

A Comparative Study of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja: Theological, Philosophical and Social Dimensions of Bhakti

Dr. Ratul Borah

Assistant professor
Philosophy
Bihpuria college

Abstract

Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva (1449–1568) and Rāmānuja (c. 1017–1137) are two of the most influential figures in the history of Vaiṣṇava thought in India. Although they belonged to different historical periods and regional contexts, both placed devotion (bhakti) to the Supreme Being at the centre of religious life. Rāmānuja developed a systematic philosophical doctrine known as Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, or qualified non-dualism, whereas Śaṅkaradeva articulated the religious philosophy of Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma, centred on exclusive devotion to Kṛṣṇa and the remembrance and recitation of the divine name. The two thinkers therefore share important theological affinities while differing substantially in their philosophical formulations, conceptions of Brahman, the relationship between God, soul and world, the nature of liberation, and the institutional expression of religious life.

This article offers a comparative study of the philosophies of Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja. It argues that their similarities are most visible in their rejection of purely abstract conceptions of ultimate reality and their emphasis on a personal and gracious God accessible through devotion. Their differences become clearer when one examines their treatment of the relationship between jīva, jagat, and Īśvara, the status of the material world, the role of ritual and caste, and the meaning of liberation. Rāmānuja formulated a comprehensive Vedāntic metaphysics in which Brahman is qualified by real sentient and non-sentient entities, while Śaṅkaradeva's thought is primarily devotional and scriptural, with Kṛṣṇa as the supreme object of exclusive surrender. The study concludes that Śaṅkaradeva should not simply be classified as another exponent of Viśiṣṭādvaita; rather, his thought represents an independent Assamese development of Vaiṣṇava bhakti that shares significant theological ground with Rāmānuja while pursuing distinctive social, cultural and religious objectives.

Keywords: Śaṅkaradeva, Rāmānuja, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma, Vaiṣṇavism, Bhakti, Kṛṣṇa, Brahman, liberation, Assamese Neo-Vaiṣṇavism

1. Introduction:

Indian philosophical history contains a rich variety of interpretations of the relationship between the individual self, the world and ultimate reality. Among the major Vaiṣṇava thinkers who transformed this philosophical inheritance into living religious traditions, Rāmānuja and Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva occupy

particularly important positions. Rāmānuja, the great South Indian theologian of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, systematized Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta and provided a philosophical interpretation of the Upaniṣads, Bhagavadgītā and Brahmasūtras. Viśiṣṭādvaita understands Brahman as the supreme personal reality, identified with Nārāyaṇa, and maintains the reality of both individual selves and the material universe.

Śaṅkaradeva, who lived several centuries later in Assam, initiated the religious and cultural movement associated with Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma. His teaching placed exclusive refuge in Kṛṣṇa at the centre of religious practice and emphasized the hearing, chanting and remembrance of God's name. His movement developed into a major social and cultural force in Assam, expressed through institutions such as the nāmaghar and satra, as well as through literary, musical and dramatic forms. Modern scholarship has particularly emphasized the relationship between his religious philosophy and his social reforming activities.

A comparison between the two thinkers is therefore significant for two reasons. First, both represent powerful forms of Vaiṣṇava theism in which devotion is not merely an emotional supplement to philosophical knowledge but a central path to spiritual transformation. Second, their differences demonstrate that Indian Vaiṣṇava thought cannot be reduced to a single philosophical model.

The central argument of this article is that **Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja share a devotional-theistic orientation but cannot be identified philosophically**. Rāmānuja's contribution is primarily a systematic Vedāntic metaphysics, while Śaṅkaradeva's contribution lies in the integration of scriptural theology, exclusive Kṛṣṇa-bhakti, accessible religious practice and social-cultural transformation.

2. Research Questions:

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the principal philosophical similarities between Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja?
- ii. How do the two thinkers understand the relationship between God, soul and world?
- iii. In what ways does Śaṅkaradeva's concept of Eka Śaraṇa resemble or differ from Rāmānuja's concept of śaraṇāgati?
- iv. What is the role of bhakti in the philosophies of the two thinkers?

3. Objectives of the study:

- i. **To examine the philosophical foundations of Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta and Śaṅkaradeva's Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma.**
- ii. **To compare their conceptions of ultimate reality**, particularly their understanding of Brahman, Īśvara and Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Reality.
- iii. **To analyse their respective views on the relationship between God, the individual soul (jīva) and the material world (jagat).**
- iv. **To examine the role of bhakti, śaraṇāgati and divine grace** in their respective paths to spiritual liberation

4. Methodology:

The present study adopts a **qualitative, comparative and textual research methodology**. Since the intellectual traditions of Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja developed in different historical and geographical

contexts, the study does not attempt to establish a direct historical dependence of one thinker upon the other. Instead, it compares their philosophical and theological positions thematically.

5. Scope and Limitations of the Study:

The study focuses specifically on the philosophical and theological comparison between Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja. It does not attempt to provide an exhaustive history of either Śrīvaiṣṇavism or Assamese Neo-Vaiṣṇavism.

A major limitation is that the two thinkers do not belong to exactly the same genre of philosophical writing. Rāmānuja was a systematic Vedānta philosopher and commentator, whereas Śaṅkaradeva expressed his religious philosophy primarily through devotional literature, translation, poetry, music, drama and religious institutions.

Therefore, the study avoids treating Śaṅkaradeva as though he had constructed a philosophical system identical in form to Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita. Instead, his philosophical ideas are reconstructed from his available textual and religious traditions.

6. Analysis and interpretation:

Historical and Intellectual Context

6.1 Rāmānuja

Rāmānuja lived in medieval South India and became the most important systematic exponent of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. His principal philosophical works include the Śrībhāṣya, Vedārthasaṃgraha and Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya. His philosophical project was partly directed against interpretations of Vedānta that reduced ultimate reality to an attributeless absolute.

Viśiṣṭādvaita is generally translated as "qualified non-dualism." It maintains the unity of Brahman while affirming the genuine reality of individual selves and the universe. Brahman is not an abstract, quality-less principle but the supreme personal reality, identified with Nārāyaṇa. In this system, sentient beings (cit) and insentient matter (acit) are real and are inseparably dependent upon Brahman.

Rāmānuja therefore sought to preserve both unity and plurality. Reality is ultimately one because Brahman is the supreme reality, but this unity does not eliminate the genuine existence and individuality of souls and the world.

6.2 Śaṅkaradeva

Śaṅkaradeva emerged in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Assam in a markedly different social and religious environment. He became the central figure of the Assamese Neo-Vaiṣṇava movement and developed Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma, literally a religious path based on taking exclusive refuge in the One.

Unlike Rāmānuja, Śaṅkaradeva did not compose a systematic philosophical commentary on the Brahmasūtras. His philosophical ideas are found across his literary and devotional works and must therefore be reconstructed from texts such as the Kīrtana-ghoṣā, Guṇamālā, Anādi Patana, his Assamese rendering of portions of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, and his devotional songs and dramatic compositions. This distinction is important because it would be methodologically inappropriate to impose the complete conceptual structure of Viśiṣṭādvaita upon Śaṅkaradeva. Some scholars describe his thought as containing distinctive elements that do not fit neatly into the established Vedāntic classifications.

His principal religious emphasis was the exclusive worship of Kṛṣṇa and the practice of nāma, or remembrance and recitation of the divine name. His movement also had a strong social dimension, bringing different communities together through common devotional practices. Contemporary scholarship has emphasized the egalitarian and humanistic dimensions of this religious programme.

6.3. Conception of Ultimate Reality

One of the most important points of comparison concerns the nature of ultimate reality. Rāmānuja: Brahman as Nārāyaṇa For Rāmānuja, Brahman is the supreme personal reality, Nārāyaṇa. Brahman possesses infinite auspicious qualities and is not devoid of attributes. The universe of sentient and non-sentient entities is also real and stands in an inseparable relation to Brahman.

This relationship is often explained through the analogy of **body and soul**. Just as a body depends upon and is controlled by the self, the universe depends upon Brahman. The universe is therefore not independent of God, but neither is it unreal. Recent philosophical scholarship characterizes this feature of Rāmānuja's position as a form of theistic or panentheistic metaphysics in which the universe exists within the supreme reality without exhausting it.

6.4 Śaṅkaradeva: Kṛṣṇa as Supreme Reality

Śaṅkaradeva similarly places a personal God at the centre of religious life, but his religious language is predominantly Kṛṣṇa-centred. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme Lord and the ultimate object of śaraṇāgati, or surrender.

The Eka Śaraṇa principle therefore differs from a philosophical doctrine of impersonal monism. The devotee does not merely seek intellectual realization of an abstract absolute; rather, the devotee takes refuge in the supreme Lord through devotion, remembrance and the divine name.

Some interpretations of Śaṅkaradeva emphasize the simultaneous presence of distinction and unity between God and the individual soul. In some passages, the individual is distinguished from God, while in others the pervasive presence of God in all beings becomes central. Consequently, Śaṅkaradeva's position has sometimes been interpreted through categories such as non-dualism, qualified non-dualism or bhedābheda, although none of these labels completely captures the distinctive character of his thought.

6.5 God, Soul and World

The relationship among God (Īśvara), soul (jīva) and world (jagat) is perhaps the clearest area of philosophical distinction.

For Rāmānuja, all three are real. The individual souls are dependent upon Brahman, and matter is likewise dependent upon Brahman. The plurality of individual souls is not abolished even in liberation. Rāmānuja therefore rejects a conception of liberation in which individuality disappears completely into an undifferentiated absolute.

Śaṅkaradeva also gives a central place to God, individual beings and the created world, but his treatment is more strongly shaped by the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and devotional theology than by the technical metaphysics of the Vedānta commentarial tradition.

A particularly important difference concerns the final relationship between the individual and God. Some interpretations of Śaṅkaradeva emphasize the possibility of ultimate absorption or merging into the divine, whereas Rāmānuja maintains the continued distinction and dependence of the liberated soul.

This distinction should, however, be handled carefully. The primary religious objective of Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma is not presented simply as the philosophical dissolution of individuality. Its practical centre is devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Consequently, the language of divine union must be interpreted within Śaṅkaradeva's broader devotional framework.

6.7. The Nature of the World

Rāmānuja strongly affirms the reality of the world. The material universe is not an illusion or mere appearance. It is dependent upon Brahman and forms part of the ordered manifestation of divine reality. This affirmation has important theological consequences: the world is meaningful because it is related to God, and ethical and religious action within the world has genuine significance.

Śaṅkaradeva likewise does not treat the world simply as something to be rejected. His religious movement transformed the cultural world through literature, music, drama and community institutions. The nāmaghar and satra became centres of religious and social life, while Bhaona, Borgeet and devotional literature provided forms through which religious ideas could be embodied in everyday culture. Scholarship on the Neo-Vaiṣṇava movement therefore emphasizes that its philosophy cannot be separated from its social and cultural practices.

Nevertheless, the two thinkers employ different philosophical frameworks for explaining the relationship between God and creation. Rāmānuja gives this relationship a systematic metaphysical explanation, while Śaṅkaradeva's account remains primarily theological and devotional.

6. 8 Bhakti and the Path to Liberation

Rāmānuja

Bhakti occupies a central position in Rāmānuja's religious philosophy. Knowledge of Brahman is not merely intellectual knowledge; it culminates in loving contemplation and devotion to the supreme Lord. His understanding of devotion is closely connected with surrender and divine grace.

The liberated soul does not cease to exist as an individual. Instead, liberation involves freedom from bondage and participation in the presence and service of God. This is one of the fundamental features distinguishing Viśiṣṭādvaita from Advaita Vedānta.

Modern scholarship on Rāmānuja has accordingly emphasized the close relationship between jñāna, bhakti and the experience of spiritual fulfillment in his thought.

6.9 Śaṅkaradeva

For Śaṅkaradeva, bhakti is even more explicitly the centre of religious practice. Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma teaches exclusive refuge in Kṛṣṇa, while the chanting and remembrance of the divine name constitute accessible forms of religious practice.

Śaṅkaradeva's emphasis on nāma is particularly important because it makes spiritual practice accessible beyond the sphere of specialized philosophical learning or elaborate ritualism. The religious community is created through collective devotion, singing, listening and remembrance.

This gives Śaṅkaradeva's thought a strongly practical and communal orientation. The goal is not simply to understand God but to establish a life ordered around devotion to God.

6.10 Knowledge, Ritual and Devotion

Rāmānuja does not reject knowledge. Rather, knowledge of the true nature of Brahman, the self and the world supports the devotional path. His system integrates scriptural interpretation, philosophical reasoning and devotion.

Śaṅkaradeva, in contrast, places much greater emphasis on accessible devotional practice. The chanting of God's name, hearing sacred narratives, congregational worship and remembrance become central religious activities.

This difference reflects their historical contexts. Rāmānuja was writing within the highly developed intellectual world of Sanskrit Vedānta, whereas Śaṅkaradeva was creating a mass devotional movement in medieval Assam.

The distinction should not be exaggerated into an opposition between "philosophy" and "devotion." Rāmānuja was deeply devotional, and Śaṅkaradeva's devotion contains substantial theological and philosophical assumptions. The difference is principally one of emphasis and method.

6.11 Social and Ethical Philosophy

An especially important difference appears in the social consequences of their respective traditions.

Rāmānuja's Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition developed a rich theological and devotional community in which surrender to God and service to the divine were fundamental. His thought also gave theological importance to divine grace and the accessibility of devotion.

Śaṅkaradeva's movement, however, developed an especially pronounced programme of social and cultural integration in Assam. The nāmaghar became a major community institution, and devotion functioned as a means of bringing different social and ethnic groups into a common religious framework.

Recent scholarship describes Śaṅkaradeva's movement as an important force in shaping Assamese society, identity and cultural expression. His institutions and artistic forms helped create spaces for collective participation in religious life.

Thus, while both thinkers connect devotion with ethical transformation, Śaṅkaradeva's contribution is particularly significant for the way philosophy and religious practice were translated into a broad cultural movement.

6.12 Comparative Analysis

Philosophical Category	Rāmānuja	Śaṅkaradeva
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Philosophical Category	Rāmānuja	Śaṅkaradeva
Historical period	c. 1017–1137 CE	1449–1568 CE
Region	South India	Assam
Major tradition	Śrīvaiṣṇavism	Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma
Philosophical orientation	Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta	Kṛṣṇa-centred devotional theology with distinctive non-dual/bhedābheda elements
Supreme reality	Brahman/Nārāyaṇa	Kṛṣṇa
Status of world	Real and dependent upon Brahman	Real within a God-centred devotional worldview
Status of individual soul	Real and eternally dependent upon God	Individuality distinguished from God, with strong emphasis on divine immanence
Main religious path	Bhakti, surrender and divine grace	Exclusive refuge, nāma, bhakti and remembrance
Liberation	Eternal freedom and service of God; individuality retained	Spiritual union with and devotion to the Supreme, interpreted through Kṛṣṇa-bhakti
Scriptural foundation	Upaniṣads, Brahmasūtras, Bhagavadgītā, Pāñcarātra	Primarily Bhāgavata Purāṇa and Vaiṣṇava devotional literature
Philosophical method	Systematic Vedāntic interpretation	Devotional, scriptural and literary expression
Social expression	Śrīvaiṣṇava religious community	Nāmaghar, satra and Assamese Neo-Vaiṣṇava culture
Principal emphasis	Qualified non-dualism	Eka Śaraṇa and exclusive Kṛṣṇa-bhakti

The comparison shows that the strongest similarity between the two thinkers is **the centrality of a personal and gracious God**. Both reject the idea that ultimate religious realization requires abandoning the personal dimension of the divine. Both also affirm the importance of devotion and surrender.

The most significant philosophical difference concerns the systematic relationship among Brahman, soul and world. Rāmānuja provides an explicit metaphysical model in which the universe and individual souls are real modes or qualifications of Brahman. Śaṅkaradeva does not provide an equivalent systematic ontology. His thought instead uses the theological language of the Bhāgavata and the practical vocabulary of śaraṇa, nāma and bhakti.

6.13 Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja: Similarities Without Identity

It would be tempting to describe Śaṅkaradeva simply as an Assamese representative of Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita, but such a classification is problematic.

First, there is a chronological gap of several centuries between the two thinkers. Second, Śaṅkaradeva's primary intellectual and scriptural environment was strongly connected with the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the devotional traditions that developed around it. Third, Śaṅkaradeva did not construct a technical Vedāntic system through a commentary on the Brahmasūtras.

Indeed, scholarship on Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma notes that the tradition generally focused more on devotional practice than on constructing a formal philosophical system comparable to those of Rāmānuja, Madhva or Vallabha.

At the same time, the comparison remains philosophically productive. Both thinkers understand divine reality as living and personal, both affirm the significance of the world rather than treating religious life as an escape from an entirely unreal universe, and both place devotion at the heart of spiritual realization.

The comparison therefore reveals **convergence without dependence**.

6.14. Philosophical Significance

A comparative reading of Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja contributes to a broader understanding of Indian philosophy in three ways.

First, it challenges the tendency to divide Indian intellectual history rigidly between "philosophy" and "religion." Rāmānuja demonstrates how rigorous metaphysical argument can coexist with devotional theology, while Śaṅkaradeva demonstrates how philosophical ideas can be embedded in poetry, music, drama, communal worship and social institutions.

Second, the comparison demonstrates that Vaiṣṇava philosophy is internally diverse. Theistic devotion does not necessarily produce a single metaphysical position. Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita and Śaṅkaradeva's Eka Śaraṇa tradition share a devotional orientation but express it through different conceptual and institutional structures.

Third, the comparison highlights the importance of regional traditions in Indian philosophy. Śaṅkaradeva's thought cannot be understood adequately if it is treated merely as a derivative form of another Vedāntic system. His transformation of Kṛṣṇa-bhakti into a comprehensive religious and cultural movement represents a distinctive contribution to Indian intellectual history.

6.15 Major Findings of the Study :

The comparative study produces several significant findings.

Both thinkers affirm a personal Supreme Reality

- The first major finding is that both Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja place a **personal Supreme Being** at the centre of religious life.
- For Rāmānuja, the Supreme Reality is Brahman, identified with Nārāyaṇa. Brahman possesses infinite auspicious qualities and is the inner ruler and foundation of all existence.
- For Śaṅkaradeva, Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord and the principal object of exclusive devotion. The devotee approaches the Supreme through śaraṇa, devotion and remembrance of the divine name.
- Thus, both thinkers reject a purely impersonal understanding of ultimate religious reality.

The two traditions affirm the meaningfulness of the world

- A second finding is that neither tradition treats ordinary existence simply as something that has no religious significance.

- Rāmānuja explicitly maintains the reality of the material universe and understands it as dependent upon Brahman.
- Śaṅkaradeva's religious movement similarly engages deeply with the world through social relationships, ethical conduct, music, literature, drama and communal worship.
- However, the philosophical explanation differs: Rāmānuja provides a systematic metaphysical account of the world's dependence upon Brahman, whereas Śaṅkaradeva expresses the relationship primarily through devotional theology.

Bhakti is central to both traditions

- The research finds that **bhakti represents the strongest common ground** between Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja.
- For Rāmānuja, devotion is connected with knowledge of God, meditation, surrender and divine grace.
- For Śaṅkaradeva, devotion is expressed particularly through nāma, kīrtana, hearing sacred narratives, remembering Kṛṣṇa and taking exclusive refuge in Him.
- Consequently, both thinkers transform devotion from a merely emotional activity into a comprehensive religious path.

Their concepts of surrender have important similarities

- The study finds a significant parallel between Rāmānuja's **prapatti/śaraṇāgati** and Śaṅkaradeva's **Eka Śaraṇa**.
- Both emphasize dependence upon God rather than reliance solely upon human intellectual or ritual achievement.
- Nevertheless, the concepts should not be regarded as identical. Rāmānuja develops prapatti within the theological structure of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, whereas Śaṅkaradeva places Eka Śaraṇa within a Kṛṣṇa-centred devotional movement in which nāma and congregational devotion have a particularly prominent place.

Rāmānuja's philosophy is more systematically metaphysical

- A major difference identified by the research is methodological.
- Rāmānuja develops an explicit philosophical system. His Viśiṣṭādvaita provides systematic explanations of Brahman, soul, matter, causality, knowledge, devotion and liberation.
- Śaṅkaradeva, by contrast, does not present an equivalent technical system of Vedānta. His philosophical ideas are expressed through devotional poetry, religious narratives, scriptural interpretation, songs and performance traditions.

The conception of the soul and liberation differs

- Rāmānuja maintains the real and enduring individuality of the soul. Liberation does not mean the destruction of the soul's individuality; rather, the liberated soul exists in relation to God and participates in divine bliss and service.

- Śaṅkaradeva's devotional theology emphasizes complete dependence upon Kṛṣṇa and the attainment of spiritual union with the Supreme. The language of union and divine realization must, however, be interpreted within his broader devotional framework rather than reduced to a single Vedāntic formula.
- Thus, while both traditions understand liberation as freedom from worldly bondage and realization of the Supreme, their philosophical descriptions of the liberated condition are not identical.

Śaṅkaradeva gives exceptional importance to the divine name

- The study identifies nāma as one of the most distinctive features of Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy and religious practice.
- The remembrance and chanting of the divine name provides an accessible form of religious participation. It does not require advanced philosophical education or elaborate ritual performance.
- This emphasis helped Śaṅkaradeva transform Vaiṣṇava devotion into a broad-based religious movement in Assam.

Social transformation is more explicitly visible in Śaṅkaradeva's movement

- Another important finding concerns the social dimension of religion.
- Rāmānuja's philosophy possesses significant ethical and communal implications, but Śaṅkaradeva's movement developed particularly visible social institutions through which devotional ideals could be practiced collectively.
- The nāmaghar and satra, together with devotional music, drama and literature, created spaces in which religious participation became a shared social activity.
- Thus, Śaṅkaradeva's contribution extends beyond theology into **social organization and cultural transformation**.

Regional context is essential for understanding Śaṅkaradeva

- The research demonstrates that Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy cannot be adequately understood by applying only categories developed for Sanskrit Vedānta.
- His religious thought emerged within the distinctive cultural environment of Assam and was communicated through Assamese literary and artistic forms.

6.16. Conclusion:

Śrīmananta Śaṅkaradeva and Rāmānuja stand among the great representatives of the Vaiṣṇava intellectual and devotional traditions of India. Although separated by several centuries and shaped by very different regional circumstances, both developed forms of religious thought in which God is a supreme personal reality and devotion constitutes a central means of spiritual transformation.

Rāmānuja's contribution lies principally in his systematic formulation of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. He affirmed the unity of Brahman while simultaneously maintaining the real existence of individual souls and the material universe. The souls and the world are dependent upon Brahman but are not simply reduced to an unreal appearance. His theology consequently provides a sophisticated account of the relationship between unity and plurality.

Śaṅkaradeva's contribution is different. His Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma centres on exclusive devotion to Kṛṣṇa, the remembrance and chanting of God's name, and surrender to the divine. His philosophical ideas are embedded in devotional literature rather than presented as a formal Vedāntic system. His originality lies not only in theological interpretation but also in transforming devotion into a broad social and cultural movement in Assam.

The two thinkers therefore should neither be treated as completely unrelated nor simply identified with one another. Their common ground consists in their affirmation of a personal divine reality, the importance of devotion, the meaningfulness of religious life and the dependence of the individual upon God. Their differences arise in their philosophical methods, metaphysical formulations, conceptions of liberation and institutional contexts.

Ultimately, Rāmānuja and Śaṅkaradeva illustrate two different ways in which Vaiṣṇava thought can unite philosophy and devotion. **Rāmānuja gives bhakti a systematic Vedāntic metaphysical foundation, whereas Śaṅkaradeva gives bhakti a distinctive social, cultural and communal expression through Eka Śaraṇa Nāmadharma.** Their comparison consequently enriches our understanding of both Vedānta and the wider history of Indian devotional philosophy.

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