CHAPTER VII

CONCLUDING REMARKS
After having thus rendered ourselves acquainted in a comparative and critical manner with the views of Ramanuja, the Advaita school, Pāñcarātra school and the Ālvārs, we may now offer the possible conclusions and a few observations.

To start with the Advaita school and Rāmānuja, our comparative study has shown that whether we consider the interpretations of Śankara and Rāmānuja on the basis of their faithfulness to the Prasthāna-trayī, or independently of that, the fact remains that Rāmānuja's interpretation is decidedly more satisfactory.

Among the Prasthāna-trayī, so far as the Upaniṣadś are concerned they speak with a double voice and hence both Śankara and Rāmānuja could successfully draw upon them for their basis. Therefore it is difficult to maintain that they consistently advocate either the views of Śankara or that of Rāmānuja. But with regard to the Gītā and the Brahma-sūtras it appears that they do not teach the doctrines of Advaita in the characteristic sense of the school. They do not seem to suggest the higher and the lower knowledge of Brahman and the consequent distinction of the higher and the lower Brahman. Nor do they seem to afford any evidence of their having held the doctrine of māyā, and the consequent phenomenality of the world, in the form in which it is advocated in the Advaita school. Further, they do not seem to teach the doctrine of complete identity of the individual self and the Supreme.

Śankara's interpretation of the Brahma-sūtras further
reveals that very often than not he feels the necessity of supplementing his interpretation by certain additions and reservations of his own for which the text gives no occasion. Rāmānuja, on the contrary, is able to take the sūtras as they stand. This suggests that the doctrines of Śankara are not present to the mind of the author of the Sūtras. The fact that the Sutrakāra should begin and end with the sūtras which can on no account be reconciled with Śankara's esoteric doctrine, leads one to suppose that there is a flaw in his reasoning so far as his faithfulness to the Sutrakāra is concerned. Further, there is a series of ancient commentators (of whom Śankara also takes cognisance) on whom Rāmānuja looks as authorities in the interpretation of the Sūtras and the Vedānta philosophy. The fact that these commentators did not teach the Advaita philosophy, as is acknowledged by Śankara himself, suggests that the Advaitic interpretation of the sūtras was not favoured by many ancient authorities on the Vedānta.

Considered independently of the Prasthāna-trayī, again, Rāmānuja's system appears more satisfactory. Granted the premises of Śankara's system, his philosophy appears to be the most compact, systematic and logical. His system affords the best example of the philosophy of identity; but merely logicality is not the alpha and omega of life. Man is a synthesis of cognitive as well as affective elements, both of which demand their fuller satisfaction. In the 'organicismic' view of Rāmānuja we find a more balanced, more comprehensive and more pacifying satisfaction of the demands of reason and the deep cravings of feeling. Another feature of his philosophy is his uncompromising insistence on safeguarding the inalienable individuality of the finite self and the reality of the world of matter, by assigning them a proper
place and value in the unifying conception of an all-embracing Reality without in any way destroying its unity and supreme perfection. Though we thus appreciate the general drift of his system, we do not relish the narrow and debased anthropomorphism that has found its way deep into his philosophy, specially in his concept of God and the nature and means of release.

With regard to Rāmānuja, the Pāñcarātra school and the Ālvārs, we have undertaken their comparative study with a view to examine the opinion held by many scholars that the theism of Rāmānuja is an outcome of his conscious effort to blend the Vedāntic metaphysics with the Vaiṣṇavite religion of the Pāñcarātra school and the Ālvārs. On the basis of our comparative study we, however, feel that the trend of thought in the works of Rāmānuja does not seem to support this view. Not only all the characteristic doctrines and dogmas of the Pāñcarātra school and the Ālvārs are conspicuous by their absence in the works of Rāmānuja, but there are also fundamental and far-reaching doctrinal differences between them. From this we may conclude that the alleged impact of the Pāñcarātra school and the Ālvārs on Rāmānuja cannot be substantiated. Our conclusion can further be confirmed from the following considerations.

First of all we propose to consider as to whether Rāmānuja was born in the spiritual lineage of the Śrī-vaiṣṇava sect. It has been alleged that Rāmānuja was born in the spiritual lineage of the Śrī-vaiṣṇava sect, and that his study of the Śrī-vaiṣṇava sect, and his training by the Śrī-vaiṣṇava acārāyas help him to develop elements which otherwise would have remained latent in the Upaniṣads and the Brahman-sūtras. This contention is based on the Śrī-vaiṣṇava tradition whose reliability has been doubted by many scholars. Therefore, in the absence of any
tangible evidence it is not proper to attribute his theistic interpretation to the so-called sectarian training, simply because on the basis of purely critical investigation he considers himself entitled to maintain that the Brahma-sūtras set forth one philosophical view rather than the other.

Further, from the writings of Rāmānuja we get nothing to speak of his affiliation to any sect. The spirit as well as the contents of his works lend themselves to a non-sectarian interpretation and one may naturally doubt whether the alleged sectarian affiliation attributed to him is well-founded and justified or not. Nowhere in his works he mentions or quotes any of the Pāṇcarātra Sāmhitās (except once under Brahma-sūtras II.2.39-42 which we shall discuss shortly) which, as the tradition goes, contain more than one and a half crore of verses. Nor does he mention or quote the works of the Ālvārs and the Śrī-vaishnava ācāryas. Not only this, while describing scriptures which are authoritative to him he does not even mention the Pāṇcarātra Sāmhitās or the Nālāyira-prabandham. Whatever he asserts or denies, confirms or refutes, he derives support for that from the Vedāntic scriptures and not from the works of the Śrī-vaishnava sect.

Moreover, he does not even allude to the Śrī-vaishnava ācāryas whom the tradition regards his spiritual teachers. When he enumerates the 'ancient teachers' on whom he relies upon not unfrequently, he does not mention any of these Śrī-vaishnava Ācāryas. It is true that he begins the Vedartha Samgraha and the commentary on the Gītā by paying his tribute to Yāmuna. Frequently he draws upon the Siddhi-traya and the the Gitārtha Samgraha of Yāmuna and generally follows their line of argument. But this Yāmuna does not seem to be the author of the Āgama-
prāmāṇya and other sectarian works ascribed to him. It may be that the arguments of Rāmānuja in favour of the Pāñcarātra were put forth in the Śrī Bhāṣya/eleborated in the Āgama-prāmāṇya by a later hand and then this work was attributed to Yāmuna to get association with his name. Such a phenomenon is not un-frequent in Indian literature. Or, it may be that there were two Yāmunas, one the philosopher, and the other a Śrī-vaiṣṇava. The Yāmuna who is paid tribute to by Rāmānuja may be the philosopher Yāmuna and not the Śrī-vaiṣṇava one. As the tradition itself holds that Rāmānuja did not meet the Śrī-vaiṣṇava Yāmuna, the later cannot be his guru. Even if, for the sake of argument, we regard the Śrī-vaiṣṇava Yāmuna, who has championed the cause of the Pāñcarātra, to be his guru, this does not provide us with also sufficient reason to conclude that Rāmānuja must/have done so. Even if we further admit that being born in the Śrī-vaiṣṇava lineage he must have been indirectly influenced, this does not prove the thesis of 'conscious synthesis'.

From the above it is clear that Rāmānuja was not a follower and an advocate of Śrī-vaiṣṇavism. Had he been so he would have championed its cause as vigorously as the author of the Āgama-prāmāṇya did. All the scholars who allege the influence of the Pāñcarātra and the Aḻvārs quote nothing from his works to substantiate their thesis. They derive support only from the Yatindramatadipikā, Tattvātrāya etc. which are the works of his followers. All these prove that the contention of these scholars does not have any ground.

We may now consider another question, viz., does Rāmānuja in his treatment of the Pāñcarātra school declare himself a follower of the Pāñcarātra?

As regards the allusion to the Pāñcarātra school under
Brahma-sūtras II.2.39-42 and Rāmānuja's favourable attitude towards it, one should interpret what he says only in the light of the particular context. Rāmānuja regards the Mahābhārata as an authority which, according to him, is composed by the Sūtrakāra himself. In the Mahābhārata the Sūtrakāra has upheld the validity of the Pāñcarātra by saying that it is of divine origin, and therefore, Rāmānuja contends, he cannot impugn the same in the sūtras. Rāmānuja of his own accord does not plead for the orthodoxy of the Pāñcarātra, but is motivated to do so by Śāṅkara's rejection of its validity, which to Rāmānuja is a clear case of going against the verdict of the Sūtrakāra stated in the Mahābhārata. Śāṅkara has rejected the validity of the Pāñcarātra on the ground that it teaches the origination of the soul and the plurality of gods. Rāmānuja tries to repudiate the Śāṅkarite contention by presenting a view which he deems correct. Only in order to elucidate his point Rāmānuja refers to the doctrines of Vyuha and the three-fold manifestations of God. But this does not mean that he has imbibed and assimilated these doctrines in his philosophy. From his treatment of this school it cannot be concluded that he was its follower and had accepted its doctrine. If he were to advocate its doctrines, he should have done so in the first sūtra of the first chapter.

It will not be out of context to discuss here as to how far Rāmānuja's interpretation of these four sūtras is tenable. It is quite evident, as all the commentators agree, that the tone of the first two sūtras is combative. The difference of opinion is with regard to the interpretation of the last two sūtras. In the second sūtra, according to Rāmānuja, the use of the particle 'vā' is indicative of the change of side in the argument. One can find such instances in the third pada of the third cha-
pter. But in the present context this does not seem to be warranted. It is true that the Sûtrakāra while refuting the origination of the soul in the preceding sūtras, has in this sūtra used the word 'vā' which indicates that here he is not refuting some of the Pāñcarātra doctrines. But this need not necessarily mean that it is a change of side. It may be that in this sūtra he has given an alternative which though true may not be worthy of importance. Or it may be that in the preceding sūtras after refuting the origination in the present sūtra he has given an alternative that if by 'mana' we mean knowledge which arises from jīva, then this is not to be refuted. In the Upaniṣads also various forms of knowledge are referred to as mana. The word 'vā' may suggest two alternatives; if the first is accepted, then the Pāñcarātra is worth condemnation, and if the second is accepted, then it is not to be refuted. In this respect the interpretation of Rāmaśūla does not seem to be correct.

Further, in the same sūtra Rāmaśūla interprets the word 'vijñānādi' as Brahman which does not seem to be proper because nowhere the Sûtrakāra has used this word in this sense. He always uses it in the sense of mana or buddhi. Nor is this word a technical term in the Pāñcarātra school.

From the interpretation of the last sūtra it is quite evident that Rāmaśūla has twisted its meaning. Here he explains 'vipratīṣedhāca' as 'and because the origination of the individual soul is contradicted in this sāstra', saying thereby that the objection raised in the first sūtra is out of question since the Pāñcarātra does not hold this view. But this interpretation is not at all happy. Here not only he explains away the question of origination, but also commits the fallacy of inconsistency. This becomes evident when we compare it with the
sūtra II.2.9, where the same phrase is interpreted by Rāmānuja to mean that contradictions in the Sāmkhya system make it unacceptable. The interpretation of Rāmānuja that in the Pāncarātra itself the origination of the jīva is refuted and therefore the Pāncarātra is regarded as valid by the Śutrakāra, would have been correct provided in the sūtra instead of 'vipratisādācacca' there would be simply 'pratiṣedācaccā'. Vipratisādccha means mutual contradiction and this is accepted by Rāmānuja in II.2.9.

So far as the negation of origination is concerned, it is found in some sections of the Pāncarātra followers, but there must have been some section which accepted and preached origination, as is testified by Kṣemarāja in the Pratyabhijñā Hṛdaya. Though the alleged doctrine is not present in the modern Pāncarātra works, and hence the above criticism of the Śutrakāra is not now applicable to it, yet the fact remains that the interpretation of Śankara is not incorrect. Moreover, Rāmānuja while defending the Pāncarātra school quotes the Parama Śāṃhitā (II.19), but in that Śāṃhitā this verse, 'Vāsudevāt samkarseṇa nāma gīvo jāyate' does not occur. It seems that by the time of Rāmānuja those Pāncarātra works which held the doctrine of origination must have become non-prevalent.

The argument of Rāmānuja that the Śutrakāra is also the author of the Mahābhārata, is entirely baseless and has no sound historical support. Secondly, in the Mahābhārata itself at some places the Pāncarātra is regarded as outside the pale of Vedic orthodoxy. Lastly, in the Mahābhārata the Sāmkhya is also praised, but here in the sūtras it is condemned. The defence of Rāmānuja the Sāmkhya is condemned because of its human origin does not seem to be a sound one.

As a matter of fact the 'tarkapāda' is meant to refute
rival theories, as Rāmānuja himself accepts it (parapakṣa prati-
kṣepo hyasmin pāde kṛtyate II.2.10). In the whole of this section
the Sūtrakāra is on the offensive, refuting through reasoning
only without recourse to the scriptural texts. Here he refutes
those schools of thought which were regarded as outside the
sphere of the Vedas. The Pāṇcarātra was also regarded so and
therefore we cannot reasonably expect Bādarāyaṇa to have accepted
the Pāṇcarātra view. Had he intended to do so, he should not
have dealt with it in the tarkapāda. The best place for this
would have been II.3.18, where on the authority of the scripture
he negates the origination of the soul and propounds its eternity,
Moreover, if the Sūtrakāra wanted to defend the Pāṇcarātra he
could have done so in a far less ambiguous manner.

The argument of Thibaut that it is not unnatural to end
the tarkapāda with the defence of a doctrine which is to be viewed
as true, is without any force, since the exposition and the
defence of the true doctrine is the object of the whole book and
not of one single adhikaraṇa. What is more important is that
we do not come across in the whole work any characteristic
doctrine of the Pāṇcarātra school. The fact that this doctrine
is refuted last of all can be explained by the circumstance that
it is most allied to the Vedānta doctrine, as is admitted by
Śaṅkara and Bhāskara as well.

We may now turn to the consideration of another
question, viz., is there not a Vedāntic tradition
of long antiquity which Rāmānuja follows in toto? The school
which Rāmānuja professes to follow has a long standing
ancestry commencing almost from the times of the author of the
sūtras. There is sufficient evidence to prove that the theistic
interpretation by Rāmānuja was no innovation nor does it betray
any non-Vedāntic influence. In fact his philosophy seems to be a faithful representation of the Vedānta teachings enshrined in the Prasthāna-trayī.

In the Upaniṣads we find distinctly theistic and devotional tendencies gradually developing. Further the Brahma-sūtras furnish us with indications of their having existed already at an early time essentially different Vedāntic systems. In the sūtras we find Vedāntic doctrines of teachers like Ātreyā, Āśmarathya, Āuçulomī, Kāśñajinī, Kāsañkrtsna, Jaiminī, Bādari etc being quoted by Bādarāyana himself. Among the passages where diverging views of these teachers are recorded and contrasted three are of particular importance, namely, I.4.20-22; III.4.7-14; IV.4.5-7. An analysis of these passages will clearly indicate that even before Bādarāyana composed the sūtras there were different views about the teachings of the Upaniṣads and that the theistic view was one of the dominant views.

Turning next to the Śaṅkara Bhāṣya we there meet with the indications that the Vedāntins were divided among themselves on some fundamental points. Śaṅkara more than once refers to the opinion of 'another' commentator of the sūtras, and at several places Śaṅkara's commentators explain that this stands for Bodhāyana whom Rāmānuja expressly follows. There are two remarks of Śaṅkara which are of great importance in this connection. The first is as follows 'some declare those sūtras which I look upon as setting forth the siddhāntavīya to state merely the purvapakṣa'. This clearly indicates that Śaṅkara's interpretation was not acceptable to other ācāryas who perhaps were more inclined towards the theistic tendency. Another instance we find under I.3.15 where Śaṅkara after having explained at length that
the individual soul as such cannot claim any reality, but is real only in so far as it is identical with Brahman, adds the following words, 'Apare tu vādinaḥ pāramārthikaveva jīvarūpaṃti manyante asmadiya ca kecit', i.e., 'other theorists, again, and among them some of ours are of the opinion that the individual soul as such is real.' The term 'ours' here made use of stands only for the Vedāntins. From this it appears that Śankara himself was willing to class under the same category himself and other philosophers who— as in their later times Rāmānuja—looked upon the individual soul as real in itself.

Yāmuna, the author of Siddhi-traya and Gitārtha Samgraha, mentions a series of authors who preceded him and composed works explanatory of the sūtras. They are Bhāgyakṛta (Perhaps Dramiḍa), Śrī Vatsānka, Tenka, Bhartṛprapañca, Bhartṛhari, Brahmadatta, Śankara and Bhāskara. The first three belong to the school of Rāmānuja.

Rāmānuja also at the very outset in his Śrī Bhāṣya claims to follow the authority of Bodhāyana which was upheld by 'ancient teachers'. In the Vedārtha Samgraha we meet with the enumeration of the following authorities of his school who preceded him. They are Bodhāyana, Tenka, Dramiḍa, Guhadeva, Kapardin and Bharuci. Quotations from the writings of some of them are not unfrequent in the Vedārtha Samgraha and the Śrī Bhāṣya.

From the foregoing it appears that the theistic interpretation of the Brahma-sūtras and the Upaniṣads by Rāmānuja was no innovation, nor does it betray any foreign influence. There had been great names among the Vedāntic precursors of the Viśistādveita philosophy of Rāmānuja and Rāmānuja did no place countenances departure from the tradition established by them.
Having given the account of the Vedantic tradition followed by Rāmānuja we may now consider the antiquity of theism. The origin of theism, as we have seen, can be traced back to the Vedic hymns which are replete with the sentiments of piety and reverence. In the Upaniṣads we find distinctly theistic and devotional tendencies. This may be partly due to the innate theistic strain in the Upaniṣads themselves and partly due to the compromise reached between the high speculations about the impersonal Brahman and the popular faiths gathering round the devout worship of personal gods. The epics though recognised the unconditioned aspect of Brahman as superior, the conditioned one was invested with a distinct personality for love and worship. The Gītā also absorbs a great deal of the monistic ideas of the Upaniṣads and reinterprets them with a clearly theistic and devotional attitude. The theistic ideas were already there in the Upaniṣads, but they were so scattered that it was necessary for practical purposes to work them into a system. This syncretic theism of the Gītā, which was lost under the spread of the Buddhism and the Advaita vedānta, was restored by Rāmānuja through the help of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. The Gītā provided Rāmānuja with the spirit of his theism and it was clothed by the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. Thus the theism of Rāmānuja is not an innovation, and there is no ground to brace its impetus to the Śrī-vaishnava school.

Before coming to a close we may do well to consider the possible cause for the misconception that Rāmānuja was influenced by the Pāñcarātra school and the Śrīvālīsas.

Firstly, there is a strong tendency among the writers on Rāmānuja to regard his Viṣṇuṣāvādaita identical with Śrī-vaishnivism, which seems to be of a later origin and which is
highlighted by his followers. This confusion is due to a failure to dissociate the Viśiṣṭādvaīta of Rāmānuja from the Viśiṣṭādvaīta of his followers. It is true that the Viśiṣṭādvaīta professed and practised by his followers is identical with Śrī-vaīṣṇavism, but on this ground it cannot be said that the same must be the case with regard to the Viśiṣṭādvaīta of Rāmānuja. The Viśiṣṭādvaīta of Rāmānuja is poles apart from the Śrī-vaīṣṇava cult which is sectarian in character practising ritualistic externalism enjoined by the Pāñcarātra school.

Secondly, it is only the Śrī-vaīṣṇava tradition (whose reliability is very much doubtful) which mentions Rāmānuja in the spiritual lineage of the Ālvārs and the Śrī-vaīṣṇava ācāryas. Some of the followers of Rāmānuja, who perhaps established this tradition, could not resist the allurement of being the devoted disciples of their master and at the same time accepting the enamouring utterances of the Ālvārs and the ācāryas. Therefore they tried to associate the two by dragging Rāmānuja within the fold of Śrī-vaīṣṇavism. They attributed to Rāmānuja those doctrines of their sect which are not found in his works and he would never have accepted. Referring to this circumstance Macnicol remarks, "...even the well-knit fabric of Rāmānuja's system did not prevent his followers from wild and dangerous aberrations." Monier Williams writes, "After Rāmānuja's death his numerous followers corrupted his teachings in the usual manner introducing doctrines and practices which the founder of the sect had not enjoined and would not have sanctioned." Prof. Srinivas Aiengar observes, "The modern Viśiṣṭādvaīta is a school of electricism blending the Rāmānuja Vedānta philosophy and Āgama cosmology and practices. Rāmānuja himself, though the ācārya par excellence of this sect and though he
pleaded for the orthodoxy of the Pāñcarātra books, expounds only the Vedānta philosophy and discipline. But his followers have neglected the Vedānta philosophy and brought into prominence Āgama doctrines and practices.\textsuperscript{11}

Lastly, there have been vigorous attempts made by the advocates of the Pāñcarātra—which is non-Vedic in origin and anti-Vedic in attitude—to secure Vedic basis for their doctrines and practices. They tried to prove their ancestry from the Vedic passage, 'Nānyāḥ pantha ayanāya vidyate'. They named themselves as Ekāntins and tried to identify their sect with the Ekāyana sect of the Kārya sākhā of the Śukla Yajurveda. A similar effort was made to misappropriate the meaning of the word 'Pāñcarātra-sattra' of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII.61). The shelter-seeking advocates of the Pāñcarātra further found in the Śrī-bhāṣya of Rāmānuja a clue to secure the needed Vedāntic support. They tried to associate his authority with their sect so as to enhance its dignity and to get rid of the reproach of unorthodoxy etc. which had dogged their sect upto that time.\textsuperscript{12} In order to drag Rāmānuja within the fold of the Pāñcarātra they even did not spare Yāmuna, the author of the Siddhi-traya and the Gitārtha Samgraha. They further described Rāmānuja as an incarnation of Śaṅkarāṇa, the Vyūha emanation of God (Bṛhad-samhitā II.7.66 ff.)

From all the foregoing considerations we may state the conclusion that taking all positive and negative evidence of all the works of Rāmānuja we may say that the Pāñcarātra school, albeit recognised in passing as an orthodox system, is not at all utilised by him to corroborate his system of Vedānta. As regards the Ālvārs he does not even allude to them. Therefore there is no ground for the contention of the scholars that the
theism of Rāmānuja is an outcome of his conscious effort to blend the Vedāntic metaphysics with the Vaiṣṇavite religion of the Ālvārs, Śrī-vaiṣṇava ācāryas and the Pāñcarātra Śaṁhitās. As a matter of fact, we do not find any element in him which may be regarded as non-Vedic.
References and foot-notes:-


2. See my paper 'Did Râmânuja Advocate Pâñcarâtra and Sîrî-veîsnavism?' Philosophical Quarterly, April, 1963.


4. See Supra p.120. See A. Grover- R. History of Sîrî-veîsnavism

5. See my paper 'Did Pâñcarâtra favour Pâñcarâtra?' Philosophical Quarterly, April, 1965.


7. See my paper 'The Vedântic Precursors of the Visistādvaîta Philosophy of Râmânuja'. Poona Orientalist, April, 65

8. See P.N. Srinivasachari-Loc. Cit. p.503; R.G. Bhandarkar, who among the modern scholars first promulgated this view, based his account of Râmânuja upon the bHartha-pâneika and the Yatindramatadipika. This makes it quite evident that this view has come to be held in indifference to Râmânuja's own works. (Indian Antiquary, Vol. XVIII, June 1889, pp.189-90; Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1910, p.565.)

9. Indian Theismp.111.

10. Religious thoughts and Life in India, p.124
