Chapter Two

BASIC TENETS OF VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA PHILOSOPHY

The system of Philosophy which was placed on a firm footing by Śrī Rāmānuja (1017-1137 A.D.) is now popularly known as "Viśiṣṭādvaita". Rāmānuja himself did not use this expression. Explaining the meaning of co-ordinate predication (sāmānāḍhikaraṇyam) he calls it "viśiṣṭa-dravyaikyam". This may roughly be translated as "the oneness of the substance which is qualified". It was Sudarśana Sūri, the author of the commentary "Śrutaprabhāśīka" on the Śrībhāṣya, who used the term "Viśiṣṭādvaita" for the first time. Vedānta Deśika (1268-1369 A.D.) explained this term in a comprehensive manner in hisNyāyasiddhāṅjana. It is the relation between God and the world that forms the principal force in this system by whatever name it is referred to either as "viśiṣṭādvaita" or as "viśiṣṭa-dravyaikya". The "viśeṣa" that is implied here is the "śarīra-śarīri -sambandha"

51 Cf. Śrībhāṣya: 1.1.1; "viśiṣṭadravyaikyam eva hi sāmānāḍhikaraṇyasya arthaḥ"
52 Cf. Dr V. Varadechārī, "Antiquity of the term Viśiṣṭādvaita", Viśiṣṭādvaita: Philosophy and Religion, Ramanuja Research Society, Madras, 1974 (p.iii)
53 Cf. Introductory portion: "aśeṣa-cidacit-prakāraṇam brahma ekameva tattvam. Tatra prakāraṇa-prakāriṇoḥ prakārāṇāṁ ca mithaḥ atyantabhede'pi viśiṣṭadravyaikyevivakṣayā ekatvavypadeśaḥ"
(body-soul relation) that subsists between the universe and the Lord who sustains it by His will (sāṅkalpa). This concept forms the Pradhāna-pratitantra-siddhānta (the most exclusive, distinctive doctrine) of this School. Rāmānuja defines "body" as that "which is, without any exception, controlled, supported and used by a conscious being for its own pleasure":

"yasya cetanasya yad dravyam sarvātmā svārthe niyantum. dhārayitum ca śākyam, tat ca tarcheṣataika-svarūpaṁ ca, tat tasya śarīram" 54

Like the physical body which forms the inseparable attribute of the soul (apṛthaksiddha-visēṣaṇa), the universe also constitutes an inseparable attribute of the all-soul, Lord Viṣṇu.

Apṛthak-siddhi:

This term is explained as 'inseparable existence'. An attribute (visēṣaṇa) normally cannot be separated from the substantive it qualifies, as the colour whiteness from a piece of cloth or the colour red from a rose. The word "siddhi" has two different connotations.

Cf. Śrībhāṣya under II.1.9: "na tu dṛṣṭāntabhāvāt"
It means "sthiti" or existence and "pratiti" or cognition. The attribute depends upon the object for its very existence. Since it is inherent in the object, it forms an integral unit of it. An attribute is defined by Logicians as "dravyāśrito guṇah" (that which is dependent upon a substance). A substance, though inseparably connected with a quality, does not really depend upon that quality. But it still requires the attribute for making its svarūpa or essential nature known. So a svarūpa devoid of quality becomes a non-entity.

It is also important to understand that this quality of "aprthaksiddhi" is not a separate relation like Samavāya or Inherence accepted by the Naiyāyikas. Samavāya, according to Nyāya, is an eternal relation which belongs to inseparables (ayuta-siddha). An inseparable pair consists of two things of which one thing, so long as it does not come to an end, exists only in the other thing as (1) a component part and the composite whole (avayava-avayavin), (2) quality and substance (guna-guṇin), (3) motion and moving body (kriyā-kriyāvat), (4) generality and the individual having it (jāti-vyakti) and (5) speciality and the substance having it (višeṣa-nityadravya).
The Aprthaksiddhi relation accepted by Rāmānuja has a special feature about it. It can explain both unity as well as difference between two entities related through "aprthaksiddhi". Thus for example, we can understand both the difference and unity between a substance and the quality, soul and body at the worldly level and between God and the universe at the higher, spiritual level. The last feature viz., the relation between God and the world cannot be known through our normal, ocular perception (pratyakṣa). That is why Lord Kṛṣṇa gave Arjuna "the divine eye" with which he could behold His cosmic form⁵⁵. So the relation between God the universe is a matter to be established by scripture only.

A substance characterized by an attribute, is one. But as substance and attribute there are two things. The aprthaksiddha-objects are cognised as one only, e.g., "I am a man". It is an instance of what is called "sāmānādhikaraṇyā" (co-ordinate predication) by Grammarians. Patañjali in his Mahābhāṣya defines "Sāmānādhikaraṇyā" thus: "bhinnapraṇavṛttinimittayoḥ śabdayoḥ ekasmin arthe vṛttiḥ sāmānādhikaraṇyam" (Grammatical co-

⁵⁵ Cf. Gitā XI. 8 : na tu māṁ śakṣyase draṣṭum anenaiva svacaksuṣā | divyāḥ dadāmi te caksuḥ paśya me yogamaiśvaram ||
ordination consists in two different words having different reasons for their usage, denoting one and the same object.). Thus in an expression like "nīlam, sundaram upalam" (a blue, beautiful lotus), the words "nīlam" and "sundaram" have two different grounds for their employment. But yet both of them point to one and the same entity, viz., the lotus which they qualify. Such statements do not show the absolute oneness of an entity devoid of any differentiation. They only stress the unity in the sense of a substance qualified by those attributes.

Grammatical coordination is found in Upaniṣadic texts like "tattvamasi" (That thou art) and "aham brahmāsmi" (I am Brahman). These sentences do not point out the absolute oneness between the individual soul and the Supreme Being devoid of any differentiation, says Rāmānuja. They only highlight the oneness of Brahman qualified by the individual self. This is an instance of "aprthaksiddhi" (inseparable existence) between the two terms used in Grammatical coordination.

It is the principle of aprthaksiddhi that has formed the foundation for Rāmānuja's concept of "śarīra-śarīri" relation between the
universe and the Lord. The following passages from the Brihadāranyaka Upaniṣad (III.7) gave Rāmānuja enormous scope for formulating this body-soul relation. According to the Upaniṣad, Sage Uddālaka asked Yājñavalkya: "Do you know that Inner Controller (antaryāmin) who controls from within not only this universe, but also the next and everything else?"

Yājñavalkya's answer to this question is epoch-making and ground-breaking:

* He who dwells in the Earth (prthivī), yet is within the Earth, Whom the Earth does not know, whose body (śarīra) the Earth is and who controls the Earth from within. He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller (antaryāmin), the Immortal One (amṛta):

"yāḥ prthivyāṁ tiṣṭhan, prthivyāḥ antaro, yam prthivi na veda, yasya prthivi śarīram, yāḥ prthivim antaro yamayati, eṣa te ātmā antaryāmyamṛtaḥ"

* He who dwells in Water (ap), yet is within Water, whom Water does not know, whose body Water is and who controls Water
from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller (antaryāmin), the Immortal (amṛtaḥ).

* He who dwells in the Fire (agnī), yet is within Fire, whom Fire does not know, whose body Fire is and who controls Fire from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in the mid-region (antarikṣa), yet is within the mid-region, whom the mid-region does not know, whose body the mid-region is and who controls the mid-region from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in Air (vāyu), yet is within Air, whom Air does not know, whose body Air is and who controls Air from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in the Heaven (divi), yet is within the Heaven, whom the Heaven does not know, whose body the Heaven is and who controls Heaven from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in the Sun (āditya), yet is within the Sun, whom the Sun does not know, whose body the Sun is and who
controls the Sun from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* **He who dwells in the directions (dik), yet is within the directions, whom the directions do not know, whose body the directions are and who controls the directions from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.**

* **He who dwells in the Moon and Stars (candrāraka), yet is within the Moon and the Stars, whom the Moon and the Stars do not know, whose body the Moon and the Stars are and who controls the Moon and the Stars from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.**

* **He who dwells in Ether (ākāśa), yet is within Ether, whom Ether does not know, whose body Ether is and who controls Ether from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.**

* **He who dwells in "Darkness" (tamas), yet is within Darkness, whom Darkness does not know, whose body Darkness is and who
controls Darkness from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in the Light (tejas), yet is within the Light, whom the Light does not know, whose body the Light is and who controls the Light from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in all the beings (sarbabhūta), yet is within all beings, whom all the beings do not know, whose body all the beings are, and who controls all beings from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in vital breath (prāṇa), yet is within vital breath, whom the vital breath does not know, whose body vital breath is and who controls vital breath from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immoral One.

* He who dwells in the organ of speech (vāk), yet is within the organ of speech, whom the organ of speech does not know, whose body the organ of speech is, who controls the organ of speech from
within, He is your self (ātma), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in the eye (cakṣus), yet is within the eye, whom the eye does not know, whose body the eye is and who controls the eye from within, He is your self (ātma), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in the ear (śrotra), yet is within the ear, whom the ear does not know, whose body the ear is, and who controls the ear from within, He is your self (ātma), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in the mind (manas), yet is within the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body the mind is and who controls the mind from within, He is your self (ātma), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in the skin (tvak), yet is within the skin, whom the skin does not know, whose body the skin is and who controls the skin from within, He is your self (ātma), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.
* He who dwells in the Vijñāna⁵⁶ (Knowledge, i.e., Ātmā, the embodiment of Knowledge), yet is within the Vijñāna, whom the Vijñāna does not know, whose body the Vijñāna is, and who controls the Vijñāna from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in the semen (retas), yet is within the semen, whom the semen does not know, whose body the semen is and who controls the semen from within, He is your self (ātmā), the Inner Controller, the Immortal One.

* He who dwells in the Vedas, yet is within the Vedas, whom the Vedas do not know, whose body the Vedas are, and who controls the Vedas from within, He is your self (ātman), the Inner Controller and the Immortal One.

This long list of entities which form the "body" of the Lord and for which the Lord is the soul, highlights two important characteristics of the Lord: His control over everything (niyāntritva) and His immortality (amṛtatva). His immortality implies His being

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⁵⁶ The Kāśvā recension reads Vijñāna whereas the Mādhyandina recension reads Ātmā. Rāmānuja prefers the Mādhyandina reading to the Kāśvā reading because of its explicit reference to the "ātmā" (soul) as the body of the Lord.
unaffected by the evil which affects all creation. The Lord is thus both immanent and transcendental. It is the invariable contingency of all embodied souls that they are affected by the pleasure and pain that come to the body. But the Lord, though abiding in the souls embodying physical bodies, is not affected by their sufferings and joys. The Munḍaka (III.1.1) clearly points to the distinct feature of God.

Rāmānuja sometimes explains the relation between the world and God as "śeṣa-śeṣi-bhāva" (relation between the subordinate and principal entities), "aṁśa-aṁśi-bhāva" (relation between a part and whole), "viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣya-bhāva" (relation between an adjective and its substantive) and "prakāra-prakāri-bhāva" (relation between a mode and the possessor thereof). But the "body-soul" relation is his favourite concept for reasons which will be listed below, shortly.

Śrī Pīḷḷai Lokācārya, a senior contemporary of Vedānta Deśika gives in his work Navavidha-sambandha nine analogies to the relation subsisting between man and God which includes the "body-soul" relation also.
"pita ca rakṣakaḥ seṣi, bharta jñeyo ramāpatih |
svāmyādhāro mamātmā ca bhokta cādyamanūditaḥ ||\(^{57}\)

But the most significant of all these is the "body-soul relation".\(^{58}\)

As a matter of fact Rāmānuja derives this concept from Śruti like the Brhadāraṇyaka and the Muṇḍaka. He is inspired and supported by Divya Prabandham of the Āvārs who preceded him by a few centuries. For instance, Nammāḷvār, the greatest of the Āvārs spells out the body-soul relation in his Tiruvāymozhi (I.1.7) as follows:

"tiṣṇa viṣumbu erivali nīr nilam ivaimiśai
paḍar poruḷ muzhuvadam āy avai avaitorum
udalmiśai uyireṇa karandeṅgum paranduḷan
udar miku suritiyiḷ ivaiuṇḍa śurane"

(The Lord has dissolved Himself in the universe, is manifest as the Sky, Fire, Air, Water and Earth, as also all other things made of

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\(^{57}\) They are the ones between the 'father and the son', the 'protector and the protected', the principal entity and the subordinate one', the 'husband and wife', the 'most important object of knowledge and the knower', the 'proprietor and the property', the 'support and the supported', the 'soul and body' and the 'enjoyer and the object that is enjoyed'.

\(^{58}\) See Eric J. Lott, God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja, p.146 ff.
these five Elements. Like the soul inside the body He abides in all these things in an invisible way by pervading everywhere. This is well-established in the scriptures.)

He says further: "O Lord, you are the Water, Earth, Fire, Air, Sky, the bright sun and the moon. You are Śiva and Brahmā."

"nirāy nilanāy tiyāy kālāy neṇuvānāy
şirār šudargarāl irāṇāy śivanāy ayanānāy" (TvM. VI. 9. 1)

Elsewhere he also says: "God is fire, water, earth, sky and air. He is the father, mother and children, all their relatives and all other individuals in the universe. Lord is the sun and the moon, the bright stars and the darkness. He is torrential rains; He is both fame and infamy. He is also the cruel God of Death."

Namājvar states that God is in contradictory things in life too. For example, "He is poverty and wealth, heaven and hell, enmity and friendship, poison and nectar. He is suffering and happiness. He is the confused state of mind and also clear thinking. He is anger and also compassionate disposition. He is both heat and cold."
This body-soul analogy has one important purpose to serve: It establishes beyond any speck of doubt the fact that the Lord has absolute control over the world of Cit and Acit, from within.

The Lord is the "ādhāra" or the support of every thing in the world. In a significant hymn the Āḻvār sings:

"nām avan ivan uvan aval ival ival eval
tām avar ivar uvar adu idu edu
vim, avai ivai uvai avai nalam tiṅgu avai
ām avai āyavai āyinra avare"  (Tvm. I.1.1)

(We, the masculine beings present here and those that are near, far and in between, the feminine species present here, near, far and in between, the neuter things referred to as that, this and other, the perishable as well as the non-perishable things, along with their good and bad qualities, and all that existed in the past and what is going to come in future -- everything subsists in the Supreme Lord.)

What is clearly from these hymns is that there is "ādhāra-ādheya" (the supporter and the supported) relation between the Lord and the
world, which was developed by Rāmānuja in his Śrībhāṣya and other works.

The Āḻvār says further:

"nirranar, irundanar, kiḍandanar, tirindanar,
ninrilar, irundilar, kiḍandilar, tirindilar

enrumor iyalvinar ena ninaiva ariyavar

enrum or iyalvoṣu ninra em tiḍare"  (Tvm. 1.1.6)

(Those who stand, sit, lie down, move, and those who do not stand, sit, lie down and move, are controlled by the Supreme Being, who Himself is not subject to any change and whose nature is beyond comprehension).

The Āḻvār also uses in his Pāṣurams the word "pukku" (enter into), to denote the Lord's entry into all things He had created, Cit and Acit. This concept is clearly enunciated by the Taittirīya text, "tat sṛṣṭvā tadeva anuprāviśat" (Having created it, He entered into it) speaking of the anupravesa of the Lord into the created entities). He is thus immanent in all entities.
Eric J. Lott, in his brilliant work, *God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*, lists in an admirable way, the chief gains of Rāmānuja's concept of "body-soul relationship" which is the mainstay of his Philosophy.

1. The self-body analogy indicates the *essential distinction* between God and His universe. Brahman is the supremely adorable, infinitely good and the personal being of theistic experience. He is not the impersonal Absolute, either of sheer transcendental intuition or of speculative logic. Supremacy and accessibility are the two most prominent characteristics of this Godhead. Body-soul relation thus brings out this twofold feature of God.

2. The body-soul relation brings out the *inseparable relationship* (*aprthaksiddhi-sambandha*) between God and the universe.

3. The *śarīra-śarīri-sambandha* also points out the *eternal dependence of the world on the Will of God*. As a matter of fact, the definition Rāmānuja gives to body is: "Any substance that an intelligent being is able completely to control (*niyantum*) and support
(dhārayitum) for his own purposes, and the essential nature of which is entirely subservient (ṣeṣabhūta) to that intelligent self." Only God is Svatatnta; the soul's eternal liberation is consequent to its recognition and experience of its pāratantrya (dependence)\textsuperscript{59}.

4. The self-body relationship emphasises the causal efficacy of God in relation to the world. Rāmānuja is in favour of sat-kārya-vāda according to which the effect is potentially inherent in the preceding cause. Thus the similarity of effect to its cause is inherent.

5. The body-soul relation also indicates the immutable perfection of God's essential Being.

6. The body-soul analogy also brings out the inclusive and consummative nature of God's relationship to the universe.

7. The self-body analogy brings to focus the character of God as the Supreme Person (Puruṣottama).

8. This analogy also points out that the universe is instrumental to the will of God. Rāmānuja also uses the expression Śeṣa-śeṣi -

\textsuperscript{59} One may observe that this idea of God's svātantrya and the world's pāratantrya had been developed later by Madhva as the key concept of his philosophy.
**sambandha** to explain the point that the essential nature of all subservient entities (śeṣa) is to be useful, serviceable and instrumental to the chief factor, the Śeṣin⁶⁰.

9. The body-soul relation is also suggestive of the divine purpose underlying creation. Rāmānuja explains that although the human bodies serve the purposes of their souls (jīvas), the celestial body of the Lord serves no such purpose to the Self since His activities are all motivated by līlā (sport)⁶¹.

10. The analogy also confirms Rāmānuja's basic concept that the world is real.

11. This analogy also stresses the intimate accessibility of God to the universe, especially in His relationship with the Jīvas. Commenting on the Gītā verse (VII.18): "udārāśarva eavaite jñānī tvātmaiva me matam..." Rāmānuja says: "The man of wisdom does not have even the possibility of sustaining his soul without Me. He

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⁶⁰ It may be noted that Rāmānuja borrows this terminology from the Mīmāṁsaka parlance. In Mīmāṁsā, "śeṣa" is a minor sacrifice. The major sacrifice called "Śeṣin" is subserved by one or more minor śeṣa- rituals.

⁶¹ The word "līlā" (sport/diversion/pastime) does not mean that the Lord is deriving pleasure at the expense of the suffering creatures. It only means that the Lord has absolute power to do things without depending upon anybody else.
takes Me alone as his incomparable goal. So without him, I cannot sustain My soul. Therefore he is My soul."

12. This body-soul relation also brings out in an effective manner, the idea that God has a unique, supernatural, transcendent body. The Śrīvaīṣṭīnavas, on the basis of the Āgamas (the Pāñcarātra) believe that the Lord has a special embodiment, four emanations (vyūhas) and several manifestations (vibhava or avatāra). The four emanations are -- Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The last of the Vyūhas, i.e., Aniruddha becomes the cause for the first of the Vibhava (Avatāra) manifestations, viz., Matsya.

Then there is the arcāvatāra-aspect which is "embodiment" of God in the consecrated images installed in temples. So is the avatāra as "acāryas"62. All these "bodies" are supernatural and transcendent, the two last mentioned being of remarkable ease to the devotees in the present age of Kali, to approach.

We may conclude this list with the statement that Rāmānuja's basic concern was with two essential dimensions of the divine activity -- God's transcendence and His immanence.

62 See God and the Universe in the Vedāntīc Theology of Rāmānuja, pp. 146-164
While the term Viśiṣṭādvaita refers to the Philosophy propounded by Rāmānuja, the expression "Śrī-vaiṣṇavism" forms the appellation by which the Religious tradition is referred to. Rāmānuja's system combines in itself the charm of religion and the warmth of philosophy. It may be described as the 'joyous philosophy' because of the immense delight in generates in one who starts understanding it, with its two alternative means for liberation viz., Bhakti and Prapatti. Philosophy devoid of religion may be compared to a tree without roots. Likewise, religion without a philosophical basis may be likened to a branch without fruits. Rāmānuja states in his Śrībhāṣya that unless one is favoured by the Grace of a personal God induced by whole-hearted surrender (śaranāgati), one will never be able to understand, much less explain, experience and enjoy the real spirit of philosophy.63 Rāmānuja's system may therefore be referred to as "Philosophy of Religion"64 because of the happy blend of these two.

A great advantage in Rāmānuja's Philosophy is that it offers a reasonable alternative to both radical dualism and radical monism,

63 See Śrībhāṣya, I.1: "tadidamaupaniṣada-paramapuruṣa-varaṇiyatābetu-guṇaviśeṣa-virahipāda..." etc.
64 See Dr K.C. Varadachari, Viśiṣṭādvaita and its Development, p. 24 ff.
the two extremes with which Vedântic schools normally identify
themselves. It is true that Reality does not admit of differentiation
and unity at one and the same time. This is a paradox in Vedânta, but
it is only apparent. The seeming dichotomy can be easily resolved if
we admit that relative truth is not defective in principle, although the
whole cannot be represented perfectly by the part. Mind and matter;
soul and non-soul; one soul and another; one substance and another;
God and man, seem to many philosophers as rooted in irreconcilable
difference. It is also believed by them that if the gap could be
bridged, important differences could totally be obliterated and
reduced into a bland uniformity.

The Sâṅkhya concept of unqualified dualism between Prakṛti and
Puruṣa and its concept of pluralism with regard to Puruṣas (souls)
was to some extent, an attempt to provide an alternative to a Monism
which would absorb all souls into one universal soul or Brahman.
Dualists maintain that no interaction between radically different
entities is possible. This is so because interaction would mean that
there is something in common between them. Therefore some degree
of similarity between the entities must be expected to exist. They
state that main differences are real and that they are absolute. In their
anxiety to maintain their position, they failed to allow for the coherence necessary for any plausible account of the world-phenomenon. The Sāṅkhya philosophers argue that Puruṣa cannot possibly arise from or take part in the affairs of Prakṛti, because he is radically different from it. But they are also unable to give any reasonable solution to the question as to how the intelligent Puruṣa can be "deceived" as it were, by Prakṛti which is non-intelligent.

The point to be recognized by all impartial philosophers is that there is some sort of unity in reality, perhaps more unity than pluralism. There is the general criticism that the pluralist philosophies have failed to do justice to unity. If this be true, then it is equally true that the Monistic schools have also failed to do justice to pluralism.

If there could be an interaction between two things, then there must be something in their nature which admits of this kind of interaction. Total interconnection is taken by Śaṅkara as the meaning of absolute identity. According to him, the universe, to be fully conceivable, should be fully inter-related and therefore, should be an undifferentiated one. Śaṅkara thought that our choice lies only between absolute difference and absolute oneness.
But, as a matter of fact, the appearance of diversity in reality can be satisfactorily explained on the basic admission that there is diversity in reality. One may cite the analogy of the body and its constituent cells to explain this relation. The human body has millions of individual cells. The cells of the heart, lungs, muscles, bones and the like, are distinct in their function. Every cell has its own special distinction from the other. But all of them form one with the body since they are united together as a unified whole. They exist and function exclusively in the interest of the concerned living being. Apart from the whole, the cells have no existence and if separated, they will perish and cease to be cells. This is applicable to the "body-soul" relation between Prakṛti and the souls on one hand, and with the universe and God on the other. This total, irrevocable and non-reciprocal dependence of an object on its supporting object is called Ārthaksiddhi, which has already been explained earlier.

Śaṅkara maintains that the one undifferentiated universe appears differentiated when reflected in our ignorance. But if the appearance of plurality rises from our ignorance, and if our ignorance is real,

65 See Swami Tapasyananda, Bhakti Schools of Vedanta, pp. 39-40
66 See p. 45 ff. above
then the differentiating principle must lie in reality. If our ignorance is not real, then plurality also cannot be real since it turns out to be only a different kind of ignorance. Advaitins contend that the Uniform One is obscured by a kind of ignorance arising from ignorance in a perpetual cycle. So as to give an account of reality, therefore, we should have a place for diversity also.

It is in this context that Rāmānuja offers us a viable solution to this seemingly irreconcilable paradox of Vedānta. According to him, the world of sentient and insentient entities forms the Lord's body, having the same being, in a lesser or a greater degree. We are absolutely dependent (paratantra) on God but He is absolutely independent (svatantra). This body-soul concept of the relation between the One and the many, and between God and man, successfully avoids the pitfalls of both undifferentiated monism and radical pluralism. Indeed this reconciliation attempted by Rāmānuja for the first time marks a significant advance in the world of Upaniṣadic interpretation.

Now this discussion leads us to the next important concept of Tattvātraya of Rāmānuja's Philosophy.
The Tattvātraya:

According to Rāmānuja, there are three imprint categories to be reckoned with, viz., Cit, Acit and Īśvara. Cit stands for multitudes of living beings that are qualified by consciousness or knowledge. Knowledge is their invariable attribute. It qualifies them at all level of existence and experience when they are awake, dreaming, in deep sleep and when liberated from the world of transmigration. This kind of knowledge is technically known as Dharmabhūta-jñāna (Attributive Knowledge). Dharmabhūtajñāna expresses itself in different forms such as pleasure and pain, vacillation and decision, fear and courage, love and hate and even bhakti and prapatti.

According to the Viśiṣṭādvaita school there are three categories of Cit (living beings): baddhas (bound souls), muktas (liberated ones) and the nitya-muktas (the ever-liberated ones). Nityas are those who were never subject to worldly bondage. Ananta, Garuḍa, Viṣvaksena and others are called Nityas. They serve the Lord in different capacities. There is, beyond this material universe, an eternal, divine abode for the Lord. His consorts and devotees, which is called Vaikūṭha. This abode, the bodies of the Lord, His Consorts and all
other inmates, including the mansions and objects there, are supposed to have been composed of a kind of substance called Śuddha-sattva.

This is in contradistinction to the Āsuddha-sattva or Miśra-sattva of which the universe in which we live is composed. This world of ours made up of Āsuddha-sattva because of its admixture with Rajas and Tamas for which reason it is also called miśra-sattva.

The term Acit (literally, the insentient category) refers to Prakṛti and its evolutes. The following table indicates the process of evolution of Prakṛti:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avyakta (Prakṛti)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( Vyakta )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahāṅkāra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sāttvika</th>
<th>Rājasa</th>
<th>Tāmasa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 karmendriyas (catalysit)</td>
<td>5 subtle forms of Elements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 jñānendriyas</td>
<td>(tanmātras)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 mind</td>
<td>5 gross Elements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of evolutes: Avyakta + Mahat+ Ahāṅkāra+ 11 organs + 5 tanmātras+ 5 gross elements: 24.

Acit forms the object of enjoyment (bhogya), the place of enjoyment (bhogasthāna) and also the means of enjoyment
(bhogopakarana) for the individual souls and also for the Lord in His manifestations. Prakṛti is also known in scriptures as Ajā, Māyā and Triguṇā and Vyaktā. The word Māyā should not be understood in the sense of Advaitic sense of Mithyā or Illusion. It is a positive, superlatively wonderful, real power of the Lord. Prakṛti is called Ajā since it is eternal. The word Triguṇā denotes that it has three tendencies--Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. A disturbance in the equilibrium of these three tendencies results in the creation of the world. This disturbance takes place due to the Will (Saṅkalpa or Avekṣaṇa) of the Lord only, but not due to the presence of the Puruṣa as held in the Sāṁkhya system. Being the Lord’s own power, Prakṛti is always subservient to Him. It has the power to conceal Truth from the individual souls. The only way to overcome its influence is to surrender whole-heartedly to the Lord.67

The third but the most important category of this Tattvatraya is Iśvara, the Supreme Lord. In Rāmānuja’s religion, Śrīman-Nārāyaṇa constitutes the Supreme Godhead. Even when God is referred to merely as "Nārāyaṇa" or "Brahman" without the prefix Śrī, His

67 Cf. GīTĀ Vll. 14: diavl hyeṣa guṇamayi maṁa māyā duratyayā | māmeva ye āprapadyante māyāmetāṁ taraṁ |
association with Śrī, His inseparable Consort, is always implied. Their relation is eternal. The Viṣṇupurāṇa states that Śrī accompanies the Lord in all His manifestations, assuming a suitable form from time to time, as for example, as Sītā and Rukmīṇī in his incarnations as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, respectively.

Śrī is also known as Lākṣmī. Another important dimension of Lākṣmī’s character is Her role as the mediator between the erring human and the strict disciplinarian father, God. Śrī is believed to intervene between the two with love and save the souls from the wrath of the Lord. She is technically called "Puruṣakāra" (mediator) for this role of hers, in the Śrīvaiṣṇava theology. According to tradition, Prapatti or Śaṇaṇagati (whole-hearted surrender) to the Lord must be preceded by Prapatti to the Mother of the Universe, Lākṣmī. Yāmuna, Rāmānuja’s grand-teacher wrote the Catusśloki on Śrī first, where he expressed his whole-hearted surrender to Her, and then wrote the Stotratatna where he did Śaṇaṇagati to the Lord. Rāmānuja

68 I. 9. 144: "rāghavatve 'bhavaṁ sitā rukmīṇī kṛṣṇajanmanī | anyeṣu cāvaśāresu viṣporeśanāpāyini ||"

69 For further details, see Dr M. Narasimhabhary, "Definitions of the term Puruṣakāra", Dr S.S. Janaki Felicitation Volume (Vols. LVI-LXII) pp. 174-178.
also, in his Śaraṇāgatigadaya first expressed total surrender to Śrī and then to the Lord.

The Five Aspects of the Lord:

According to the Pāñcarātra Āgamas which are believed to be the "word of the mouth of Lord Viṣṇu" and whose authority Rāmānuja accepts, the Lord has five aspects: Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antaryāmin and Arcā. The Para aspect is present only in Vaikuṇṭha. This form of the Lord is called Para Vāsudeva. The Lord, in this form, manifests six auspicious attributes viz., Jñāna (Knowledge), Bala (Strength), Aiśvarya (Lordship), Vīrya (Virility), Śakti (Power) and Tejas (Splendour) in the fullest degree of perfection. These are collectively called "bhaga". Since He possesses them, He is known as "Bhagavān".70 This aspect is two-fold as "Sūkṣma" (subtle) and "Sthūla" (gross). From the former comes the latter and it emanates as the four Vyūhas called again Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha.

70 See Viṣṇupurāṇa, VI.5.79
The "Vyūha Vāsudeva" and the remaining three forms also have all the six perfections mentioned above, to a full measure. Still a subtle distinction is drawn among them. While the Vyūha Vāsudeva is full of the six qualities, he forms the source of the next emanation (Vyūha) called Saṅkarṣaṇa. Saṅkarṣaṇa, though a repository of six qualities, exhibits only two qualities, viz., Jñāna and Bala in an abounding degree. From him emanates Pradyumna who has two dominant qualities of Aiśvarya (Lordship) and Vīrya (Virility). He becomes the source of Aniruddha in whom the qualities of Śakti and Tejas attain their fullest culmination.

The three emanations viz., Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha have three upakāras to do, three abhimānas to display and three lilās to enact, says Vedānta Deśika. Saṅkarṣaṇa propagates the scriptures, presides over the jīva-tattva and destroys the universe sportively. Pradyumna makes people follow the path of virtue, presides over the manastattva and is in charge of creation. Aniruddha makes people realize the ultimate reality, presides over ahaṅkāra-tattva and carries the sport of protection.71

71 See "Sarvārthasiddhi" on Tattvamuktākalāpa, III. 70
The next aspect of the Lord is *Vibhava* which is popularly known as *Avatāra*. The Lord can assume any number of incarnations for the purpose of resurrecting *Dharma* in the world (*dharmasamsthāpana*). To accomplish this objective He has to protect virtuous people. To achieve this, He has to remove the evil-doers. This is the main purpose of His descent, says Lord *Kṛṣṇa* in the *Gītā* (IV.8).

"*paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtāṁ |
dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge ||*

It is also said in the same context that He would create Himself from time to time depending upon the need of the hour (IV.7).

"*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata |
abhyyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam srjāmyaham ||*

It is thus clear that there is virtually no limit to the number of incarnations the Lord may take. He alone knows best the *how, when* and *where* of His manifestations.

The next aspect of the Lord is called *Antaryāmin* (one who controls from within). This is the subtlest form of the Lord living inside the ethereal space of the human heart which is itself very
subtle. The Lord abides there out of great compassion and concern for the human beings.72

The next form of the Lord is called Arca (icon/image) which is the replica of the Lord that is properly consecrated and installed in temples. The Āgama texts lay down the details regarding the construction of temples, consecration of images, method of worshipping the Lord and so on. Once the image is consecrated, it becomes metamorphosed into something divine, according to these texts. It becomes "Śuddha-sattva" in nature according to the Āgamas. Then and only then this image will become as powerful and as efficacious as the Lord Himself.

The Śrīvaiśāṅavācāryas are unanimous in believing that of all the five aspects of the Lord, this last mentioned arca-aspect is the most easily accessible (atyanta-sulabha) to one and all. The Para-aspect of the Lord which is in Vaikuṇṭha, is difficult to be reached by ordinary mortals because of the enormous distance (dūravipraKarṣa) that separates our world and the divine abode. The Vyūha-forms are also

72 Cf. Vedānta Deśika's Varadarāja-paścāt, v. 21:

audanvate mahatī sadmanī bhāsamāne... antaḥkalebaram idaṁ suṣiṁ śarīraṁ susūkṣmaṁ,

jātarb Karīśā! kathamādaranāśpadam te! ||
far removed from our reach because the places (such as the milky ocean) where they exist are away from ours (deśa-viprakarasā). The Vibhava (Avatāra)-forms as those of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are not accessible because they appeared in different periods of time (kāla-viprakarasā). The Antaryāmin-aspect is not easily accessible to us because of the difficulty in visualizing it, which is infinitesimally small (svarūpa-viprakarasā). Only expert yogins, after several years of perfect training and concentration may perhaps have a glimpse of this Antaryāmin aspect. Thus for us, by the principle of exclusion, the remaining form, viz., Arcā-form alone becomes the most easily accessible aspect of God.

Pilḷai Lokācārya in his Śrīvacanabhūṣanam makes a beautiful statement about the comparative accessibility and affability of these five aspects of the Lord:73

"bhūgatam jalampole antaryāmitvam; āvaranaṇajalam pole paratvam; pārkaḍal pole vyūhaṅgaḷ; atile teṅgiya maḍukkal pole arcāvatāram"
(The Antaryāmin aspect of the Lord is like the sub-soil water; the Para-aspect is like the water that encircles the cosmic egg; the Vyūhas are like the milky ocean; the Vibhavas (=Avatāras) are like flash floods; the Arcā-aspect is like the pools of water on a river bank)

It is to be noted in this connection that Vedānta Deśika explains in his introduction to the Rahasyatrayasāra that the nature of liberation varies with the content or object of meditation. It is Dhyāna on the Supreme as Antaryāmin that confers Śāyujya while other kinds of Dhyāna on the Vibhava-forms, stop short at Sārūpya. This suggests that the concept of the Antaryāmin brings out the spirit of Viśiṣṭādvaita better and more fully than any other. This brings out the intrinsic significance of the śarīra-śarīri-bhāva in a new dimension, throwing fresh light on the meaning and purpose of meditation.

It is this vision of the Supreme as the Antaryāmin that would spiritualise and divinise all existence, both within and without, and give an inward orientation to Bhakti, no less than to Dhyāna, and a new extension to Prapatti.\footnote{See Prof. K. Seahadri, "Viśiṣṭādvaita-Its Mystical and Metaphysical Undertones", p. 10. (Pub. University of Madras, 1972)}
Means of Liberation:

According to Rāmānuja, Bhakti (loving devotion) is the chief means of liberation which consists of remembering the Lord lovingly and incessantly. According to the Liṅgapurāṇa the word "Bhakti" is derived from the verbal root "bhaj" which means "to serve". So Bhakti automatically comprises "service" also to the person who becomes the object of devotion. By Bhakti no emotion is meant. It is a discipline in which the mind is turned towards God by rigorous and constant practice. In this kind of meditation, that acquires the clarity and vividness of a living presence (darśana-samānākārā). Bhakti is same as Upāsana, Dhyāna, Nididhyāsana, Vedana and Dhruvānusmṛti, according to Rāmānuja. Steady recollection is compared by Rāmānuja to the steady flow of oil which does not admit any break in its course: (tailadhārāvad avicchinnasmṛti-santānarūpam). Such a steady thinking about God becomes possible only when the mind is pure and free from evil propensities. Purity of mind can be accomplished by taking sāttvic food, says the Chāndogya (VII.26.2).

75 II.9.19: "bhaja ityēṣa dhāturyai sevāyāṁ parikṛtitaṁ
tasmāt sevā budhaiḥ proktā bhaktiśabdena bhūyasī"
Rāmānuja in his Śrībhāṣya (introductory) refers to the view of Vākyakāra (Brahmanandin, one of the early commentators on the Chāndogya Upaniṣad) that Bhakti can be cultivated by seven steps (sādhana-saptaka). They are:

1. **Viveka** means "discrimination" of food and purification of the body thereby. The Gītā (XVII. 7-10) classifies food as sāttvic, rājasic and tāmasic. Sāttvic food (described in verse 8) is ideal for those who want to steady their mind and practice contemplation on God.

2. **Vimoka** consists in getting rid of all worldly desires.

3. **Abhyāsa** is repeated practice of meditation.

4. **Kriyā** consists in performing "five great sacrifices" (pañca-mahāyajñaḥ) according to one's capacity.

5. **Kalyāṇa** means cultivating auspicious qualities like speaking truth and being kind to all living beings.

6. **Anavasāda** means, not losing one's cheerfulness even in the face of the worst calamity.
7. Anuddharsa means non-exultation, which is the opposite of the previous step, viz., Anavasāda.

Once Bhakti is thus generated, it may express itself in different forms such as listening to the episodes of the Lord (śravaṇa), singing aloud His auspicious names (kīrtana), remembering Him, (smarana) etc. as pointed in the Bhāgavata (VII.5.23).

In spite of its attractions, Bhakti which involves non-stop constant loving meditation on God is difficult for ordinary people to attain. It is said that the Bhaktimārga can be adopted only by sages like Vyāsa and Śuka. There must then be an easier way to reach God and that is called Prapatti or Šaraṇāgati which consists in whole-hearted surrender to God. Surrendering oneself to the Lord is advocated by the Pāñcarātra Āgamas and it is one of the two alternative means to liberation, the other being Bhakti.

So says the Ahirbudhnya Samhitā, one of the early texts of the Pāñcarātra branch of Vaiṣṇava Āgamas.

"ānukūlasya saṅkalpāḥ, prātikūlyasya varjanam | rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāsaḥ, gopīṛtya-varaṇām tathā || ātmanikṣepa-kārpanye ṣadvidhā śaraṇāgatīḥ ||" 76

76 Ahirbudhnya Samhitā XXXVII. 27b-28
This has six steps: (1) resolve to do what is favoured by God; (2) avoidance of all things not favoured by Him; (3) unassailable faith in His saviourship; (4) requesting Him to be one's protector and (5) placing one's burden at His feet; and (6) having utter humility and a sense of total dejection in doing so.

According to some, the last two auxiliaries can be taken as one in essence. Then Šaraṇāgati will have only five auxiliaries.

Šaraṇāgati can be done just once (sakṛt) and there is no need to do it repeatedly as in the case of Bhakti. Any one is qualified to adopt it. There is no restriction regarding eligibility (adhikāriniyama), or a particular place (deśaniyama) or a particular time (kālaniyama) to perform the act of surrender. The only eligibility to adopt Prapatti is one's inability to practice Bhakti.77

What is very important in Prapatti is total unassailable faith (mahāviśvāsa) in the saviourship of the Lord. "Mahāviśvāsa" is the absolutely clear and distinct knowledge of the omnipotence of the Lord's compassion (dayā), and is therefore the vital and ruling motive.

77 Vide Stotaratna, " na dharmaniṣṭho 'smi na cātmavedit, na bhaktimān tvacca saṇārāvibde | akiñcana 'manyagatiḥ śaṇaṇya ! tvatpādāmūlam śaṇaṇam prapadye || (v.22)
of Prapatti Yoga. The other conditions actually follow from this spiritual conviction and exalts the levels of conation, feeling and cognition. While Bakti Yoga constitutes the arduous building up of devotion from below a posteriori, Prapatti is the a prior way of divine dayā and is the descent of kr̃pā into the realm of karman. But whether it is from earth to heaven or from heaven to earth, the essentials of Bhakti and Prapatti are the same, namely the illumined faith in the saving grace of God as both the upāya and the upeya."

The later Śrīvaiṣṭavācāryas found out another means of liberation called "Ācāryābhimāna" or "Ācāryanisṭhā", which means total faith in the saving grace of one's own spiritual preceptor. Here the aspirant trusts whole-heartedly his own Guru for protection. He dispenses with the so-called Prapatti to the Lord because in his firm conviction, his Ācārya can deliver the goods without necessitating the devotee's seeking refuge in God. We may cite the instance of Madhurakavi Āḻvār for this kind of approach. The Āḻvār had such immense faith in his own Guru, Nammāḻvār, that he declared in his work, the Kaṇṭīnuṇ Śīruttāmbu that his Ācārya was more important and far

78 See P.N. Srinivassachari, The Phiolosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita, p. 393
more superior than even Lord Kṛṣṇa who allowed Himself to be tied to a mortar by his mother Yaśodā with a slender thread. Although considered as a separate, final and the most important means (caramaparvaniṣṭhā), Ācāryābhimāna can be included in the means called Prapatti or Śaraṇāgati itself.

**God as the Material and Efficient Cause of the Universe:**

Another important doctrine of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school is that Brahman is both the Material (upādāna) and Efficient (nimitta) Cause of the universe. In our day-to-day experience of the world however, we see the material cause and the efficient cause to be different from each other. For example, for a pot, a lump of clay forms the material cause, and a potter forms the efficient cause. But in so far as the universe is concerned, God alone forms both the material and efficient cause. This is precisely the issue that our author Śrīnivāsa is discussing in the present text taken up for study, viz., the *Siddhānta Cintāmaṇi.*
The Seśvara Sāṅkhya view:

There is a section of Sāṅkhya's called Seśvara Sāṅkhya i.e., those admit a God presiding over Matter or Prakṛti. They accept the Brahman to be the efficient or instrumental cause and they deny that He can be the material cause as well. Their arguments are taken up and refuted by Rāmānuja in his commentary on the Prakṛtyadrikaraṇa of the Brahma-sūtra (1.4.23-27). The Sāṅkhya philosopher cites some scriptural texts which are supposed to indicate that Pradhāna or Matter is the material cause of the world, when presided over by the Lord. This of course is the general trend of the teaching of the scriptural passages although it may not precisely refer to Prakṛti as the material cause for the world. Rāmānuja in his Śrībhāṣya takes up the aphorism: "prakṛṣṭaḥ ca pratijñā-dṛṣṭānta-anuparodhāt" (I.4.23) (The Brahman is) also the material cause [of the universe] because [in the context] there can be no stultification of the proposition and the examples illustrative of it.), for a detailed examination. The word ca (also) indicates that Brahman is already admitted to be the Efficient Cause of world-manifestation. The

79 Cf. Śvet. IV.9: "asmaṁ māyāḥ srijate viśvam etat"; IV.10: "māyāṁ tu prakṛtim vidyāt māyinaḥ tu mahēśvaram" Bh. G. IX. 10: mayādhikṣetā prakṛtisāya sacarācaram
proposition is in the Chândogya statement (VI.1.4 to 6) that "through a knowledge of a certain principle, all things become known" (ekavijñān ānena sarva-vijñānam).

The father of the boy Śvetaketu asks him whether he had learnt about the "Ādeśa" (i.e., the Ruler or Controlling Principle), by knowing whom or which, whatever is unknown becomes known. Three illustrations are given — lumps of clay, gold and iron. By knowing any one of the lumps, all things made of it become known. These examples try to prove that Brahman is the material cause of the universe. Since Brahman is also described as the Ruler and Controller, He is also the Instrumental or Efficient Cause. Reference in the scriptures to Prakṛti as the 'mother of all modifications' (vikāra-janani), its evolution and its involution only proves that in the state of dissolution Brahman has Prakṛti in its subtle condition for His mode, and that in the state of creation, He has the same Prakṛti in its gross state, for His mode.

It is true that in our worldly experience we see that the material and instrumental causes for things like pots and ornaments are different. But this does not necessarily prove that the universe also
should have its material cause different from its efficient cause. The limitations found in the clay and the potter are not present in Brahman the supreme Creator. The clay, for example, is non-intelligent and the potter lacks the capacity to undergo modifications. Also, he does not have a will that can realize itself. But the Supreme Brahman can constitute both the Efficient and Material causes since He is omniscient and omnipotent and thus distinct from all other entities and agents.

Rāmānuja then comments on the next three aphorisms of the Brahmasūtra (I. iv. 24 to 26) citing scriptural passages in support of this view. These aphorisms are: "abhidhyopadesācca" (Because the teaching is given relating to God's thinking and willing, He forms both the Upādāna and Nimitta) (24); "sākṣāccobhayāmnānāt" (Because He is directly revealed in the scriptures to be both the Upādāna and Nimitta) (25); "ātmakṛteḥ" (Because He made Himself into the world, He is both the Upādāna and Nimitta).

The Chāndogya (VI.2.3) and the Taittirīya (II.6.1) speak of the Brahman as entertaining a Will to become many. The Taittirīya passage also says that He made Himself into the manifold world. The
Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (II.8.9) refers to the Lord as the "wood" (brahma vanam) and that He is also the "tree" (brahma sa vṛkṣah) out of which He fashioned the universe. A doubt is then raised as to how the Brahman can become the manifold world consisting of intelligent and non-intelligent entities, and yet remain untouched by its evil. Aphorism 27 of the same section, viz., "parināmāt" (Brahman is the Upādāna and Nimitta because of the evolution relating to Himself, as taught in the scriptures) points out that all this is possible with the Lord since He has a peculiarly evolving nature⁸⁰. Rāmānuja explains that the Brahman is the Self of the world. Although there are periodical creations and dissolutions, all the substantial changes belong to matter, and all the wrong aims of life belong to the individual selves both of which form His "body". Brahman remains distinct from matter and the selves even during the state of praṇaya (dissolution) when they being very subtle in form, cannot be distinguished from Him. In both creation and dissolution they form the instruments of His divine play. This brings us to the end of this chapter. The succeeding chapter will take up the Siddhāntacintāmaṇi for a detailed study.

⁸⁰ Cf. I.iv.27