
LIFE OF SRI RAMANUJA

(THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND)

Professor Dr. V. V. Ramanujam, University of Madras.

The biographies of our Alvars and Acharyas have been narrated for our benefit in books known as *Guruparampara Prabhawam*. There are three such works, the *Moovayirappadi*, the *Arayirappadi* and the *Pannirayirappadi*, in increasing order of the length of narration. The narration is essentially the same in the three works mentioned with minor differences. They have been written in 'Manipravala' Tamil. Sanskrit works like the *Prapannamritham* and the *Divyasuri charitham* also cover the same material. The latter work is a *kavyam* in which the poet gives ample play to his imagination so that its value as a biography is limited.

According to these *Guruparampara* works, Sri Ramanujacharya was born in the year *Pingala* corresponding to Sakabda 939 and lived over a period of 120 years upto S. 1059. These two saka years have been recorded according to the ancient Indian method of numeral-representation by धीर्लब्धा and धर्मोत्थः respectively. The corresponding years according to the christian era are 1017 and 1137.

Even today it can be seen that in our horoscopes the year of birth is first recorded by the name of the year in the name cycle *Prabhava* to *Akshaya*. This is a sixty-year cycle and a named year would recur after sixty years and the year is celebrated as *sashtiabdapoorthy*. This year, 1977-78, is *Pingala* and, calculating back, 1017 AD should have been *Pingala*. It is common in *Guruparampara* and other works for the year to be referred to by name. Many Tamil books of the earlier years of this century can be seen to carry only the name of the year of publication rather than the number. It is not difficult to calculate the corresponding numerical designation of the year.

The sequence of narration in the *Guruparampara* appears to be quite satisfactory but very few events are dated in the name of the years. This is very unfortunate and has given ground for difference of opinion among scholars in chronicling the events in the lives of Acharyas like Ramanuja in the historical background of South Indian history. We can definitely say that during this life period the Chola Kings ruled most of Tamil Nadu (including the southern area of what is now called Andhra Pradesh) and the Mysore area was ruled by the Hoysala Kings. The periods of reign of various kings have been fixed by scholars and notwithstanding some differences they generally agree in this area of historical research. There has been some difference of opinion in the identity of some of the rulers who were involved, some in friendship and some in hostility, with the great saint, Ramanuja.

There have been several publications which have examined this question. There has been a general consensus that Ramanuja flourished during the years 1017-1037 A.D. and that the various events narrated in the Guruparampara accounts are historically authentic. Two events which are subjects of controversy are : (1) Ramanuja's self-imposed exile in the present Mysore area (then Hoysala kingdom) to escape persecution by a Chola King because of Saiva-Vaishnava differences. What are the actual dates during which the Acharya was away from Srirangam? Who was the exact Chola King who was responsible for this persecution? A related question here is the identity of the Hoysala king who befriended Ramanuja during this period and actually helped him in his activities in that area. (2) When did Ramanuja consecrate the Govindaraja idol at Tirupati? This idol is accepted to be the one worshipped in Tiruchitrakoota, a shrine within the Nataraja temple in Chidambaram. The shrine was destroyed at the command of a Chola King who seems to have been a die-hard fanatic, and the idol thrown into the sea. Who exactly was the king responsible for this and when was the shrine destroyed? Another related question is who was the king in the Tirupati area (a vassal of the Cholas) who actually helped in the consecration of the new shrine at Tirupati and the exact period of his reign.

In this article, I have examined the two questions posed under (1) and the two questions posed under (2) in the preceding paragraph in the light of all earlier publications that I could lay my hand on, listed at the end of this article. In a recent article the suggestion has been made by Dr. K. V. Raman that the date of Ramanuja's life has to be pushed to the end of the twelfth century—that he lived mostly through the twelfth and not mostly through the eleventh as is generally accepted. The Guruparampara dates are then set at naught.

It is my submission that all the available evidence—traditional and otherwise—can be reconciled with the generally accepted period, 1017-1137 A.D. and that the controversial Chola King responsible for both Ramanuja's exile and the destruction of Tiruchitrakoota was Kulothunga I who ruled between 1070 and 1118 (or 1120?) A.D. Ramanuja's activity in the Hoysala kingdom extended over two decades, roughly between 1095 and 1120 A.D., mainly during the reign of Bhittideva Vishnuvardhana. The consecration of the Govindaraja shrine in Tirupati should have occurred around 1130 A.D. during the reign of Vikrama Chola also called Akalangan. The destruction of the original shrine at Chidambaram, however, should have occurred very much earlier when Ramanuja was away in the Mysore area.

Before I proceed to a detailed examination of the events in their proper setting, I will present an account of the traditional source material. The Divyasuricharithai is a poem written by Garudavahanapanditha, a contemporary of Ramanuja. The Prapanamritnam is likewise in Sanskrit verse and was written by one Ananthacharya, a descendent of Vadukanambi, very likely early in the seventeenth century.

The events narrated agree closely among the Guruparampara works. The moovayirappadi and panneerayirappadi were written several centuries after the avatar of Ramanuja ended. The arayirappadi was probably written towards the close of the twelfth century and is *chronologically quite close to the life period of Ramanuja*. Pinpalagi perumal Jeyar, the author of this work was a disciple of Nampillai whose life period, according to

traditional dates is 1140-1240 A.D. Because of its chronological nearness to Ramanuja's life period it is perhaps the most reliable of the three Guruparampara works. A biography of Ramanuja called *Ramanujarya Divyacharitha* has been written by Pillailokam Jeeyar, a great-grandson of one of the chief disciples of Manavalamamunigal (1370-1474 A. D.) This book follows the arayirappadi closely in its narration and even repeats many sentences verbatim. It also gives some chronological information obviously from word-of-mouth sources (karnaparamparai). This book was possibly written some 350 or more years after Ramanuja's passing away. I have examined the dates given in this work and find that they are not consistent within themselves.

The bibliography at the end of this article gives information about modern publications in which scholars have discussed the historical setting of Ramanuja's life. A table of dates of our Alvars and Acharyas giving the year of birth in *Kalyabda*, *Sakabda*, named year, month, star, life-span and other information was published in the early years of this century by the learned Tamil scholar, Setlur Krishnamachariar Swami. He states in a note appended to this table, "The chronology of Srivaishnava Guruparampara was chronicled by Koorathalwan at the behest of Ramanuja in verse and in prose; by Garudavahna Panditha in kavya form in Divyasuri charitham; Pirpalagiaperumal Jeer wrote the Arayirappadi Guruparampara at the command of Nampillai. Pillailokam Jeer has written the Yateendrapravana prabhavam. Following these traditional accounts and events mentioned in the commentaries on the Divyaprabandams and Rabasya texts as well as the Thirumudi Adaiyu this table has been drawn up after repeated and careful study." This table is fairly consistent within itself and many dates tally with his accepted dates.

Though there are left some small discrepancies, the available evidence fairly clinches the issue of the life-period of Ramanuja's as between 1017 and 1137 A. D. Within this eventful period it is possible to work out a fairly convincing chronicle of the succession of events.

Tradition has it that Ramanuja paid his first visit to Srirangam in his twentyfifth year to meet the great Acharya, Alavandar. He could, however, only pay homage to the mortal remains of the saint. This places the last year of Alavandar as 1012 A. D. His life span is given as 125 years. The birth year then should be 917 A. D. The Thirumudi Adaiyu gives the birth year as *Dhathu* and 917 A. D. corresponds to *Dhathu*.

The *Ramanujarya Divyacharithai*, in agreement with the Guruparampara works gives the birth year of Ramanuja as Pingala and S. 939. But the book contains statements which contradict each other as far as chronology is concerned. We find the statement in this book that Ramanuja lived and taught undisturbed in Srirangam for a period of sixty years¹ apparently before he left the place to escape the danger posed by the saivite Chola King. We are told that Ramanuja became a sanyasin in his thirty second year and migrated to Srirangam soon afterwards to succeed Alavandar in his Acharyapeeta. So we infer he was around ninety years old at the time he fled Srirangam.

1. வேதாந்தார்த்தத்தை விசதிகரித்துக்கொண்டு அறுபது ஸம்வதஸரம் கோயிலிலே எழுந்தருளியிருந்தார்.

Peris Nambi, who went to the King's court accompanying Koorathalwan died a few days after Ramanuja left Srirangam. The Divyacharithai gives the year of death as *Kaloyukhi*² and this year corresponds to the 61st year of Ramanuja's life. A third date given in this book is the date of consecration of the Thirunarayana temple at Melkote³ by Ramanuja. The year S 911 is obviously in error but the name of the year *Bahudanya* is the same as that given in other gurunara para works. This would correspond to the 81st year of Ramanuja's life. Two more dates are obtainable from a verse quoted in this book⁴. Another verse⁵ is also found in this book giving the date of the throwing of the Govindaraja Idol enshrined in the Nataraja temple in Chidambaram by Kulohunga Chola as S. 1009. We shall examine the first verse⁶ now and take up the other verse later.

According to Madurai S. Srinivasan (see Bibliography) this verse refers to the year of passing away of Ramanuja. The words "பாந்தனைத்துயில் பரமன் பாதம் பணிந்து அங்குறைந்திடு நாள்" is rendered "the date of attainment of the bliss of the supreme who reposes on the great serpent" and the year S. 1059 mentioned was the terminal year in the eventful life. The other traditional works also give S. 1059 as the year when Ramanuja passed away. Sri Srinivasan obviously renders the verse into prose this way: *வங்குமின்றும் போந்து அரங்கநகரெய்தி பதினொரொண்டு புகழ்தான் வளர்த்த பெரும்பூதார் வேந்தன் ஆய்ந்த சகாப்தம் ஆயிரத்தைப் பத்தொன்பதில் பரமன் பாதம் பணிந்து அங்குறைந்திடு நாள்*—meaning that Ramanuja lived eleven glorious years in Srirangam after his return and entered into the feet of the Lord in S. 1059.

Dr. K. V. Raman quotes the epigraphist Sri. T. N. Subramanian according to whom the verse under question refers to the year of departure from Srirangam and the eleven years the period of sojourn in the west. Ramanuja should have returned to Srirangam in S. 1070. Another verse⁶ in the Divyacharithai is quoted in support of this interpretation. This states that the concluding chapter of the Sri Bashyam was added to the then existing three chapters and the work completed in S. 1077. The implication of this verse is that the first three chapters were written earlier to S. 1059 and the last was written in S. 1077. Why did Ramanuja wait for over 18 years to write this concluding chapter? Prima facie, one cannot accept this preposterous suggestion that a great Acharya of Ramanuja's stature kept his *mognum opus* incomplete over a period of 2 decades! One may unhesitatingly

2. காலயுக்தயஸ்டகாமத்யதிதிப்ரோக்தா மஹாகுரோ:, யாமுநார்ய பதாம்பொஹு கச்சுஷயாபவதஸதா.
3. சகாப்தம் தொளாயிரத் தொருபதுடன் பின்னும் ஓராண்டு சென்றவர்த்தமானம் பஹுதான்யஸம்வதஸரம் திருநாரணன் தோன்றியது.
4. ஆய்ந்த சகாப்தம் ஆயிரத்தைப்பத்தொன்பதின்னும் போந்து, பதினொராண்டிங்ஙன் புகழ்தான் வளர்த்த பெரும்பூதார் வேந்தன் எண்ணிலா வண்புருடனும் அரங்கநகரெய்தி, பாந்தனைத்துயில் பரமன்பாதம் பணிந்தங் குறைந்திடு நாள்.
5. அம்பொற் குடைசகன் ஆயிரத்து ஒன்பதாம் வருஷத்துத் தென்பால் சென்னி குலோத்துங்கன் சித்திரகூடச் செங்கண்மால் தன்னை யலையெறி நாள்தான்.
6. இன்னவாறு திருப்பதிகள் எங்கும் வழிவித்தெதிராசன் தன்னதாக்கித் தரிசனமும் தரணிபெங்கும் விளங்குவித்து முன்னமுரைத்த பாடியத்தின் முற்றமுன்றத் தொரு கூறு தன்னைச சென்னுண்டாயிரத்தாங் கெழுபத்தேழில் சாத்தினான்.

reject this verse as totally incorrect. Bearing in mind that the Bodayana Vrithi in Kashmir (see later) was read by Koorthalwan and Ramanuja and the understanding that Alwan should write to Ramanuja's dictation, it is easily comprehended that the book was completed long before the departure to Mysore. The Sri Bashya was propagated in the North during the second Dig Vijaya trip of Ramanuja where he was hailed as *Bashyakara*. According to tradition it was Koorathalwan who, as scribe took down the work to the dictation of his Acharya and wrote the concluding lines इति श्रीभगवद्रामानुज विरचिते शारीरक मीमांसा भाष्ये etc. Ramanuja would not have styled himself as Sri Bagavad Ramanuja in recording the authorship. Alwan could not have written the last chapter if that chapter had been written after Ramanuja's return from the west because he had been blinded in the king's court. No other disciple could have substituted for Alwan because it was a sacred understanding that Alwan should be the scribe since he alone had studied the Vrithi of Bodayana with Ramanuja.

It is now obvious that where chronicling of events is concerned, we do not get much real help from the Divyacharithal. We are left with only two acceptable dates, 1017 A.D. (Pingala S. 939 the year of birth) and 1098 A.D. (Bahudanya) the year of consecration of the Thirunarayana temple at melkote. Bhattideva Vishnuvardhana who befriended Ramanuja in the Mysore area is assigned rulership between 1104 and 1141 A.D. The Melkote temple is said to have been built with his active cooperation. Though Vishnuvardhana was not the crowned king in 1098 A.D., the year is quite close to the date of his accession and it is easily possible that as heir-apparent he came under Ramanuja's influence and actively participated in the latter's work. According to traditional accounts, Ramanuja fled to the west when he was 79 years and spent a fairly long period there. The accounts vary regarding the period of his sojourn. The 6000-guruparampara puts it at 12 years while other works put it at more than 20 years. There is inscriptional evidence (cited by Sri Srinivasan in his book) that the Belur Narayana temple was consecrated by Mudaliandan (under the guidance of Ramanuja) during the reign (and under the patronage) of Vishnuvardhana in Hevilambi, S. 1039. This corresponds to the 100th year (1117 A.D.) of Ramanuja's life. It is worth noting that this Vishnuvardhana defeated Adigaman (an ally of Kulothunga I) at Kangapadi in 1116. A.D. Many scholars are agreed that Ramanuja returned to Srirangam in 1118 A.D., the year in which Kulothunga I, the Chola King responsible for Ramanuja's fleeing Srirangam, died.

There is difference of opinion about the identity of the Chola King. The guruparampara works refer to him as *Krtmikanta* (lit. neck full of worms—the deep wounds in his neck developed worms) contemptuously. He is also referred to as *avyapadesya* (one unfit to be named). Kulothunga I reigned over the Chola kingdom between 1070 A.D. and 1118 (or 1120?) A.D. Some scholars suggest that Ramanuja's persecutor was Kulothunga II (grandson of Kulothunga I) who was Chola King during the period 1133-1150. A.D. If this king is the persecutor of Ramanuja then the traditional date of Ramanuja's life (S. 939—S. 1059) has to be pushed ahead, which is what Professor Raman suggests.

This matter has to be examined in some detail and I crave the indulgence of a patient and careful reading. Kulothunga I was an ardent saiva and called himself *Thiruneetru Cholan*. He was deeply devoted to Lord Nataraja, the presiding deity of the Chidambaram

temple. He is reputed to have covered the Nataraja shrine with gold plated sheets. He was instrumental for Sekkilar's composing the *Periapuranam* and publishing it (*arangetrim*) in Chidambaram. He is praised by the poet Jayankondar as the hero of the Kalinga war in the poem Kalingathupparani. This Kulothunga is associated with patronising the building of Vishnu and Jain temples also, and charities in Vishnu temples. A large share of the success in the Kalinga war was due to the King's son Vikrama and the commander Karunakara Thondaman both of whom are known to have had Vaishnava leanings. It is therefore argued that Kulotunga I was not antivaishnava and could not have been Ramanuja's persecutor. On the other hand Kulothunga II was a fanatic saiva and is eulogised by his court poets for his strong anti-vaishnava feelings.

It is my contention that the traditional date of Ramanuja's life (1017-1037 A.D.) needs no alteration for reconciliation with the dates of the reign of Chola Kings. I have taken pains to show that Ramanuja was in the Mysore area between 1096 and at least 1117 A.D. if not a couple of years longer. The ruling Chola King at this period was Kulothunga I and he should be the Krimikanta of the Guruparaṇpara works. Admittedly an ardent Saiva, he should have developed strong antivaishnava feelings later in his life. To understand how this could have come about, it is necessary to examine the conditions under which Ramanuja worked and succeeded in spreading his religion and philosophy.

Ramanuja came to Srirangam from his native Kancheepuram to succeed Yamuna as the Vaishnava Acharya when he was in his early thirties. He had to prepare himself for the great task of fulfilling his promise to Alavandar (Yamuncharya) by writing the commentary on the Brahmasutras. For this purpose he had to study in particular a voluminous work called *Vrtthi* by Maharishi *Bhodajana*. Only one copy of this work was available in the whole of India in a library in far off Kashmir under the care of pandits who were hostile to the idea of letting Ramanuja study the work. Ramanuja did study the book with the able help of Koorathalwan. It is said that the guru and the disciple read portions so that between them the whole book had been mastered. He had to retrieve Yamuna's teachings from the latter's disciples some of whom were extremely reluctant to impart the knowledge. He had to study Yamuna's books unaided. The local people were also hostile and did not take to him kindly. Some went to the extent of attempting to end his life by giving poisoned food by way of alms (A sanyasi has necessarily to live on *bhiksha*). One can see what extraordinary patience and courage Ramanuja displayed in his early years in Srirangam. We are even told that he stayed away for short periods to gain respite from the hostile surroundings. It was his sheer love of humanity and his devotion to and faith in the protective grace of Ranganath that sustained and encouraged him. Not that he did not have any devoted friends, but the atmosphere was generally not helpful. With all the trouble from within his own (Vaishnava) fold, he had to face forces which worked against his consolidating and expanding on any large scale. His own cousin Govindaperumal, his boyhood friend and classmate had been lured away by the salvas and made their leader in Kalahasthi. Emboldened by the fact that the local ruler was a vassal of the Chola King who was an ardent saiva, the saivas of Kalahasthi made a bold bid to claim the temple at Thirumalai to be a Siva temple. It became Ramanuja's task to establish the Vaishnava character of the temple unequivocally without even the shadow of a doubt. He trekked all the way from Srirangam and stayed in Tirupati to achieve his purpose. The

consolidation and silent expansion of the frontiers of his religion of love and divine grace should have taken considerable time. Ramanuja was a relatively unknown figure in political circles as is proved from the fact that when he was summoned to the royal court, nobody knew his identity and the devoted disciple, Koorathalwan could easily impersonate for him. It is obvious from all this that all his mighty achievements were due to his own personal strength and not any political patronage.

I have presented the background under which Ramanuja toiled in Srirangam in a cold and objective manner to impress the fact that vaishnavism was not really a force to reckon with in those days for the saiva king and only when some people with vested interests advised the king that Ramanuja's growing popularity and influence may endanger their own saivite faith that the king summoned the Acharya to his court. It should also be noted that one of the chief advisers in this was one Nalooran, a vaishnava, and a disciple of these acharyas in Srirangam. He was the great betrayer of the faith. Koorathalwan with his innate characteristic magnanimity of Himalayan heights not only pardoned him but also ardently prayed to Sri Varadaraja for his spiritual welfare without even caring to know whether Nalooran repented for his dastardly act in advising the king to summon Ramanuja to his court and humiliate him publicly by making him swallow all his faith and teachings by owning Siva as the Supreme God. This magnanimity of the disciple should have been inspired by the teacher himself and gives some idea of the *guna paripurthi* of the great Saint of Srirangam, which was the secret of his success.

The King should have got very much enraged at the mockery he suffered from Alwan and the consequences of his realisation that his orders had been flouted and that Ramanuja had escaped his kingdom were: (a) Koorathalwan was blinded (b) Peria Nambi lost his life and most important, (c) the temple of Sri Ranganatha at Srirangam was declared out of bounds to all of Ramanuja's followers and supporters and sentries were posted at the temple gates to carry out this order. With Ramanuja himself out of Srirangam and the temple, the rallying point and source of inspiration closed to the leaders left in Srirangam, the king should have felt quite safe.

The foregoing rather lengthy essay is to show that there is no inherent contradiction in identifying Kulothunga I as Krimikanta. That he was an ardent saivite is an established fact. His deep attachment and devotion to Lord Nataraja of Chidambaram is well known. He was, however, a just and famous ruler, kind to his subjects. As long as he did not fear any danger to his own faith, he was not anti-vaishnavite and was even ready with royal patronage so that his fair name would not be sullied. But when he found that Ramanuja's growing popularity and achievements posed a danger to his faith, hostile feelings should have started growing in his bosom and this should have been fanned by fanatic saivites in his court and parasites like Nalooran. It is, I think, fairly obvious that the king was more interested in subduing the growing influence of Ramanuja than in banning vaishnavism or doing away with Vishnu temples. That there was a general appreciation

of the robustness of the vaishnava faith is tellingly brought out in the words ' attributed to Krimikanta's successor (Vikrama chola 1118—1135 A.D) that while the Ramayana and the Thi-uvaimozhi formed two impregnable fortresses for that religion, it was futile on the part of his father to have pulled down a few walls (of Vishnu temples). This Vikrama chola is better known in Vaishnava circles as Akalangan. He was a disciple of Ramanuja and helped him in a big way in improving, reforming and administering the Srirangam temple.

We now come to examine Ramanuja's activity in Tirupati and Thirumalai. He should have made at least three different trips to the area. The first was avowedly to see Ananthalwan's flower garden and to study the Ramayana at the feet of his uncle and acharya Peria Thirumalai Nambi. The second was in response to urgent summons from local vaishnavas to establish unequivocally the vaishnava character of the Thirumalai temple when the saivas of Kalahasthi claimed it to be theirs. The third was to consecrate the idol of Govindaraja of Chidambaram in the Parthasarathi temple at Thirupati. Regarding the exact age of the Acharya during the first two trips nothing unequivocal can be said. Taking a hint from the Tirumalai Olugu, one may guess that the first trip was prior to his fortieth year. The second trip also should definitely have been before he was forced to flee Srirangam for Mysore. The third trip was certainly after he returned from Melkote.

There is no indication of saiva-vaishnava discord during the first trip. Peria Tirumalai Nambi had actually won over Govinda Perumal from his association with the saivas of Kalahasthi when Ramanuja made this trip. He actually took Govinda Perumal with him to Srirangam when he left Tirupati. When the events of the second trip are narrated in Guruparampara works, there is reference to a king Yadavaraya. Yadavaraya is a dynastic title and whether this king is the Ghattideva Yadavaraya who is recorded to have actively helped Ramanuja to consecrate the Govindaraja temple cannot be established with certainty. It is very likely it was the predecessor of Ghattideva. The Yadavarayas were vassals of the reigning chola monarchs in the south.

The exact period of the reign of Ghattideva has not also been established. It is surmised by historians from epigraphical evidence that it was during the second quarter of the 12th century. It was during this period that Ramanuja consecrated the Govindaraja idol. The consecration, according to tradition was done on Panguni Uthiram day in the year Sowmya and this corresponds to 1130 A.D., full seven years before the demise of Ramanuja. Ghattideva actively helped this consecration.

I have already quoted a verse from the Divyacharithai giving the year in which Kulothunga threw the Govindaraja idol into the sea as S. 1009 (the 1087 A.D.) According to Dr. K. V. Raman, Sri T. N. Subramanian's contention is that this date is wrong because

7. அவ்யபதேச்யனுக்கு அந்தரத்திலவன், தமப்பன் செய்ததைக் கேட்டு, "இவன் என் செய்தானான்?" என்று க்ஷித்தான். "ஒரு மதினை வாங்குங்காட்டில் அத்தர்சனம் குகைந்ததோ, திருவாய்மொழி என்றும் ஸ்ரீராமாயணம் என்றும் வலியன இரண்டு மஹாப்ரபந்தங்கள் உண்டா? ருக்க? (திருவாய்மொழிக்கு 10-7-5 க்கு நம்பிள்ளை ஈட்டில் உள்ளவை).

S. 1009 falls within the reign of Kulothunga I and it is his thesis that Kulothunga I was not Ramanuja's persecutor. I would agree with the contention that the date is not acceptable, but not because it falls in the reign of Kulothunga I. As I have already shown the dates given in the Divyacharithai are not quite reliable. The removal of the Govindaraja idol from the Chidambaram temple should have occurred during Ramanuja's stay in the Mysore area. S. 1009 mentioned in the verse corresponds to the 70th year of Ramanuja's life when he was in Srirangam and the loss of a *Divyadesa* would certainly have been reported to him and it would in turn have been recorded in the Guruparamparai. On the other hand, the Guruparampara says that the news that Tiruchitrakuta had been destroyed and that the idol of Sri Govindaraja which was thrown into the sea had been salvaged and taken for safe custody to Tirupathi was conveyed to Ramanuja after his return from Melkote. The consecration of the idol at Tirupathi was done subsequently by Ramanuja with the help and patronage of Ghattideva Yadavaraja.

Sri Balasundara Nayakar (see Bibliography) quotes that the date of consecration of Govindaraja, according to Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar is 1135 A.D. and according to Sri T. K. T. Veeraraghavachari as 1130 A.D. Both have written books on the History of Tirupathi. Sri Nayakar refers to an inscription* in Tirumalai in connection with the consecration of the Ramanuja shrine in Tirumalai. This inscription though mutilated mentions the year S. wmya. It is possible that this consecration, which according to traditional accounts was performed by Ananthalan in Ramanuja's life-time with his consent was also in the same year 1130 A.D. as the consecration of Govindaraja. This should also have been under the patronage of Ghattideva. A later inscription of 1220 A.D. mentions an endowment by Veeranasimha Yadavaraya towards daily supply of flowers and oil (for lamps) to this shrine.

Since the destruction of Thiruchitrakutam occurred during the sojourn of Ramanuja in Mysore, the author of this tragedy should have been Kulothunga I. His fervour in improving the Nataraja temple is well-known and he should have resorted to destruction of the Govindaraja shrine to make more space available for the use of the devotees of Nataraja.

It is argued that because Ghattideva was a contemporary of Kulothunga II, it was this latter king and not Kulothunga I who was responsible for the destruction of Thiruchitrakutam. The consecration at Tirupathi was done quite a long time after the destruction of the shrine at Chidambaram and before Kulothunga II became king. Ghattideva's chieftainship extended into the reign of Kulothunga II. That does not prove that Kulothunga II threw the Govindaraja idol into the sea. That this latter king is eulogised by Ottakuthar for his fanatic zeal in upholding saivism and the destruction of the Govindaraja shrine need not be taken too seriously because it is well-known that court poets are very fanciful in praising their patrons. The poet obviously exploited the name of this king being the same as that of the previous Kulothunga who threw the idol into the sea, and the fanatic fervour of this king towards saivism which he eulogised.

Lastly, about the inscription of 1180 A. D. making a land grant Thiruvarangathu Amudanr referred by Professor K. V. Raman. Many of these names are honours. Even

today in the Srirangam temple the original *Iyarpa* service assigned by Ramanuja to the author of the *Ramanuja Nootrandadi* goes under the name of Amudanar-service and the service-holder is called by the name Thiruvarangathu Amudanar. The 1180 inscription need not necessarily refer to the author of the *Ramanuja Nootrandadi*, but is likely to be to a descendent of his.

The events mentioned in the traditional Guruparampara can thus be reconciled with historical and epigraphical dates. All historians agree with regard to the historical authenticity of the incidents narrated in the Guruparampara works. The sequence of the narration is convincing. A few years mentioned (Pingala, Bahudanya, Sowmya) in this article from the traditional works fit in nicely in this sequence. While the events narrated in the *Divyacharithai* are substantially the same as other traditional works, the few sakabda dates given therein are not useful at all and have to be totally rejected, since they contradict each other and the named years also. There is no need to post-date the date of Ramanuja's life to period beyond the largely accepted 1077 to 1037 A.D.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Arayirappadi Guruparampara Prabhavam and Peria Thirumudi Adaivu. Ed. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar, Tiruchi. Published by the Editor, 1968.

2. Panrirayirappadi Guruparampara Prabhavam, Ed. T. C. Parthasarathi Iyengar. Boomagal Vilasam Press, Madras, 1928

3. Ramanujarya Divyacharithai of Pillailokam Jeeyar. Publisher and date of publication not known.

4. Koil Olugu. History (?) of the Srirangam temple. An ancient work of unestablished authorship. Ed. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar, Tiruchi. Published by the Editor, 1976.

5. Thirumalai Olugu- History (?) of the Tirumalai- Tirupati temples. Also an ancient work of unestablished authorship. Ed. K. Balasundara Nayakar. Published by T. T. Devasthanams, Tirupati 1953.

The Editor (Reader in Tamil, S. V. Oriental Institute, Tirupati,) in his introduction examines the traditional dates of Ramanuja's work in Tirupati in the light of available epigraphical evidence.

6. Nithyanusanthanam. Ed. Settur Krishnamachariar, Triplicane. Year not given. This book gives a comprehensive table of the traditional dates of Alvars and Acharyas.

7. Sri Ramanujar Charitham by S. Srinivasan, Madurai 1931

The author, of the Tamil faculty of Madurai, College, Madurai, in an epilogue to the book discusses the historical setting of Ramanuja's life in the light of (a) Sri T. A. Gopinatha Rao's findings (b) Tamil works like Moovar Ula, Kalingathupparani and Thakkaya-gapparani.

8. Sri Ramanujar by P. Sri. Swadesamitran Press, 1964.

In a separate chapter in this book, this well-known Tamil scholar analyses the problem in the light of a number of published works-particularly the history of Cholas by Sri Sadasiva Pandarathar and Prof. K. K. Pillai.

9. Sri Ramanuja Vanl, Madras. Vol I, No. 1. 1977. Article by Prof. K. V. Raman on "Historical Glimpses of Ramanuja's life."