CHAPTER VI

MEANS

OF

EMANCIPATION
Prolegomena

The individual life in the worldly state is incomplete and broken, and points beyond itself. It has a goal to achieve, a purpose to fulfill, and an end to realise. This goal is not a matter of direct realisation of something which is existent from eternity, though hidden from our view, but it is, as we have seen, an establishment of a society of perfect individuals where in the sorrows and sufferings of the world would cease to exist. This is what we mean by release or liberation. This release of the individual self from the travails of the earthly life, is not effectual by mere wish, nor is it an idle or ideal apprehension through abstract speculation. It is a realisation through proper endeavour. It requires a rigorous discipline, a course of sādhanā—moral, intellectual and spiritual—and consequent mental make up on the part of the finite, and also an insurge in of redemptive grace on the part of the infinite. In the following pages we shall consider the views of the Advaita school, Ramanuja, and the Pāncarātra school and the Ālvārs on the nature of the means of emancipation.

The Advaita account of the means of emancipation

Broadly speaking the course of discipline which the Indian systems of philosophy prescribe for attaining the final goal of life is three-fold, viz. Karma, jñāna and bhakti. Of this triple method the advaitin recognises jñāna alone as the direct means of emancipation. His system being
thoroughly intellectual, the philosophical discrimination of the real from the unreal is the immediate cause of realisation. The ethical discipline and the devotion to God do not directly lead to emancipation, but they are only accessories to intellectual penetration and discrimination. Since bondage consists in being ignorant of the true nature of the self, it is knowledge alone that can bring about release. Karma and upāsanā may help us in urging to know the Reality, and may quip us for that knowledge by purifying our mind, but ultimately it is knowledge alone which by destroying ignorance can enable us to be one with the Absolute.

According to the Advaita karma or merely properly regulated life in the light of śāstric injunctions, generally known as dharma, is inherently incapable of removing ignorance, for it is life in ignorance. Mokṣa is not possible with a perception of difference and karma is not possible without a perception of it. According to the Mīmāṃsā school it is not the knowledge, but the performance of actions in accordance with the Vedic injunctions which can bring about mokṣa. The advaitin, on the contrary, declares that the karmakānda cannot lead to final release, for even the most meritorious works necessarily lead to new forms of embodied existence. Actions are prescribed only for those who are in ignorance and not for those who are enlightened.

The advaitin thus bifurcates the scripture into jñānakānda and karmakānda, and declares that it is the former which alone is the means of emancipation. In the jñānakānda again there are two different parts, those which deal with Saguna Brahman and those which deal with nirguna Brahman. Devout meditation to the lower Saguna Brahman does not lead to emancipation, but to the
world of lower Brahman only. They alone obtain release whose self
has been enlightened by the texts embodying the higher knowledge
of the Nirguna Brahman, and who have attained identity-conscious-
ness.

This identity-consciousness or knowledge of oneness,
is possible to only those who are equipped with the four requi-
sites (sādhana caṭuṣṭaya), viz., (i) viveka, (ii) vairāgya,
(iii) śama, deśa, uparati, titikṣā, śīdha and samādhanā,
(iv) mumukṣutva. These four are the sine qua non to the inquiry
into the nature of Brahman. A man possessing these requisites
should try to understand correctly the true purport of the
scripture (śravaṇa). He should try to strengthen his conviction
about that purport by means of arguments in its favour (manana),
and then by meditation (nididhyāsana), which includes all the
yoga process of concentration, he should try to realise the truth.
The Advaita Vedānta thus covers up the ground of yoga; but while
in yoga system emancipation proceeds from understanding the diffe-
rence between Puruṣa and Prakṛti, in the Advaita it comes by the
dawn of right knowledge that Brahman alone is the true reality,
his own self.

Rāmānuja's account of the means of emancipation

Rāmānuja however differs from the advaitin. A difference
in the basic conception of life and reality naturally demands
divergence of discipline. Rāmānuja, unlike the advaitin, upholds
the dynamic concept of being, which retains an element of diffe-
rence, a difference not to indicate a division in the integrity
of the Infinite, but to allow a beatitude in love and service,
mutual giving and receiving, the love currents and responses.
Such a conception of giving and take has no place in the Advaita.
In nescience is the root of the world-appearance and knowledge
is the direct cause of its destruction, with the complete denial of nescience the end is achieved. In Rāmānuja denial has no place, for nothing is or can be denied. The jīva continues to exist for ever. It is only required to be saved from the influence of avidyā and its travail of divided existence. It can transcend this divided life and can pass into unitive divine life, and be eternally saved.

Rāmānuja admits with the advaitin that the removal of nescience, which puts the soul under bondage, is release, and that it can be secured by Brahmāvijñāna, but he controverts the view that this Brahmāvijñāna is mere knowledge devoid of karma and bhakti. The basic difference between Śankara and Rāmānuja with regard to the means of emancipation starts with the interpretation of the word 'atha' in the first aphorism of the Brahma Sūtras. This word significantly points out that the enquiry into the nature of Brahman is to be preceded by some preliminary. It implies that something must have gone before to which Brahmāvijñāsā is invariably related. That is that Śankara maintains that it refers to sādhana catuṣṭaya, whereas Rāmānuja declares that it refers to karma-mīmāṁsā which is an indispensable prolegomena to jñānamīmāṁsā. According to Śankara what is required for release is mere intellectual illumination and therefore ethical conduct has little place in the final stage of the discipline which is necessary to attain release. But Rāmānuja urges that Śankara overlooks those scriptural texts which emphasize purity of conduct, devotion of heart and grace of God, which all are as essential as knowledge of identity.

Accordingly Rāmānuja in his synthetic approach regards the three paths to liberation, viz. karma, jñāna and bhakti,
not as exclusive, but as inclusive of one another. Karma yoga or moral discipline is a process of self-purification which develops into jñānayoga. Jñāna yoga is a means of self-realisation which culminates in bhakti yoga, which in its turn is a method of God-realisation. On the basis of the Chāndogya Upanishad VIII.7.1 Rāmānuja maintains that knowledge of the ātman combined with karmayoga leads to jñānayoga. Through jñānayoga one arrives at the true contemplation of the realising ātman (prapṛt-ātman). This contemplation again is propaedeutic to bhakti yoga, through which alone one is capable of attaining God.¹

Rāmānuja fully agrees with Śaṅkara that knowledge is the only means of obtaining release, but this knowledge, he urges, is not devoid of karma and bhakti as Śaṅkara has tried to maintain. Śaṅkara has categorically declared that neither action, nor even knowledge in combination with action is of any avail with regard to the attainment of release.² It is true that Bādarāyaṇa has declared that release accrues from vidyā and not from action,³ but this vidyā means meditation upon and devotion to God.⁴ Rāmānuja is firmly of the opinion that knowledge must be wedded to devotion ere self-realisation may develop into God-realisation.⁵ Knowledge is thus quite inevitable for obtaining release, but by itself it is quite insufficient. He compares knowledge to a horse which though a means of conveyance for his master, requires attendants, groomings etc. The horse will of course carry its rider, but a smooth riding requires certain actions on the part of the rider.⁶

Rāmānuja holds that the duties relating to various āśramas also are to be discharged by a man of wisdom, because karma contributes to vidyā.⁷ In this respect he differs from Śaṅkara who affirms that there is no necessity of karma for a
man of knowledge. Ramanuja, on the other hand, maintained that actions, if rightly done, are not detrimental to final beatitude. Not only the daily and the accidental actions, but also the deserved ones can procure emancipation, provided the agent surrenders his agency to the divinity. \( ^{8} \) svakarma\( \text{\textit{n}} \) tams\( \text{\textit{bhyer\textit{e}}} \) siddhim vindanti manava\( \text{\textit{m}} \) Ramana writes that the Lord has declared that faithful discharge of one's own duties is itself the worship of God. \( ^{9} \)

The three-fold yoga, thus, in the philosophy of Ramanuja, marks the three successive stages in the progressive realisation of release. Karma and jh\( \text{\textit{\text{\textit{\text{\textn}}}}} \) are preliminaries to bhakti which is a direct path to release. Besides this triadic process of human sadhana, Ramanuja rightly emphasises the role of grace of God. The later metrical upanis\( \text{\textit{\text{\text{\textn}}}}} \)s unmistakably declare that the Deity out of His grace grants to the finite self that knowledge which it requires for obtaining release. In this way Ramanuja gives full justice to all the scriptural texts by synthesising the various constituents which constitute the means of release. For this Ramanuja is mainly indebted to the Gita where this synthesis is attempted. Lord K\( \text{\textit{\text{\textn}}}} \)na has declared that the different pathways are not ultimately distinct though they appear to be so. (VII.21) He has synthesised karma, jh\( \text{\textit{\text{\text{\textn}}}}} \), bhakti, yoga, grace of God etc., shown the exact place and value of each and thus preached the effectiveness of the joint effort. Ramanuja has fully followed this lead of the Gita.

Let us now see in details the place and value of each of these constituents of the scheme of release in the philosophy of Ramanuja.
The karmayoga, or ethical discipline is the first step in the scheme of release. It is regarded as a path-way to self-realisation, and is preferred on account of its ease, naturality, efficacy and freedom from the fallacy of mistaking not-self for the self. Ramanuja lays great emphasis on the need of moral conduct and the performance of the duties of life.

Ramanuja's emphasis on the karmayoga is entirely based on the Upaniṣads and the Gītā. It is true that in the earlier Upaniṣads the emphasis was laid on knowledge only as the means of obtaining release. Some thinkers even were led to think that the mere knowledge of one's identity with Brahman sufficed to produce liberation, and that accordingly the Brahman-knower need not bother about moral discipline. But in the later Upaniṣads it was emphatically asserted that Brahman can never be known by one who had not ceased from evil conduct. Not only that, they firmly declared the inevitability of the performance of one's own duties. This does not mean that ethical discipline was altogether absent in the earlier Upaniṣads. It is given due place in them, but it was specially emphasised in the later Upaniṣads. For example, Katha declares, 'Not he who has not ceased from evil conduct...can obtain Him by intelligence.' (II.24)

'He...who has not understanding, who is unmindful and ever impure, reaches not the goal, but goes on to transmigration' (Ibid III.1)

'This soul is obtainable by truth, by austerity, by proper knowledge, by the student's life of chastity constantly (practised).... consisting of light, pure is He whom the ascetic (yati) with imperfections done away behold' (Mundaka.III.1.5.). The Śvetāśvātara Upaniṣad also dwells on the necessity of yogic practice where by the individual becomes cleansed. In the Maitrī Upaniṣad
the method for attaining release is described thus, 'Study of the knowledge of the Veda,.... Pursuit of one's regular duty, in one's own stage of the religious life that, verily, is the rule .......
If one does not practise austerity there is no success in the knowledge of the soul, nor perfection of works. For thus has it been said: 'Tis goodness(sattva) from austerity (tapas), and mind from goodness that is won, and from the mind soul is won, on winning whom no one returns.'

In the Gita also, on which the ethics of Ramanuja is mainly based, ethical requirements are declared as essential, and several virtues, are accordingly mentioned as leading to the 'Divine Estate', which alone enables one to attain release.
Throughout the Gita Krishna urges upon Arjuna the necessity to control sense and desire, and to do one's duty as unto God. The Gita declares that one's duties must be performed, 'Therefore without attachment ever perform the work that thou must do: for if without attachment a man works, he gains the Highest.'(III.19)
One can have the redeeming knowledge only when his senses are held in check and he is perfected in control (IV.38-39). The earnest desire of the Deity to see that righteousness should prevail, is the chief motive of incarnation in the Gita. The ethical conduct and the performance of duties is not only binding on the individual, but the Lord Himself, though perfect, also acts for the sake of the finite self, and thus sets an example.

On the basis of the above authorities Ramanuja also emphasises the place of karma-yoga. He urges that one who aspires after release must fulfil many practical requirements. It is first of all necessary for him to escape sin for thereby he can have the real knowledge of the self. After this he is required to give himself to the pursuit of all the duties binding on
him in his station in life, without any tinge of selfishness or
desire for personal gain. Rāmānuja writes, 'All daily (nitya)
and incidental (naimittika) rites prescribed in the sāstras shall
be performed... As for fructiferous rites (kāmya) even those shall
be performed in the manner prescribed for the several castes (varṇa)
and orders of life (āśrama), and according to one's ability; but
resigning their specific fruits, 15 The Deity is pleased and
conciliated by the different kinds of acts of sacrifice and
worship duly performed by the devotee day after day. 16 The Lord
Himself says, 'The work of sacrifice, gift-giving, and austerities
is not to be relinquished, but is indeed to be performed; for
sacrifices, gifts and austerities are purifying to the thoughtful.'
'He from whom all beings proceed... worshiping Him with proper
works man attains to perfection.'

Not only such sacrificial rites, but also the duties
connected with each āśrama have to be performed. 18 Those who do
not stand within any āśrama should devote themselves to practices
not exclusively connected with any āśrama, such as prayer, fasting,
charity, propitiation of the Deity and so on. 19 But better than
to be outside the āśramas is the condition of standing within an
āśrama. The latter state may be due to misfortune; but he who can,
should be within an āśrama which state is the more holy and bene-
ficial one. 20 Those who have fallen from the āśrama state owing
to a lapse from chastity are not qualified for knowledge of
Brahman. 21 The duties obligatory on the four castes are prescri-
bled in the sāstras and these duties should be faithfully performed. 22

Jñānayoga

In order that an individual may perform his duties
properly and disinterestedly, it is necessary for him to perceive
his own essential nature. Since the root of all evil is nescience
whereby the soul identifies itself with the body and gives itself to the pursuits of bodily ends, it is necessary for it to see that its own true nature is quite distinct from that of the body.

Knowing ātmā to be that which is distinct from body, uncontaminated with qualities pertaining to bodies, and to be that which is eternal, keeping the mind imperturbable under the varying conditions of pleasure and pain, gain and loss.... and destitude of any wish for regard. In this wise wilt thou escape sin. Rāmānuja further holds that one must meditate on oneself as not only different from the body but also as having qualities similar to Brahman. This is the state or condition of work-performance in an unselfish or disinterested manner, based on the knowledge of the eternal ātmā. This method has for its aim the achievement of true wisdom. Thus jñānayoga consists of knowledge of the ātmān combined with karmayoga. In this way karmayoga presupposes jhānyoga and jhānayoga includes karmayoga. Karma and jñāna, thus, interpenetrate each other by moralising jhāna and illuminating karma. The two can be distinguished but not separated. Hence there must be a blending (samuccaya) of the two.

Bhaktiyoga

The jñānayoga which consists of the knowledge of oneself as different from the body and as akin to the pure nature of Brahman, and the karmayoga which means the fulfilment of religious and social duties inculcated in the śāstras without any expectation of reward, are not sufficient to bring about release. What is needed is a whole-hearted devotion, which demands the centering of one's thought entirely on God. The Karma and jñāna-yoga must be supplemented with bhaktiyoga, without which no emancipation can be achieved.
Ramanuja admits that the jñāna mārga by itself can also accrue emancipation, but he points out that meditation on the soul as imperishable, indefinable, indescribable etc. is not within the easy reach of the ordinary man. Therefore he insists on bhakti mārga which is quite an easy method.

The origin of the cult of bhakti in Hinduism is shrouded in mystery, but it is quite evident that its germs are found in the Vedic hymns. The doctrine of loving God is as old as the Vedas as is evinced in passages such as, 'yosājāramiva priyaṃ' (Ṛg Ⅸ.32.5). The hymns 'namo bhāraṇṭa emaśi'(Ⅹ.Ⅰ.Ⅰ.) 'yasya viśvā upāsate' (yaju 25.13) 'Mahaṭe viśnoḥ sumatim bhaṅjāmahe'(Ṛg Ⅰ.Ⅰ.Ⅴ.3) etc. suggest the consciousness of love and reverence to the Deity as the only means of the progress of man. Bhakti has been the trend even of the oldest phase of the Vedic religion. As B.N. Seal has remarked, 'The Vedic hymns are replete with sentiments of piety and reverence in the worship of God... The upāsanā kānda of the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads lay the foundation of the bhaktimārga, the way of devotion and faith.' Prof. Belvakar is also of the same opinion when he writes, 'It is impossible to read some of the soul-stirring Vedic hymns to Varuṇa, Śaṅkara and Uṣas, and not to feel therein the presence of the true bhakti, however, inadequate may have been its philosophical background.'

In the Upaniṣads we find distinctly theistic tendencies gradually developing. Though the older prose Upaniṣads lay stress on knowledge as the way to release, the older metrical Upaniṣads like Katha, Mundaka, Śvetāsvatāra, etc. distinctly advocate the doctrine of bhakti. In the Śvetāsvatāra we also find the doctrine of Prapatti. Bādarāyana also in his Brahma Sūtras refers to it as 'saṃrādhaṇa'. 
In the Gita we find a systematic formation of the cult of bhakti. The God of the Gita is not an Abstract Impersonal Absolute, for whom the individual counts for little. He is a personal God who loves the individual and wishes to possess him completely. Consequently what He requires more than all else is whole-hearted devotion. It is this bhakti, a constant life-long contemplation on God and total dedication of oneself to Him, which the "ord names as madbhakti, madyajana, manmanana etc.

Accordingly Ramanuja describes the devotion that is required of the individual as chiefly contemplative involving the centering of one's thoughts on the Deity. It is a devotion which requires the dedication of one's will, for it involves the performance of all one's own duties.

Ramanuja regards this bhakti as synonymous with Upasana. In the Vedic literature we find both these words used for devotion. Bhakti, derived from the root 'bhaj', appears in the Vedic passage 'Mbhaste Vignoh sumatim bhajamahe' (Rg.1.156.3). The root 'as' with the prefix 'upa' is also used side by side with the root 'bhaja' as we find in the yajurveda passage 'yasya visvā upāsate'. (25.13)

Ramanuja further maintains that this devotion is identical with redeeming knowledge. He explicitly declares that it is essentially a specific form of cognition. It is not an intellectual exuberance of feeling, or a fervent glow of emotion, or an unrestrained exhibition of erotic elements, but it is thoroughly meditative and contemplative. He accordingly defines bhakti as 'a meditation on God accompanied by love.' He elsewhere writes, 'That the knowledge intended to be enjoined as the means of final release is of the nature of meditation, we conclude from the circumstance that the terms 'knowing' and 'meditating'
are seen to be used in place of each other in the earlier and later parts of the Vedic texts! Rāmānuja further writes that this is the view of the Vākyakāra as well, and quotes the following passage: 'Knowledge (Vedana) means meditation (upāsanā) scripture using the word in that sense.'

Bhakti as a loving meditation is also described by Rāmānuja as a 'steady remembrance'. He writes, 'Meditation means steady remembrance, i.e., a continuity of steady remembrance, uninterrupted like a flow of oil; in agreement with the scriptural passage 'On the attainment of remembrance all the ties are loosened'. (Chānd. VII.26.2). Such remembrance is of the same character (form) as seeing (intuition) for the passage quoted has the same purport as the following one, 'The fetter of the heart is broken, all doubts are solved, and all the works of that man perish when He has been seen who is high and low (Mund. II.2.8).

With reference to remembrance, which thus acquires the character of immediate presentation (Pratyakṣatā) and is the means of final release, scripture makes a further determination, viz., in the passage Katha II.23. 'That Self cannot be gained by the study of the Veda (reflection), nor by thought (meditation), nor by much hearing. whom the Self chooses, by it may be gained.' Now a 'chosen' one means a most beloved person, the relation being that he by whom that Self is held most dear is most dear to the Self. That the Lord Himself endeavours that this most beloved person should gain the Self. He Himself declares in the following words, 'To those who are constantly devoted and worship with love I give that knowledge by which they reach me' (Gītā X.10), and 'To him who has knowledge I am dear above all things, and he is dear to me.' (VII.17) Hence, who possesses remembrance marked by the character of immediate presentation (sākṣākāra), and which itself
is dear above all things since the object remembered is such; he, we may say, is chosen by the highest Self, and by him the highest Self is gained. Steady remembrance of this kind is designated by the word 'devotion' (bhakti); for this term has the same meaning as Upāsanā (meditation) 36

Hence we conclude that the knowledge which the Vedanta texts aim at inculcating is a knowledge other than the mere knowledge of the sense of sentences, and devoted by 'dhyāna', 'upāsanā' (i.e. meditation), and similar terms. With this agree scriptural texts such as 'Having known it, let him practise meditation' (Bṛ. IV.4.21).... all these texts, must be viewed as agreeing in meaning with the injunction of meditation contained in the passage quoted from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad and what they enjoin is therefore meditation. 36

In this way Rāmānuja makes it quite clear that the knowledge, which is a means to release, is not mere Vākyāntha jñāna (knowledge of mere sense of the sentences), but it is of the nature of contemplation and direct intuition of Brahma. Thus by equating bhakti with jñāna Rāmānuja gives to bhakti a predominantly meditative significance on the one hand, and, on the other, regards the redeeming knowledge taught by the Upaniṣads as neither something purely intellectual nor as something to be accomplished once and for all, but as a meditative devotion daily practised and constantly improved by repetition throughout one's life, and culminating in a mystic intuition of the Deity. The system of Rāmānuja from this point of view culminates in a lofty mysticism in which the soul finds its highest life in the intellectual love of God.

Though Rāmānuja describes devotion as chiefly contemplative, he does not underrate the emotional side of it, lest it
should become a matter of head only. Accordingly he gives recognition and due place to the emotional experiences of the devotees. 37

The account of the state of an ardent devotee given by Rāmānuja (which occurs once only in all his works) is, no doubt, an emotional attitude of worship and devotion, but it is not a blind intensity of feeling or an unreasoned ecstasy divorced from knowledge and the duties of practical life. In this respect this slight emotional element in the meditative and ethical bhakti of Rāmānuja cannot be compared or traced to the highly emotional bhakti of the Ālvārs who would reject jñāna and even karma and would regard the ecstatic passion of the erotic nature as the only essential.

It is further to be noted that the bhakti in Rāmānuja is not an outer form of worship, as it has become in the Pāñcarātra cult, but it is an inner spiritual attitude produced and enriched by virtues. It is not an emotional, but a training of the body, will and intellect. This bhakti is the ripened fruit of karma and jñāna, and is not possible without them. Rāmānuja writes, 'Sacrifices and similar works being performed day after day have the effect of purifying the mind, and owing to this, knowledge arises in the mind with even increasing brightness.' 38 Hence in order that knowledge may arise, evil works have to be got rid of, and this is effected by the performance of acts of religious duty not aiming at some immediate result (such as the heavenly world and the like); according to the text 'by works of religious duty he discards all evil'. Knowledge which is the means of reaching Brahman, thus requires the works prescribed for the different āśramas. 39
For the careful discipline of the mind and will Rāmānuja, following the Vākyakāra, prescribes a seven-fold scheme of discipline. Without undergoing this, no one can be granted the redeeming knowledge by the Deity. The seven constituents of the scheme are Viveka (abstention from impure food), Vimoka (absence of attachment to desires), Abhyāsa (continued practice), Kriyā (performance of Pāṇca mahāyajñas), Kalyāna (virtuous conduct), Anavasāda (freedom from dejection) and anudāharsa (absence of exultation).

The bhakti which is the result of this sādāna-saptaka has three stages and nine phases. The three stages are dhruvāmam-smṛti (firm meditation), ṛkṣyānṛ-tan (frequent repetition) and dārśana smāna-kāratā (orison of union). Its nine phases are as follows: stūti (glorification), smṛti (remembrance), namaskṛṣṭi (homage), vandana (salutation), yatana (mortification), kīrtana (exaltation), guṇasramana (listening to the attributes of the Lord), vacana (narrating the attributes), dhyāna (meditation), arcana (adoration) and pranāma (prostration).

Does Rāmānuja advocate the doctrine of Prapatti?

It has been maintained by many scholars that Rāmānuja has accepted and incorporated the Pāṇcarātra doctrine of Prapatti which teaches an absolute surrendering of oneself to the Deity and leaving the work of Salvation to be done by Him, as a means of independent of, and superior to, bhakti, or as the only requisite for Salvation. But that there is no evidence in his works to support this contention. We shall substantiate our point by considering three of his works, viz., Śrī Bhāṣya, Gitā Bhāṣya and Vedārtha Samgraha. His other two works, viz., Vedānta Śāra and Vedānta Deepa need no separate consideration, as they are mere
condensed form of the Śrī Bhāṣya. Another work, Gadya-trayam, is also ascribed to him, but its genuineness is yet to be established.

The word 'Prapatti', I believe, does not occur in the Śrī Bhāṣya. Nowhere in his works Rāmānuja has said that the individual self can lay aside its responsibility for salvation and entrust this work to the Deity, or that the Deity requires nothing from the self beyond complete surrender. Nor has he said that the Deity plays a leading role and the individual self has to play only a subordinate role. Far from maintaining that the salvation is entirely the work of God, or is due the 'Sole agency' of God, or that 'all that is necessary is to flee to the Deity for refuge', Rāmānuja insists that no one can get salvation unless he becomes purified by devout works and strenuous discipline. He makes it quite clear that the 'Saving knowledge', which is the effect of God's grace, is not possible except to one who has undergone thorough preparation ethically, intellectually and spiritually. A methodical training of body, intellect and will, through karma yoga, jhāna yoga and bhakti yoga, is an indispensable prolegomenon to it. He declares, 'It is impossible that the capability of performing meditations on Brahman should belong to a person not knowing the nature of Brahman and the due modes of meditation, and not qualified by the knowledge of the requisite preliminaries of such meditation, viz., recitation of the Veda, sacrifices and so on. Mere want or desire does not impart qualification to a person destitute of the required capability.' At so many places Rāmānuja emphatically declares that the grace of God is not arbitrary, but acts in accordance with the law of Karma.

Prof. Kumarappa, who maintains that Rāmānuja has advocated the doctrine of prapatti, also admits that the tenets of
this doctrine are not present in the Śrī Bhāṣya. He writes,
'Since grace functions then only when the soul has elaborately
 prepared itself by Vedic instruction, performance of śāstric duties,
 intellectual knowledge of Brahman, and desire for release, there
can be no talk of the Deity either overriding the individuality
of the soul or permitting a violation of His laws. This is the
view consistently maintained throughout the Śrī Bhāṣya.'

From the above it is quite clear that the tenets of the
docline of prapatti are in flagrant contradiction to the declared
 teachings of the Śrī Bhāṣya, and hence it would be far from truth
to say that Rāmānuja has accepted it.

In the Vedārtha Samgraha also the distinctive tenets of
this pāñcarātra doctrine are conspicuously absent. In one of the
various recensions of the Vedārtha Samgraha the word 'Prapatti'
ocurs thus, 'Etetām Samsāra moçaññam bhagavate prapattimantareṇa
nopapadyeta.' In the palm leaf manuscript of the Mysore Oriental Research Institute Catelque No. A 2409. In the palm leaf manuscript of the Mysore Government Oriental Research Institute catalogue No. Gr. 378
instead of 'Prapatti' the word is 'Pratipatti'. In some manuscripts it is 'bhagevatprāptim'. Since the word 'Prapatti'
ocurs in one recension only and there too we are not quite
certain about the sense in which it is used, it may be contended
that this recension has come to be distorted by the later
sectarians.

In the Gītā Bhāṣya also no where Rāmānuja has maintai-
med that the redeeming knowledge can be bestowed on any one
irrespective of the moral considerations. He has never suggested
that the redeeming grace works in such a way as to annul the
law of Karma. He has, on the contrary, always tried to emphasise
that in the operation of Divine grace both the individuality of the finite self and the moral consistency of Brahman are preserved. He has declared that the individual must fulfill many conditions if it is to obtain release. Indeed, even devotion, which the Deity requires as the supreme condition for release is possible only to one who has through efforts achieved merit. He writes, 'Those whose self-acquired merits have led them to come to me as their asylum, whose bonds of sin has been broken down and who partake of the Divine nature are noble-souled'. (IX.13). 'It is only to one who is entirely cleansed of all his sins that I become the object of love.' (XII.11). 'Thus, then, in conclusion thou shalt carry on all thy worldly duties.....and scriptural duties...occupying thyself daily, thus, in devotion of the aforesaid description thou shall reach Myself,' (IX.34). From these references to the Gita Bhasya it is quite obvious that the Deity through his grace grants release only to those who have fulfilled the necessary condition of knowledge, duty and devotion.

As a matter of fact the central idea of the prapatti doctrine is present in the Gita passages such as 'Mamprapadyante' (IV.11) 'Mameva ye prapadyante' (VII.14) 'tameva saranam gaccha' (XVIII.62) 'Mamekam saranam Vrja' (XVIII.66) etc. The word 'prapatti' occurs at many places in the Gita. But nowhere Ramanuja has interpreted it in the pancharatra sense of prapatti. In VII.19 it is described as an approach to the Lord which presupposes the true knowledge of the atman that its sole essence is to be a se of God. In this way it is a means of self-realisation. In XVIII.62 it is explained as 'anuvartasva' i.e. obey the commands of the Lord. He interprets 'prapadyante' as 'samashrayante' (IV.11, VII.20) or as 'Upagamya' (XV 4-5) or as 'upasate'
(VII.19), none of which have any pāñcarātra sense. Besides Rāmānuja refers to it as an activity which leads to bhakti. 41

Thus nowhere the word 'prapatti' has been used in the sense in which it is used in the pāñcarātra school, as a complete surrender of the devotee to the Deity who moved by devotee’s utter desolation, lifts him to beatitude by a mere act of grace. Though in the Gītā it is intimated that prapatti provokes God’s grace, there is no evidence to prove that Rāmānuja believed that prapatti alone would suffice for this. On the contrary, it becomes quite manifest that he does not consider prapatti a separate, let alone superior, means, apart from bhakti, but only a preliminary to it.

Though the position of Rāmānuja is quite clear on this point, Prof. Kumarappa feels that on this topic Rāmānuja’s teaching in the Gītā Bhāṣya differs from his teaching in the Śrī Bhāṣya. Prof. Kumarappa agrees that the doctrine of prapatti should find its expression in the Śrī Bhāṣya, but he argues that ‘the religion of devotion to which he belonged seems to lead him in the Bhagvada Gītā Bhāṣya to assert that the Deity requires nothing from the soul beyond complete surrender (prapatti)’ 42. In order to support his conclusion he cites Rāmānuja’s commentary on Gītā XV.4. But here he attaches importance to a spurious reading, which Rāmānuja mentions, but does not accept. First of all Rāmānuja gives his own interpretation and then in the second place he gives only a variant reading by saying ‘iti vā pāthaḥ’. Prof. Kumarappa cites only this spurious reading, perhaps, because it serves his purpose. He further quotes Gītā XV.5 and here also he is misled by Govindacārya’s faulty translation of the text, ‘matprasadat’ as ‘through my sole agency’, whereas it really means ‘by my collaborating grace’. Besides he refers to Śarāṇa-
Further Prof. Kumarappa quotes Ramānuja's commentary on the famous śloka XVIII,66. Here again he gives greater emphasis to the later half portion of the explanation. Ramānuja gives here two different explanations. The first explanation is perfectly in keeping with his general views, and is preferred by him. The second one, though ambiguous, does not mean that taking refuge in God 'solely' is enough for release. As to why Ramānuja has given two different explanations it may be said that though Ramānuja did not subscribe to the views prevalent at his time he did not want to exclude them from his Bhasya. In the first explanation, which alone is acceptable to him, he interprets 'renouncing' (parityajya) not as 'absolute surrendering of oneself to the Deity and leaving the work of salvation to be done by Him', but as 'performing one's duties without attachment to fruits etc.' The declaration 'I will deliver thee from all sins' is interpreted to mean that the Deity will remove the obstructions caused by the past sins. Here Ramānuja makes it quite clear that the Lord would only remove the obstructions and it would be the sole responsibility of the individual self to strive for salvation.

Thus viewed, Ramānuja has rather rejected the unconditional surrender to God and together with it the responsibility of the work of salvation on God. This is clear evidence to show that the doctrine of prapatti was not accepted by Ramānuja.

It would be interesting to note here that in the Gadyatrāyam, which the sectarians attribute to Ramānuja, there is one passage in which Ramānuja is made to confess his omission of not referring to this doctrine in his other works. The very wording of the passage betray the imposition of this doctrine on Ramānuja. No reasons have been given why did Ramānuja conceal
it in his other works, and why did he deemed it fit to reveal it in the Gadgmatrayam. As many sectarian doctrines have been attributed to Ramanuja by his Srivaisnava followers with a view to find support for their sect in his philosophy, this also seems to be an instance of the same. As a matter of fact had Ramanuja been an advocate of the doctrine of prapatti he would have unfailingly utilised the Gita passages for this purpose, which, as we have seen, very inclined towards the prapatti marga. Moreover, we find many references to this doctrine in Brähmanical works as well, and it would have been least sectarian had Ramanuja dwelt upon it.

From the foregoing consideration the conclusion we arrive at is that the pāńcarātra doctrine of prapatti, wrongly maintained to have been accepted by Ramanuja, has found no expression in his works, and is also in opposition to his declared teachings.

Divine grace as a means of Release

According to Ramanuja God is not only a Creator and a Sustainer but a Redeemer as well. He has always regarded the Deity as eminently loving. The Deity bears an immense love for His devotees. This has been the teaching of the Gita, and Ramanuja, therefore, rightly draws upon it for this idea. While commenting on the Gita VII.18 he writes, 'As for the jñāni, I deem him as my own self, i.e., my very life depends on him. He cannot live without Me-his highest goal—I cannot live without him'. Similar are the interpretations of Ramanuja of many other devotional passages of the Gita.

The origin of the ideas of God of love and God of grace has been attributed to the Vaishnavism, but in the Upaniṣads we find a growing tendency to regard the Supreme Being as
'eminently loving' and as the Redeemer who by his grace leads man to salvation. In the Śvetāsvatara (I.6,III.20) the Supreme Being is referred to as 'Kindly One'. In the Katha II.20 it is declared that one becomes free from sorrow, i.e., gains release, 'when through the grace of the Creator he beholds the greatness of the self'. Further the same Upaniṣad declares, 'This self (Atman) is not to be obtained by instruction, nor by the intellect, nor by much learning. He is to be obtained only by the one whom He chooses; to such a one that Self (Atman) reveals His own person. (cf. Mundaka III.2.3). In the earlier Upaniṣads the redeeming knowledge was something philosophical or intellectual, but in the later Upaniṣads it was transformed into something religious. It came to be believed that this knowledge is not so much the product of one's own efforts as it is a gift of God's grace.

This thought is further developed in the Giti. Here the individual is not left alone to work out his own salvation by work, knowledge and devotion, but is assisted by the Deity whose grace he can procure easily. But this grace is not bestowed without any consideration of merit. It befalls only on those who are righteous. In the Giti we come across some passages which appear to declare that the loving Deity is not unwilling to extend His grace to the most undeserving, but all such passages are immediately followed by another passages which remove this ambiguity. God is loving but He is also righteous, and does not wish that His all-forgiving love should lead to unrighteousness.

On the basis of the above authorities Rāmānuja also advocates the doctrine of grace. His favourite texts in this connection is Katha II.23. He writes that God protects all irrespective of their differences. He is the refuge of all beings, high and low, irrespective of their differences of caste (jāti)
contour (ākāra) creed (jñāna) and character (svabhāva). Though the Deity showers His grace without any discrimination of such sort, this grace is never unmerited. The redeeming knowledge is granted only to him who has rid himself of all evils. Further if the grace operates unconditionally, that would nullify the freedom of will of the individual and also the doctrine of Karma. Rāmānuja is very much particular in preserving the individual freedom and initiative, and therefore he can never accept any such idea which may involve cessation of individual freedom and initiative.

In the operation of grace God simply carries to fruition the meditation the devotee adopts for reaching Him. He wards off the obstacle which may hamper him in his progress in meditation. Lastly He generates in him the intense love and affection for Him. This much alone is the role of the Deity and the rest all is to be done by the individual only. This is the view of the Rāmānuja in the Śrī Bhāṣya as well as in the Gītā Bhāṣya. Prof. Kumarappa has misunderstood the position of Rāmānuja in the Gītā Bhāṣya. Under a presupposition that Rāmānuja has advocated the doctrine of prapatti, Prof. Kumarappa feels that in the Gītā Bhāṣya Rāmānuja has maintained that salvation is entirely a work of God and the soul has no part to play except that of absolute self-surrender to God. But we have already cleared this misunderstanding.

Thus, according to Rāmānuja, release is always a gift of God's grace and involves the Deity taking the necessary steps to this end, but it is not possible except to one who has undergone a thorough preparation involving a rigorous training of body, intellect and will. There can be no possibility of the Deity either over-riding the individuality of the soul or permitting a violation of His laws. That is why Rāmānuja maintains that
release is not possible for a śūdra. But this does not imply any partiality on the part of the Deity, because He is to abide by the law of Karma. All His favours or disfavours are always in accordance with His law that the souls shall be dealt with in the light of what they deserve.

According to Rāmānuja there is no opposition between the law of grace and the law of Karma. Both are the Divine modes of action. The law of karma is merely instrumental for the law of grace. It determines the operation of the law of grace. This is the interpretation Rāmānuja puts on Kauśitāki Upaniṣad, III.8. This way of relating the two laws preserve the individual freedom and initiative of the finite, as well as the perfect and ethical nature of the finite.

In this way this tradić process of karma, jhāna and bhakti provides the aspirant for release the needed discipline of knowledge, feeling and will. Thus equipped, the individual self is granted the redeeming knowledge by the Deity out of His grace. This redeeming knowledge is different from the path of knowledge. The path of knowledge is a sort of self-realisation, a knowledge of one's own true self, whereas the redeeming knowledge is the knowledge of one's true relation with the Deity and the world. It is the latter which removes the avidyā and the consequent bondage.

The Nārāyaniya account of the means of emancipation

As regards the means of emancipation the position of the Pāñcarātra school is not very clear. According to the Nārāyaṇiya the individual self can attain emancipation by knowledge, and yogic practices, but above all there must be exclusive spirit of loving devotion which is the way beloved to the Deity. It declares the superiority of the religion of devotion. Without
doubt the religion of devotion seems to be superior and is very
ocular to Narayana. The end that is attained by Brhamanas who
attending to due observances, study the Vedas with the Upanishads...

...and by those that adopt the religion of ascetics, is inferior
to that attained by persons devoted to Hari with their whole souls.

Connected with devotion on the part of the devotee,
there is redemption grace on the part of the Deity. That person
upon whom Narayana looks with compassion succeeds in becoming
awakened.

But the grace of God, though entirely dependent
on God, is not unconditional. It does not fall upon any undeserving one. It is conditioned by the renouncing of the evil qualities and pursuing the good qualities by the individual soul.

The Samhita account of the means of emancipation

The Narayaniya account does not seem to be very much
different from the position of the Gita. But when we turn to the
Samhitas, we find that in different Samhitas, or also in the same
Samhita, different ways of achieving emancipation are described.

It seems that no one taken in itself is regarded as sufficient,
but all are required to be synthetically implemented for this
task.

The Samhitas describe two major ways to attain liberation,
to wit, yoga and meditation. The path of yoga is compatible with the Vedic worship, but the path of devotion, named as Sattvata vidhi is not so. Of the two methods the latter alone is
regarded as superior and preferable. Though a distinction is made in the highest Reality, the Samhitas maintain between the two methods of attaining that a devotee must also be
initiated in the yoga vidhi. It seems that the yoga method is regarded as a preliminary to the path of devotion. Dr. Schrader
has rightly remarked that the yoga method has entered into the
Pancharatra through the impact of the Advaita school. This is evinced from the fact that the yoga is defined as joining the individual self with the Supreme.

The Path of Yoga

Some Samhitas like Ahirbudhnya, Jayakhya, Viṣṇu, Viha-gendra etc. discuss in details the Saṣāṅga and the Aṣṭāṅga yoga and their application to the path of devotion. The Parama Samhitā which seems to be very much influenced by the Gita, gives a different account of the yoga. It describes two types of yoga-karma yoga and jñānayoga. Yoga is defined as a peaceful union of the mind with any particular object. When the mind is firmly fixed on the performance of any action it is called karmayoga. It functions as a destroyer of sins. When the mind is firmly fixed on acquiring knowledge without being anxious of the result, it is called jñānayoga. The karmayoga means the moral discipline of yama and niyama, involving vrata, upavāsa and a virtuous course of action without any selfish end. The jñānayoga means vairāgya and samādhi. By vairāgya is meant the wisdom by which the mind stays unflinchingly in the Supreme.

The Jayakhya Samhitā describes knowledge as two-fold, viz., sattākhya (static) and kriyākhya (dynamic) which correspond to jñānayoga and karmayoga respectively. The sattākhya is regarded as the final fulfilment of the Kriyākhya. The sattākhya alone brings about release. The same is reiterated in the Parama Samhitā.

The Samhitās abound with innumerable passages which declare knowledge as the only means of emancipation. This knowledge is also named as 'Vedānta jñāna', is the same as the identity-consciousness or the unqualified knowledge which is
upheld in the Advaita. In a language directly borrowed from the Advaita the Brahma Samhitā declares that the cessation of the worldly existence is possible only by the consciousness of the fact that there is no duality and that Brahman is the only reality. It quotes in support the famous scriptural passage, very often taken resort to by the Advaita, viz., Brahma-advaita brahma.

The Path of devotion-Prapatti

Along with the path of yoga the Pāñcarātra school recognises another and easier method of achieving emancipation, which is named as prapatti. The basic idea underlying this method is that all that is necessary for salvation is to flee to the Deity for refuge. It emphasises an absolute and unconditional surrender to the Deity and leaving the work of salvation to Him be done by Him. It also implies that the Deity grants salvation to the individual self irrespective of the moral considerations.

The Ahrībuddhnyā Samhitā defines it as a 'praying thought.' The contents of the thought are, 'I am a receptacle of sins, naught, helpless; do Thou become my refuge.'

The preliminary to the prapatti is described as 'nama-nama' (adoration). It means a spontaneous acceptance of the Deity as the master. Its core is the feeling of dependence. A true adoration or obeisance proceeds naturally without any motive of any kind. The Ahrībuddhnyā Samhitā gives an occult explanation of the word 'namas' as follows, 'Na(na) selfish regard(māmya) for one's self and one's own(svāsmin svīye ca).' The process of prapatti consists of six essentials which are as follows:

The first is a firm resolve of the devotee to dedicate himself to God in the spirit of love and subservience.
The second is abstinence from all kinds of disservice to God. The commands of God should on no account be disobeyed.

The third is an unflinching faith in the providence and goodness of God. The idea that God is all-merciful and all-powerful and hence would certainly protect us produces the quality of faith in God's protective power.

The fourth is the spiritual yearning of the soul to take refuge in the Divine.

The fifth is complete self-surrender to God and resignation of the sense of 'I'.

The sixth and the last is feeling of lowliness.

Prapatti, thus, is a prayer for God's help in association with the conviction of one's being full of sin and guilt, and a sense of being totally doomed without the protecting grace of God. Prapatti depends not on one's desert but on one's mere desire. The only requisite of it is a change of heart, a feeling of contrition, and absolute confidence in the saving grace of God. It is not merely a self-sacrifice of the individual for the Supreme but also the melting of the Divine heart in response to the self-effacement of the prapanna. The individual is required to make no efforts other than to keep himself in the prayerful spirit; all the rest is done by God. Prapatti, thus, is upâya jñâna and not upâya. It is like a boat on which the passenger merely sits, while it is the business of the boatsman to do the rest.

The Pâñcarâtra doctrine of prapatti has been accepted and practised by the Śrīvaṁśavāya followers of Râmânuja. They find its basis in the Upaniṣads (cf. Śve.VI.18, katha I.22, etc.), Râmâyana (Yuddha kânda XVIII.3.31) etc. They regard the Gita as the manual of the religion of prapatti. On the basis of the nature of prapatti they are divided into two camps, viz., the Vaḍagalai
or the Northern school and the Tengalai or the Southern school. The former emphasises human initiative and effort as an essential requisite condition of getting the grace of God. The grace of God is one among the several means, and should be resorted to only by those who find it difficult to follow other ways of salvation. The latter school, on the other hand, regards prapatti not as a yoga or human endeavour, but a work completely to be done by God only. It further holds that prapatti is the only way of salvation and it is assisted by no other means. The characteristic difference between the two schools is indicated by their nicknames. The Northern is called the 'monkey school' (Markaṭa Nyāya) because it teaches that the soul must cooperate with the Deity in salvation, as the young monkey clings to its mother who carries it to safety; while the Southern school is called the 'cat school' (Mārjāra Nyāya) because it teaches that the soul need do nothing for salvation beyond passively submitting to the Deity, as the kitten remains passive while its mother carries it about in its mouth. Both the schools try to read their respective views in the works of Rāmānuja, but, as we have seen, there is no basis for their doing so.

Grace of God as the final means of emancipation

The theistic importance of the Pāñcarātra school lies in its idea of the grace of God. For the sake of His sincere devotees God is said to assume graciously five-fold forms so as to be easily accessible to them. Out of love the Deity actively concerns Himself in seeking to free His worshippers from the samsāra. This work is allotted to the Sudārsana portion of Lakṣmī, the Supreme Being being too transcendental to be engaged in such matters. In addition to the three well-known powers of creation, preservation and destruction, Lakṣmī or for that matter
the Lord has two more powers called Nigraha and Amugraha, by means of which prepares and predetermines the soul for bondage and liberation respectively.\(^7\) The bondage, though, has no beginning, may have an end by the breaking in of the power of the divine grace, which resembles a 'shower of compassion' coming down upon him who has been 'beheld' by God (Viṣṇu samīkṣita', cf. Kath.1.2.23.'yamevaīṣa vṛṇute tena labhyeta'). The grace of God may break in at any time, the result of which is the annihilation of all past karmas. This grace further causes the soul to discern its goal, turns it to scriptures and teachers, makes it to strive after the goal by means of the recognised systems (Sāmkhya, yoga etc.), and finally enables it to enter into Brahman. In this way it is the grace of God which is the final instrument to attain salvation.\(^7\)

**Initiation through teacher as a prerequisite for grace**

Although the Deity thus works for salvation, the individual also has his part to play. The Lord Viṣṇu is the object of human approach, but He can be approached only through the scriptures, and the scriptures can be taught only by a teacher. Then through the grace of God one begins to have discriminative knowledge, there dawns spiritual inquiry within an individual and he approaches the true preceptor. The teacher, therefore, is the first and primary means to the attainment of the Ultimate Reality through the instruction of the scriptures.

Before a teacher instructs a disciple, he is required to undergo initiation (dīkṣā). The initiation ceremony in the Pāncarātra cult has a very important place. There can be no emancipation of an uninitiated. The main idea underlying initiation is the purification of the individual. The Parama Samhitā bids that
no worship should be performed without teacher's permission. One desirous of having initiation should fall prostrate at the teacher's feet saying, 'I am now seeking refuge with you, and place my body and wealth at your disposal'. The process of initiation consists of five acts, to wit, (a) the individual should bear on his shoulder the symbol of the Deity (tāpa), (b) he should put special marks on his forehead (pundra), (c) he should receive a devotional name (nāma), (d) he should learn and recite mantras and (e) he should procure an image of the Deity (yāga).

Worship of idol as another prerequisite

In order that emancipation may be obtained besides the instructions of the scriptures through the preceptor, worship is also necessary. No one can realise the Supreme Spirit without a concrete idea of the same, and hence it is necessary that He should be worshipped in the form of images. The Parama Samhitā emphatically directs the aspirant for release to worship God only through idols. 'He is to be worshipped only in the visible form. Except in such a form worship ought not to be conducted.' The worship or prayer offered to His image is as good as worship etc. offered to Him directly. The only thing to be taken care of is that the worship should be conducted strictly in the manner prescribed in the ordinances of the Pāñcarātra.

The worship should always be conducted through mantras, because the mantras are the part and parcel of God. The letters of the alphabet originate from Him, and their combination makes mantras. And because the mantras come out of Him, it is reasonable that His worship should be performed through the agency of the mantras.
In the Sāttvata Samhitā four kinds of worship are described. These four are enjoined on the devotees of different mental make up, caste, liking, etc. They are as follows: 84

(i) The yogins familiar with the eight-fold yoga, satisfied with the worship of the heart are authorised for the worship of the One dwelling in the heart. This worship connected with the diagram of sounds (varṇacakra), the six attributes of God etc. is described in detail in the Ahirbudhnya Samhitā.

(ii) On the other hand, the Brāhmaṇas fond of mixed worship and extolling the Vedas are authorised for the worship, with Mantras, of the four Vyuhas. They should not worship the Lord in any other way.

(iii) Again, those of the three other castes viz., the Kṣatriyas etc. who have sincerely taken refuge with the Lord, should also, but not with Mantras, perform several rites connected with the worship of the four Vyuhas. The Ahirbudhnya Samhitā (chapt. XXXVI) teaches that the Sudarṣana Yantra, consists of Form and Mantra aspects. The Form aspect consists of figures of the Sudarṣana Puruṣa surrounded by the twelve sub-Vyuhas, etc. The Mantra aspect consists of Mantras only without the figures. Brāhmaṇas alone can meditate on the Mantra aspect. The others are recommended to worship through the Form aspect only.

(iv) But for the worship of the Mantra diagram relating to the thirty nine Vibhavas and for the ceremonies connected with these none are authorised but the truly seeing ones, who have completely cast off the idea of mine, are satisfied with doing their duty and wholly devoted in deed, speech and mind, to the Highest Lord.

This fourth class consists of those Brāhmaṇas, among the Pāñcarātrins, who have abandoned mixed, that is, Vedic
worship, and, prefer the path of devotion to that of yoga.

But it is also insisted that they alone are authorised to do either of these four forms of worship who have embraced the Sattvata religion and who have been duly initiated with the Mantras prescribed.

Sankaracarya in his notice of the Pancharatra school refers to five methods of worshipping the Supreme Lord which are as follows: (i) Abhiṣekamana, (ii) Upācāra, (iii) Ikṣyā, (iv) Svādyāya and (v) Yoga. They are named as Pañca-kāla Kṛtyas in the Śrī Vaishnava ethics. It should be noted that the Pancharatra is not only a school of thought but also a body of people practising a mode of worship in conformity there to. It emphasises the worship of anca or idol, which is one of the five-fold manifestations of the Deity. The major portion of the Pancharatra literature consists of rituals concerning worship, iconography, temple-architecture, installing of images, etc.

From the foregoing it is clear that the means of emancipation in the Pancharatra school are two-fold, viz., yoga and devotion. The yoga method is mainly advaitic and has very much come under the influence of the Yoga school. The path of devotion, specially its prapatti doctrine, is peculiar to the Pancharatra and may be said to be its unique contribution to the philosophy and religion of India. The peculiarity of the Pancharatra school lies in that though its ideal is advaitic, one of the means, viz., prapatti, to realise it, is non-advaitic. The Pancharatra school has accepted the monistic philosophy of the Upaniṣads, appreciated the value of worship and prayer along with the bhakti schools, and like the Yoga system laid great emphasis on the discovery and culture of the most important bodily centres and process connected with the mind.
The Alvars are not the philosophers but the ardent devotees of Visnu, and therefore, their whole outlook towards life and other related problems is marked with the devotional attitude. The Alvars regard the earthly life as full of horrors and, therefore, we find in them an utter hatred for it. The reason for wishing to flee from the earthly life is not merely that it is itself evil, but also that it separates the soul from the Deity, whereas the Alvars long to be with Him or to be merged in Him. The worldly existence comes in the way of their achieving this end, and therefore, they desire to get rid of it. A day in samsara seems to them like a dark painful night of thousand ages along, for it separates them from the Lord, for whom they become pale, and languish.

Union with God—the end of life

The intensity of devotion and love that finds expression in the hymns of the Alvars reflects an earnest appeal of direct longing for union with the Deity. Kulashekhar Alvar, for example, will not rest content with anything short of entering into the Deity. Nanmalaivar realises that it is difficult to enter into Him* and, therefore, he impatiently cries, 'I do not know when I shall be able to join the company of His servants.' He imagines himself a love-sick maiden, weeping day and night, and wasting away for her lover, and expresses the 'yearning of his heart to be united with the Lord.'

The stories connected with some of the Alvars relate that they merged in this fashion into the Deity. Thus it is said of Andal that in the presence of all assembled she, 'ascending the soft seà bed of the Lord, more and more pressed on to His side;
and lo, where was she? she had passed into 'Him. Her distinct person was no more cognizable to mortal ken. Glory merged in glory.

But the state of merger is left here quite ambiguous, and it is difficult to decide whether it is total absorption or mere communion. At times the former tendency becomes clearly suggested that by merger they mean total annihilation of individual's personality. But at many more times the latter tendency is so dominant that it becomes quite distinct that in this process of merging the soul retains personal identity, since this union is not identification or extinction, but only an intimate association. For example, Tirumangai prays that he may never leave the Deity. At the end of the Tiruppallandu it is hoped that all the souls will gather round god and there 'Namonārāyaṇa' will be the unceasing cry.

Grace of God as a means of emancipation

The above mentioned state of communion with the Deity, or emancipation from the Samsāra, can be attained only through the grace of God. As we have seen it is the loving and condescending nature of the Deity and His acts of grace that chiefly appeal to the Alvārs, evoke their devotion and determine their conception of the Deity. Accordingly for reaching the goal of their life, viz., communion with the Deity, neither asceticism nor ceremonial, neither knowledge nor high birth is required. Tirumangai, who belonged to the thief caste and could not claim any of these distinctions— not even the distinction of a virtuous life—is loudest in proclaiming God's mercy which stoops to accept the simple devotion of even the most degraded. Thus, e.g., in Periya Tirumoli V.8 he dwell with great feeling on God's grace.
shown at sundry times to those of low estate. In a similar vein, Tondradippodi declares that even the lowest of the low, if they have devotion, are nearer to the Deity than men of high caste, deep in learning.

The such simple devotion is found, the Deity in His infinite mercy destroys all sin and takes the soul to Himself. First He cuts off the two kinds of sin in me. Then He wipes off the residue. Then leads the mind towards Him by degrees. Then gets the heaven decorated and takes me there.

Whether in redeeming man from sin grace operates in such a way as to make man's efforts in that direction superfluous, is not considered. The Alvars, conscious as they are of their own weakness and unworthiness, are apt to ascribe all the transforming work to the Deity's grace. Thus Tondraedippodi who was lost in a life of sin till the Deity Himself intervened and redeemed him from it, speaks of grace as operating on him in spite of himself. His heart's devotion, he declares, was forced out of him. Nevertheless in living the life of a true devotee great effort was also necessary on the part of the Alvar, as is shown by his earnest prayer for grace against besetting sins.

Hammalvar declares that the Deity takes the initial step in the work of salvation. 'It is not on my request He comes and resides in my mind. He took abode there of His own accord....First He infused His spirit into my flesh, then into my life, and became one with my soul.' Residing in the soul, 'He will not allow the five senses of His refugee to go in their own way. He takes up all souls of all places to the higher and higher state of goodness gradually.' He destroys 'all the cruel sins in the period of a moment,' and drives away the ignorance of the devotee. He produces the love which He requires of the worshipper.
Moral virtues as the pre-requisite of Divine grace.

Although the Deity seeks in all these ways actively to redeem the soul it would appear that His grace is not irresistible for 'He leaves him who goes away desiring other things.' In order to win the grace of God along with single-minded devotion moral qualities are necessary, and without them no man can be a true worshipper of the Deity. 'To kneel off wicked deeds and the blackest sin, and to be engaged in good deed and to rise, is to go to the grove where God resides! 'Go to the Lord, rooting out all ideas of you and yours completely.' Andal, along with good deeds and charity, regards austerities, control of appetite, abandoning of self-love and vain glory etc. as equally necessary. Tondaradippodi holds that so long as one is steeped in sin, he cannot attain communion with the Deity.

Although victory over sin and leading of virtuous life are necessary for emancipation, the sinner and the degraded ones are not rejected by God. Though a man who is steeped in sin is thus accepted by the Deity and is forgiven, once he becomes a devotee he is required to flee from sin, and to practise righteousness. As a matter of fact the very act of worship has a purifying effect, if it is done with all sincerity. The very thought of the Lord suffices to make one renounce evil.

Devotion as a means of securing grace

Ālvārs, as we have said, were in the fullest sense God-intoxicated, God-enamoured and God-absorbed mystics. Their hearts were as if welling with a genuine, unalloyed and devoted love of an extremely intense degree. It is, therefore, quite evident that the chief characteristics of the religion of Ālvārs was a passionate devotion to the Deity. They believed that a
single minded devotion to Visnu in the simplest form possible
was the most efficacious means for the attainment of salvation. 103

The passionate devotion to the Deity in the Alvars
culminates in the spirit of total surrender and a feeling of
clinging to God as one’s all. Their ardent devotion deepens into
prapatti, the key note of which is a state of prayerfulness of
mind to God, associated with deep conviction that He alone is the
saviour and that there is no other way of attaining His grace
except by such self-surrender. The only requisite for gaining the
grace of God is a change of heart, a sense of utter humiliation
and an absolute surrender. It is not a possession of any merit
or wisdom, but a sense of humility and sinfulness. 104

In their all-absorbing devotion the Alvars are so much
dedicated that every drop of their blood, every beat of their
heart and every thought of their mind are surrendered to the Lord,
the soul of their souls. 105 Such ekalaksanatva, i.e., placing
oneself entirely at the disposal of the Lord, is the essence of
the devotion of the Alvars. This highest form of devotion further
demands a sincere dedication to God of everything that the
devotee as an individual separate from the Lord possesses. This
total renunciation of earthly things is found in the case of
Kulashekhara, who renounced his kingdom to be an Alvar. 106

The devotion in the Alvars further expresses itself
in the worship of the Deity. The Alvars are particularly fasci-
nated by the Lord’s manifestation in the arca form. They dwell
with love not only on the Deity as an incarnate in individuals
like Krishna, but also as an incarnate in images. They are deeply
touched with the Lord’s infinite mercy in making Himself easily
accessible to men in their form. They feel the Lord’s immediate
presence in the shrines and are moved to tears in the contempation
of His attributes. They gaze at the image, and with hearts filled with emotion they shed tears of joy.\textsuperscript{107}

Out of intense love they dress and adorn the image, dwell on the infinite perfection of God it represents, on the beautiful shape it possesses, on the radiance of its countenance, on the brilliance of its ornaments, etc. Ändäl and other Älvārs love to go to the shrine even before the temple doors are opened to wake the Deity and to greet Him with flowers. Their single-minded devotion expresses itself in worshipping at the shrine, offering flowers to the Deity, singing His praise, joining with others in uttering His names, gazing at His image, reciting His great and glorious deeds of grace, meditating on His incarnations till finally the soul is filled with ecstatic joy.\textsuperscript{108}

So dearly do they love the temple in which the image is enshrined that Kulaśekhara Älvār declares that rather than be a king in this world or in heaven, he would fain be a crane or a fish in the temple-tank, a tree in the temple-garden, a road upon the temple-hill, a step at the threshold of the temple, or anything whatsoever so long as he is in the vicinity of the shrine.\textsuperscript{109}

Though the Älvārs worship the arcās, they repudiate elaborate ritualism involving various articles of worship. They believe that what the Deity desires from His devotees is their whole hearted devotion, expressing itself in loving worship at the shrine, uttering His names, meditating on His act of grace, and joining with others in singing His praise.

The sum and substance of the entire teachings of the Älvārs is condensed in the opening verse of Prebandham in which the Älvār exhorts his soul to be devoted to the active worship of the Lord who by His grace cleanses and purifies the mind and
the heart of the devotee. The religion of the Ālvārs, therefore, is marked with an undivided devotion and unreserved surrender to the Supreme. It was the sentiment of bhakti, a continuous flow of emotional religiosity ranging from the worship of idols to the most exalted mysticism of love for and surrender to the Supreme, that pervaded and animated the religious life of the Ālvārs.

An appraisal of the Advaitic and Rāmānuja's account of the means of emancipation

All systems of Indian philosophy, except the Cārvāka and the allied schools, maintain that the ultimate end of human life is to transcend the mundane life of travails and traversities. But they differ widely with regard to the nature of the life attained after this transcensure, and also with regard to the means by which this transcensure can be attained. They agree that the means to liberation involves a course of sādhanā, but what are the constituents of this sādhanā, and which constituent is more important or less important, is a matter of great dispute. A traditional process of sādhanā, consisting of karma, jñāna and bhakti, has been usually recognised in most of the schools.

Of this traditional process the Advaitin, as we have seen, recognises jñāna alone as the final means of emancipation. This is the logical conclusion of his advaitic metaphysical position. For the advaitin emancipation is not something to be attained, but it is only to be realised or known. Ignorance is bondage and knowledge is emancipation. Accordingly he prescribes jñāna as the only final requisite for this purpose. According to Rāmānuja, on the other hand, bondage is undoubtedly due to ignorance, but it cannot be negated by mere intellectual enlightenment. It is not something to be realised, but rather to be attained through
a disciplined endeavour. Accordingly, he regards karma, jhāna, bhakti and grace of God as the constituents of the process of leading to emancipation.

In the previous chapter we have tried to suggest that by emancipation we do not mean annihilation of the individual self, dissipation of human personality and absorption in the abyss of Brahman. On the contrary it stands for the perfection of the individual, an establishment of a society of perfect selves. This end, then, is not something to be realised only, but it is to be attained. The establishment of such a society requires a rigorous effort, an all-round development of individuals’ personality.

The human being is a complex of cognitive, conative and affective elements, and therefore, any sādhanā, worth the name, must have in view a balanced development of all the three faculties. The whole man must rise up, awake and fight against the limitations, imperfections and finitude. Karma, jhāna and bhakti are the three different, though integrally united, processes relating to conative, cognitive and affective faculties respectively. These independent three are not to be regarded as three independent forms of sādhanā in the sense that only one of them is sufficient for the attainment of release. These three are intimately connected with one another and the cooperation of all is necessary for the realisation of this idea. Modern psychologists have rightly refuted the compartmental division of the ‘faculty psychologists,’ and we must take lesson from this.

This fact that all the three aspects are intimately interconnected, and that they work in moderation, is very well emphasised in the Gītā. We call them different because they represent three different aspects of mind, but all the three are
always present together, though we may give more or less emphasis to each of them at different stages of spiritual development. A karmayogi, thus, far from being devoid of bhakti and jñāna, must necessarily be a jñāni and bhakta at a certain stage of his development. Similar is the case with bhakta and jñāni. The natural bent of mind or aptitude determines the particular line of sādhana for every particular sādhaka, but it is never to be forgotten that the particular line is merely a main support for the development of the different aspects. The difficulty arises only when this aspect of mutual cooperation is lost sight of, and undue importance or unmerited neglect is accorded to one or the other of them.

Karma, jñāna and bhakti, then, are the three disciplines suiting to different stages in the course of development of the sādhaka. From which of these three the starting is to be made, will depend upon his aptitude and bent of mind, but at one stage or the other he will have to undergo the remaining stages. The easiest method is that one should start with karmayoga, and through jñānayoga should subsequently reach to bhaktiyoga. This appears to be the teaching of the Chāndogya passage 'āharaśuddeḥ sattva śuddhiḥ sattvasuddheḥ dhruvāsmṛtiḥ'. (VII.26.2). First of all there should be purity in all that is gathered through senses. This would result into transperance of the intellect. The latter in turn produces constant and continuous recollection. Let us now see the place of each one of these constituents in the scheme of sādhana.

Karmayoga

There has been a general agreement among all schools of Indian thought that the realisation of the highest end is impo-
ssible unless one is purified in mind and body, and that this purification can be brought about only through karma. But they disagree with regard to the utility of karma in the later stages of the course of sādhanā. Śaṅkara maintains that karma has only secondary significance in so far as it is an accessory to intellectual penetration and discrimination. An advance sādhaka should cease from all sorts of karma, since all karmas proceed from ignorance. Pūrva mīmāṃsā, on the other hand, maintains that jñāna alone can never yield liberation, but must be joined with karma for attaining the same. It, however, rejects niṣīḍhā and kāmya karmas, and prescribes nitya and naimittika karmas. Rāmānuja on the authority of the Gītā goes a step further and declares that all sorts of activities are to be performed. He takes karma in the widest sense.

The most striking teaching of the Gītā is that in no circumstances karma should be renounced. Activity is the law of life. Conation is an essential factor of consciousness. Cessation from karma in thought, words, or deed is a psychological impossibility.

The liberated soul also cannot be free from activity. That the liberated should perform actions is evident from the passage of the Gītā where the Lord Himself is said to perform actions (III.22-3). When the liberated soul acts, he always acts that which is good. In order to do the good, he is not required to make any effort, for good actions come out of him automatically and spontaneously. This circumstance is very well expressed by Kant when he writes, 'No imperatives hold for the Divine Will, or in general for a holy will, 'ought' is here out of place, because the volition is already itself necessarily in unison with the law.'
Thus karma is quite indispensable both for the released as well as for the aspirant for release. Karma alone confers the required allround growth and development. The individual contains within himself immense potentialities which, when fully developed and properly cultured, open up the centre of infinite energy, unbounded expansion and limitless bliss. Since every individual is an element in the whole and has no existence and hence no function apart from the whole, all the functions performed by the parts need to be dedicated to the whole. Then only he can feel in him the centre of infinite energy, the unbounded expansion and the limitless bliss. In this state the individual identifies his whole essence with the universal centre of energy and feels himself as only an instrument through which the universal centre of energy is manifesting itself. No longer does he feel his limited existence as a separate individual possessing a limited source of energy, limited span of consciousness and a limited degree of enjoyment.

This attainment of the feeling of oneness with the Infinite is possible only when the actions are performed without attachment. In the Vedic literature there is a very apt word used for such type of action. The universe, according to the Ṛgveda, is a mahāyajña (great sacrifice) on the part of the Infinite. It is Visṛṣṭi or Visarga, a giving out or sacrificing oneself. By self-sacrifice alone God multiplies Himself and produces the universe. This sacrifice alone is the divine action, the true action. The individual should join hands with the Lord in performing such action. Through this alone the universe is sustained and through this alone the universe can develop. This alone restores the equilibrium and reestablishes the lost harmony. But this alone the world-cause and the purpose of God can be
served. This is the real worship of God.

Thus karmayoga preaches renunciation in action and not renunciation of action. We must not seek freedom from action but only freedom in action. We must not abandon the deed but the selfish motive in performing the deed. The performance of such a deed would be a process of self-realisation through self-sacrifice. This is the burden of the teaching of the Isopanisad and the Gita.

**Jñānsyoga**

The value and importance of jñāna in the scheme of sādhanā is clearly emphasised in the Upaniṣads and the Gītā. At places they declare that by knowledge alone one can attain emancipation. It is very difficult to understand exactly what they mean by the term 'knowledge'. This much is clear that it is not an ordinary rationalistic knowledge, but something intuitive and immediate (aparokṣānubhūti). Both Śankara and Rāmānuja agree that this knowledge in the form of aparokṣānubhūti is a means to release but they differ with regard to the nature of this knowledge. According to Śankara it is a realisation of one's own self by the self (ātmabodha). For him this is both the means and the end, for the individual self is identical with the Absolute. But for Rāmānuja by attaining ātmabodha the process does not come to an end. The knowledge of the true nature of the self must ripen into a sort of intellectual love or intellectual sympathy for the cosmic self.

The karmayoga must develop into jñānayoga because the proper performance of one's actions needs a true knowledge of one's own potentialities and the ways of expressing them. Since every individual is a part, he must know his station in the whole and the duties pertaining to that station. He must know that he has no separate existence of his own apart from the social whole
and his true good and well-being lies in the well-being of the whole. This feeling of sympathy for others is nothing short of devotion to the cosmic and, i.e., the perfection of the whole universe. This feeling is well expressed by Royce by the term 'appreciation'.\textsuperscript{112} It is realising a thing exactly as a part of one's own experience. When the finite self feels itself identified with the Infinite self, it can be said to possess appreciative knowledge.

Śaṅkara cannot speak of such a world of mutual appreciation for there is no such a thing as a society of perfect selves in his philosophy. The release for him is nothing but a flight of the alone to the alone. He tells of a state of experience where there is not a society of selves; but the Only Self, one without a second, pervading the whole of cosmos and resting in its own glory. In this experience the manifold world of selves disappears, and there remains only solid singleness without a glow of godliness. In the philosophy of Rāmānuja, there is much scope for this mutual appreciation among souls, which alone is a pre-requisite of perfection, peace, and plentitude. This is how Rāmānuja should have understood the concept of bhakti. He is wrong in maintaining that the conative part of devotion lies in bhajana, kirtana etc. only. At some places Rāmānuja has become anthropomorphic in his account and we must repudiate such elements in his philosophy.

Besides these three constituents of the scheme of sādhana, unlike Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja emphasises the role of divine grace which is a crowning achievement of this endeavour. This alone can ultimately deliver one from bondage which consists of imperfection and misery. Because of his theological leaning
Rāmānuja has taken grace as something coming from above but it should be understood in the sense of an awakening of an ideal tendency in the heart. That is, the mutual appreciation among the souls must become instinctive and a part and parcel of the life. Here again Rāmānuja has given vent to his anthropomorphic accretions and mythological fancy.

Rāmānuja and the Pāñcarātra school-A Study in contrast

Our comparative studies in the philosophy of Rāmānuja and the Pāñcarātra in the previous chapters have shown that the doctrines of Rāmānuja differ widely from the Pāñcarātra and that the latter approach very near to Advaitism. Our comparative studies on the topic of the means of emancipation would further confirm this finding.

The fundamental difference between Rāmānuja and the Pāñcarātra is that the synthetic approach of Rāmānuja, under which he coordinates karma, jñāna, bhakti and grace of God as integral constituents of the same course of sādhanā, is conspicuously absent in the Pāñcarātra. Though these concepts do occur in the Pāñcarātra sādhanā, the meaning put to them is quite different. Unlike Rāmānuja, the Pāñcarātra school advocates two different lines of sādhanā, the relation between which has been left undescribed. It seems that the two are regarded as independent and separate means. The one form of sādhanā consists of jñāna and karma, with a basis of yoga. This form is mainly advaitic in nature. Rāmānuja also recognises karma and jñāna as the stages in the scheme of sādhanā, but they are not given independent value. They are merely preliminaries to bhakti. In the Pāñcarātra, like the Advaita, karma is helpful to the attainment of jñāna, and it is jñāna alone which is the direct means to release.
Further by karma Rāmānuja means nīskāma karma as taught in the 
Gītā, whereas in the Pāñcarātra karma is understood as performance 
of action with complete concentration. Similarly jñāna, in 
Rāmānuja stands for the true knowledge of individual self as 
different from the body etc. In the Pāñcarātra knowledge is 
understood, like the Advaita, as identity-consciousness, i.e., 
the consciousness of oneself being identical with the Absolute. 
The means of developing such a knowledge are vairāgya and samādhi, 
which are again the means recognised in the Advaita school. 

Through the Advaita school, the whole process of Pāñcarātra 
sādhanā has very much come under the influence of yoga 
system. Here the yoga process has occupied such an important 
place that an aspirant for release is required to be a yogī. The 
Pāñcarātra not merely borrowed the yoga sādhanā but also has made 
substantial improvement upon it.

The other line of sādhanā recognised in the Pāñcarātra 
school is that of bhakti, or more properly, prapatti. In Rāmānuja 
jñānayoga must ripen into bhakti yoga and bhakti alone evokes 
the grace of God which results into release. But in the Pāñcarātra 
jñāna, not only does not develop into bhakti, but also does not 
stand in need of the grace of God for the attainment of release.

Further, the whole theory and practice of bhakti in 
Rāmānuja is essentially different from that of the Pāñcarātra, 
so much so that psychologically speaking they may be said to 
be just the opposite. In the Pāñcarātra bhakti moves in an inde-
finite haze of mythology (in the Nārāyaniya) and occultism (in 
the Samhitās) with a strange combination of sentimentalism. In 
Rāmānuja, on the contrary, it is set forth not only with a 
systematic philosophic background, but also with an intellectual 
seriousness and ethical nobility. In the Pāñcarātra bhakti as
a matter of fact, is nothing else than praapatti, a spirit of absolute and unflinching surrender to God, leaving aside all other scriptural duties, technically called avidhigocaratva. But in Râmânuja the concept of praapatti, as we have seen, is not only altogether absent, but it is also in flagrant contradiction to his declared teachings. The bhakti of Râmânuja is contemplation of God, but the praapatti of the Pâñcarâtra is an utter self-surrender to God. The goal of bhakti is realisation of God but the goal of praapatti is servitude to God. It is true that the Pâñcarâtra bhakti does not have that much of exuberance of feeling, erotic element and unintellectual emotionalism as we find in the Âryârs, yet it is not completely free from these elements. In Râmânuja, on the contrary, bhakti is essentially qualified by karma and jhâna, is very much restraint, and consists of calm meditation and serene contemplation. In Râmânuja it stands for intuitive realisation or immediate presentation but such a sublime concept is far from the ritualistic bhakti of the Pâñcarâtra. In the Pâñcarâtra school bhakti has come to assume a mechanically ritualistic outer form, mere heartless repetition of mantras, but in Râmânuja it is essentially an inner spiritual attitude enriched by virtues and disciplined by rigorous effort. The bhakti in Râmânuja is a result of sādhanâ saptaeka where as in the Pâñcarâtra it is mere spontaneous and unrestrained exhibition of the feeling of surrender. Lastly, the bhakti of Râmânuja takes full regard of the factors of freedom and initiative of the individual and moral responsibility of God, but both these factors are sadly neglected in the Pâñcarâtra concept of praapatti.

Râmânuja and the Pâñcarâtra school recognise the grace of God. In Râmânuja the grace of God is the culminating result of the triadic process of karma, jhâna and bhakti, which
Involves a training of body, intellect and will. In the Pāñcarātra out of the two processes recognised for release, it is only the bhakti mārga which stands in need of the grace of God, and not the jñāna mārga. In the bhakti mārga, too, the grace of God, unlike Rāmānuja, is quite unmerited, and is showered irrespective of the conduct and character of the subject. Not only they differ in stimulus for but also with regard to the function of grace. In the Pāñcarātra the individual has to play no role except that of self-surrender. The Deity requires no efforts on the part of the individual. But in Rāmānuja the grace of God merely removes the obstacles in the path of devotion caused by past sins, and generates a tendency towards devotion. Rest everything is to be done by the individual only. In Rāmānuja the grace of God operates in accordance with the law of karma, but in the Pāñcarātra even the karmas can be annulled by the grace.

Another point of difference between Rāmānuja and the Pāñcarātra school is that unlike the former the latter is very much wedded to the worship of idol (ācarā). Almost half of the Pāñcarātra literature consists of the elaborate process of worship, recitation of mantras and other related things. The worship of idol may be regarded to be one of the most important characteristic of the Pāñcarātra school. It is regarded as almost indispensable for a devotee. In order that one may be entitled to perform worship, he is required to undergo initiation through the teacher. All these process of worship and initiation have very much come under the influence of tāntrism. The worship of idol, ceremony of initiation in the sect and consequent importance to the teacher, and the predominance of tāntric element are altogether absent in Rāmānuja. As a matter of fact Rāmānuja does not
belong to any particular sect, though his philosophy has very much influenced the Śrī Vaishnava sect.

Rāmānuja and Ālvārs-A Study in Contrast

It has been very often maintained that in his concepts of bhakti and grace of God, Rāmānuja chiefly draws upon the rich religious experiences of the Ālvārs. The fact that Rāmānuja nowhere mentions or alludes to the Ālvārs, and that some people regard Ālvārs as the successors of Rāmānuja, oblige us to examine the truth of the contention that Rāmānuja derived his concept of bhakti from the Ālvārs. A comparative study of the concept of bhakti and the concept of grace of God will show that there is no truth in the above contention.

As a matter of fact, the meditative and ethical bhakti of Rāmānuja can not be compared with, or traced to, the highly emotional bhakti of the Ālvārs who would reject jñāna and even karma, and would regard the ecstatic passion of the erotic nature as the only essential. For the Ālvārs the bhakti is the alpha and omega of spiritual life, whereas for Rāmānuja it is only one of the constituents of the scheme of means to release. In Rāmānuja bhakti is a feeling accompanied by intellectual sympathy, devoid of exciting emotional attitude. It is an expression of divine life in knowledge and immensity with sublime touches on feeling. It is an intellectual communion with silent devotion, free from the heights of violent emotional outbursts. The reverse is the case with the Ālvārs. Psychologically speaking a contradiction is manifest between these two attitudes. One is characterised by the intellectual serenity and meditative calmness, whereas the other has the peculiar vibrative expression of love-consciousness, with a maddening attraction in the sweetness and beauty of the
LorclIn Ramanujai the heightening in intellectual love and enjoyment has the effect of quietening down the love impulses whose flashes are so manifest in the Álvârs. This sort of delirious, rapturous and ravishing love and the consequent maddening intoxication associated with ecstasy in the Álvârs are, I believe, due to the impact of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Rāmānuja is absolutely uninfluenced by the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, perhaps because the latter was either not written down in his times or because by then it did not receive canonical recognition.

The Álvârs dwell with great feelings on the grace of God, which to them is His most endearing quality. The legendary acts of helpfulness shown by God at sundry times, especially to those of low caste, appeal to the Álvârs the most. Rāmānuja also accepts the concept of the grace of God, but for him the grace of God is only a means to release and not the end of spiritual life.

This acceptance of the idea of grace of God by Rāmānuja and the Álvârs has led some scholars to presume that Rāmānuja has borrowed this idea from the Álvârs. But I believe that this position can hardly be substantiated. It is true that the Vaisnava religion has always spoken of the gracious Deity, helping man in various ways and especially in his efforts for release. In the history of Hinduism Viṣṇu, as the God of grace, has come down right from the Vedic period. The fact that Álvârs speak touchingly of the divine grace which stoops to rescue even the meanest and the most unworthy does not provide us with any valid reason to think that this was an innovation of the Álvârs. This idea has been deeply rooted in Hinduism from antiquity and is not a monopoly of any one particular sect or denomination. If Rāmānuja also advocates this doctrine because
it is accepted notion of the Upaniṣads and the Gītā, why should he be attributed with any sectarian motive? There is no ground whatsoever for saying that Rāmānuja did so only because this doctrine is given very important place in the Vaiṣṇava sect. If any Upaniṣadic doctrine is advocated by Rāmānuja and if the same doctrine is found in the Vaiṣṇava sect as well, there is no point of justification in saying that Rāmānuja accepted it not because it is taught in the Upaniṣads, but because it is accepted in the Vaiṣṇavism. This has been the argument of Prof. Kumarappa throughout his work.

Another point of difference between Rāmānuja and the Ālvārs is that unlike Rāmānuja the Ālvārs are very much given to the worship of idols. It is true that the idea of a personal God satisfies the deepest yearning of all religious people all over the world. And, therefore, no religion can escape from symbolism, and icons. The finitude and the emotional nature of man require some definite object of worship and adoration, help and protection. The idol worship also has the advantage of creating the belief that the real presence of the so-called transcendental Lord is possible. It also shows symbolically some of the attributes of the Lord. It produces godliness, inspires piety and love and enables one to concentrate on God. So far it remains as a means to these, it goes well. But the moment the idols themselves are regarded as God, or as actual incarnations of God (āravatāṁ) and not mere symbols, it results in low idolatry. Then people come to believe not one God, but many gods, quite independent of one another, residing in separate places, having particular days, articles, and modes of worship etc. This is nothing but a fall of religion. In the Ālvārs we do appreciate the sincerity of feeling but we do not find favour with this sort of narrow
Idolatry. Ramanuja is free from this idolatry, though he has fallen in the trap of anthropomorphism which we had an occasion to disapprove.
References and foot-notes.

1. Introduction to the III chapter of the Gitā Bhāṣya.

2. तत्पर्तिः कर्म भोजितं मित्रोऽस्मस साधवन्तवं न-पञ्चरत्रेऽत्वं. श्रीवल्लभदास. पू.345.

3. III.4.1

4. Śrī Bhāṣya. IV.1.1

5. Ibid the introductory verse; cf. Introduction to the Gitā Bhāṣya

6. Ibid III.4.2


8. Gitā Bhāṣya XVIII.56

9. Śrī Bhāṣya IV.4.22.

10. Introduction to the V chapter of the Gitā Bhāṣya.

11. Cf. Isopanisad XII.

12. Chād. VII.26.2; VIII.4.3; VIII.5; VIII.15.1; Tait. I.9; I.11; etc.

13. Cf. II.2.55-71; 3.7-9; IV.17-24; 6.26-32 etc.


15. Ibid II.41

16. Ibid III.9

17. Ibid XVIII.54-56; Śrī Bhāṣya III.4.26

18. Śrī Bhāṣya III.4.32

19. Ibid III.4.36

20. Ibid III.4.39

21. Ibid III.4.42-43

22. It should be noted that among these scriptures enumerated by Rāmānuja there is no mention of the Pāñcarātra works.

23. Gitā Bhāṣya II.38

24. Śrī Bhāṣya III.8.52

25. Gitā Bhāṣya II.52

26. Comparative Studies in Cristianity and Vaisnavavism, p.8

27. History of Indian philosophy volume II. p.409

28. Śrī Bhāṣya III.2.24
29. Gita Bhāṣya VIII.7
30. Ibid IX.27
31. Ibid IX.34
32. Śrī Bhāṣya I.1.1.
33. Vedārtha Samgraha, 144.
34. Gita Bhāṣya VII.1.
35. Śrī Bhāṣya I.1.1.
36. Ibid I.1.1
37. Gita Bhāṣya IX-14
38. Śrī Bhāṣya III.4.35
39. Śrī Bhāṣya I.1.1.
40. Vedārtha Samgraha Ex.149; all these elements are met with, not conjointly in the Vedic scriptures. See K.D.Bharadwaja, 'The philosophy of Rāmānuja' p.178
42. Śrī Bhāṣya I.3.32
43. Ibid II.3.41
44. loc. cit. 226-297
45. Section 45.
46. See Buitenen's translation of the Vedārtha Samgraha p.116
47. VII.14 'भगवद्वपललोपादिनि अग्नवस्पदितम्!'
48. loc. cit. 305-5
49. 'शारीरस्ये ऊप्रि भाष्यं या गौरविता शरशम्राति! अय गुद्देजे कथा ता तिथि आण्वो मय्युः!' quoted from K.D.Bharadwaja, loc. cit. p.205
51. Gita Bhāṣya IX.29
52. Ibid VIII.14
53. Śrī Bhāṣya I.3.32.
54. Ibid III.3.47
60. Two different ways are described in the Āhirbudhnya Samhitā for the attainment of the Ultimate Reality, viz., through mantras and through yoga, and more emphasis is placed on the former. Yoga is here used in the sense of Astāṅga Yoga.

XXX.4.5

The Jayātika Samhitā, which speaks of the devotee as a yogi, also describes two ways of arriving at the ultimate goal, one through absorptive trance and the other through the practice of the concentration on the mantras. Here again it is the latter which is regarded as more efficacious.

61. S.N. DasGupta remarks that 'the so-called bhakti school of the Bhāgavata's was so much under the influence of yoga system that a bhakta was required to be a yogin, since bhakti by itself was not regarded as a sufficient means to the attainment of salvation. loc. cit. P.32.


63. Āhirbudhnya XXXI.15. साधुको योगाः उत्सेधसंविनयाियेतरसायाि धर्मात्

64. see the different kinds and processes of yoga in DasGupta. loc. cit. p.30 ff.

65. X.6

66. X.7

67. X.8

68. Āhirbudhnya XIV.4

69. एवं क्रियारूपां सन्तारणवें शास्त्रः प्राणायनां मानवः / अन्यायं प्राणायां प्राणायां।

70. अहं नामादयायो भुजायुगो नामादयायो नायुगोः मुद्रायुगोः हस्यायुगोः।

71. त्र्यम्बकं विष्णुस्स्वरः प्रहारस्वरः प्रहारस्वरः | अहं विष्णुस्स्वरः प्रहारस्वरः प्रहारस्वरः | अन्यायं प्राणायां प्राणायां प्राणायां।
72. 
73. XXXVII.30-31; cf. Lekšmi Tantra XVI.43-44; XVII.58-61, etc.
74. Ahibudhnya LII.9; cf. LII.2-15.
75. LII.28; cf. 'Nāśmitya na me nāham' Sāmkhya Kārikā,94
76. Ahibudhnya XXXVII.27 ff; Lekšmi Tantra XVII.66 ff.
77. See DasGupta loc. cit. pp.36-93; 374 ff.
78. Ahibudhnya I.2; XI.12; A1.58
79. Ibid XIV.34-35.
80. Parama Samhitā VIII.66-72
81. Jayākhyā Samhitā V.29-31
82. Parama Samhitā III.5 ff.
83. Jayākhyā Samhitā VI.59-60
84. II.2-12; see Schrader, loc. cit. p.150 ff.
85. Jayākhyā Samhitā XXII.65-75; Paḍma Samhitā, Cāyā Pēda, XIII.3; see Satyavrata Sinha loc. cit. pp.402 ff.
86. Periya Tirumoli XI.3.2-3
87. Tirudiruttam. 70.
88. Perumal Tirumoli C.5.3
89. Tīrvaymoli C.1.7.10; II.3.10; II.4
91. Periyatirumoli V.8.6.
92. Ibid. I.1.3
93. Tirumalal,39
94. Tīrvaymoli C.1.5.10; Tiruppavai. 5
95. Tirumalal.66; 26.
96. Ibid 29, 30, 32, 33, 35 etc.
97. Tīrvaymoli C. I.7.7; I.7.2; I.7.4; II.3.3
98. Ibid. C.1.7.10; II.10.4; I.2.3.
99. Tiruppavai II.
100. Tirumalal 16-17
101. Tirumalai II.17. 4.
102. Ibid. 40.
103. Tiruvandadi II.38
104. Tirumoli C.5.5
105. Tiruväymöli C.II.3.4.
106. Tirumoli C.III.1
107. Tirumal V.18
108. Tirupalli yeluchi 10; Tiruppallamdu IV.5, Tiruväymöli C.II.6.3, 4.6; X.1; X.2
109. Tirumoli C.IV.
110. Tiruvandadi II.39
111. Metaphysics of morals, Watsons' selection P.31
112. The Spirit of modern philosophy p.286