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## Contribution of Sanskrit scholars of Tamil Nadu to viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy

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### Introduction

One of the popular systems of Vedānta Philosophy namely, *Viśiṣṭādvaita* was propagated by Śrī Rāmānuja, who was well known as *Śrī Bhāṣyakāra*. He has systematized the teachings of the Rishis and the Ālvars as expounded by Nāthamuni and Ālavandār. The prophecy of the *Śrī mad Bhāgavata* that in the Kali Yuga, the rishis devoted to Narayana would be born in on the banks of rivers *Kāveri*, *Tāmrāparni* and the *Pālar* in *Drāvidadesa* or in the land of Agastya was fulfilled in the lives and teachings of the Ālvars<sup>[1]</sup>.

कृतादिषु प्रजा राजन् कलाविच्छन्ति सम्भवम् । कलौ खलु भविष्यन्ति नारायण परायणाः ॥३८

क्वचित् क्वचिन्महाराज द्रविडेषु च भृशः । ताम्रपर्णी नदी यत्र कृतमाला पयस्विनी ॥३९

कावेरी च महापुण्या प्रतीची च महानदी । ये पिबन्ति जलं तासां मनुजा मनुजेश्वरः ॥

प्रायो भक्ता भगवति वासुदेवेऽमलाशयाः ॥ ४०

All the Alvars are the messengers of God who spread the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* doctrine that the Brahman, the Sariri of all, has the chief quality of *Saulabhya* even on the perceptual level and that by rooting out *ahankāra* and by Self-surrender to His love, every man can attain *Mukti*. The truth laid down traditionally by the rishis and Ālvars are embodied in the system are known as Ubhaya Vedānta. Sri Nāthamuni who was considered as the founder of Ubhaya Vedānta School of Srivaisnavism has collected and collated the four thousand Hymns of Ālvars which contain the quintessence of the Vedas<sup>[2]</sup>.

Both the Acāryās namely Sri Nāthamuni and Sri Ālavandār were born at Kāttu Mannār Kovil in the South Arcot district in 824 CE Sri Nāthamuni has written *Nyāya Tattva* and *Yoga Rahasya* both books are not available but some portion of *Nyāya Tattva* found in *Vedānta Deśika's* works. Sri Nāthamuni was succeeded by *Uyyakondar* and *Manakkal Nambi*. The next Acharya who spread the principles of Srivaisnavism is Ālavandār or Yāmunāchārya, the grandson of Sri Nāthamuni. He has written *Stotraratnam*, *Gītārthasaṅgraham*, *Catuśślokī*, *Āgama Prāmānyam*, *Mahāpuruṣa Nirṇayam* and *Siddhi Trayam (Ātma Siddhi, Samvat Siddhi, Īśvara Siddhi)*<sup>[3]</sup>. His masterly summary in the *Gitartha Sangraha*, he explains the nature of *Prakṛti*, *Puruṣa* and *Puruṣottama* and the need for *Bhakti* and *Prapatti* as the supreme means to *Moksha* in about thirty verses. This was later developed by Śrī Rāmānuja and *Śrī Vedānta Deśika*.

Śrī Rāmānuja, who followed Yāmunāchārya was born in Sriperumbudur near Kanchi in the year 1017 CE as the son of Āsuri Keśava Somayāji and Kāntimathi, sister of Sri Śailapurna, the grandson of Yāmunāchārya. Śrī Rāmānuja has written an elaborate commentary on *Brahmasutra* based on the doctrine of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* namely, *Śrī Bhāṣya*. In addition to that *Vedartha Sangraha*, *Vedānta Sara*, *Vedānta Dīpa*, *Gīta Bhashya*, *Saranāgati Gadyam*, *Sri Ranga Gadyam* and *Vaikunta Gadyam* popularly known as *Gadya Trayam*<sup>[4]</sup>. By creating 74 *Simhāsanādhipati-s*, he has done a great revolution in spreading the principles of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* through which a number of *Guruparampara-s* have been developed.

Some important disciples who were closely attached to Śrī Rāmānuja were Mudaliyāndān, Kooratthāzhvan, Nadādurāzhvan, Embār, Kidāmbi Acchan and Tirukkukurukai Pirān. All these Acharyas were born in and around Kanchi and served with Śrī Rāmānuja in popularising the doctrine of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*.

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Among these āchāryā-s Kooratthazhvan has written *Atimānuṣa Stavam*, *Varadarājastavam*, *Vaikunṭha Stavam*, *Sundarabāhustavam*, *Śrīstavam*, *Abhigamanasāram*, *Yamakarānākaram*, *Gadyatrayabhāṣyam* etc., *Parāśarabhaṭṭar*, the son of Kooratthazhvan wrote *Aṣṭaśloki*, *Bhagavad Guṇadarpanam*, *Śrī Guṇaratnakośam*, *Śrī Raṅgarājastavam*, *Śrī Raṅganāthāṣṭakam*, *Tattvaratnākaram*, *Lakṣmī Kalyāṇam*, *Subālopaniṣad* etc., and Nadadur Ammal, the grandson of Nadadurazhvan has done *Tattvasāram*, *Prabandha Pārijatam*, *Prameyamālā*, *Paratattva Nirṇayam*, *Ārāhanakramam*, *Paramārtha Stuti*, *Paratvādi Pañcakam*, *Hetirājastavam*, *Āhnika Cūdāmaṇī*, *Prameya Sāram*, *Jñānasāram*, *Maṅgalāśāsanam*, *Jayanti Darśanam*, *Rahasya Saṅgraham*, *Caturlakṣaṇa Saṅgraham*, *Dramidopanaśad Saṅgraham*, *Śrī Bhāṣya Saṅgraham*, *Saaraartha Catuṣṭayam* etc.<sup>[5]</sup>

A century after Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī *Vedānta Deśika*, was born in 1268 CE at Tooppul in Kanchi to the couple Anantasuri and Totharamba, established the teachings of Ubhaya Vedanta and spread the gospel of *Prapatti* as a means to the attainment of Brahman. His main contribution to Viśiṣṭādvaitic literature was the further elucidation of the teachings of Śrī Rāmānuja by writing more than 100 works which include Sanskrit, Tamil, Prakrit and *Maṇipravāla* texts. Among them, 28 Stothras, 5 Kavyas, 1 Drama, 13 Vedanta granthas, 10 Commentaries, 32 Rahasya Granthas and 24 Tamil Prabandhas are very popular among Vaishnavites. As many of the Desika's works were famous, instead of names numbers are mentioned. These are not only considered as literary masterpieces but also practiced by many Srivaishnavites in their regular routine (*Pārāyanam*).

Another contemporary author who lived during the period of Śrī *Vedānta Deśika* was *Pillai Lokācharya*. He was born in Sri Rangam in the Tamil year Krodana. He has written 18 works known as Eighteen Rahasyas, out of which *Mumukṣupaḍī*, *Sārasaṅgraham*, *Arthapañcakam*, *Navaratnamālai* and *Śrī Vacana Bhūṣaṇam* are well known. Though there were some theological differences between *Pillai Lokācharya* and *Vedānta Deśika*, they had great respect for each other. Next famous author in the lineage of *Pillai Lokācharya* is *Manavāla Māmunigal*, born in 1370 CE at Azhvar Tirunagari. He was also contributed eighteen granthas, on which *Devarāja Maṅgalam*, *Kāncī Divyadeśa Stuti*, *Yatirāja Viṃśati* and *Tātparyā Dīpam* are in Sanskrit, *Upadeśa Ratnamālai*, *Tiruvāimozhi Noottrandādi* and *Ārthi Prabandham* are in Tamil and the remaining eleven are *Maṇipravāla* texts. His disciples, namely, *Vānamāmalai Jeeyar*, *Paṭṭarbiran Jeeyar*, *Tiruvēkata Ramanuja Jeeyar*, *Koīl Annan*, *Prativādi Bhayankaram Annan*, *Erunbiyappaa*, *Appillai* and *Appillār* were known as *Aṣṭa Dik Gajaṅgal*<sup>[6]</sup>.

The advent of Śrī *Vedānta Deśika* gave rise to many Srivaishnava Achāryas, who followed the footsteps of the illustrious Acharya. Each teacher had his own disciples and thus a number of scholars particularly in Northern Tamil Nadu. But there were some reputed scholars in and around Sri Rangam, one of the main centre for the propagation of the Ramanuja Vedanta. Of them mention must be made to Śrī Raṅgarāmānuja Muni, Sri Mahāchārya of Sholinger, Sri Venkatādhvarin of Nallur, Arasānippālai, the Sogathur family, the Nāvalpākkam tradition, the Somāsi Andan and the Tiruvaraṇam Āṇḍān family<sup>[7]</sup>.

Śrī Raṅgarāmānuja Muni, popularly known as *Upaniṣad Bhāṣyakāra* born in Velamur in North Arcot district. He has written Sixty works, of which *Daśopaniṣad Bhāṣya*, *Bhāva Prakāśikā Mūlabhāva Prakāśikā Śārīraka Śāstrārtha Dīpikā*,

*Nyāya Siddhāṅjana Tīkā Viṣaya Vākya Dīpikā*, *Bhagavad Viṣayam*, *Tiruvāimozhi* and *Tiruppāvai Vyākhyānam* (in Sanskrit) *Tattva Niṣkarṣam*, *Pratitantra Pariṣkriyā*, *Śrīmad Rahasyatrayasāra Tīkā*, *Sāra Tātparyā Nirṇayam*, *Śrī Rāmānuja Siddhānta Sāram* are noteworthy.

Navalpakkam, a small village in North Arcot district has produced many scholars who were not only proficient in *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, but also in Nyaya, Mimamsa and Vyakarana Sashtas. Sri Ayya Kumara Tatha Desikan, Srimad Annayarya Mahadesikan, Sri Ayya Narasimha Tathayarya Mahadesikan and Sri Ayya Devanatha Tathayarya Mahadesikan are very famous in the Navalpakkam Tradition. Ayya Kumara Tatha Desikan has authored *Pārijātāpahāraṇa Nātakam*, *Nikṣeparakṣā Vyākhyā*, *Śrī Bhāṣya Vyākhyā*, *Pañcakāla Pradīpikā*, *Uṣāniruddha Caritam*, *Rāmāyaṇa Kathā Saram*, *Sūtrakalpa Bhāṣyam*, *Vyākaraṇa Dīpikā*, *Kaṇādapariṣāthī*, *Kapilatantra Sāram*, *Abhayapradānasāra Vyākhyā* and *Acyutendrābhayudayam*. Ayyā Devanātha Tātārya Mahādeśikan has done seven works namely, *Nyāya Vāsanā*, *Vedānta Vaijayantī*, *Sutrānugūṇya Siddhi Vimarśanam*, *Prācīnapatha Paritrāṇam*, *Pañcalakṣaṇī Vyākhyānam*, *Tattvamuktākālāpa Vyākhyānam* and *Prācīnācārasaṅgraham*<sup>[8]</sup>. In the recent years Sri N.S. Ramanuja Tathacharya, who is very famous in Sanskrit literary tradition by receiving Chevalier Award for his work "An inquiry into Indian theories of Verbal Cognition", also belongs to this great Srivaishnavite Tradition.

The *Tiruvaraṇam Āṇḍān* family supposed have inhabited in the Nerur village of Karur district in Tamil Nadu. This family is well known for their erudition in almost in all the branches of learning and also performed many sacrifices. It appears that they migrated from this place to a village near Mysore and which was named as Sri Rangarajapuram. This village still exists and was patronized by the then king Krishnaraja Wodeyar. This was donated by the king as the mark of honour to the learned family. This illustrious family gave rise to a great preceptor by name *Śrī Raṅgarāja Mahādeśika*. He had two sons by name *Śrī Śailācārya* and Srinivasacarya. *Śrī Śailācārya* had a son named Srinivasacarya<sup>[9]</sup>. All the above three Scholars have spread the *Sampradāyam* in a nice manner and especially *Śrī Śailācārya* and his son Srinivasacarya have more works to their credit. Some of the works ascribed to *Śrī Śailācārya* have been assigned to his son Srinivasacarya. But this confusion can be sorted out by the colophons of each work<sup>[10]</sup>. Srinivasacarya, the brother of *Śrī Śailācārya* has written *Nyāsa Vidyā Vijaya*<sup>[11]</sup>. Another Srinivasacarya, the son of *Śrī Śailācārya* has written *Sahasrakiraṇī*<sup>[12]</sup>, an elaborate commentary on *Śatadūṣaṇī* of *Śrī Vedānta Deśika*, *Vivaraṇa* on *Kāthopaniṣad*<sup>[13]</sup>, Commentary of *Varadarāja Pañcāśat*<sup>[14]</sup>, *Natvatattvapariṣāraṇa*<sup>[15]</sup>, *Trayyanta Cintāmaṇī* and *Sāravivaraṇī*<sup>[16]</sup> a commentary on *Śrīmad Rahasyatrayasāra*. He was popularly known as Karur Swami. *Śrī Śailācārya* was known to have written many works, of which some of them are available and rest of them are not available or incomplete. *Vedānta Sampradāya Sudhā*<sup>[17]</sup>, *Sārārtha Kusumāṅjali*<sup>[18]</sup> and *Tātparyā Kaumudī*<sup>[19]</sup> are the Commentaries written on *Śrīmad Rahasyatrayasāra*. *Siddhānta Saṅgraha*<sup>[20]</sup>, *Sārasaṅgraha*<sup>[21]</sup>, *Sārasaṅgraha Vyākhyā*<sup>[22]</sup>, *Sāraṇiṣkarṣa*<sup>[23]</sup>, *Sārasarvasvam*<sup>[24]</sup>, *Jayantinirṇaya*, *Tattvaviveka*, *Prapatti Śatakam* and *Prapatti Tattvam* are his other works<sup>[25]</sup>.

In addition to the above Garudapuram Swami, Kethandapatti Swami, Kozhiyalam Swami and Madurantakam Swami have contributed for the development of Viśiṣṭādvaitic Tradition.

The *Maṭhādhipati-s* of various Mutts, namely *Śrī Parakāla Maṭha*, Srimad Ahobila Mutt and Srimad Andavan Ashraram have also contributed immensely for the development and propagation of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* Philosophy through their works and disciples.

### End Notes

1. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahapurānam*, 11<sup>th</sup> Skandha, V Chapter, sl.38-40, Pub. Gita Press, Gorakhpur 677.
2. Srinivasachari PN. The Philosophy of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, Adyar Library, Chennai, 504.
3. Srinivasan MK. *Rāmānujarukku pin Vanda ācāryargal varalāru*, Pub. Sayee Educational & Charitable Trust, Chennai 17, 2.
4. Ibid., P.3.
5. Ibid., P.7, 13 and 17.
6. Ibid., pp.45-48.
7. Siddhānta Saṅgraha of Śrī Śailācārya – A Critical Education with English Translation and Notes by T.E.Sowmyanarayanan, A thesis Submitted to the Madras University, 2008, 7.
8. Ayya Devanatha Thatarya Mahadesikan 121<sup>st</sup> Tirunakshatra Malar, Pub. Sri Srinivasa Swami Sabha, Chennai 88, 114.
9. Siddhānta Saṅgraha of Śrī Śailācārya – A Critical Education with English Translation and Notes by T.E.Sowmyanarayanan, A thesis Submitted to the Madras University 2008, 8.
10. Ibid., P.11.
11. See ALS, X, 313, TR.234, MG.R.2129.
12. TR, 262, MT.1273, MG-D.5044.
13. My. XI, P.262-63. P.6021.
14. Pub. *Śrīmad Andavan Śrī Paṇḍarīkapuram Āśramam*, Srirangam, 2006.
15. MT.R.2212, P.3014-15.
16. See My. XI, Mss.No.2794, 2795, 2796.
17. My. Mss.No.B.380.
18. Ibid., No.2208.
19. Ibid., No. P.3422/4, B.779.
20. See fn.No.9.
21. My. Mss.NO.P.6049, p.420.
22. Ibid., No. P.6050.
23. Ibid., No.P.4919/1, 6044, P.628.
24. Ibid., No.P.919.
25. For more details, See Siddhānta Saṅgraha of Śrī Śailācārya – A Critical Education with English Translation and Notes by T.E.Sowmyanarayanan, A thesis Submitted to the Madras University, 2008.