Brahman, see Śrīnivāsadāsa, Yatindramatadīpikā, pp. 133-140.

⁴Friedrich Otto Shrader, An Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Samhitā (Madras: Adyar Library, 1916), p. 49; M. Narasimhacharya, Agamaprāmāṇya of Yamuna, p. 6.

⁵V. N. Hari Rao, The History of the Śrīrangam Temple (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1976), p. 56; Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, p. 43; J. Gonda, Viṣṇuism and Śivaism: a Comparison (London: Athlone Press, 1970), p. 77.

⁶Rao, Śrīrangam Temple, p. 57. Swami Ramakrishnananda, Life of Śrī Rāmānuja, translated by Swami Budhananda, 3rd ed. (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1977), pp. 114, 196, 231.

⁷Shraeder, Introduction to the Pāñcarātra, p. 49.

⁸Śrīnivāsadāsa, Yatindramatadīpikā, p. 239.

⁹This interpretation is applied by the translator, M. R. Sampatkuraran, p. 120, n. 8, as well as by M. Yamunacharya, "The Significance of Arcā," Viśistādvaita Philosophy and Religion: a Symposium by Twenty Four Erudite Scholars (Madras: Rāmānuja Research Society, 1974), pp. 207-08. Carman, in Theology of Rāmānuja, p. 181, and Kumarappa, in The Hindu Conception of the Deity, p. 316, also take this passage, as well as GBh 9.26 to refer to image worship.

¹⁰For a description of Śrī Vaisnava temple worship, see Jagadeesan, History of Śrī Vaishnavism, pp. 357-371.

¹¹Śrīnivāsadāsa, Yatindramatadīpikā, pp. 203-04, n. 18.

¹²Chakravarti, Philosophy of Rāmānuja, p. 328.

CHAPTER VI

¹Thibaut, The Vedānta Sūtras, with the Commentary of Sankara, Vol. 34, pt. 1, 1.1.4, pp. 22-27.

²The four stages of life (āśrama) consist of the student, the householder, the wandering hermit and the ascetic.

³In SBh 1.3.32 (339) Rāmānuja says that Śūdras (lowest caste) are not qualified for meditation because they may not study the scriptures. They may hear the teaching of smṛti, but this is helpful only for destroying their sins: In the Gītābhāṣya, however, Rāmānuja goes along with the Bhagavadgītā's position that liberation is for everyone, including women and Śūdras (GBh 9.33, 273). What is required of the individual of each caste is the performance of his duty, with the desire for obtaining release (GBh 18.55, 511). The duties of each caste differ in accordance with their ability, as determined by the gunas which are predominant within them. The performance of sacrifices and the development of spiritual qualities are assigned to Brahmins only, because these are easier for them to perform than for the Kshatriyas (warrior caste), and the Vaiśyas (merchant caste). However, these two castes may also attempt to perform these sacrifices and develop these qualities, for the purpose of obtaining release, but they are not assigned to them as their duty. The duty of the Śūdra is to serve the first three castes. The point is that, it is the performance of one's duty with the desire to obtain release, and not the type of action itself, which is efficacious (GBh 18.41-45, 506-511). Those who are unable to attain steady remembrance of Brahman may worship him by building temples, or even through service such as sweeping them (GBh 12.10, 44-45). The only requirement is that these are performed as service to Brahman. In Gītābhāṣya 9.34 (274), after a description of the excellent qualities of Bhagavān, Rāmānuja interprets Kṛṣṇa to say that the Lord is an ocean of boundless mercy, magnanimity, and maternal solicitude, and that he is the "refuge of all without exception and without regard to their particular qualities."

⁴See also GBh 10.4-5, 281-82; 12.13-14, 347-49; 13.7-9, 372-74; 13.11, 375; 16.1-3, 438-40; 18.42, 507-08; SBh 3.4.27, 700-01.

⁵ Robert C. Lester, Rāmānuja on the Yoga (Madras: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1976), p. 71.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ In a number of passages, Rāmānuja includes Jñānayoga along with Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga, as the means to release. In the case of the introduction to Gītābhāṣya Chapter 4 (111), he is simply stating what has already been discussed and what will be the topic of this chapter. In Gītābhāṣya 16.6 (442), he is also reviewing what has been discussed. Neither of these passages indicate that Rāmānuja is endorsing Jñānayoga. Gītābhāṣya 18.66 reads, "Renouncing all dharmas which consists of Karmayoga, Jñānayoga and Bhaktiyoga, which constitute the means for the highest goal . . ." (526). This and other passages like it, can be interpreted to mean either that Rāmānuja is not ruling out Jñānayoga completely for certain people, or that he is including it in the sense that it is part of Karmayoga. For Robert Lester's comments in this regard, see Rāmānuja on the Yoga, pp. 83-98.

⁸ The four stages of maturity of Jñānayoga are: (1) retiring from the world of activity, withdrawing the senses from contact with sense objects, and focusing the manas on the ātman (GBh 2.58, 62-63); (2) cultivating indifference to that which pleases and that which does not please the senses (GBh 2.57, 62); (3) becoming a sage of steady understanding, i.e. one who practices reflection on the ātman, unagitated by feelings of love, fear, or anger (GBh 2.56, 61-62); (4) focusing the manas exclusively on the ātman, having completely renounced desire for anything else (GBh 2.55, 60-61).

⁹ For a discussion of the bodily form of Brahman see Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, pp. 167-74.

¹⁰ H. H. Wilson, The Viṣṇu Purāṇa: a System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition, translation with notes, introduction by R. C. Hazra (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1840; reprint, 3rd ed., Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1972), pp. 513-14.

CHAPTER VII

¹Dasgupta, History, 3:379.

²Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, p. 218.

³Lester, Rāmānuja on the Yoga, p. 171.

⁴Satyavrata Singh, Vedānta Deśika: His Life, Works and Philosophy: a Study, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Studies Vol. 5 (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1958), pp. 390, 394.

⁵M. B. Narasimha Iyengar, Mumukshupadi of Pillai Lokāchārya, translation (Madras: The Educational Publishing Co., 1962), para. 274, p. 34.

⁶Ibid., para. 150-64, pp. 20-21.

⁷Singh, Vedānta Deśika, p. 374-75.

⁸Ibid., p. 383.

⁹N. S. Anantharangachar, The Philosophy of Sadhana in Viśistādvaita (Mysor: Prasaranga, University of Mysore, 1967), p. 210.

¹⁰Lester, Rāmānuja on the Yoga, pp. 159-60.

¹¹Singh, Vedānta Deśika, p. 386.

¹²Ibid., p. 390.

¹³Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, p. 219.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 215.

¹⁵M. Yamunacharya, Rāmānuja's Teachings in His Own Words (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970), p. 131.

¹⁶S. S. Ragavachar, "Dr. J. A. B. van Guitenen and Dr. Robert Lester on Rāmānuja," Srī Venkateswara University Oriental Journal 13 (1970), p. 17.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁹Lester, Rāmānuja on the Yoga, pp. 169-70.

²⁰Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, pp. 220-21.

²¹Yamunacharya, Rāmānuja's Teachings, p. 128.

²²Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, p. 233.

²³Ibid.

CONCLUSION

¹Carman, Theology of Rāmānuja, pp. 223-25.

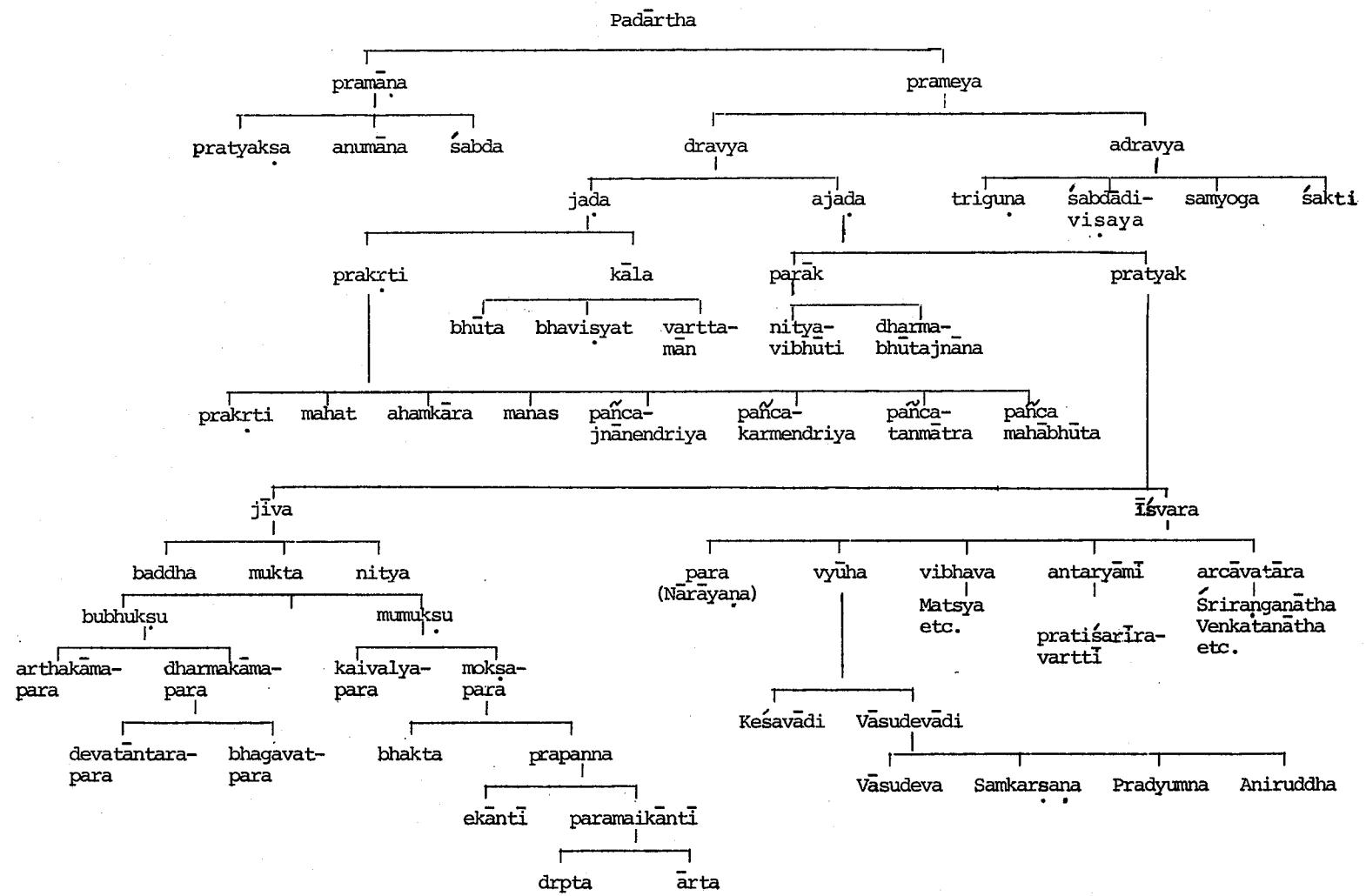
²Ibid., p. 218.

³Srinivāsadāsa, Yatindramatadīpikā, pp. 94-100.

APPENDIX

¹Rāmdās Gand, Hindutva (Kāśī: Samvat 1995), p. 655.

APPENDIX¹



GLOSSARY

All definitions given here are according to Ramanuja's usage.

adravya: non-substance

ahamkāra: the ego or the faculty of self-conception.

ajada: that which does not change.

arta: a prapanna who has not found fulfillment.

arthakāma-para: those devoted to pleasure and worldly gain.

atman or jīva: a living sentient being which is subsidiary to Brahman, has knowledge as its essential property, and is distinct from the body, the sense organs, and the manas.

avidyā: non-knowledge as opposed to the knowledge of Brahman, which is vidya.

baddha: a jīva bound in samsāra.

bhagavat-para: devotees of Bhagavān (Visnu).

bhakta: one who seeks mokṣa through Bhaktiyoga.

bhavisyat: future.

bhūta: past.

buddhi: the intellectual faculty or the faculty of comprehension; the great cosmic principle; mahat.

citta: the faculty of thinking.

devatāntara-para: devotees of deities other than Bhagavān (Visnu).

dharmabhūtajñāna: attributive consciousness.

dharmakāma-para: those devoted to dharma.

dravya: substance.

drpta: a prapanna who has found fulfillment.

ekānti: a prapanna whose manas is one-pointed.

jada: that which changes.

jīvatman: the individualized ātman in conjunction with the body, the sense organs and the manas.

jñāna: knowledge.

kāla: time.

kalpa: a period of time equal to 4,320,000,000 solar years, at the beginning of which the creation of the world is said to begin, and at the end of which the world is destroyed, by the will of Brahman.

karma: the doctrine of moral causality operating through many births.

karman: action; any religious or ritual action.

mahat: buddhi.

manas: the co-ordinating organ of perception and cognition, which co-ordinates the effect of the senses upon the ātman. According to Rāmānuja's usage, the manas includes the buddhi, the ahamkāra, and the cittā. He also says that the ātman denotes the manas.

māyā: avidyā, as opposed to Sankara's definition of it, as being the principle of illusion from which the world evolves, under the guidance of Brahman.

moksa: liberation; eternal release from worldly existence and rebirth.

mukta: a freed jīva.

mumuksu: one who aspires to liberation from samsāra.

nirguna: devoid of qualities.

nitya: eternally free.

nityavibhuti: all-pervasive.

padartha: key categories.

pañca-jñānendriya: the 5 sense organs through which knowledge is acquired - hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch.

pañca-karmendriya: the 5 sense organs of activity - hands, speech, feet, and the organs of excretion and generation.

pañca-mahābhūta: the 5 gross elements in their unevolved state - ether, air, fire, water, and earth.

panca-tanmātra: pure infinitesimal substance out of which the mahābhūta and the sense organs evolve.

parabhakti: higher or supreme devotion.

parajñāna: higher knowledge.

parāk: that which cannot exist apart from that to which it belongs.

paramabhakti: the highest devotion.

paramaikānti: a prapanna whose manas is extremely one-pointed.

prakāra: mode.

prameya: object of valid knowledge.

prapanna: one who seeks mokṣa through prāpatti.

pratisariravartti: moving towards bodies.

pratyak: that which can exist apart from that which is dependent upon it.

pratyakṣa: perception.

sabda: (a) literally - sound, voice.

(b) authoritative, sacred verbal communication.

sabda-visaya: sense objects.

sadgunas: six qualities of the Lord.

sakti: potency; non-substance which is the effecting agent of causation among all causes.

samsara: the world dominated by the law of karma and rebirth.

samyoga: conjunction.

sastra: revelation. scripture.

smṛti: remembrance or tradition which is handed down in writing by the human authors of the sutras, under the direction of Brahman.

sruti: that which was heard from the beginning, i.e. sacred eternal sounds or words as heard by holy sages called Rishis.

triguna: the three gunas - sattva, tamas and rajas.

vaikuntha: the celestial abode of Visnu.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

GBh

The Gitabhasya of Rāmānuja.Translated by M. R.
Sampatkumaran.

SarG

Srī Bhagavad-Rāmānuja's
Saranāgati Gadya. Trans-
lated by K. Bhashyam.

SBh

The Vedānta Sūtras, with
the Commentary of Rāmānuja,
Translated by George Thibaut.

Ved S

Rāmānuja's Vedārthasamgraha,
Translated by J. A. B. van
Buitenen.

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