

THE ĀCĀRYAS

The tradition that has provided the synthesis of the triple streams of religious thought comes to an end in its first phase with the āḷvār . the āḷvār however prepared the age of the Ācāryas, the teachers of the philosophy underlying the experiences of the āḷvār. The tasks required a different kind of competence. The last of the āḷvār (Nammāḷvār) is said to be the teacher of the first of the Ācāryas (Nāthamuni which is the contraction of the full name Ranganātha Muni. He is said to have been a yogi who lived for about 500 years and passed away about 920 A.D. This conception however is not believed by the moderns who have accepted only 100 years as the maximum period of man's life, despite our getting news about more persons living beyond this figure.

(1) *Nāthamuni*

Ranganātha Muni was a native of Vipranārāyaṇapuram (Modern Mannargudi). There are different versions that he might have been one of the earliest immigrants from the North who carried the Bhāgavata Cult to the South and laid the foundation of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava cult during the second to the seventh centuries of the Christian era during the 'palmy days of pallava Rule'. In any case there has been a resurgence of tamil hymnal religious thought based on the Bhāgavata and Pāñcarātra tradition which gave rise to the phenomenon of temple construction in the South, which even today preserves the deep and abiding sense of presence of the Divine in the temples. In a sense the tenure philosophy of Bhāgavata grants sanction to the temple centered culture. The temples themselves became the source of spiritual and material inspiration, of art and craft, yoga and realisation.

Nāthamuni imbibed the spiritual atmosphere of the temples. He heard it seems some beautiful tamil hymns being sung by some persons in the temple.

He was charged by the spiritual quality and since they centered round Śrī Kṛṣṇa he was more than entranced. He tried to get information about the source of the songs. He learn that they were by one Sathakopa a great devotee of Kurukai, (Āḷvār Tirnagari) near Tirunelveli. He began an assiduous task of collecting all the hymns of sathakopa which numbered more than a thousand He is said to have arranged the hymns in the order thanks to the gift of divine granted by sathakopa himself in his yogic state. Not content with having gathered and collected and arranged these hymns, he saw to it that these hymns get recited in the temples at srirangam on important occasions and also regularly. This is being done even today in almost all temples where Śrī Vaṣṇava method of worship is being followed. This is the beginning of combining the tamil with the sanskr̥t tradition of worship in the temples, and also in the dialy worship in the houses also.

Nāthamun seems to have initiated also the collection of other hymns by other Āḷvār s also. He was well – versed both in Sanskrit and Tamil and a siddha adept in Yoga (Bhāgavata Yoga). He seems to have composed a work of Logic *Nyāyatattva*, and a work of *Yoga Yogarahasya*. Only a few extracts are given by Śrī Venkatanatha in his *Nyāya-siddhanjana* otherwise the tow works have been lost. He left no tamil work, though he has given taniyans or praise – verses on Nammāḷvār, Periyāḷvār, and Mdhurakavi.

Nāthamuni as is the usual custom, visited on pilgrimage all the holy shrines of indiaincluding Badrai, Mathura, Dwaraka etc and it was when the was at Mathura, most probably his grandson was born whom he named Yamuna (AD 916). Nāthamuni's son was Īśvaramuni, and nothing much is known except that like his father he also followed his footsteps.

On Yamuna, indeed fell the mantle of continuing the great work that his grandsire began.

Nāthamuni had eleven disciples, Pundarīkākṣa, Kurukunatha and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Lakṣminātha being the most important. The last named seems th hare

written and extensive work on Praptti. Pundarīkākṣa (Uyyakondar) was the teacher of Rama Miśra (Manakkal Nambi) and Pundarīkākṣa had instructed the latter to teach Yamuna, indeed to bring him back from his kingly enjoyments to the sense of spiritual destiny to which he was elected by Nāthamuni.

(2) Yāmunacārya

Yāmunacārya is the grandson of Nāthamuni. His father was Īśvaramuni. Nāthamuni had several disciples and died when yāmuna was very young. He grew up at his ancestral place Vipranārāyaṇapouram (Mannarguid). He was very brilliant and attractive looking and a born leader. Even whilst he was studying under a good pundit he seems to have attracted the attention of all for his boldness and it is stated that once his own teacher was called upon to pay tax to a superior pundit in the court of the prince. Yāmuna on behalf of his teacher refused to pay the tax and elected to accept a debate with that pundit. He worsted him and in the bargain was granted half the lands by the ruler. Thus very early he was in affluent and royal circumstances. He married and had two daughters one of whom was the mother of Śrī Rāmānuja. But whilst his abilities as a ruler were being appreciated, he was called upon by one Rāmā miśra, the disciple of Pundarīkākṣa who was instructed by Nāthamuni to look after Yāmuna when he came of age so as to fit him for being the successor to Nāthamuni. The story is told how Rāmā miśra tried to get an audience with Yāmuna by a simple ruse of having arranged for a particular kind of vegetable to be given regularly to Yāmuna asked for that delicacy and was told that it was not brought by a particular person. The person was sent far and Rāmā Miśra presented himself before Yāmuna. Then Rāmā Miśra told him that his grandfather had left a treasure for him and took Yāmuna to the temple of Śrīrangam and told him that Śrī Ranganātha was his treasure. Yāmuna immediately understood that his grandsire had given him the task of spreading Śrī Vaiṣṇavism as the service of god. He donned the robes of sannyāsin at once and became the leader of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism

Yāmuna occupies a very important place in the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita. His important works formed the basic texts of Viśiṣṭādvaita. His works have come down to us unlike those of his grand father. Śrī Rāmāṇuja had directly been guided by these works. Yāmuna wrote Siddhi traya comprising Ātma siddhi, Īśvara Siddhi and Samvit siddhi, Gītārthasamgraha, Agamaprāmānya, and slokarantana. It is said that he wrote another work called Mahāpuruṣanirṇaya, but this is not extant.

Siddhi traya supplies all the arguments advanced by the different schools in regard to the nature of the soul, Īśvara and consciousness. It is written in terse prose style. Though Yāmuna relies on the śāstra for the proof of the ultimate categories yet he wishes to show that the arguments advanced by the materialists and others are self – contradictory and not proved even by the inferences “All dogmatism may carry weight with believers; we are non – believers and require logic to convince us.

Hanta brahmopadeśo yam śraddhaneṣu śobhate,

Vayam aśraddhānaśmo yeyuktim prthiyāmahe.

Yāmuna refuted the theories of materialists who hold that the finite soul is identical with the body, that it is identical with the sense or the manas, or consciousness or breath; Yāmuna concludes that “The individual soul is separate from the body: it is a separate entity in each body; it is by nature subtle, eternal, blissful. It is distinct from the body, the senses, the mind the vital air, and the intellect and is self – contained.

Dehendriya manah prāṇādhibhyo ‘nyo’ nyasādhanah,

Nitya vyāpi pratikṣetrātma bhinnah svataḥ sukhi. Indeed Śrī Rāmāṇuja utilizes Siddhitraye extensively in his Śrī Bhāṣya to refute the positions of Sankara.

Regarding the nature of Īśvara, Yāmuna expounds the vedic statement that Īśvara is the Only supreme Being and that does not mean that other existents exist. “To say that the Chola king is now reigning in this country, is all supreme wants without a second, can only exclude the existence of another monarch equal (in power) to him; it cannot imply the denial of the existence of a wife, sons, or servants of such a monarch “Yathā colanṛpāh sāmṛād advitiyo iti bhūtale iti tattulyanṛpati nivāraṇaparam vacah, na tu tat putra tatbhr̥tya kalatrādi nivāraṇam”.

Cārvaka’s holds that the soul is the body. Yāmuna takes his stand on the notion of self consciousness. He says that our perception ‘ I know’ distinctly points to the self as subject as distinguished from the perception of the body as ‘this is my body’. When I restrain my senses from the outer objects and concentrate on myself I have still the notion of myself as i. but it does not refer to the body. Introspection shows that I am independently by myself. I am the enjoyer whereas everything else is what I enjoy. I am not t for the sake of body. I am an end in myself and never a means for anything else. All combinations and collocations are for the sake of another whom they serve: the self is neither the result of any collocation nor does it exist for the sake of serving another.

Consciousness cannot be regarded as being the product of the body; it is not an intoxicating property of combinations of the four elements: - earth, water, fire, air. It is not a result of chemical change – an epiphenomenon. For consciousness is not made of particles since if it were so there can be no identity of consciousness. Therefore consciousness belongs to an entity, the soul, which is different from the body.

Consciousness does not belong to the senses for what is perceived by one sense could not be perceived by the other sense: and together all the senses cannot grant consciousness. When there is no consciousness the senses can see nothing at all.

Consciousness is not manas is nothing but an organ to give us knowledge in succession. How can manas which is known to be an instrument of knowledge be the subject of knowledge? (It is wrong to conclude as Das Gupta does that the mans is 7tman of Yāmuna if manas in considered to be a separate organ by which we know succession. Copare Ramanujachari’s translation of Sidditraya p. 27. Manas may be on aspect of Buddhi or independent. Yāmuna leaves the question open, andina ny ecen manas cannot be an intelligent entity. Das Gup[ta is wrong here.

Nor is the ātman mere knowledge or consciousness as the Vijñānavādin holds, for it is intelligent. But Yāmuna points out hat the quilt of being non – intelligent belongs to consciousness because consciousness shines merely by its own being; it is not eternal but ‘what is termed consciousness is well – known to posses the eternal but manifesting by its very existence some object to its own substrate to have the words jñāna , avagati, anubhūti as its ynonyms, to have an object and to be the quality of the know self. Consciousness does not exist in deep sleep etc. consciousness as devoid of objects and sustrate cannot exist.”

The Sāmkhya view that ahamkāra or buddhi can be the knower cannot be accepted as they are products of prakṛit and thus non – intelligent by themselves.

There are certain criticisms of sāmkhya made by Yāmuna (i) the pcesses of prakṛit are said to be for the purpose of puruṣa. it cannot be proved. puruṣa is said to be an inference from the processes of prakṛit (ii) puruṣa is said to be reflected: but how can an immaterial entity be reflected in material entity; puruṣa in not a visible object. If it is said that buddhi become like puruṣa rather than reflects it hten buddhi becomes quality less, and no process is possible. puruṣa in sāmkhya is pure intelligence, not intelligent.

Īśvara Siddhi

Mimāmsakas do not admit the existence of the Īśvara, as He cannot be proved. He is not an object of perception, either sādāhāraṇa or yogaja. Nor can He be proved by means of inference as the Naiyāyikas assert.

The Nyāya proves that since the world is an effect it must have an intelligent person to produce it who has direct knowledge of all the materials with which it is being made. He has also direct knowledge of the dharma and adharma of men in accordance with which every man is granted such experiences as he deserves. God is thus the creator of the world as well as the moral governor. He by His desire sets the world in motion bringing all its parts together. He has no body, but still carries on the world functions of His desire by His manas. He has to be admitted as the person of infinite knowledge and power.

Brahman is not a quality – less pure intelligence but a person, supreme Ruler of Saccidānanda. He is the sole Lord but that does not mean other depends like the souls and nature do not exist.

Thus God is real. The souls and Nature are dependently real, Das Gupta shows that Yāmuna held the position of the Nyāya in respect of the proofs of the existence of God. But it clear that Rāmānuja who has criticized the positions of Nyāya holds that inference cannot process the existence of God. Only śabda can be the authority. Indeed on of the basic of Nyāya is to prove God not only as creator of the world but also the maerk of śabda, or the auto of the śabda. So they are precluded form appealing to śabda, to prove the Īśvara but had to go to interfere to prove God in order to avoid circular reasoning.

It may also be state that Īśvara means different things in the different darasans.

Nyāya claims Brahman to be the creator of the world and śabda, for there is design and the signs of bring made in the world or universe and language. There is unity of design hence it must be by one single Architect, omniscient and

omnipotent. This is challenged by Rāmāṇuja as unprovable by the rules of analogy and inferences and perception.

Yoga proves the existence of Īśvara not at the creator of the universe but as the teacher of the souls the path of liberation from prakṛit. He cannot be the creator as prakṛiti cannot be affected or changed, as He is omniscient of all her modes and changes. Sāṃkhya cannot accept the Īśvara or even One Self – theory as there can hardly be a creative process set into motion.

mīmāṃsaka does not accept the Īśvara as creator of śabda as śabda is claimed to be apauruṣeya, being coeval with Gods or God Himself. It is not interested in the creatorship business. That is the reason why Vedānta. Sūtras take up the question of creator.

Yāmuna laid fundamentally the basic concepts of Viśiṣṭādvaita. He showed that the soul or puruṣa is self-conscious and *svayamprakāśa* and known not through perception or inference but by itself as self – evident. It is not mere consciousness, for consciousness is a quality of the subject or self, whether it is of a supreme Subject or Self like the Īśvara or the finite subject, the ātman. It is a dharma of a dharma-sub which has the nature of being the body (śarīra) of Brahman as the śabda reiterates. Thus the basis of authority or pramāṇa is exclusively shown to be śāstra. For this purpose Yāmuna brilliantly criticizes the claims of rationalists and empiricists to prove that existence of Īśvara and the soul.

In his *samvitsiddhi* which it is stated was to have been the first siddhi but which usually is put at the end as the third part, Yāmuna expounds the meaning of the so-called mahāvākyas on which Advaita depends namely '*Ekamevādvitīyam*, and *Tattvam asi*'. It is incomplete. Indeed it is also stated by Sri Viraraghavacharya, the recent editor of the Siddhitraya, that even the Īśvara siddhi is incomplete. This should be true as the conclusion on which Das Gupta surmises is true of the Nyāya system and cannot have been that of Yāmuna – Śrī

Rāmānuja obviously has not gone counter to the earlier view of Yāmuna though Das Gupta seems to suggest it.

In the *Āgamaprāmānya*, Yāmuna establishes, as we have already stated, the authority of the Pāñcarātra śāstra. He also points out that the teachings of Pāñcarātra are not contradictory to Vedānta, but fully reconcilable. Other āmas however cannot claim this privilege, being contractor to the Vedānta.

The *Stotra Ratna* is a wonderful praise of the Lord wherein Yāmuna shows his supreme devotion; and indeed it can be stated that this creates the same unique air we see in the later *Gadyatraya* of Śrī Rāmānuja. It is a document of prapatti and not merely a prayer. The pañca angas of prapatti – ānukūlyasamkalpa, prātikūlya varjanam, gopṛṭva varaṇam, mahāviśvasa, ātmanikṣepa all these follow on that extreme condition of helplessness before the triumphant march of evil or sinfulness and egoism which is sometimes reckoned to be the sixth condition.

Na dharma niṣṭho sim na cātmavedi bhaktimāms tvac caranāravinde
Akincano nanyagatis śaraṇm papadye.

I am not a follower of the self:

Nor am I a devotee of the lotus feet.

I am one who hath nothing whatever and aim without any other way.

Refuge: I seek refuge at Thy Feet.

Almost all the future pace of Hymnal praise in Sanskrit called stotras has been set by Yāmuna. It is clear that the hymns or stotras made handbooks of the philosophy of Religion of Viśiṣṭādvaita.

Yāmuna may well be said to be the initiator of philosophical dialectics in Viśiṣṭādvaita.

As stated earlier, his Gītārtha-samgraha is the basis of Śrī Rāmānuja Śrī Bhāṣya. This has been fully shown by Śrī Vedānta Deśika in his *Tatparya Candika*. A recent study on the same was made by two modern scholars, Sriman D.T. Tatacharya in the Venkateswara Oriental Institute Journal, and Dr. J.B. Buitenen a Dutch scholar, in his doctoral dissertation on the Bhāṣya of Rāmānuja on the Gītā. The later writer has fully examined the indebtedness of Śrī Rāmānuja to Yāmuna. He has also given text and translation of the Gītārthasamgraha.

Yāmuna carya also composed a small four – verse or quartet of verse on the Sritattva, *catuśloki*. These four verses conceived as a disunity. God and mother form a divine pair. Sri is grace, who is inseparable from Hari in all possessions, powers and purposes.

1. Thou art the Spouse (illuminationkāntah) of the Puruṣotama; Thy seat and bed is the Divine Serpent: thy vehicle is the Divine Lord of the Birds the embodiment of the Vedas: Thy veil is the world attractive power Māyā. Thy host of servants are Brahma, Īśa and others and their divine spouses. Thy name is Sri.

O Divine Mother, what canst I say, about Thee?

2. Even thy consort omnipotent though He be, canst not know of Thy greatness even as He cannot now know His own; boundless eternal and blissful.

Thee do I praise as thy servant and refugee, fearlessly O sovereign of the Universe, the Beloved of the lord of the Universe, knowing that thou showerest thy Grace on those who seek refuge in Thee.

3. Thou savest by the grace of a particle of the nectar of Thy merciful glances the three worlds, non – existent because of its absence, and endow them with prosperity (existence). Without the grace of the Darling of the Lotus –

eyed verily where is there joy possible for the souls, here or in akṣara or (the Vaikunta or the path of Viṣṇu?)

They (the sages) say: Withg Thy wealth, splendour, and forms suited to His own are inseparably united all His forms: that transcendent aspect of peace Unending Vast, known as Brahman, That form of Hari which is called Brahman which *śeṣi* extremely lovable (adorable), wonderful and therefore liked by Him; and also the forms which He assumes at His will for His own pleasure.

The Catuśśloki sit the basic text for expounding the nature of Śrī tattva. Indeed the important of Śrī in this being called by sectarian name of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism . Śrī is a philosophic – religious category. There have unfortunately centered round this category much more of controversy between the tow branches of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism than need be. The problems are philosophical in a sense, and religious in another.

Philosophically, the basic question is can thee be two infinities? Is it not right to hold that there is only One Infinite and all finites, though these finites may be hierarchically arranged as nitays, muktas and baddhas? The principle of parsimony leads to the acceptance of the view that Śrī must be a finite. As against the above view which makes Śrī just belong to the category of finite soul, it is shown that the Śrī is infinite and the dualism is overcome by the principle of anapāyini inseparable relationship and fellowship in all respects which is fully exemplified in the institution of love. There cannot be that same equality between the finite and the infinite as exist between the infinities, however much such promise of equality may be given (Param sāmīyam upaiti), indeed it is held that equality is had except in respect of world creation and other processes, which include redemption and one should add that it excludes the Sriyahpatitiva, for Śrī indeed is conceived as the power of Brahman in all activities. The above verses of Yāmuna definitely show that She is Infinite and Her Grace is Infinite and intrinsic and not derivative unlike as in the case of souls or finite beings who can

achieve equality of fellowship rather than world – creative function. In any case these powers are derived from God and not inherent.