CHAPTER 1

Introduction: An Orientation
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Literature and the study of literature are two distinct activities. While the former is a creative art, the latter, though not a science, “is a species of knowledge or of learning” observe Rene Wellek and Austin Warren and they affirm that a student’s task is apparent: “He must translate his experience of literature into intellectual terms, assimilate it to a coherent scheme which must be rational if it is to be knowledge” (Theory of Literature 15) (1978). They continue to remark that “a literary work of art is not a simple object but rather a highly complex organization of a stratified character with multiple meanings and relationships” (17). Discussions have been going on as to how to conduct a true study of literature, at once literary and systematic. Literary scholarship “can be accomplished only in universal terms, on the basis of a literary theory. Literary theory, an organon of methods, is the great need of literary scholarship today” (19) – literary scholarship being a growing body of knowledge, insights, and judgments. The present day analysis of the work of art has to tackle with more complex questions, its mode of existence and its system of levels and it cannot stop with seeing the interrelationship between form and content. Every artistically coherent work seems to possess ‘truth’ through the ‘view of life’ that has to be recognized by the philosopher or critic.
Wellek and Warren rightly affirm:

The truth of literature, as we are now considering it, seems to be the truth in literature – the philosophy which exists, in systematic conceptual form, outside of literature but may be applied to or illustrated by or embodied in literature. . . . Truth is the province of systematic thinkers; and artists are not such thinkers, though they may try to be if there are no philosophers whose work they can suitably assimilate. (34)

A similar point of view comes from the noteworthy poet and critic of the twentieth century, T.S. Eliot. While discussing Wyndham Lewis’ statement that “Shakespeare is the only thinker we meet with among the Elizabethan dramatists” in his book The Lion and the Fox, T.S. Eliot in his essay “Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca” (1972) forwards an observation that corroborates the view of Wellek and Warren:

The poet who ‘thinks’ is merely the poet who can express the emotional equivalent of thought. But he is not necessarily interested in the thought itself. . . . All great poetry gives the illusion of a view of life. When we enter into the world of Homer, or Sophocles, or Virgil, or Dante, or Shakespeare, we incline to believe that we are apprehending something that can be expressed
intellectually; for every precise emotion tends towards intellectual formulation. (*Selected Essays*, 135)

Literary scholarship, then, must take up different courses to identify the intellectual formulation and obviously it cannot depend upon the traditional approaches only. Nevertheless, as Wilfred L. Guerin and others say, “the most astute critics have espoused a more eclectic approach and have fused a variety of techniques. . . .they have not ruled out the possibility of further aesthetic illumination from traditional quarters” (*A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* 17) (1999). Oscar Cargill also in the introduction to his work *Towards a Pluralistic Criticism* (1965) unambiguously supports the wide-ranging approach:

I have always held that any method which could produce the meaning of a work of literature was a legitimate method. . . . the critic’s task was . . . to procure a viable meaning appropriate to the critic’s time and place. Practically, this meant employing not any one method in interpreting a work of art but every method which might prove efficient. (xii-xiv. Qtd by Guerin 17)

A work of art does not exist in vacuum. It is a creation of an individual at some point in history that conveys ideas of human relevance, more meaningful to knowledgeable persons than the less informed ones. It becomes so “when the wisest, most cultivated, most sensitive minds bring all their information,
experience, and feeling to contemplate it, they are moved and impressed by its beauty, by its unique kind of knowledge, and even by its nonaesthetic values’ remark Guerin et al (18). All the same, interpretive venture does not preclude oriental scholarship, which can be aptly employed to investigate a work of art.

This present study, based on this acknowledgement, endeavours to scrutinize selected works of Shakespeare in the light of Sri Ramanuja’s Vedantic philosophy to find out how Shakespeare through his characters in his plays and poetry resonate certain key concepts of Sri Ramanuja, one of the great thinkers of Hindu philosophy. The investigation has yet another sanction of methodology of the discipline of Comparative Literature. The unchallenged definition offered by the American Comparatist, Henry H.H. Remak in his scholarly article, “Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function” included in Comparative Literature: Method & Perspective (1971), edited by Newton Stalknecht and Horst Frenz provides a broad scope to carry on such researches. Remak’s definition is:

Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and the other areas of knowledge and belief, such as arts (e.g., painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, the social sciences (e.g., politics, economics, sociology), the sciences, religion, etc., on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another
or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of
human expression. (1)

This authoritative declaration for an eclectic study and scrutiny directs the
researcher to take up an investigation by bringing together the exemplary
playwright and an efficacious philosopher to see how far the playwright reflects
Indian philosophical thought. A survey of Sri Ramanuja’s philosophy and a
brief preamble of Shakespeare’s works will be taken up presently.

Ever since man started to think the spirit of inquiry in him has never
declined and is in perpetual progression in spite of the steady scientific
advancements. He began looking around and commenced to ‘philosophize’ by
asking questions, what, why and how. Philosophy was then born and is
obviously considered to be the Mother of all Sciences. With the augmenting of
different civilizations around the world, the inquest also developed in varieties
leading to diverse types of philosophies. At present, the world has a horde of
philosophies and a host of renowned philosophers who have carried on subtle
investigations to surprise mankind.

The term ‘Philosophy’ is now an umbrella-term accommodating anything
that can be scrutinized under its canopy. Hence, it defies definition.
‘Philosophy’ is the study of general and fundamental problems concerning
matters such as existence, knowledge, truth, beauty, law, justice, validity, mind,
and language. It is distinguished from other ways of addressing these questions
(such as mysticism or mythology) by its critical, generally systematic approach and its dependence on reasoned argument. The term comes from the Greek word ‘philosophia’, which can be translated as ‘love of wisdom’. What Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), the renowned 20th century British philosopher has said in his book *The Wisdom of the West* (1959) deserves mention:

> We may note one peculiar feature of philosophy. If someone asks the question what is mathematics, we can give him a dictionary definition, let us say the science of number, for the sake of argument. As far as it goes this is an uncontroversial statement. . . . Definitions may be given in this way of any field where a body of definite knowledge exists. But philosophy cannot be so defined. Any definition is controversial and already embodies a philosophic attitude. The only way to find out what philosophy is, is to do philosophy. (7)

The main areas of study in Philosophy are Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, Political philosophy, Aesthetics, Logic, Philosophy of mind, Philosophy of language, Philosophy of religion and so on.

Most of the academic subjects have a philosophy, for example the philosophy of science, mathematics, logic, law, and the philosophy of history. In addition, a range of academic subjects have emerged to deal with areas which would have historically been the subject of philosophy. These include
psychology, anthropology and science. At present, Philosophy itself has been subjected to scrutiny and such a study is called ‘Meta philosophy’, ‘meta’ the Greek word meaning ‘after’ or ‘beyond’ and ‘philosophy’ is ‘love of wisdom’. It is the study of the nature and aims at the methods of philosophy.

However, because of the rich varieties both in the West and the East, there have been naturally two broad divisions of Philosophy, the Western and the Eastern Philosophy. The history of Western philosophy is customarily divided into six periods: Ancient philosophy, Medieval philosophy, Renaissance philosophy, Early and Late Modern philosophy and Contemporary philosophy. The introduction of the terms ‘philosopher’ and ‘philosophy’ has been ascribed to the Greek thinker Pythagoras (app.570 BC-495 BC). The general practice to commence the study of Western Philosophy is from the Ancient Philosophy, the philosophy of the Graeco-Roman world from the sixth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. (Britannica Encyclopedia) (2007). It is usually divided into three periods: the pre-Socratic period, the periods of Plato and Aristotle and the post-Aristotelian (or Hellenistic) period. Sometimes a fourth period is added that includes the Christian and Neo-Platonist philosophers. The most important of the ancient philosophers (in terms of subsequent influence) are Plato (424/423 BC–348/347 BC) and Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC). All the subsequent philosophies of the West branch off from these two great thinkers.

The thoughts of a society have profound repercussions on what it does. The applied study of philosophy yields applications such as those in ethics –
applied ethics in particular—and political philosophy. The political and
economic philosophies of Confucius (551 BC-479 BC), Sun Zi, Chanakya (370-
283 BC) Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), Ibn Rushd also noted as Averroes in
European Literature (1126-1198), Ibn Taimiyyah (1263-1328), Niccolò
Machiavelli (1469-1527), Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), John Locke (1632-
1704), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Karl Marx (1818-1883), John
Stuart Mill (1806-1873), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Martin Luther King Jr.
(1929-1968), and others—all of these have been used to shape and justify
governments and their actions.

Often philosophy is seen as an investigation into an area not sufficiently
well understood to be its own branch of knowledge. What were once
philosophical pursuits have evolved into the modern day fields such as
psychology, sociology, linguistics, and economics, for example. But as such
areas of intellectual endeavour proliferate and expand, so will the broader
philosophical questions that they generate. Many societies have considered
philosophical questions and built philosophical traditions based upon each
other's works. Eastern and Middle Eastern philosophical traditions have
influenced Western philosophers. Russian (which many people consider
Western), Jewish, Islamic, African, and recently Latin American philosophical
traditions have contributed to, or been influenced by, Western philosophy; yet
each has retained a distinctive identity. The differences between traditions are
often well captured by consideration of their favoured historical philosophers,
and varying stress on ideas, procedural styles, or written language. The subject matter and dialogues of each can be studied using methods derived from the others, and there are significant commonalities and exchanges between them.

*Eastern philosophy* refers to the broad traditions that originated or were popular in India, Persia, China, Korea, Japan, and to an extent, the Middle East, which overlaps with Western philosophy due to the spread of the Abrahamic religions and the continuing intellectual traffic between these societies and Europe. The term ‘Indian philosophy’, usually referred to in Sanskrit as *Darshanas*, may indicate any of several traditions of philosophical thought that originated in the Indian subcontinent, including Hindu philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, and Jain philosophy. Having the same or rather intertwined origins, all of these philosophies have a common underlying theme of *Dharma*, and similarly attempt to explain the attainment of emancipation. They have been formalized and promulgated chiefly between 1,000 BC to a few centuries A.D, with residual commentaries and reformations continuing up to as late as the 20th century by Sri Aurobindo and ISKCON among others, who provided stylized interpretations.

In the history of the Indian subcontinent, following the establishment of a *Vedic* culture, the development of philosophical and religious thought over a period of two millennia gave rise to what came to be called the six schools of *astika*, or orthodox, Indian or Hindu philosophy. These schools have come to be synonymous with the greater religion of Hinduism, which was a development of
the early Vedic religion. Hindu philosophy constitutes an integral part of the culture of Southern Asia, and is the first of the \textit{Dharmic} philosophies which were influential throughout the Far East. The great diversity in thought and practice of Hinduism is nurtured by its liberal universalism.

Of the six \textit{darshanas}, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Mimamsa and Vedanta, the last one - Vedanta has been considered to be highly intellectual and so motivated great thinkers like Sri Adi Sankara, Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhva to promulgate new interpretations to the \textit{Vedantic} thoughts, especially of the Brahman-Atman relationship, with the respective nomenclature \textit{Advaita}, \textit{Visistadvaita} and \textit{Dvaita}. A brief outline of these systems is presented.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in his book \textit{Indian philosophy} (1956) Vol. I, observes that Adi Sankara, a saint, philosopher and a poet “flourished in sixth century B.C” (447) and is revered by scholars throughout the world for his exposition of \textit{Advaitic} system of philosophy. The spirit of his philosophy is Brahman, the absolute existence, knowledge and bliss is real and the universe is unreal. Brahman and atman are ONE. He accepts as real that which neither changes nor ceases to exist. No object, no kind of knowledge can be absolutely real if its existence is only temporary. Every object of knowledge, external or internal is subject to modification and therefore according to him not real. He does not regard any experience as non-existence as long as it is experienced but he naturally draws a distinction between the private illusions of the individuals and the world illusion. The former he calls illusory and the latter phenomenal
vyavakarika). He thus distinguishes these two kinds of illusion and those altogether unreal and imaginary ideas which represent a total impossibility, for example, horn of a hare. However, there rests a paradox, such as the world is and is not. It is neither real nor unreal and yet this paradox recognizes the existence of what Adi Sankara calls as Maya. He professes that Brahman is the ultimate cause of the universe by the action of Maya. Brahman is the cause and Maya is the effect.

The most difficult of all the philosophical problems is that of the relation between the finite and the infinite. This difficulty is overcome if one considers the world as Maya. In the unpublished thesis of Dr. S.O. Ramakrishnan (1963) on Advaitic Absolutism the researcher draws the example from Adi Sankara and talks about the seed – sprout relationship in which one is “not able to explain their order of succession”. (63) The world appearance is superimposed upon the Brahman as snake is superimposed on rope. The researcher further explains: “The gist of the philosophy of Adi Sankara is expressed in a small verse which runs thus: Brahman alone is real, the world is illusory and the so called jiva is non different from Brahman -- Brahman sathyam, jagat mithya, jivo brahmaiva napara”. Narasimha Saraswathy Theerthar presents this Sloka 67 in his Vedanta Dindimam (1936). Ramakrishnan, however, provides the quintessential meaning of Advaita:

In this verse is the identity of Brahman or the universal self, the underlying substratum of the universe, with the Atman, the essence
of the individual self, and it is the Brahman and the Atman thus in their Identity, that is the absolute of Advaita. (2)

M. Hiriyanna, the foremost scholar in Indian Philosophy, in his book Essentials of Indian Philosophy (1978) crisply presents the essence of Advaita:

Brahman is the sole reality, and it appears both as the objective universe and as the individual subject. The former is an illusory manifestation of Brahman, while the latter is Brahman itself appearing under the limitations which form part of that illusory universe. (158)

Adi Sankara’s works including the individual poems substantiate his views on Advaita. His works are: Commentaries on Prasthanathrayam – Brahma Sutra, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita, Sanathsbсутheyam (Mahabharatham), Vishnu Sahasranamam (Mahabharatham), Slokas on various deities, Prapancha Saaram and so on.

Another celebrated commentator on the Brahma Sutras, Sri Madhva, later to Sri Ramanuja founded the Vaishnava sect known as Sad-Vaishnavam. He wrote commentaries on Upanishads, Brahma Sutra and Gita. The proposition on which he bases realism is that both the knower and the object of knowledge must be real for otherwise no knowledge is possible. He averred that no knowledge can be known without the knower and the known. Madhva’s vedantic system is known as Dvaita. According to him the world is real and it is perceived as such.
The fact that an object is fleeting and changeable does not mean that it is not real. Madhva asserts that God is different from all living beings and non-living things, who exists in order that His law may be fulfilled in the universe. His whole philosophy is thus based upon the idea of difference or distinction and the distinctions are known to be five in number. While referring to Madhva’s philosophy, Swami Prabhavanandha in his book *Spiritual Heritage of India* (1993) crisply summarizes the tenets:

- God is distinct from the individual souls.
- God is distinct from non-living souls.
- One individual soul is distinct from every other.
- Individual souls are distinct from matter.
- In matter when it is divided the parts are distinct from one another. (320)

He adds that matter is classified into two categories as Independent being and Dependent being and says that God alone is the independent being. Matter is distinct from God and human soul in itself is only a dependent being. Although souls are distinct from one another they fall into three classes differing in their essential nature and in their destiny. Madhva feels that those are moral and devoted to God alone will attain salvation and enjoy the eternal felicity. The second type will never attain salvation but remain subject to rebirth. The third type who revile Vishnu and His devotees will never attain salvation but will be subjected to damnation. Madhva’s belief that only few attain salvation while others are condemned to damnation “is contrary to the teachings of all other Indian religious schools” (321), observes Swami Prabhavananda.
Incidentally, since the current scrutiny concerns itself with Ramanuja’s philosophy, a detailed study of his *vedantic* system, *Visistadvaita* must be taken. Ramanuja attempted to amalgamate the theistic creed of *Vaisnavism* with the *Upanishadic* doctrine. Hiriyanna observes:

Broadly the schools of Vedanta may be classed as either absolutistic or theistic – the former representing Brahman, the ultimate reality, as an impersonal principle and the latter as a personal God. Each of these, it should be added, includes different types of teaching. (152)

The scholar further precisely pictures the survival of the theistic traditions against the absolutistic school of thought.

Although the Upanishadic doctrine does not exclude belief in a personal God, it is not prevailingly theistic. Indian theism has a separate history; . . . it had already developed in two main directions before the beginning of the Christian era, viz., Saivism and Vaisnavism. The revival of Hinduism under the Gupta kings (*circa* A.D. 400) to counter the success of Jainism and Buddhism meant, in reality, the resuscitation of these two creeds. (175)

He also notes that “so far as the higher classes of society were concerned, the revival also meant the revival of Vedic ritualism” (209).
Hence, the development of different religions is a natural corollary. The aim of all religious faiths is the betterment of humanity. Different religious traditions cater to the needs and mutual disposition of the great variety of human beings. Philosophy is an attempt to understand the various stimulates of the world and provides a basic intellectual frame of reference so that one can make sense out of the situation. How a person has to face the challenges of life perhaps forms the core of philosophy. Since human beings possess widely differing temperament they conduct their lives upon different levels and for this reason no one system of religion can equally well satisfy everyone. That is why there exists, diverse forms of religious truth. One such system of religious faith is that of Ramanuja, which believes in the way of devotion by making an absolute surrender to Vishnu-Narayana, the eternal Brahman, the repository of all blessed qualities. The word darshana in Sanskrit is translated as ‘philosophy’ in English that means seeing or experiencing. The philosophy of Ramanuja is termed as ‘Ramanuja darshana’. Sri Ramanuja is not only the propounder of Visistadvaita but also an avid social activist who initiated many effective changes in the then society through religious practices. His life is a message as it is marked by his humanistic vision.

Ramanuja, the preceptor highly venerated by his devotees, was born at Sriperumpudur in the year 1017 AD. He had his Vedic training under Yadhava Prakasa with whom he had a difference of opinion in an interpretation. But for this incident Ramanuja would not have become an acharya to the vaisnavite
sect. He lived a full meritorious life of 120 years and passed away in 1137 A.D. He had a strong view that the knowledge of *sastras* brings pride and erudition instead of devotion to God, and such a knowledge is false. He strongly believed that all are equal before God. Caste or creed, high or low cannot be a bar for God realization. He was a social revolutionary in this way. He was also very compassionate by nature that could be witnessed in his actions of day today life. Non-dualism that was much prevalent during that time strongly argued that except *Brahman* everything was illusion, and so did not encourage worship of personal deities. Ramanuja in his pragmatic philosophy advocated that apart from *Brahman*, all other things are also real with the difference that they are not independent but dependent on the *Brahman* for their existence.

Ramanuja was essentially a devotee and philosophy was only a means for him to bridge the gulf between the *vedic* philosophical methodology and the emotional absorption of the Alwars, the Tamil bards who propagated *Vishnu-bhakti* in a simple way. The philosophy of Ramanuja is the most pre-eminent among the *Bhakti* School of *Vedanta* both because of the profundity of the doctrines it expounds and the balanced devotionalism it teaches. His system is called *Visistadvaita*, a term not used by him anywhere in his writings but came into vogue to differentiate it from the other systems of *Advaita*. His *vedantic* views resulted theistic *Vaisnavism*, thereby turning philosophy to religion. S.S. Raghavachar observes: “From the religious point of view, the Visistadvaita of Ramanuja is Vaisnavism” (*Visistadvaita* 62). In fact his mission in life was to
effect a rational and natural mingling of the rapturous devotion of the Alwars with the *Upanisadic* quest of the ontological and unifying ground of the changing world of the many. He often describes *Brahman* as one whose essential nature is solely knowledge and bliss. Truth, incorruptible purity and infinity are integral and constitute His essence as also His inherent attitudes. These attributes are classified as six qualities of *Bhagawan* (God). Svami Thapasyanandha in his book entitled *Ramanuja: His life, religion and philosophy’* (1992) classifies these six qualities of Bhagawan:

- Gnana, (Omniscience), Bala (Omnipotence), Aiswarya (Lordship),
- Shakthi (Creative Power), Veerya (Immutability) and Thejas (Splendour). Some more qualities are also added to these six-
- Gambirya (inestimable grandeur) Audarya (Generosity) and Karunya (Compassion). (36-37)

However, the Lord cannot be confined to these qualities alone. As Nammalvar declares in his *Tiruvaymoli*, 1.1.1, He is “the natural repository of innumerable auspicious traits of unlimited dimensions” (S. Satyamurthi Ayyangar, *Tiruvaymoli English Glossary* Vol.1 (1981), 1).

Swami Ramakrishnananda in his *Life of Ramanuja* (2002) explains the philosophy of the seer:

He accepts as ultimate three kinds of entities – Matter (*acit*) soul (*cit*) and God (*Iswara*). Though equally real, matter and soul
depend on God and constitute His body or attributes, the relation being conceived as that between body and soul. Individual souls and matter form the body of God and He is the Soul of souls and matter. God is the central reality of soul and matter, and neither can exist without Him. They exist in Him and are absolutely inseparable. Thus the three realities are ultimate and eternal each having its own distinctiveness. (258)

M. Hiriyanna’s precise elucidation of the three ultimate entities and their inseparability deserves to be quoted. He states:

Ramanuja recognizes as ultimate and real the three factors (tattvatreya) of matter (acit), soul (cit) and God (Isvara). Though equally ultimate, the first two are absolutely dependent upon the last, the dependence being conceived as that of the body upon the soul. Whatever is, is thus the body of God and he is the soul not only of inorganic nature but also of souls or jivas. It is in this connection that Ramanuja formulates the relation, so important in his system, of aprathak-siddhi or ‘inseparability’ which obtains between substance and attribute and may be found between one substance and another. It may be described as the pivot on which his whole philosophy turns. (Outlines of Indian Philosophy (1951) 398-99)
The scholar further explains that the *aprathak-siddhi* indicates the internal relationship like that of the intimacy between the body and soul, the former supported and controlled by the latter. Matter and souls, being the body of God are sustained by him and exist entirely for him. This inseparable unity of matter, souls and God is the Brahman or Absolute of Ramanuja. Hiriyanna also ventures to define the term *Visistadvaita*:

[Ramanuja’s] conception of the Absolute may be described as that of an organic unity in which, as in a living organism, one element predominates over and controls the rest. The subordinate elements are termed visesanas and the predominant one visesya. Because the visesanas cannot by hypothesis exist by themselves or separately, the complex whole (visista) in which they are included is described as a unity. Hence the name ‘Visistadvaita’. (399)

*Cit*, the domicile of consciousness is noted by various terms: *jiva*, *pratyagatma*, *jivatma*, *kshetragna*, and *chetana*. *Cit* is different from body; it is eternal – is neither born nor dies, is like an atom inside, indivisible, changeless, the abode of *jnana*, and by relation is body to God, dependent on Him. The souls are many and there is no difference among them as far as their essential nature is concerned. But in *samsara*, as a result of its past *karma* (deeds done in previous births) its consciousness contracts, the expansion of which through constant communion with God is *Moksa* or Liberation. The souls are of three kinds - *nithya sooris* (those that are ever free and never experience bondage),
muktas (Those that have attained release from transmigration), bhaktas (those that are still in samsara). According to Ramanuja there is no jivan-mukta or a liberated jiva when the body is alive.

Acit is also referred to by various names: pradhana, avyaktha, prakriti, avidhya, maya, achetana. Acit is that which possesses a combination of sattwa, rajas and tamasa gunas, and is a veil to the knowledge and bliss of embodied souls. It causes ignorance or makes the person believe that it is impossible to know the Supreme Being, the Ultimate cause. It is eternal and an instrument in the hands of God. Changes occur in it according to Space and Time. It also forms the body of God.

Iswara or God or Narayana, the Lord of all, is named variously – Brahman, Para Brahma, Parameswara, Purushothama, Parama Purusha, Vishnu, Narayana. Iswara is infinite, intelligent, bliss, omnicient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and is opposed to all evils. He is the Creator, Protector and Destroyer of the creation. He is the refuge and resort of four types of people – arthi (one who is in trouble), artharthi (one who is in need of wealth), jignasu (One who is eager to know) and jnani (one who has realized). He is the bestower of four desires of people -- dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kama (desire) and moksa (salvation) which are together called purusartha. Iswara is possessed of a Divine Body unlike ordinary creations who take the material form of bodies in accordance with one’s own karma.
Any writing on Sri Ramanuja will be incomplete if no mention is made of *Dharmabhutajnana*, the eternal attribute of the *jiva*. This is a significant contribution to the *Vedantic* thinking, as Ramanuja recognizes the distinction between substance or *dravya* and attribute or *adravya*. In Hiriyanna's words, “There are thus only two main categories of which the second, *adravya*, is always and necessarily dependent upon the first, *dravya*, although neither, in consequence of the unique relation that obtains between them, can be or be thought of apart from the other” (*Outlines of Indian Philosophy* 402) (1951). *Visistadvaita* affirms that “whatever serves as the substratum of change is *dravya*. . . . But it is the attributive elements (visesana) alone that change . . . The substantive element (visesya) in itself is changeless. God viewed as the visesya is changeless and soul also is so, but the dharma-bhuta-jnana which belongs to them changes” (402-3). The six *dravyas* are divided into two main classes – *jada* and *ajada*. The *jada* includes *prakriti* and *kala* (time) In the *Ajada* category are included *Isvara, Jiva*, the *suddha-sattva* or *nitya-vibhuti* and *dharmabhutajnana*. *Dharmi jnana* or Substance consciousness is inward while *dharmabhutajnana* or Attribute consciousness is outward. God is pure knowledge substance and *dharmabhutajnana* covers all existences. When the *jiva* is liberated he continues to maintain his individuality, his *dharmabhutajnana* expands and merges with that of God. It is like a small wick-lamp kept before a glazing light of intense splendour. The light of wick-lamp
continues to have its individuality but its radiance becomes merged and indistinguishable from the glazing luminosity of the other.

Ramanuja’s main interest in divine philosophy was to link the *vaisnava* devotion of the alwars and the *Vedanta* that seeks to find out the unity behind diversity – this is the theistic aspect of *Visistadvaita*. Being a practical person he knew that ordinary man requires a concrete conception of God if he is to focus his attention on the divinity and gradually attain spiritual insight. His teachings on *bhakti* are addressed to both the intellectuals who seek *vedantic* support and also to simple souls who have an unalloyed faith in God and submission to His will. *Bhakti* is classified into three categories - *Parabhakti*, *Parajnana*, and *Paramabhakti*. *Bhakti* is described as knowledge of the ultimate reality and the consequent excessive adoration and attachment to God. Ramanuja equates *bhakti* to *dhyana* and *upasana*, the former is concentration of mind on God and the latter, the incessant thought of Him. *Parabhakti* is that when the mind without any external simulation goes towards God. *Parajnana* is the devotion acquired through wisdom. *Paramabhakti* is that when the devotee becomes mad with love and longing as he remains intimate with divine. P.N.Srinivasachari in his book *The Philosophy of Visistadvaita* (1943) succinctly observes “the love of God becomes, in course of time, a thirst for communion and *parabhakti* deepens into *parajnana*; and *parajnana* results in *paramabhakti* or supreme devotion and becomes irresistible” (381). Above the *bhaktiyoga*, Ramanuja prescribes *Prapatti*, the methodology in *vaisnavism* for a person to do complete surrender
to the Lord, leaving everything unto Him so that he can receive moksa or liberation. Ramanuja has thus made the grace of devotional doctrine available to all men who are unable to do any form of bhakti. Prapatti also known as ‘Saranagati’, is the core of theistic Vaisnavism.

Ramanuja’s writings comprise nine works. Four of them are short devotional compositions, but they contain the quintessence of his philosophical position. They are Nithya Grantha, Saranagathi Gadhya, Sriranga Gadhya and Vaikunta Gadhya. His other works are the commentary on Bhagavad Gita, the Upanisads are surveyed and synoptically viewed in Vedartha Sangraha, a brief elucidation of Brahma-sutras in Vedanta Sara and Vedanta Deepa and his magnum opus Sri Bhasya, his greatest work is the fullest commentary on all the important Brahma-sutras. S.S. Raghavachar in his book Visistadvaita (1977) pays an encomium to this stupendous work and asserts:

There is nothing provisional and piecemeal in argument. The work imparts completeness and finality to the entire Vedantic outlook of Visistadvaita. Even this philosophising contains outbursts of rapturous bhakti of the author. There is no bifurcation of bhakti and jnana in the writings of Ramanuja, and the fusion of the two seems to elevate both. (12)

Ramanuja, however, did not want to leave his system of philosophy, separated from human life and experience. He created many avenues for practical
application in the cult of *Vaisnavism* to benefit not only the learned but also the laymen.

Unlike Ramanuja, Shakespeare is neither a systematic thinker nor a propounder of philosophy. As a stupendous theatre-man he could observe and relate what went around him, and voice-out the worldly-wise philosophy through his characters in the given circumstances. This can obviously satisfy any philosophical precepts, western or eastern. William Shakespeare was born sometime between 21\textsuperscript{st} and 24\textsuperscript{th} April 1564 AD at the borough of Stratford-upon-Avon. The nearby city of Coventry had a rich tradition of theatrical activity. Shakespeare attended the local grammar school from where he received a vigorous Latin based education which gave him access to famous classical myths and histories and trained him in oral presentation. The serious financial problem of the family prevented Shakespeare from obtaining university degree. The first reference to Shakespeare as a writer and actor in London dates from 1592 and his artistic and financial success dates from 1598 when his plays began to be published with his name on the title page. Some consider he died on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} April 1616, and was buried near the altar in Holy Trinity Church.

Shakespeare composed multiple forms of poetry or verse for different kinds of dramas, and a wide range of characters and plots. Certain ideas about the design of the cosmos, the nature of mankind, the necessity of Government, the organization of society and the inferiority of women were widely promulgated during his time. He was politically conservative, an upholder of
monarchy, proponent of obedience to authority in the family and the state. His plays can be categorized as Tragedies, Romantic comedies, Romances, Tragicomedies, Historical and Roman plays. Shakespeare’s romantic comedy at its core is fuelled by desire. Tragedy is one of the many human efforts to explore the problem of evil. Although he never uses the word romance in his plays, it usually suggests the idea of fiction that are unrealistic, works that create a world dominated by a change rather than character or cause and effects. The Narrative poems published in 1593 and 1594 made Shakespeare a celebrity.

Shakespeare apart from his plays, has penned a few poems such as *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Sonnets*, *A Lover’s Complaint*, *The Passionate Pilgrim*, *The Phoenix and the Turtle*. These poems with the exception of *Sonnets*, have not attracted much critical attention. All these poems reflect the lover’s passion one sort or another. Both *A Lover’s Complaint* and *Venus and Adonis* present a hetero-sexual passion from the women’s point of view, while *The Rape of Lucrece* reveals the agony of lust and guilt. *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton celebrated in his *Sonnets* as the ‘fair youth’. *The Phoenix and the Turtle* is a different metaphysical poem that talks about a perfected love. Critics in their elaborate research relate these poems to the *Sonnets*, that has obviously lent itself to varied commentaries. G. Wilson Knight in his book *The Mutual Flame* (1955) looks at Phoenix as a symbol and comments:
The Phoenix (i) rouses an extreme poetical, almost mystical devotion; (ii) is naturally associated with excelling love including chastity; and (iii) has immortal powers. Clearly we are close to Shakespeare’s sonnets. . . . but the Phoenix is certainly a symbol of personal, indeed intimate experience. (151)

The content of the sonnets, though presents his mental commitment to a fair man and a dark woman, records different thoughts that have yielded to different interpretations. The three great issues are Time, Death and Eternity. The theme of Time has been taken up in the next chapter to find out its application in terms of Ramanuja’s philosophy.

The Sonnets has provoked a large critical writing, the practice of which continues vigorously. For instance, Roger Peters in his erudite work William Shakespeare’s Sonnet Philosophy (2005) in four volumes discusses in detail that the Sonnets provide the basic pattern that is elaborated as various thematic structures in the different plays. Volume 1 is “The Sonnet Logic” and “demonstrates that the Sonnets articulate the logical conditions for any mythic expression including Shakespeare’s plays”. Volume 2, “Sonnet Commentaries”, “confirms that the philosophy Shakespeare developed very early in his career as a playwright and poet is evident in every aspect of the sonnets”. Shakespeare seems to have modified several of his earlier sonnets “to express the various elements of his natural logic The increase sonnets, the truth and beauty sonnets to the Master and to the Mistress unfailingly consider the sexual dynamics, the
logic of writing, and the logic of human mind”. Volume 3 comprises “Play Commentaries” and “begins the process of considering all Shakespeare’s plays and poems from the vantage point of the Sonnet philosophy”. The section demonstrates “that only the Sonnet philosophy provides a complete insight into Shakespeare's works”. Volume 4 is “Duchamp Letter and 10 Essays”. “The Duchamp letter explains how the combination of the work of four philosophic thinkers enabled an insight into Shakespeare's philosophy” each providing “a component that the comprehensive and consistent philosophy of the Sonnets coordinates and completes”. The four thinkers discussed are Charles Darwin, the English Naturalist (1809-1882), Ludwig Wittgenstein, the Austrian-British philosopher (1889-1951), Stephen Mallarme, the French symbolist poet (1842-1898) and Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), a French artist. (http://www.quaternaryinstitute.com/sonnetphilosophy4vols.html)

The most famous of all his plays are mainly tragedies. These plays were written throughout his entire career, beginning with earliest of his tragedies Titus Andronicus and Romeo and Juliet. The first one is considered to be the bloodiest as it involves a Roman general who sacrifices the son of a defeated army. Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra, Timon of Athens and Troilus and Cressida are his other tragedies written between 1600 and 1607. His tragedies could be divided into two main headings. The first group includes love or “ heart” tragedies of Romeo and Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra and Othello which involve a pair of lovers torn apart by fate and society. In these
three plays, “the main characters are not masters of their own destiny, but pawns pulled along toward death or permanent separation beyond control”. The remaining plays have been described as “head” tragedies in which the hero “is always faced with opportunities of redemption, but never is able to take them in time, leading almost always to death. . . . The protagonists of Shakespeare’s tragedies are not villains or saints but generally good people destroyed by their own ego or ill fate” (www.wisegeek.com/what-are-shakespeares-tragedies.htm). David Chandler in his essay “The Essence of Shakespearean Tragedy” writes:

The essence of Shakespeare's tragedies is the expression of one of the great paradoxes of life. We might call it the paradox of disappointment. . . . Tragic literature confronts us afresh with this paradox and we become fascinated by it. . . . It does not propose a solution to the paradox. It does not tell that life is meaningful in spite of defeat and disappointment, nor does it point to despair and proclaim the worthlessness of our hopes. Rather it affirms the paradox and challenges us within it. (www.wisegeek.com)

Many of Shakespeare’s plays are historical, but only certain plays are categorized as such. *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* are historical in setting but are correctly classified as tragedies. Likewise the Roman plays, *Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* are all based on historical sources. The ten historical plays founded on English history are *Henry IV, Part I, Part II, Henry V, Henry
These plays share a number of common features. The Shakespeare histories dramatize the Hundred Years War with France. In writing the history plays, Shakespeare did not attempt to render a historically accurate picture of the past. Rather, he was writing to entertain his theater audience and so moulded historical events to suit their prejudices. The history plays say more about Shakespeare’s time than the Medieval society in which they are set. For example, Shakespeare casts King Henry V as an everyman hero to exploit the growing sense of patriotism in England. Above all, the history plays offer a view of society that cuts right across the class system. These plays present all kinds of characters from lowly-beggars to the monarchy, the most memorable ones being Henry V and Falstaff.

The comedies of Shakespeare are a class of their kind. Though Shakespeare owed a lot to his predecessors, his own peculiar and native genius enabled him to create his plays. Almost all of Shakespeare's comedies are built up on a love story, indeed on a group of love stories; lovers are united, faults are pardoned, enmities are reconciled. His comedies tend to affirm the basic harmony of life, nevertheless, many of them include the melancholy and the sinful. Shakespearean comedies celebrate marriage, more often conclude with multiple marriages. Marriage, thus, becomes a marker, which has the fullest potential for happiness in the human experience. It also indicates the importance of preserving the society. The significant pattern in these comedies is movement
into the green world, generally set far from the madding crowd. Of the seventeen comedies of Shakespeare, plays such as *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, have an unusual tone with a difficult mix of humour and tragedy and so have been classified as ‘problem plays’. *Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*, considered as the later plays of Shakespeare, receive the special designation, ‘romances’, in which the stories take place across expanses of space and time. These plays share characteristics such as: a redemptive plotline with a happy ending that involves the re-uniting of long-separated family members, magic and other fantastical elements, the presence of masque-like figures and a mixture of "courtly" and "pastoral" scenes.

Shakespeare has been celebrated for the depth of his themes, vividness of his characters and the beauty of his poetry. However, the philosophical nature of his compositions have largely been overlooked. Philosophers often are irresistibly tempted by the depth and complexity of the literary works, which lure people who respond to the complexity of abstract thought. Such philosophers see profound thought in Shakespeare not wrongly. His philosophical insights are surprising and subtle, while genuinely illuminating themes of love, avoidance, skepticism, and acknowledgment in the dramas that do not fail to express the agony of human emotions. A philosopher reading Shakespeare would ponder in a genuinely philosophical way. Such a reading should illuminate the world of the plays, closely attending enough to language and texture as the interpretation gets
changed the way one looks at the work. It also informs why philosophical thinking needs to turn to Shakespeare’s plays or similar kind of works. The portrayal and dissection of a wide range of human experiences that happen in the drama of life are depicted beautifully through his dramas, sonnets and poems in such a way that one is able to understand his mind by reading in between the lines of his works. The true originality of Shakespeare’s mind lies in the integration of ideas gathered from many sources and in his poetic gift of seeking new found resemblances and expressing them in memorable verse. The greater the artist the more perfectly will his mind transmute the passion on which it works and the greater therefore will be the separation the heart that suffers and the mind that creates. Shakespeare had the conviction that evil could never be finally cleansed from the world, but he found in the twin action of penitence and forgiveness the surest solvent of the misery.

Focusing on Shakespeare’s six most regarded plays – *A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, and The Tempest* – the noted philosopher Colin McGinn provides a brilliant analysis of the major philosophical themes embedded in Shakespeare’s work, including the possibility of human knowledge, the threat of skepticism, the nature and persistence of the self; the character of causation as it shapes human affairs, the existence and nature of evil; and the power of language to influence and shape the human mind. McGinn observes in his book, *Shakespeare’s Philosophy: Discovering the Meaning behind the Plays*: “He is a philosophical dramatist. There is not a
sentimental bone in his body. He has the curiosity of a scientist, the judgement of a philosopher, and the soul of a poet” (www.amazon.com). Shakespeare’s unique contribution to the exploration of human nature is a profound appreciation of the capacity of other minds and the mysteries of the soul, presenting a view of the self as theatrical in nature. His major tragedies are patterned along these philosophical concerns/concepts, as “fresh, innovative and thought–provoking. Shakespeare’s Philosophy is an exhilarating reading experience”. (McGinn). Shakespeare’s famous phrase in *As You Like It*, “All the world’s stage/ And all the men and women merely players” (II.vii.142-143) reflects a common sense of the self shared by many philosophers.

It is true that his reading of his works sometimes elude definition, because he was first concerned with turning human action in poetry not with prescribing codes of conduct or formulating system of metaphysical thought. This may lead one to think that he was morally indifferent; but it is not so because many of the expressions and traditional aphorisms put through the mouth of fools, simple folk or even rogues have been cherished for their moral teachings. M.M. Reese in his book *Shakespeare: His World and His work* (1953) makes a valuable observation:

Suffering will be the portion of most of mankind, and only love will redeem it. Compassion is the virtue that is more than kind of all the qualities which help men to resist evil in the world coverage, self sacrifice, loyalty, forgiveness are attributed of
loving kindness and it is in his capacity for love and mercy that man reach upwards to nature of God. Let’s exchange charity. Where one is ready to forgive, another is to repent, the evil fails.

(311)

Shakespeare believed that redemption by love is the cardinal doctrine of Christianity, but he seems to have felt that redemption is brought about by man’s individual action rather than by the efficacy of spiritual grace. In all that he wrote he honoured the Christian teaching that man shall love one another, bring one another to repentance and repay evil with good. Though he believed that there is divinity that shapes men’s ends and he rejected it as inadequate, alike for tragedy and life. He also believed that it was for the sake of man that the physical universe had been created. The goal of man’s life is to know God, and God has revealed himself in two ways first by the scriptural word and secondly by the creation. His strong notion was that a man has no right to blame his failures on the persuasiveness of neither irresistible humans nor pity himself as the victim of fate. For neither star nor human could destroy him unless he shared in his own destruction by allowing his will or reason to be enslaved. He reiterates through his plays the idea that the freedom to which man may properly aspire is freedom from bondage of passion and appetite, and the only standard of living that he acknowledges is the moral standard. He asserts that Life itself has many interpretations which do not invalidate one another.
Subsequently, an appraisal of the similarities of both Ramanuja and Shakespeare can be seen. Ramanuja, by interpreting the Vedas and the Upanishads, promulgated his philosophical concept Visistadvaita and theistically implicated it as the religious mode, Sri Vaisnavism which is an improvisation of the Vaisnavism prevalent much earlier to his period. Vaisnavism is the worshipping of Vishnu. A Sri Vaisnavaite, then, is not only the worshipper of Vishnu but also the follower of Visistadvaita and Sri Vaisnavism principle as codified by Ramanuja. On the other hand, Shakespeare is not a definite philosopher but a theatre-man and a keen observer of the world around him. His humaneness, perhaps, made him absorb alike both the good and ill of mankind, and fantastically convert them as theatre stuff. The fundamental difference between Ramanuja and Shakespeare is that while the former is concerned about the aspects of man, the latter concentrates on the empirical experiences of man. Both of them however have immense faith in the inherent positive potentials in humankind. The pivot of their faith is supreme surrender – to Ramanuja it takes a divine end, it is to Lord Vishnu Narayana and to Shakespeare, it is to one’s benevolent self, as he declares it through Prospero in his last speech in The Tempest:

…the rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. (V.i - 31-34)
In practice, both of them are pronounced humanists. Ramanuja’s life-history is strewn with many incidents that reveal his cosmopolitan approach to life with which he attempted to direct the people towards spiritual path through bhakti. Shakespeare as a close observer of the world and its inhabitants looked at life as a drama which he transferred to his plays. This empirical approach of the playwright lends itself to different philosophical interpretations. One such is Ramanuja’s philosophy.

In the forth-coming chapters, select works of Shakespeare will be scrutinized in terms of a few precepts of Ramanuja to show how Shakespeare’s works respond to this philosopher’s thinking. The concepts chosen are kala or time, bhuvanasundara or Cosmic Beauty, dharmabhutajnana or attributive consciousness, daya or mercy, and prapatti or supreme surrender. These crucial concepts mostly cover the ontological, metaphysical and ethical aspects of Ramanuja’s philosophy. The next chapter discusses the concept of kala or Time as explicated by Ramanuja and how it has been replicated in the Sonnets and the plays of Shakespeare.