

Statue of Equality - Ramanujacharya Statue

[UPSC Notes]

What is the Statue of Equality?

The Statue of Equality, or the Ramanuja statue, is a depiction of the 11th-century Vaishnavite, Ramanuja, on the premises of the Chinna Jeeyar Trust in Muchintal, Ranga Reddy district, 36 kilometers from the Hyderabad.

- The Statue of Equality is one of the world's tallest metallic sculptures in a sitting position.
- The initiative to build the Ramanujacharya statue came from the trust in order to commemorate the one-thousandth anniversary of Ramanuja's birth.
- The project, which cost an estimated Rs. 1,000 crore (US \$130 million), was mostly funded by donations from devotees.
- This statue is named the 'Statue of Equality by the trust.
- It's a 216-foot-tall figure crafted of 'panchaloha,' a five-metal alloy consisting of gold, silver, copper, brass, and zinc.

The article below consists of a brief description of the Statue of Equality, citing its importance in the context of UPSC.

Statue of Equality Design

In 2014, the idea of a statue commemorating the 1000th anniversary of Ramanuja's teachings was brought forth by ascetic Chinna Jeeyar.

- This would have a ground floor of 6,000 square meters and would depict Ramanuja's life and philosophy.
- On the 27,870 square meters on the second floor of the temple, there would be a spot for daily worship.
- On the 3,365 square meters third floor, there would be a library for research in the Vedic faith.
- For the construction of an Omnimax theatre in the shape of a planetarium featuring the life stories of Ramanuja, 14 models were designed according to Agama Shashtra and Shilpa Shastra.

Who was Ramaujacharya?

Ramanujacharya was a respected social reformer and a Vedic philosopher. He was born in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, in 1017 CE. He lived till 1137 CE. His birth name was Lakshmana. Ilaya Perumal, which translates to "the shining one," was another name for him.

- He promoted social justice and equality in India.
- He is well-known for being the main advocate of the Vedanta subschool of Vishishtadvaita (The non-dualistic school of Vedanta philosophy).
- Later, he produced various Vedic scripture commentaries as well as the nine scriptures. Those are known as the Navaratnas.
- The Sri Bhasya, or "True Commentary," by Ramanuja on the Vedanta Sutras and the Bhagavad-Gita are two of his most significant works (the Gitabhasya, or "Commentary on the Gita").
- His other works include the Vedantasara ("Essence of Vedanta"), the Vedartha Samgraha ("Summary of the Meaning of the Veda"), and the Vedantadipa ("Lamp of Vedanta").
- Additionally, he has emphasized the need to respect nature and not overuse it.
- He resurrected the Bhakti movement.
- Various Bhakti schools of thought were inspired by his sermons.
- Poets like Annamacharya, Bhakta Ramdas, Thyagaraja, Kabir, and Meerabai are said to have drawn inspiration from him.

Why it is called the Statue of Equality?

At a time when many castes were prohibited from accessing temples, Ramanuja advocated for social equality across all groups of people. He encouraged them to welcome everyone regardless of caste or social standing.

- He provided education to people who lacked it.
- His greatest role is the spread of the idea that "all of creation is one family," or "vasudhaiva kutumbakam."
- He spent several decades traveling the length and breadth of India, speaking from temple platforms about social equality and interconnectedness.
- He requested that the royal courts accept the social outcasts and condemned as equals while embracing them.
- He advocated for everyone's redemption via a commitment to God, kindness, humility, equality, and respect for others. He discussed the Sri Vaishnavam Sampradaya, which advocates devotion to God, humility, compassion, equality, and respect for one another, as a means of achieving global salvation.
- With the fundamental belief that every person is equal irrespective of nationality, gender, colour, caste, or faith, Ramanujacharya freed countless of societal, religious, sex, academic, and class exploitation.

Construction of Statue of Equality

The construction of the statue was led by Chinna Jeeyar. Work on the statue began in November 2017.

- Based in Nanjing, the Aerosun Corporation company was contracted in August 2015 to be the company to build the statue.
- A final design model was scanned in three dimensions and then sent to the Aerosun Corporation to be built. Seven hundred tons of a five-metal alloy consisting of gold, silver, copper, brass, and zinc were used to build the statue.
- It was created in China and later shipped in 1600 individual pieces to India via Chennai Port in 54 shipments.
- A group of around 60 Chinese workers, engineers, and welders came together to build the Muchintal solar farm over the course of 2017 and 2018.
- The assembly was undertaken at the Muchintal solar farm site, Hyderabad.
- The gold hues of the statue can be guaranteed for the next 20 years thanks to Aerosun Corporation.
- The base building in the courtyard below the Bhadravadi statue is 54 feet (16 m) tall and three stories high.
- On top of this building sits a lotus flower, 27 feet (8.2 m) in diameter, with 36 elephants carrying it.
- Over these elephants lies the statue.
- The dimension of the lotus at 27 feet represents 24 tattvas, and the remaining 3 represent the soul, god, and the guru.
- The statue has a concrete core which is surrounded by a panchaloha sheet with a thickness varying between 10 mm and 20 mm.
- There is a small meditation hall inside the complex with a golden sculpture of Ramanuja, depicting the number of years he lived. The surrounding 108 Divyadesams, carved out of stone, follow suit.
- The big, golden statue inside the plaza building was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 5, 2022. The little, golden statue inside the smaller building was inaugurated by President Ram Nath Kovind on February 13, 2022.

Features of Statue of Equality

- The Statue of Equality is the world's second-tallest sitting statue.
- At its base, there is a library, a research center, Indian scriptures, a theater, and a gallery. Ramanuja's paintings are on display in the gallery.