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Statue of Equality (Ramanuja)

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Statue of Equality (Ramanuja)

A statue made of five metals stands taller than a 20-storey building. It honours a thinker who was born about 1,000 years ago.

This lesson covers the Statue of Equality in Hyderabad and the man it remembers, Ramanujacharya.



Statue of Equality (Ramanuja) near Hyderabad. Photo by Nampar10, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

What is the Statue of Equality and when was it dedicated?

What is the statue?

The Statue of Equality is a **216-foot** seated statue of Ramanujacharya. It stands at Shamshabad near Hyderabad, in Telangana.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated it on **5 February 2022**. That day was Basant Panchami.

The Governor of Telangana, Tamilisai Soundararajan, and the Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy were present.

Sources: pib.gov.in; statueofequality.org

> **Quick check 1.** The Statue of Equality was dedicated in 2022. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

What is it made of?

The statue is made of **panchaloha**. This is a mix of five metals: gold, silver, copper, brass and zinc.

PIB calls it one of the tallest metallic seated statues in the world.

The statue site adds that a smaller seated figure inside is made of **120 kg of gold**.

Sources: pib.gov.in; statueofequality.org

What stands under the statue?

The statue sits on a 54-foot base called the **Bhadra Vedi**.

Inside the base are a Vedic digital library and a research centre. It also holds ancient texts, a theatre and an educational gallery.

So the site is meant for learning as well as worship.

Sources: pib.gov.in

Who planned it, and what surrounds it?

PIB says the project was conceived by **Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swami**.

Around the statue are identical recreations of the **108 Divya Desams**. These are shrines holy to the Vaishnava tradition.

The statue site calls Chinna Jeeyar the visionary behind it.

Sources: pib.gov.in; statueofequality.org

What was the occasion?

The dedication was part of the 12-day **Sri Ramanuja Sahasrabdi Samaroham**. This marked the 1000th birth anniversary of Ramanujacharya.

The Prime Minister also took part in the Purnahuti, the closing offering, of the Vishwaksena Ishti Yagya.

Sources: pib.gov.in

What message does it carry?

PIB says the statue remembers Ramanujacharya, an 11th-century bhakti saint. He promoted equality in every part of life.

PIB lists faith, caste and creed. So the statue is named for equality, not only for size.

The release calls him a saint of the **bhakti** tradition, the path of loving devotion to God.

Sources: pib.gov.in

How did the Prime Minister link it to the Statue of Unity?

In his speech the Prime Minister compared the two statues. Sardar Patel's **Statue of Unity** repeats the oath of unity in the country.

Ramanujacharya's **Statue of Equality**, he said, gives the message of equality.

This pairing is easy to remember: Unity for Patel, Equality for Ramanuja.

Sources: pib.gov.in

What are the 108 Divya Desams?

PIB describes the 108 Divya Desams around the statue as identical recreations of ornately carved temples.

The Divya Desams are the 108 temples sacred to the Vaishnava tradition. The Alvars sang in praise of them.

The Prime Minister visited these recreations during the visit.

Sources: pib.gov.in; britannica.com

> **Quick check 2.** The statue is made of stone only. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

Who was Ramanujacharya?

When and where did he live?

Ramanuja was born around **1017** at Shriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu. Britannica says he died in **1137** at Shrirangam.

He is also called Ilaiya Perumal and Ramanujacharya.

Tradition says he lived 120 years.

Sources: britannica.com

How was he trained?

He studied at Kanchi under a teacher named Yadavaprakasha.

Later he served as a priest at the Varadaraja Temple in Kanchi.

He also carried forward the teachings of an earlier master, **Yamuna**.

Sources: britannica.com

What did he write?

Ramanuja wrote commentaries on the sacred texts. Britannica lists three major works.

They are the **Vedartha-samgraha**, the **Shri-bhashya** and the **Bhagavadgita-bhashya**.

The Shri-bhashya is his commentary on the Brahma Sutra.

Sources: britannica.com

Where did he travel and teach?

Ramanuja made a pilgrimage from Rameswaram in the south to Badrinath in the north.

He was based at the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Shrirangam.

Britannica says the Chola king Kulottunga persecuted him. He withdrew to Mysore and founded Melukote in 1099.

Tradition credits him with founding 74 centres.

Sources: britannica.com

Quick check 3. Ramanuja lived in the 1900s. *(True or False?)*

See answer ↓

What did Ramanuja teach?

What is Vishishtadvaita?

His school is called **Vishishtadvaita**, or “qualified nonduality”.

It says three things are real: matter, souls and God.

Matter and souls are the “body” of God. So they are real, but they depend on him.

Sources: britannica.com

Why is he linked to bhakti?

Ramanuja gave devotion, or **bhakti**, a firm place in philosophy. Britannica says he gave it an intellectual basis.

He continued the devotional path of the Alvars, the Tamil saints of Vishnu.

His followers are the **Shrivaishnavas**.

Sources: britannica.com

What happened to his followers?

The Shrivaishnavas later split into two schools. They are the **Vadakalai** and the **Tenkalai**.

Key centres of the tradition are the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Shrirangam and the Venkateswara Temple at Tirupati.

Sources: britannica.com

> **Quick check 4.** Ramanuja taught that matter and souls are unreal. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Which numbers should you remember?

Exams love numbers, so keep this short list.

216 feet is the height of the statue. **54 feet** is the height of the Bhadra Vedi base.

108 is the number of Divya Desams recreated around it. **12 days** is the length of the Samaroham.

5 February 2022 is the date of dedication. **120 kg** is the gold in the inner statue, as per the statue site.

Sources: pib.gov.in; statueofequality.org

Which mistakes should you avoid?

Do not mix up the statue and its base. The statue is 216 feet tall, and the base is 54 feet high.

Do not call it a stone statue. It is panchaloha, a mix of five metals.

Do not mix up the dedication year. PIB gives 5 February 2022.

Do not mix up the man and the statue. Ramanuja died in 1137, and the statue was dedicated in 2022.

Sources: pib.gov.in; britannica.com

Who were the Alvars?

The Alvars were Tamil saints who sang in praise of Vishnu. Britannica says Ramanuja continued their devotional spirit.

He did not only feel the devotion. He also argued for it in logical books, such as the Shri-bhashya.

This mix of feeling and reason is why teachers still study him.

Sources: britannica.com

What else did the same PIB release mention?

The same release also noted two other places in Telangana.

It said the **Ramappa temple**, a 13th-century Kakatiya temple, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It also said **Pochampalli** was chosen as a best tourism village by the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

These are handy facts for questions on Telangana.

Sources: pib.gov.in

Quick check 5. The 54-foot Bhadra Vedi is the statue itself. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

1017 Born near Chennai
1099 Founds Melukote
1137 Dies at Shrirangam
2022 Statue dedicated

Practice MCQs

1. When was the Statue of Equality dedicated?

A. 5 February 2023

B. 26 January 2022

C. 5 February 2022

D. 15 August 2021

See answer ↓

2. The Statue of Equality is made of which material?

A. Marble

B. Sandstone

C. Bronze alone

D. Panchaloha

See answer ↓

3. How tall is the Statue of Equality?

A. 300 feet

B. 108 feet

C. 216 feet

D. 150 feet

See answer ↓

4. How many Divya Desams are recreated around the Statue of Equality?

A. 54

B. 216

C. 12

D. 108

See answer ↓

5. In which century did the bhakti saint Ramanujacharya live, according to PIB?

A. 15th century

B. 19th century

C. 11th century

D. 7th century

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **C.**
   PIB says the Prime Minister dedicated the statue on 5 February 2022, on Basant Panchami.
   ↑ Q1
2. **D.**
   PIB says it is made of panchaloha: gold, silver, copper, brass and zinc.
   ↑ Q2
3. **C.**
   The PIB release gives the height as 216 feet. The statue site agrees.
   ↑ Q3
4. **D.**
   PIB says identical recreations of the 108 Divya Desams surround the statue. The statue site also lists 108 Divya Desams.
   ↑ Q4
5. **C.**
   PIB calls him the 11th-century bhakti saint. Britannica dates his life to about 1017 to 1137.
   ↑ Q5

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** The PIB release says the Prime Minister dedicated it on 5 February 2022. ↑ 1
2. **False.** PIB says it is made of panchaloha, a mix of five metals: gold, silver, copper, brass and zinc. ↑ 2
3. **False.** Britannica gives his dates as about 1017 to 1137. ↑ 3
4. **False.** Britannica says Vishishtadvaita treats matter and souls as real, as the "body" of God. ↑ 4
5. **False.** PIB says the statue is 216 feet tall and stands on a 54-foot base called the Bhadra Vedi. ↑ 5

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