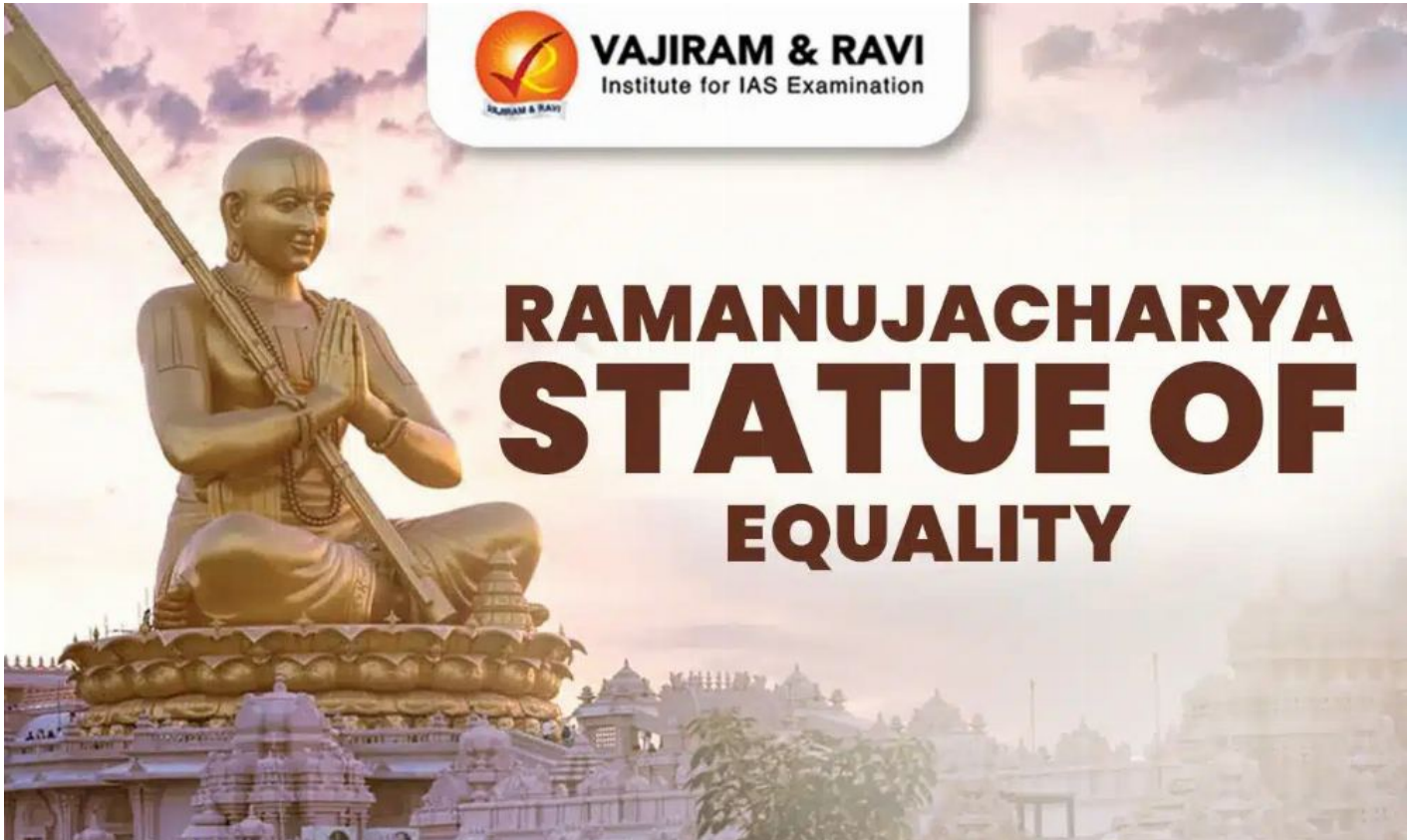


# Ramanujacharya - Statue of Equality, Philosophy, Contributions

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Ramanujacharya, a Vaishnavite Saint from Tamil Nadu, established the **Vishishtadvaita philosophy**, emphasizing devotion to Vishnu and the reality of the material world. His key texts, including Vedartha Samgraha and Sri Bhashya, laid the foundation for temple worship and inspired the bhakti movement across India. Known as 'Emperumanar', he uplifted oppressed communities, opened temple access to all, and promoted a social order based on respect and moral conduct.

His teachings influenced many saints and established the Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya, fostering unity and equality among diverse communities. The **Statue of Equality** commemorates his legacy of inclusivity and social justice.

## About Ramanujacharya

Ramanujacharya (c. 1017–1137 CE), born in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, is one of the most celebrated theologians and philosophers of Hinduism. Initially studying under Yadavaprakasha in Kanchipuram, Ramanuja diverged from Advaita Vedanta, establishing his own **Vishishtadvaita** or "qualified non-duality," which highlighted devotion (bhakti) to a personal God, specifically Vishnu, and the reality of the material world.

- **Commentaries:** His landmark texts—Vedartha-Samgraha, Sri Bhashya, and Bhagavadgita-Bhashyalaid the groundwork for temple worship in Srirangam, where he organized and promoted bhakti practices.
- **Role in Bhakti Movement:** His influence fostered a widespread bhakti movement and inspired 74 centres to spread his teachings across India, deeply impacting Hindu devotional traditions and philosophical discourse.

## Ramanujacharya Philosophy

Ramanuja's **Vishishtadvaita** philosophy posits a non-dualistic yet qualified view of reality. His framework consists of three primary categories: God (Brahman), individual souls, and matter. Unlike Shankara's Advaita, which claims that the individual self is ultimately an illusion, Ramanuja argued that individual souls and the material world are real and eternally connected to God.

- **Analogy of Body and Soul:** Rāmānuja compares the relationship between body and soul to that between matter and God, asserting that matter and soul together form God's "body."
- **Goal of the Human Soul:** For Ramanuja, the primary objective of the human soul is to serve God, reflecting that all creation is a manifestation of divine glory.
- **Devotion for Salvation:** Rāmānuja emphasizes bhakti (devotion) as a means of salvation, merging popular religious practices with philosophical inquiry, and legitimizing devotional worship.
- **Key Texts:** His significant works include Vedartha-Samgraha and Sri Bhashya, which elaborate on the Upanishads, Brahma-Sutras, and Bhagavad-Gita.
- **Promotion of Worship:** He advocated for religious worship as essential for salvation, drawing from earlier traditions, particularly the Alvars, 7th-10th-century poet-mystics.
- **Groundwork for Bhakti Movement:** Rāmānuja's teachings were pivotal in shaping the bhakti movement, influencing religious thought and practices throughout India.

## Ramanujacharya Literary Works

Rāmānuja structured the Vishishtadvaita or "qualified non-dualism" doctrine. His Navaratnas (Nine Gems) or major works, are pillars of Vaishnavism and illustrate paths of devotion, grace, and liberation. While Ramanuja's contributions are mainly in Sanskrit, his influence is profound across India, promoting bhakti (devotion) over abstract philosophy. His key texts include:

- **Vedartha-Sangraha:** This text presents the concepts of Vishishtadvaita, reconciling various competing *sruthis* and summarizing the essential teachings aligned with his philosophy of devotion and divine grace.
- **Sri Bhashya:** Rāmānuja's magnum opus, this comprehensive commentary on the Vedanta Sutras serves as a critical counter to Advaita Vedanta.
  - This significant contribution was one of three desires granted by Rāmānuja for his respected mentor and guru, Yamunacharya.
- **Gita-Bhashya:** An in-depth analysis of the Bhagavad-Gita, Rāmānuja elucidates the dynamics of devotion and God's grace, stressing that true understanding arises from heartfelt devotion.
- **Vedanta-Dipa:** A synopsis of the Vedanta Sutras, this work distils key concepts for better comprehension.

- **Vedanta-Sara:** A concise commentary on the Vedanta Sutras, intended for novices seeking foundational understanding.
- **Saranagati-Gadyam:** A prayer expressing complete surrender to Lord Srimannarayana's lotus feet, embodying the principle of self-surrender.
- **Sriranga-Gadyam:** A guide for self-surrender to Lord Vishnu, reinforcing the devotional aspect of his teachings.
- **Sri Vaikunta-Gadyam:** This text describes Sri Vaikuntha-Loka and the status of liberated souls, highlighting the eternal bliss of those who attain moksha.
- **Nitya-Grantha:** A brief guidebook designed to assist devotees in their day-to-day prayers and activities, ensuring consistent engagement with spiritual practices.

## Ramanujacharya Contributions

Contributions of Ramanujacharya include promoting a Vedic way of life based on compassion and equality, earning him the title *Em-perum-anar*. He uplifted oppressed communities, established inclusive temple practices, and inspired many Bhakti saints while fostering unity through the Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya.

- **Commitment to Compassion and Equality:** Ramanujacharya dedicated himself to spreading a Vedic way of life grounded in compassion and equality, earning the title '*Emperumanar*' (You are ahead of us) for embracing all.
- **Uplifting Oppressed Communities:** He uplifted oppressed communities, calling them Thirukkulathar (Divine-Born), and opened temple access and sacred knowledge to all.
- **Inclusive Temple Practices:** Ramanujacharya established inclusive temple practices, notably at Tirumala and Srirangam, and made Vedic knowledge accessible through public teachings and commentaries.
- **Promotion of Moral Social Order:** He promoted a social order based on moral conduct, emphasizing respect for all. His pioneering ideas earned him the title "Bhagwad," marking him as a significant religious and social reformer.
- **Formation of Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya:** Ramanujacharya established the Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya to unite diverse communities through mutual respect and equality, transcending caste divisions to form a spiritual fellowship.
- **Influence on Saints and Philosophers:** His teachings inspired numerous saints and philosophers, including Madhvacharya and figures within the Bhakti movement such as Kabir, Meera Bai, Tulsidas, Annamacharya, Thyagaraja, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

## Ramanujacharya - Statue of Equality

Statue of Equality, the second tallest sitting statue in the world, was inaugurated in February 2022 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Muchintal, Hyderabad. This statue stands as a tribute to his teachings and philosophy.

- **Height:** The Statue of Equality, standing 216 feet tall, is within the 45-acre Jeeyar Integrated Vedic Academy (JIVA) near Shamshabad, Hyderabad.
- **Features:** The statue is on a 54-foot tall base structure known as Bhadra Vedi. This building features a Vedic digital library and research centre, collections of ancient Indian texts, a theatre, and an educational gallery.

## Why is it Called the Statue of Equality?

Because Ramanujacharya was a pioneer of social equality, advocating for the inclusion of all individuals in religious practices, regardless of caste or status. He emphasized opening temple doors to everyone, challenging the prevailing caste restrictions.

- His philosophy promoted the idea of “**vasudhaiva kutumbakam**,” meaning "the world is one family," he worked tirelessly to empower the marginalized.
- According to **Chinna Jeeyar Swami**, who played a key role in the statue's conception, Ramanujacharya's teachings aimed to transcend caste boundaries and promote universal brotherhood.

## Ramanujacharya UPSC PYQs

**Question 1:** The world’s second tallest statue in the sitting pose of Ramanuja was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India at Hyderabad recently. Which one of the following statements correctly represents the teachings of Ramanuja? **(UPSC Prelims 2022)**

1. The best means of salvation was devotion.
2. Vedas are eternal, self-existent and wholly authoritative.
3. Logical arguments were essential means for the highest bliss.
4. Salvation was to be obtained through meditation.

**Answer: (a)**

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