Visistadvaita
A Philosophy of Religion

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Dedicated to the Being of Sri Sathya Sai
TAT Embodied
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Preface

Visistadvaita, as a philosophy of religion, not only interprets metaphysics in terms of religion, and religion in terms of metaphysics, but equates the two by the common designation darsana. Darsana connotes a Vedanta philosophical system as well as spiritual perception of Reality, and may be explained as an integral intuition of the Brahman.

In extreme monism, the Brahman is jnaana and is realized by jnaana. Extreme theism distrusts the intellect and relies on scriptural faith. But in Visistadvaita, the Brahman can be enquired into as well as experienced. Conceptual knowledge of God is exalted by the soul-sense of God, and the soul-sight of God is rationalized by conceptual knowledge.

Ramanuja integrates the experiences of risis and Alvars in relation to the Brahman, the Supreme Self, and expounds what is called Ubhaya-Vedanta. As a philosopher-saint, he establishes the truths of Visistadvaita as embodied in the Vedantasutras. Simultaneously, he elucidates each adhikarana of the Sutras as experience of the Brahman, brahmanubhava. He gives a critical exposition of the experiences of the Alvars by showing their logical coherence. As a saint, he experiences God, and as a philosopher, he proves the truths of spiritual experience. He establishes that Sribhashyam, his commentary on Vedantasutras, and the Bhagavad-visaya, the logical exposition of the spiritual experiences of Nammalvar, are similar in content and look to the Brahman as the Ultimate to be attained. He is thus the exponent of Vedanta as stated in Vedantasutras and in Bhagavad-visaya and is, therefore, considered the architect of Ubhaya-Vedanta. The end and aim of Ubhaya-Vedanta is summed up in the Upanisad itself: ‘He who knows the Brahman attains the Highest’.
The catholicity of Visistadvaita lies in its synthetic insight into truth, and the spiritual transformation of such insight into universal love. Ramanuja’s synthetic method consists in his conclusion that all ideas and names ultimately connote the Brahman, Narayana, that the worship of deities like Indra is really the worship of Narayana, the inner ruler of all beings. The terms sarva-saririn, sarva-sabdavacya and sarva-raksaka refer only to the Brahman or Narayana.

Srivaisnavism, as a living religion, owes itself to Ramanuja. He has moulded it into a religion of sattvic love based on sastraic authority and spiritual experience. Visistadvaitic Srivaisnavism lays stress on personal mystic experience rather than on super naturalism and historicity. It guarantees God to all persons, and affords a philosophic basis for religious consciousness. For Ramanuja, God is love, the atman is eternal and the Paramatman is immanent. The idea of God as the saririn of all and as indwelling love is the contribution of Ramanuja. This concept offers the most inspiring motive for philosophic enlightenment and achievement of social integration. Visistadvaita is not a mere metaphysical enquiry into the nature of the Brahman as the ground of existence, but it is also a spiritual method of attaining the Brahman as the supreme end of life. Thus Visistadvaita establishes itself as a philosophy of religion.

It is significant to note that the term Visistadvaita is generally translated into English as Qualified Non-dualism. What is qualified in Visistadvaita is not Non-dualism, but the Brahman. Visistadvaita propounds that the Brahman is saguna as opposed to nirguna, though ontologically. It subscribes to the theory of Non-dualism, though of the Saguna Brahman. It is also significant to note that while Vaisnavism has evolved predating the Christian era as a non-Vedic religion of rites, Srivaisnavism, as a Vedic religion, has been the contribution of Vedic seers such as Sri Ramanuja, Vedanta Desika, etc. These seers along with the Alvars have made Srivaisnavism a religion of spiritual realization.

This book Visistadvaita - A Philosophy of Religion borrows considerably from the work ‘The Philosophy of Visistadvaita’ by P.N.Srinivasachari, a very well researched and creative presentation.
1. Visistadvaita - A Darsana

A Darsana is a body of eternal and impersonal spiritual truths enshrined in Sruti, which can be logically tested and verified in personal experience. Sruti is self-valid, and the self-explanation of existence in its wholeness and of experience in its integrity. The Vedanta Darsanas afford insight into the nature of the Brahman. The ultimate proof of the existence of the Brahman is the experience of the Brahman. It is not tarka-drsti, the way of reasoning and dialectic, but tattva-drsti, the soul-sight of the Brahman, by knowing which everything is known.

Visistadvaita, a Vedanta Darsana, maintains its position in the history of Indian thought by establishing its own siddhanta by a criticism of rival systems. It has, at the same time, a synthetic insight into the essentials of other Darsanas, and accepts whatever in them is consistent with its basic principles. It is neither pure philosophy nor pure religion. It is a true philosophy of religion, which reconciles the opposition between philosophy and religion, and the conflict between monism and pluralism. If it is liberally interpreted in terms of contemporary philosophy and comparative religion without, in any way, sacrificing its foundational principles, it is capable of satisfying the demands of science and philosophy on the one hand, and of ethics and religion on the other.

It is the task of philosophy as an intellectual enquiry into the whole of reality to frame the ultimate problems of life. The three persistent problems of philosophy relate to God, nature and the self. Of them, the enquiry into the nature of God is the most valuable. The existence of God is established by the well-known theistic proofs, and not by revealed theology. Faith and reason belong to different realms. It is impossible to prove the existence of God by logical thinking. On the other hand, mere reason is ill founded and self-contradictory. As free thought leads to atheism, blind faith leads to dogmatism.
The conflict between faith and philosophy is mainly due to the difference in their method of approach or enquiry. Faith claims finality. When it is supported by reason working in a subordinate capacity, it becomes dogmatic. When dogma is sanctioned by tradition, and sanctified by the worship of word, it claims absolute allegiance. Faith then results in fanaticism.

On the other hand, philosophy rejects the way of faith. It accepts only the guidance of reason, and follows its conclusions. But, quite often, it starts doubting everything, and ends with doubts, with no solutions to the problems posed by it. The advancement of reason, for its own sake and unrelated to spiritual intuition, only leads to atheism. Theology, therefore, condemns its guidance and takes refuse in faith. This conflict between faith and philosophy will cease only if they get reconciled in a true philosophy of religion.

Visistadvaita offers a contrast to mere philosophical speculation on the whole of reality on one hand, and to religion in the sense of a faith in revealed theology on the other. Theology insists on dogmatic faith in truths regarded as infallible on account of scriptural authority or divine disclosure. It is by its nature antagonistic to the free exercise of reason on the facts provided by human experience, which is the hallmark of philosophy. Ramanuja’s system of Visistadvaita recognizes the claims of both faith and reason. It aims at harmonizing or reconciling them. It admits a free play of reason as to the data of sense perception and inference. It also accepts spiritual intuition, anubhava of the great seers, and the doctrines or views recorded in the scriptures.

There is considerable divergence between secular thought and religious knowledge in different realms with varying results. The first stage is that of tension between naturalism and supernaturalism. The conflict is of value in so far as it leads to recognition of the fact that matter is real, though the materialistic outlook is false. It also becomes clear that a metaphysical system cannot be built on the foundations of the physical-chemical sciences and mathematics. Polytheism, in whatever form, cannot satisfy the demand of reason for unity, and the ethical claims of righteousness.

The second is that of the collision between vitalism and animism. Vitalism accepts the primacy of reason, but denies the validity of faith. It also repudiates the mechanistic view of life. On the other hand, animism attributes life and divinity to nature. It assumes different forms such as metempsychosis, fetishism, totemism and spiritism. According to it, every natural object is animate and endowed with spirit.

Visistadvaita is opposed to both the philosophy of vitalism and the religion of animism. According to it, reality is life, but the category of life does not exhaust the whole range of reality. Living cells and protoplasm cannot adequately express the highest moral and spiritual values of experience.

Vedanta does not accept animism in any form as true religion. True religion begins with theism, and not with animism. To identify image worship with fetishism betrays ignorance and prejudice, as the image is the incarnation of the Infinite in the finite.

The third realm of conflict is between sensationalism and anthropomorphism. Sensationalism is the theory of reality conceived as a mental continuum or stream of psychic presentations. Psychology is descriptive, and does not accept the metaphysical view of a psyche or self. For sensationalism, consciousness is a mere continuum without a self.

On the other hand, anthropomorphism revolves round the tendency of making God infused with religious rites. For instance, the worship of the Vedic deity Visnu is fused with the Narayana cult and the Vaasudeva cult, and has become the Visnu-Narayana
religion of Vaisnavism. The concept of the *avatāras* of Visnu is the Puranic way of tracing the evolutionary ascent of man from the sub-human levels and zoomorphic incarnations. The essential faith of anthropomorphism is that man is made in the image of God, and not God in the image of man.

Visistadvaita rejects the sensationalistic view of reality as inadequate and unsatisfactory, as it leads to nihilism. Religious truths are super-sensuous and eternal, and they cannot be discerned wholly by historic judgments, which apply only to events in sense perception. The true Vedic method is spiritual instruction according to the qualification and needs of the aspirant. The Vedantasutras afford true insight into Vedic religion when they explain the worship of different Vedic gods as that of their inner self, *antaryāmin*, the Supreme Brahman.

The next phase of the contest is between rationalism and theology in their answers to the question of the nature of reality. Reason marks the transition in knowledge from consciousness to self-consciousness. On the other hand, rationalism pursues the logical method of determining truth in a clear and distinct way.

Rationalism, claiming to be philosophy, seeks the liberation of thought from the tyranny of dogmatic theology. It is the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake founded on the inner light of reason and reflection. It is a process of self-criticism freed from subjection to external authority. Its method is rationalistic on account of its acceptance of reason as the highest authority in the acquisition of truth.

Though the existence of God cannot be proved by reason, He can be experienced by means of direct intuition. Intuition is the immediate experience of God transcending the realms of sentient experience and reason. It transcends the level of instinct and intellect, and is a direct insight into God or *Atman*; and it is ineffable and incommunicable. *Atman* is a-logical and amoral. It cannot be apprehended by discursive reason or attained by moral effort. The a-logical and the amoral is the fulfillment of the logical and moral experience.

Visistadvaita accepts the method of testing truth by means of the disciplined logical intellect and emancipating it from the fallacies incidental to the investigation of truth. Its materialistic idea is *mukti*, salvation. It welcomes the Mimamsa view of Veda-dharma and insists on the authority of the moral consciousness. But it stresses on the philosophic need of intuiting the Brahman that is self-realized, and not something to be accomplished.

But theology does not favour this mystic philosophy. The mystic experience of God is particular, private and arbitrary without any objective validity. The mystic philosophy has no faith in the infallibility of revelation or *sastra*. Scripture is the word of God in the sense that it is infallible and eternal. To the theologian, literal faith in scriptural revelation is more important to religion than personal religion.

Religion is essentially theo-centric and cannot be traced to personal experience. The proof of God is meant either for the theist or for the atheist. The former is a believer and needs no proof. The atheist is a non-believer who rejects all proof. For religion, scripture is its own proof, and every word of it is an eternal truth. It is considered as holy as a shrine of God. Philosophic speculation is admissible only if, like a handmaid, it is subservient to faith, and justifies the truth of revelation deductively without resorting to the heretic method of logical criticism.

Faith is sanctified by tradition or *sat-sampradaaya*. It is a heritage bequeathed to posterity in the form of divinely ordained truths. The theist believes that it is his duty to submit to spiritual authority, and be loyal to the tradition. It is the essence of
scholasticism that dogma, as an article of faith, should regulate life. For him, philosophy should learn to square with dogma and not conflict with it. And, conduct is to conform to the will of God as expressed in the sacred tradition, which is the final truth.

This conflict between faith and reason reaches its zenith when intuition tries to oust faith in revelation, and when faith tries to oust intuition. Authoritarianism is opposed to intuitionism on the ground that it refers to mere subjective and private experience, which can never be the same for all. It strengthens itself by alliance with forces of verbalism, dogmatism and fanaticism.

On the other hand, intuitionism is anti-theological. It is a spiritual quest for immediate religious experience. As such it allies with mysticism. Another form of intuitionism rejects religion as a mere appearance of reality, betraying the self-contradiction between man and God. Religion and its God disappear in the non-dual experience of oneness. But there cannot be a more solid reality than religious experience.

A true philosopher accepts the truths of religious faith, experiments with them and experiences them. He ventures to know the reality. On the other hand, true religion aims at realization of reality as the Brahman. Thus, a true philosophy of religion is neither a free rational speculation on the nature and value of reality, nor is it a theology with no faith in the trustworthiness of the pramanas of sense perception and reasoning.

The object of Vedanta is to raise man to the level of God. The finite is to be infinitized, and not the Infinite humanized. True religion is, therefore, not a nature religion, but is a self-revelation of God to the self with a view to perfecting it. The idea that religious faith is induced by the psychological conditions of life such as fear, anger and sex is not acceptable, as religious consciousness is spiritual and not sensual.

Vedanta makes an attempt to think out all things and discover their spiritual meaning and value, as a true religio-philosophical system. The vedantin seeks to know the right way of framing questions, and gradually recognizes that Vedanta is not the obstinate questioning of external things or mere revolute thinking. It is but a spiritual quest or induction.

The dialogue between Varuna and his son Bhrgu in the Taittiriiya Upanisad brings out this concept in a classical way. The problem posed to Bhrgu is: ‘What is that from which these beings are born, by which they are sustained and into which they return?’ Bhrgu, as a philosopher-mystic, seeks to understand the problem and solve it by a resolute spiritual effort and consecrated life. He attempts various definitions of the Brahman as suggested by the teacher like annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya and vijnaanamaya, which have their parallels in western thought as materialism, vitalism, mentalism and rationalism. None of these definitions satisfies him, as none exhausts the nature of the Absolute. Only the Absolute reckons the Absolute. It is alone self-complete and supremely valuable. Then Bhrgu concludes that the Bharman is anandamaya, the intuitional Highest, and that the mystic experience of the Brahman is the crown and consummation of knowledge.

Vedanta is thus an enquiry into the meaning of the Brahman and is really a Darsana. The term darsana adequately expresses the foundational truths of Vedanta. It is the philosophic knowledge of reality strengthened by viveka, discrimination and vairagya, freedom from sense-desires, as well as the spiritual realization of that knowledge. It is an organic integration of sruti, scripture; yukti, logic; and anubhava, intuitive experience. In other words, they relate to revelational faith, rational enquiry and intuitive verifiability in that order.

Visistadvaita, as a philosophy of religion, reconciles the extremes of reason and faith by the sublime truth that the Brahman
is the ultimate explanation of the world of cit, the sentient and acit, the insentient. It is the supreme end of spirituality, and outside the Brahman there is no reality. The more the jiva is spiritual, the more brahmanized it is. Visistadvaita avers that the satvata religion of the Pancaratra is the word of God promoting godliness, and is, therefore, true.

In fact, the divine experiences of the Alvars have Vedantic validity and value. Visistadvaita, as a philosophy of religion, reconciles revelation, reason and intuition, claims to be universal, and accepts whatever is coherent with its cardinal truths. It solicits humanity to participate in the riches of brahmanubhava, the experience of the Brahman. Its spiritual hospitality knows no barriers, either geographical or racial.

2. The Theory of Knowledge

General

The central idea of Visistadvaita, as a philosophy of religion, is the integration and harmonization of all knowledge obtained through sense perception, inference and revelation. The key to revelation is enshrined in the Upanisadic text, brahmavid apnoti param meaning ‘he who knows the Brahman attains the highest’. This axiom affirms the interrelated unity of the threefold system of Vedantic wisdom known as tattva, hita and purusartha, elaborated in the Vedantasutras.

Tattvajnaana is the philosophic exposition of the Brahman as the immanent ground of existence, and the inner self of all things. Hita involves the determination of the moral and spiritual means of sadhana for realizing the Brahman. Purusartha is the attainment of the Brahman as the summum bonum of life by realizing which everything is realized.

Visistadvaita accepts the trustworthiness of thought. It is a philosophy of affirmation and valuation. It answers the three basic questions of philosophy, ‘what can I know? What ought I to do? And what may I hope for?’ thus: The Brahman is knowable as the supreme tattva. Hita is doing one’s duty as brahmarpana. Purusartha is the brahmanization of the self so that the self attains the eternal nature of the Brahman. The philosophy of religion, for Visistadvaita, gathers the divergent lines of thought, and combines them in a synthetic way. All the currents of knowledge converge in the Brahman by knowing which everything is known.

The first problem of philosophy ‘what can I know?’ relates to the theory of knowledge, its origin and nature. The Visistadvaita epistemology provides an answer to it.
The problem of epistemology is the problem of the relation between knowledge and reality. The question raised in this regard is as follows: ‘What is the connection between the course of consciousness in the individual self, and the world of persons and things which constitute the objective world *par excellence* and the All-Self?’ This question does not presuppose a radical distinction between rational psychology, cosmology and theology on one hand, and the knowledge of the self, nature and God on the other, as they are interrelated. The world of knowledge has a unity sustained by the intelligent self, which endures in all the levels of experience including the perceptual, the rational and the revelation.

The first question in epistemology is about the origin and possibility of knowledge. Visistadvaita affirms the knowability of reality. It asserts that we can know things as they are. In the perceptive judgment as in ‘I see a rose’, the self with its *jnaana* perceives the object rose, and does not passively receive the visual sensation. The knowledge presupposes a knowing self and an object of thought. It is explained as an ascent from the sensation to the self.

Sensations form the raw material of knowledge. They become percepts by means of the *a priori* form prescribed by the mind. The perceived objects are conceived and arranged by the synthetic mind or understanding. The mind or understanding brings together the perceived objects, and forms judgments. Without the unity of self-consciousness, sensation cannot pass into perception and conception, or judgment.

Reason unifies the judgments. It is a higher principle than understanding, and arrives at the idea of self, nature and God as the highest unity. Thus, epistemology begins with sensation as the matter of knowledge, and proceeds through perception and conception to the self as the synthetic unity of knowledge.

Visistadvaita, however, lays stress on the work of thought as a revelatory function. Knowledge is not a synthetic construction, but a process by which things are revealed. The objects in nature are given, and not made by thought. It is the function of thought to reveal them, and not to create them.

According to Visistadvaita, *jnaana*, the attributive intelligence of the self can reveal both itself and the object outside it. In the act of perception, it streams out from the self towards the object and illumines it. This is in contrast with the concept of *antahkarana* of the Advaita.

*Jnaana* or knowledge, for this system of thought, starts from the *atman*. With the *manas* and the *indriyas*, it comes into contact with the object (*artha*), assumes its form, and thus reveals it. The knowledge of the object thus arises when *jnaana* contacts the object through the inner and outer senses. This theory has the merit of recognizing the primal nature of consciousness, *jnaana* and the relative independence of the conscious self and the non-conscious object. The object is not a *vrtti* or idea or psychosis objectified by *avidya* or nescience. It is not the counterfeit self of *ahamkara* or egoism. This concept predicates the reality of the perceiving self, and of the external world that is perceived. Both are interdependent, essential to knowledge. This is neither materialism nor mentalism.

The theory of perception of Visistadvaita is a profound truth satisfying the demands of science and philosophic speculation. Many of the theories of the origin of knowledge fail to give a satisfactory account of *pratyaksa* or sense perception. Science is a specialized knowledge of some aspect of reality. It is, therefore, fractional, fragmentary and abstract.

In the judgment of sight perception ‘I see the rose’, the physicist traces the visual sensation to the light vibrations starting...
from the object and stimulating the eye, which is like a photographic camera, and to the formation of the visual image on the retina. The physiologist then refers to the response of the neuron to the external stimulus and also to the passage of the impulse to the visual area where it is resisted by the synapses, causing the flash of consciousness.

The psychologist then explains sensation as the report of the sensory stimulation in consciousness, which gives us acquaintance with the object. Each sensation has its specific functioning on account of which the eye can only see the thing, and the ear hear the sound.

But the sense object is not bare sensation. The knowledge of the object traces to the synthetic unity of apperception that is in one’s self-consciousness. The exponent of each succeeding view thus begins where the other ends, with the result that there is no real explanation of the process by which the self knows the object ‘rose’.

It is possible to explain the concrete experience by synthetic coordination of the abstract truths of physics, physiology and psychology, genetic and rational. The Visistadvaita theory of knowledge avoids the perils of the analytic method. It states the simple fact that the self with its jnaana knows the object, which is relatively external to it. The self seeks to know the external object through the channels of the senses as a whole. This is similar to perceiving white light as a whole in spite of its separate spectral colours. This synthetic view is thus the culminiation, and completion of the conclusions of the sciences such as physics, physiology and psychology.

Knowledge is the self-revelation of the real object as a whole. It is not a piecing together or juxtaposition of the rational with the empirical. It is not an ascent from the particulars of sense to a pervading identity. It is not a descent, too, from the universal to the particular. The object is not the copy of the idea, nor is the idea the archetype of the object. Neither is deduced from the other.

To say that the mind or its vrarti, form creates the object and takes its form is to take no account of the object at all. The object is not ‘not-self made of avidya’ opposed to the self, but a real thing in terra firma. It includes other selves also as social objects.

The world of physical objects is for consciousness, and not in consciousness. Objects have an existence independent of consciousness.

How does the subjective consciousness perceive the object that is outside it and different from it? Visistadvaita explains it thus: The ultimate explanation of the subject-object relation is afforded by the religious insight that the real object of every judgment is the Brahman that is in everything as its inner self. When one says ‘I think’, it really means that ‘the Brahman thinks in one as one’s self’. The Brahman as finite intelligence is the pries and pre-supposition of finite thought, and has more affinity with it than with external things.
Dharmabhuta-jnaana (Phenomenological Consciousness)

Dharmabhuta-jnaana, attributive knowledge, is the foundational truth of the Visistadvaita theory of knowledge. It throws light on the nature of reality, and is well expounded in Yatindramatadeepika. It explains cosmic consciousness, self-consciousness and the Brahman-consciousness.

Consciousness, according to this theory, cannot be aware of itself. It presupposes a self of which it is the idea or attribute. Jnaana is not identical with reality or the self. The two are separate, but not separable. If being and knowing are identical, the theory of knowledge or epistemology is identical with the theory of being or ontology. In such an event, there is no need for theorizing activity at all. In other words, if ‘what is’ is in itself, then there is no ‘ism’ as a metaphysical explanation of ‘what is’.

The alternative that knowing is entirely unrelated to being is equally inadmissible, as it would lead to skepticism. If there is self-discrepancy between thought as ‘what’ and reality as ‘that’, thought can never grasp reality or get merged in it. The method of negation, neti that distills pure consciousness from abstract consciousness is a denial of consciousness itself. The method of negation has nothing to do with doubting knowledge and denying it.

It is wrong in monistic philosophy to start with doubt and end with denial. The monist denies the reality of an external object, and declares the percept as a false appearance projected by the mind, which is itself unreal. This is how he considers that the conscious subject within perceives what is external to it. This view is allied to skepticism. It is sterile.

The act of denial at least exists as an act. If it is regarded as an illusion, the illusion exists as a fact. If it is causally explained, it leads to the fallacy of infinite regress. It is difficult for the monist to explain how the illusion arises. If it is explained as the result or effect of a cause like avidya, the origin of this avidya crops up for explanation.

The statement that nothing exists assumes the conceivability of something, which it denies. Thought constitutes reality as its inner quality, and is not superimposed on it. The fact that something exists affirms a quality of that something. ‘What is’ has a quality apart from its existence. But a quality cannot exist by itself and be its own predicate. As such it presupposes a substance of which it is a quality. A substance is of a quality, and is not a quality or an aggregate of qualities.

If monism affirms mere being or substance, and denies its having qualities, in other words, predication and determination, it encounters phenomenalism, which admits qualities but denies substance. Even monism is constrained to concede the truth of substance and qualities when it refers to the asraya or adhishthana as the locus of illusion.

Dharma, quality presupposes dharmin, the substance. And dharmin presupposes dharma. The denial of the one is the denial of the other. Such denial is opposed to all pramanas, instruments of knowledge.

When substance is svaprapakasa, self-illumined, it is called ajada. It is different from jada like the world of space and time. Ajada is consciousness with content classified into pratyak, conscious-self existing by itself. Its knowledge, parak (existing for another) is its essential quality, dharmabhuta-jnaana.
Substance as *ajada* is conceived as a conscious self, finite or infinite. It is the subject of experience that has *jnaana* as its inseparable attribute. *Atman* is and has consciousness. It is substantive intelligence, and has attributive intelligence as well, manifesting its nature. There can be logical distinction between the two, but no division or separation.

*Dharmabhuta-jnaana* is *svayam-prakasa*, self-illumined. It illuminates objects, *artha-prakasa*. It is also called *mati*, *prajnaa*, *semusi* as well as *samvit*. It can reveal itself and objects. But it is only revelatory and is not self-realized like the *atman*. It is midway between *cetana* and *jada*, as it manifests itself and objects as *cetana*, and is, for another, *acetana*. It is like physical light which can only ‘show but not know’. It exists in the self and is sustained by its intelligence.

The relation between the *atman* and its *jnaana* is like that between light and its luminosity. The self is a knowing subject and is not mere intelligence. It is not true to say that intelligence is creation of *ajaana*, ignorance. *Jnaana* is self-originated and self-valid. We can think away all things, but cannot think away thought or *jnaana*.

In affirming the ‘I’ in the judgment ‘I am conscious’, consciousness is predicated of the self that is affirmed. But it does not imply the identity of being and knowing. The self that exists and is conscious is not mere consciousness. *Jnaana* explains itself and things, as an act of inner necessity. It is the idea that interacts with the things, and makes the world of nature intelligible. It imparts meaning and value to *buddhi* and other mental states, which are the modifications of *jnaana*, and not its creations. *Jnaana* thus illumines and explains reason and understanding, and perception and sensation. Besides, it is self-explanatory.

*Jnaana* functions in the empirical states through the medium of *manas* or the auxiliary cause. It is often identified with *manas* as a matter of convention, *upacara*. All states of consciousness from the lowest instinct to the highest state of *bhakti* (devotion) including *viveka* (discrimination), *pratyaksa* (perception), *anumana* (inference) and *sabda* (scriptural faith) are only *avastas* (modifications) of *jnaana*. *Jnaana* has the character of revealing objects. It thus reveals the knowledge of things in the external world.

In the *samsara* (empirical) state of the *jiva*, *jnaana* radiates from the centre and illuminates the objects through the medium of the senses. *Jnaana* is as real as the object known for the reason that there is no barrier between the subjective and the objective.

The object is not a mental construction, creation or shadow of the idea. The idea is also not a faint copy or duplicate of the object. This is for the reason that *jnaana* is both capable of illumining itself and illuminating objects. The view that the self-consciousness of the self is the source of all mental states and that it is its nature to reveal external objects has the merit of simplicity. It is a true test of truth, and affords a basis for reconciliation of the claims of realism and idealism.

Sensation has a metaphysical foundation in the self, and the self itself has its meaning and value in its inner self. Visistadvaita prefers the method of tracing psychology to metaphysics and religion, to the reverse process of deriving religion and metaphysics from psychology.

The self is *cit-ruupa*. It is of the nature of consciousness. It has *caitanya* or consciousness for its essential quality. While the finite self is *anu* (infinitesimal) in nature, its consciousness is *vibhu*, all pervasive and infinite. While the self abides in its being, its
consciousness is expansive without limit. Its consciousness mirrors the whole universe as its content.

During the phenomenal state of samsara, jnaana is causally determined by the moral law of avidya-karma, and is limited in the embodied state. Consciousness, which is capable of becoming infinite, is spatialized, cribbed and confined. It is this finitized existence of jnaana that accounts for the difference in the states of the jiva from the most humble to Brahma.

In the noumenal state of mukti (liberation), jnaana is infinite consciousness and all pervasive. It is then free from the contractions of karma. It is co-terminus with cosmic consciousness and God-consciousness. While the self is immutable and eternal, its consciousness changes. But it endures through time and persists even in dreamless sleep, swoon or senselessness as is evidenced in the experience ‘I slept well’.

In sleep, the revelatory nature of jnaana is overpowered by tamas, but is not absent. Its light is hidden, and is not revealed. The witness consciousness in sleep is the witness of something. Consciousness is continuous, distinct and clear in the waking state, dim and confused in the subconscious and dream states, and divine in mukti (liberation). It is implied in sleep and stupor. Its non-experience in sleep does not prove its non-existence. The fact of memory supports this view.

The self persists in its subjective modification as a pervading identity. While it illuminates other objects, they do not illumine it. Further, the three states of consciousness are continuous, and are not self-contradictory. It is not correct to explain youth as the contradiction of childhood, and overcome by manhood. The three states are different phases of a being in a single life having the same biological end. They are not three discrepant unreals. Even monism admits the coexistence of the self as witness consciousness and the antahkarana, and that the self persists in the non-dual experience of sleep.

The differences are to be accounted for psychologically as the changing states of the same self and its consciousness, because of its being affected by avidya-karma. The un-manifest state of jnaana is not ajnaana or illusion, but jnaana as essence or real possibility.

With the lifting of avidya and the contractions of karman, jnaana wakes to itself, expands and shines in its infinite and eternal splendour. It then radiates its light everywhere. It mirrors forth the universe from its own point of view. Then perceptual and inferential knowledge expands into full integral experience. The jiva then becomes free of matter and evolves into the Iswara state of cosmic consciousness. The jnaana of Iswara, unlike that of bound jiva, is ever all pervasive.

The idea of the finite self with infinite consciousness as its essential and eternal nature is not inconceivable. Even absolutism is constrained psychologically to posit the existence of infinity of finite selves, nanajiva. The Visistadvaita theory of jnaana has the merit of recognizing the reality of the finite and the infinite, and reconciling the claims of pluralism and monism. The infinite pervades the finite, and removes its exclusive feeling of individualism. By knowing the one, we know the other. The intelligence of the jiva, finite and infinite, has its home in the absolute intelligence of the Brahman. Thus the theory of Dharmabhuta-jnaana mediates between the finite and the infinite, and traces spiritual consciousness to the Brahman.

Dharmabhuta-jnaana, besides illuminating itself and the objects of nature, is also substance-attribute (dravya-guna). Light (prabha) illumines objects and is a quality inhering in the substance. At the same time, it is a substance. Similarly, the term jnaana
expresses an essential and eternal attribute that inheres in the self. But it contracts or expands like a substance, owing to the determining influence of *karma*. So it is the substratum of change. As such it is liable to be defined as a substance as well.

Eternal consciousness changes when it is caught up in the world of *karma*. But when freed from sense contact, it comes true to itself in the state of *mukti*, liberation. *Jnaana* is thus both changing and changeless, and is both substance and quality. It is the peculiar spiritual quality of the *atman*, and is contrasted with the qualities of objects or their secondary sensations. *Dharmabhuta-jnaana* is thus a mediating link between the changeless state of reality and the changing phenomenal states.

*Jnaana* is unitary though it realizes itself in various mental modifications starting with the animal instincts and ending with the divine impulse of *bhakti*, devotion. *Jnaana* functions as conation and feeling. As such, every state of consciousness is cognitive, conative and affective. It contains within itself the principle of self-differentiation and self-activity. *Jnaana* is not an abstract thought, but is a mode of thinking with infinite variations. It is not the sum of mental processes or an identity that pervades the differences. It is the self-same consciousness that exhibits itself, though in different forms, owing to the influence of *avidya-karma*. It is the mother of metaphysics.

**Svarupa-jnaana (Existential Consciousness) & Dharmabhuta-jnaana (Phenomenological Consciousness) – Interrelationship**

The concepts of *Svarupa-jnaana* and *Dharmabhuta-jnaana* throw considerable light on the knowledge situation. *Svarupa-jnaana* is the *atman*. *Dharmabhuta-jnaana* is described as working through mind and the senses. It is everything that is said to be internal except the *atman* and mind.

*Dharmabhuta-jnaana* and *Svarupa-jnaana* are in essence one and the same, and also are distinct as in the reflective consciousness ‘I-know that I-know X’. When I see a star, it is not merely my *dharmabhuta-jnaana* that becomes one with the existence of the star. In the live act of perception, both the consciousesses unite. But in reflection, *svarupa-jnaana* can transcend the identity and make it its own object. The *dharmabhuta-jnaana* is only the outward going force of the *svarupa-jnaana*. It is part and parcel of the latter and can be assimilated to it. The complete disappearance of *dharmabhuta-jnaana* in deep sleep is complete withdrawal into *svarupa-jnaana* as structured by our finitude. The *dharmabhuta-jnaana* does not reveal the existential at the time that it reveals an object. But the presence of the existential in the act of seeing and locating the object is revealed in the reflective consciousness through the transcendence of the witness consciousness.

In fact, the light, which reveals the object through the *dharmabhuta-jnaana*, is the borrowed light of the existential. In other words, it is the light, which is the *svarupa-jnaana* that reveals the object through the *dharmabhuta-jnaana*, which is a form of activity of the *svarupa-jnaana* (*atman*).

It is for this reason that we do not know ourselves when we are focused on the object and know the object. Although *dharmabhuta-jnaana* denotes something substantive, it is
essentially the form of the activity of the atman, one of the types of its becoming.

Thus, the atman as svarupa-jnaana cannot be excluded from the dharmabhuta-jnaana which itself is a function, power, force of the former. The dharmabhuta-jnaana has, therefore, directedness towards the object, gross or subtle, or even an idea, or a mental image. Direction has necessarily two terms, that from which and that to which it points. Then the two terms must have been included in the direction of the dharmabhuta-jnaana. They have to be inseparable from the consciousness. This direction or directedness is not that of an empty or lifeless relation. It is that of a concrete, living process. It is a case of the concrete, factual, experimental, not merely that of an abstract symbol as in formal logic or mathematics.

Indeed, the dharmabhuta (attribute) jnaana, in a sense, flows through the inner sense (antahkarana) and the senses. But they are not patterns external to it. They constitute the very form of the attribute consciousness. They are constituent to it, as its patterns of active directedness, not static or inactive. Thus, the independence of prakrti from the dharmabhuta-jnaana of either the Supreme Spirit or the finite atman is not tenable.

The atman absorbs its attribute consciousness and has infinite power or potency to do so. This is to say that the directed knowing (I-know) is absorbed into being (I-am), the phenomenological into the existential consciousness.

A question arises whether the individual atmans (the atmans of finite individuals) as existential consciousnesses (svarupa-jnaana) can ultimately remain independent of one another. Empirically, in the world of action, they are often independent, that is, separate, although dependent on one another in practical life. The question is whether they remain separate and be many, through all the transcendental stages. If the Logos and Its various levels are the same for every individual, constituting the stages of his higher self, is it possible that at these transcendental stages all the atmans are separate and not one?

In Indian philosophy or thought, the question whether something remains so and so ultimately is considered from the point of view of what it will be in liberation. The presumption is that, in the liberated state, everything assumes its absolutely original form.

If the phenomenological (attribute) consciousnesses are each infinite by nature, overlapping, interpenetrating, conscious, and conscious of one another, it is not intelligible that they can be separate. If I know whatever is happening in another’s mind, his thinking, his pains and pleasures without his telling me, then there is nothing to separate him from me. Both of us have to be identical. But that does not happen.

Regarding sensations and sense data, one may say that there is privacy of experience. However, we cannot be so sure about the privacy of sensations as we can be of pains, pleasures, mental images, illusions, dreams etc although, all are experiences. If X says “I am in pain”, I know and the doctor knows that X is in pain. It does not mean that I and the doctor experience the same pain which X experiences. Still our experience, that X experiences pain, is real.

The sensations and the senses are different as belonging to different persons. The atmans are each infinite and even the attribute consciousnesses of each are infinite. Yet the sensations and the senses overlap and are different without becoming numerically identical. How are we then to account for the identity of the object? In the case of the pain of X, if the object of sensation is not the same for three of us, there will be no identity of the object in perception. If the senses present sensations (sense data), mind their unity as an object as a whole, then what is it in us that presents the identity?
The Upanisads mention the inward structure of the self – senses, life, mind, individual reason, Cosmic Reason and the atman in that ascending order. We may have to say that it is the Cosmic Reason, which has to be the same, numerically identical, in all of us. It is what finally confers existence on all the phenomenal objects in so far as they are real. The Cosmic Reason in all of us must be the same and also must be above the impurities of individual reasons. It has to be the higher aspect or dimension of the individual reason and has also to be its deeper aspect or dimension. The numerical sameness of the object we contend for can be made possible only by something numerically the same for all in our inner beings. Hence, in spite of overlapping of experiences, it cannot be contended that we can be different persons all the way up to the individual atmans. It ends at the stage of the Cosmic Reason before the atman in each individual. Existence is only one. Ontologically, all existences, all beings of both God and the finite individuals are one. Only empirically in the world of action, are they different.

The phenomenological (attribute) consciousness is structured and directed. It has intentionality. The structure of the phenomenal world is due to the structure of the phenomenological consciousness in so far as it works rightly. This consciousness is said to be outward like the Eternal Force (nitya-vibhuthi). The two forms of consciousness – of the atman and of God – are said to be inward, called the existential consciousness, svarupa-jnaana.

Now in the atman’s act of cognizing an object, how are the two forms – the inward and the outward related? The answer may be that the same dharmabhuta-jnaana, when it reveals an object, reveals itself to the atman. For revealing itself to the atman, which is inward, it must have inward directedness, and for revealing the object, it must have outward directedness. Then, the so-called inward and outward directedness are not absolute distinctions, but are two intentionalities of the same consciousness, that is, the dharmabhuta-jnaana. The atman is conscious of the dharmabhuta-jnaana belonging to it like heat of fire. It is the power of the atman or the svarupa-jnaana itself. Without svarupa-jnaana in the background, dharmabhuta-jnaana cannot be phenomenological.

In the final analysis, my dharmabhuta-jnaana is my rational consciousness with directions outwards and inwards. It is finally to be absorbed, assimilated to and made part of my being, my I-am which will be the true indeterminate consciousness (jnaana). It is infinite, without contours and fully restful.

The svarupa-jnaana is revealed not only by the phenomenal when it reveals an object, but is cognized by itself. Its cognition of itself is not like revealing an object by the dharmabhuta-jnaana; svarupa-jnaana is not an object of the phenomenal like the book on the table. The phenomenal is known as another to the svarupa-jnaana, but also as being covered, comprehended and within the svarupa-jnaana. It is like my body being an object of my consciousness, but my consciousness extending beyond my body.
3. The Theory of Judgment

Every judgment is the affirmation of reality, and not the apprehension of identity, devoid of content or differentiation. Thought qualifies reality. It presupposes the distinction between the subject and the object of the judgment. Judgment, as an act of predication, is the fundamental principle of philosophic logic. The two elements of subject and predicate are integrally united, and not isolated bits, or opposite.

If thought is identical with reality, the process of judging becomes tautological. There may be no need for it. But if thought is opposed to reality and cannot reach it, it becomes useless and irrelevant to knowledge. The only way of solving the problem lies in the affirmation that reality is knowable by thought on account of their inseparable relation, and of the logical faith in the reality of predication as a subject-object relation. Reality is, therefore, determinate, and not indeterminate.

Consciousness abstracted from the knowing self, or the subject and the object, is inconceivable and, therefore, non-existent. If consciousness as such is self-proved, it has at least the quality of being self-proved. If it can be argued that pure consciousness remains identical with itself when jñaana dispels ajñaana, or ajaanaa destroys itself, it is justifiable to say that self-consciousness cannot be sublated, and the self remains an eternal subject and cannot have antecedent or consequent non-existence.

Judgment is the unity, which explains the different elements. It does not explain them away. The two are correlated and distinguishable elements of knowledge. Determination is not negation. But negation is determination, and acquires positive meaning in a judgment by defining its nature. It presupposes self-determination.

Substance as an entity is an empty abstraction if it is devoid of content. Substance is not the mere aggregate of attributes. On the other hand, it is their organic unity and underlying reality. The distinction between the indeterminate perception and the determinate perception is not a difference in kind between the undifferentiated and the differentiated. Both are complex presentations.

Knowledge, even in the form of primitive sensation, is significant. It is in the nature of judgment. It is a development of the objective. The indefinite becomes the definite and clear. The substance-quality relation is implicit in the former, and explicit in the latter. If the first is bare identity, it is non-relational and no amount of subsequent knowledge can introduce difference into it. But, as a matter of fact, the first called prathama-pinda-grahana is the absence, not of difference and discrimination altogether, of some specific difference as ‘this is such’, and is articulate. The second called dviteeya-pinda-grahana is the extension of what is already affirmed of the generic character of a class.

The first judgment ‘this is a table’ is indefinite, but not indeterminate. The second ‘this is also a table’ is revival based on similarity of structure. Both are savisesa, and not nirvisesa. Every judgment is in the form ‘this is such’ in which the predicate qualifies the subject. There is no distinction drawn between what is given and its extension.

What is immediate knowledge is, by its own necessity, mediated. We give a reason for what is immediately felt. When we say that there is fire, we try to give a reason for the assertion. In every judgment, extent and intent go together. The jati or genus is realized in the vyakti or individual owing to the intimate structural similarity of pattern, samsthana. Therefore, samanya or genus is practically the same as samsthana, and is structured.
Thus there is no contradiction between *savikalpaka-jnāna* and *nirvikalpaka-jnāna*. Two different things are contradictory only when they stand in the same relation to the same object. But different qualities of whiteness and redness may coexist in the same object like cow. To say that there is being as such without any quality is the result of progressive abstraction. It is not correct to say that the first perception is knowledge of pure being, *nirvīsesa-cinmatra*. A pure sensation as such is psychologically impossible.

Even in a perceptive judgment like ‘this is a pot’, the factors of knowledge can be distinguished. They are all equally real, even though their values differ. The perceived object, in its present-ness, is a given spot in the world of space-time, which is in sensuous contact with the percipient subject, the sensitive self. The percipient subject comes into contact with the particular spot, which is only a this-now. The judging activity belongs to *jñāna*, which illumines the world of mind and of nature. In this case, it reveals the external object, which is the illumined spot, the focus of attention.

The sensitive self is the spiritual *atman* different from the body, the senses, *manas* and *jñāna*. The *atman* is self-revelatory as well as self-realized. It is the subject of every kind of knowledge. But the ultimate subject of knowledge is the inner self of all thinking beings.

Thus the logical subject is *jñāna*; the philosophical subject is the *atman* or *dharmin* behind *dharma*; and the subject of the religious consciousness is the *Paramatman*. The *Paramatman* is the whole reality that enters into the atman as its self, and then enters into the world of nature as its source and centre. Thus every term, thought and thing ultimately connotes the Brahman on account of Its all-pervasive character. This is only from the connotative point of view as the Brahman, *cit* or *ksetrajña*, and *acit* or *ksetra* are ultimate reals. They are, therefore, different denotatively.

The subject of grammar in a sentence is different from the subject of logic of the proposition. The subject of grammar refers to reality qualified by difference in the light of the principle of grammar related to words in a sentence, *samanadhiḥkaranya*. It conveys the idea of one thing qualified by several attributes. The words denote the same thing, but connote its different qualities. It is the application to one thing of several words, for the application of each of which there is a different purpose.

In the sentence ‘this is a tree’, the terms ‘this’ and ‘tree’ stand for an individual and a class. They have different respective functions, *bhinnā-pravṛtti-nimitta*. But they refer to the same thing. In the sentence ‘this is green’, the *guna*, quality ‘greenness’ in ‘this’ refers to the same subject of discourse.

It is true that contradictories cannot coexist at the same time and in the same context. But distinct qualities may coexist side by side as different qualities of the same object. The judgment ‘this person is that Ram’ connotes the same individual existing in two different contexts, and not absolute identity or non-difference. A judgment is a connected idea referring to reality. The sentence ‘this person is that Ram’ explicitly refers to personal identity and means that Ram-śvā, in a particular former context, belongs to him in the present context.

The Advaita interpretation of the theory of *samanadhiḥkaranya* in terms of absolute identity is untenable as the implied affirmation of such identity cuts at the very root of grammatical construction. To speak of bare identity as the implied sense or *laksya* as opposed to the apparent sense or *mukhyā-vrtti* really implies nothing, and applies to nothing. Similarly, the interpretation of the principle in terms of difference between subject and predicate as mere otherness has no meaning. Identity in difference is also impossible as the two are self-contradictory.
The principle of coordination is ultimately the relation between prakara and prakarin. In the sentence ‘the cow is white’, whiteness depends for its meaning on the subject with which it is inseparably related. The quality is, therefore, termed the prakara or mode of the substance, prakarin. Similarly, the sentence ‘he is Ram, a man’ implies that the body is a mode or prakara of the self, which animates it. Therefore, the term connoting the body connotes also the self, and ultimately, all terms referring to things and thinking beings are used in coordination with their inner self or the Brahman. Therefore, they extend their meaning up to the self, which is their prakarin. Every kind of knowledge, perceptive, inferential or scriptural, refers to the ultimate knower or subject. Atman alone is the inner meaning of all experience.

4. The Theory of Relations

Philosophical logic is based on the truths of determinate knowledge, savisesa-jnaana and the principle of samanadhikaranya. It throws light on the problem of external and internal relations.

In the theory of external relations, the relations are said to make no difference to the terms related. The objects are external to the relation, and one substance does not pass into and become another. What exists alone is cognized. Knowledge is the awareness of external objects by the knowing subject, and such experience makes no difference to the existing objects.

The external objects are given not as things, but as objects to a subject. They form the ksetra. They do not depend on the self or ksetrajna for their existence. Cit, the percipient self, and acit, the perceived object, are externally connected, mutually exclusive and eternally real.

Knowledge presupposes not only the independence of the subject and the object, but also the existence of plurality of knowing subjects and knowable objects. The self is not always the subject of knowledge as, in social relations, each self is both subject and object. Inter-subjective intercourse and social concern for one another would be impossible if there is no subject-object relation among different persons.

If the object is considered outside there, outside the mind, it cannot be known. Similarly if the subject is inside, it is shut up in itself. Thus, there is no way of escape from skepticism on the one hand and subjectivism on the other. To avoid these pitfalls, the theory of external relations and epistemological realism is to be restated in terms of the logic of aprthak-siddha-visesana, inseparable attributes and the theory of ontological non-dualism.
For example, the relation between the hand and the pen is external. But the relation between the hand and the fingers is internal and organic. Externality implies the reality of the eternal differences of the facts of *cit* and *acit*. But in relation to the whole, which is their inner essence, they become inseparable and correlative factors. As such they lose their independence and exclusiveness.

Thus the plurality of *cit* and *acit* becomes acceptable while the pluralistic view is rejected. The cosmos is not subject or object, but is subject-object. Appropriately it is defined as universe, but not multi-verse. As parts, *cit* and *acit* are mutually exclusive and indifferent. But as parts of the all-pervasive consciousness of the inner-self, which sustains them, they are internally and organically related.

Qualities and relations depend on the whole of reality as their background. Internal relations are grounded in the nature of the terms related not as separate terms as such, but as terms connoting the ultimate ground of existence and experience as *visista* and *visesya*. The *visesana* is an attribute of the *visesya* or adjective of the whole. It is vitally related to it as its mode or *prakara*, like the fragrance and the flower. It is also like the vowel related to the consonant, and the body to its self.

The *visista* is thus not a mechanical whole of indifferent parts. Nor is it the totality of attributes. The judgment ‘this rose is fragrant’ is not a unity of the substance and its quality, or the subject-object relation, as explained by the *bheda-abheda* theory of the identity and difference. Incidentally, this theory regards identity and difference as two moments of reality. In its philosophic aspect, this view expounds reality as the Absolute consisting of God and the finite centres.

Visistadvaita, however, holds that the Absolute is not God and the finite beings, but is God in the finite beings, as their sustaining ground. While the *visesya* or *prakarin* is one, the *visesanas* or *prakaras* are many. The Brahman and the world are not two, but one, the Brahmans in the world.

The metaphysical view of Visistadvaita is opposed to the mathematical view of addition. Likewise, it is different from the adjectival theory of the Absolute, which explains the finite self as the essential quality of the Infinite and its connection of content. The finite self is an inseparable attribute of the Infinite as its *aprthak-siddha-visesana* or *prakara*. At the same time, it is a separate self, persevering in its own being.

The *visesana* is substance and quality, *dravya-guna* like light and its radiation. As quality or mode, it derives its substantiality from the self-effulgent *atman*. But as substance, it has its own monadic being. A quality is quality of a substance. But, when it is also a substance, it admits of relation.

The connection between *atman* and *Paramatman* is not merely the logical view of substance and attribute, but the spiritual view of two selves that are eternally existent. They are not externally related, for *Paramatman* is defined as the inner self and the essence of the *jiva*, its *antaryamin*.

This view avoids the monadic exclusiveness on one hand and the modal inclusiveness on the other. The Visistadvaita insight of the Brahman as the *antaryamin* throws a flood of light even on logical problems, and provides a comprehensive view of reality.

The self and the objects in nature are independent entities existentially, and are externally related. But they have their meaning and value in the Absolute as the All-self, and they are related to It internally as Its modes or *prakaras*. The Absolute is self-related
and has its own inner identity. At the same time, it is related to \textit{cit} and \textit{acit}, which are its modes. This interpretation avoids the fallacies of skepticism and of infinite regress.

When Ramanuja says that all knowledge is of the real, \textit{sarvam vijnaana-jaatam yathartham}, he does not accept the realistic contention that knowledge comes from the external object through the sense organ, and the mind passively receives the sense impressions like a blank sheet of paper. The self with its \textit{jnaana} and its psychophysical changes is as real as the external objects or \textit{prakrti} with all its \textit{tattvas}.

Knowledge is revelatory and not representative. As what exists alone is cognized, Ramanuja’s view is justified in its conclusion that the existence of a thing is independent of our experience of it. Further there is an external relation between an object and its awareness by the self. The thought of an object is not the object, but is about it. A thing is known as it exists and not otherwise. It is wrong to say that it exists because it is known.

Nature exists for consciousness, and not in consciousness as its idea. If realism, as a philosophy, insists on the primacy of matter over the self, and rules out the role of \textit{jnaana}, it leads to pan-objectivism and lapses into materialism. Idealism is justified if it accepts \textit{dharmabhuta-jnaana} as the presupposition of experience. But it is to be refuted if it ignores the reality of the external object given in sense perception, and explains it as a mental state or construction based on relations either internal or relevant.

If the internal relation alone is accepted, then space, time and causality are \textit{a priori} forms belonging to the very structure of thought superimposed on the manifold of the sense. According to this view, the world seems to be real, and yet is not real. In such a case, there is no difference between waking and dream consciousness. What we know is what we seem to know, and it is only an ‘as if’. Then thought cannot grasp reality, and the theory of knowledge becomes no theory of knowledge.

Sankara is well aware of the defects of extreme idealism. He combats it by admitting the realistic view that the external object is not an idea or a projection of thought. It has an objective reality. The waking state is different in kind from the dream state.

Visistadvaita absolutism checks the extremes of realism and idealism. It points out the defects of the pure object philosophy and the pure subject philosophy by insisting on the reality of \textit{ksetrajna}, the knowing subject and the \textit{ksetra}, the knowable object. It also insists on the correlativity of the subject-object relation and the immanence of the atman in \textit{cit} and \textit{acit}. \textit{Atman} enters into \textit{cit} as itself, enters into the object and then becomes the self of the object.

If the object alone is taken as the real, it leads to the realistic view ending in materialism. If \textit{manas} and \textit{buddhi} are alone considered reality, there is mentalism and rationalism. If the self alone is considered existent, it is monadism or personalism. If the Brahman alone is considered existent, it is a-cosmism. But Visistadvaita accepts all these existents, and assigns a place and value to each one of them. It explains all selves and objects of knowledge as the living embodiments of the inner self.

Visistadvaita thus affirms the duality of the subject-object relation within the unity of experience between the one experiencing and the thing experienced, but denies their dualism. It relies on the eternity of \textit{cit} and \textit{acit} as the one experiencing or the experienced, but abolishes their externality.
5. Truth, Error and Avidya

Truth

Visistadvaita accepts the integrity of experience in all its levels as noticed in pratyaksa (perception), anumana (inference) and sastra (scripture). This is on the ground that jnaana is self-valid and true, that the sat (real) alone is cognized and that there is no knowledge of asat (unreal). If the Brahman alone is satya (real) and the world of experience is tuccha (futile, false) and mithya (non-existent) on the ground of the self-contradictions of dualistic knowledge, no knowledge is possible or desirable. Meticulous monistic logic does not admit the coexistence of the Brahman and maya or different degrees of reality.

Maya is non-existence, as opposed to sat. It cannot, therefore, coexist with the Brahman. If maya refers to the world of illusion, then it contradicts the theory of degrees of reality, and the truth of two standpoints as the vyavahaarika (the world of practical life) and the paramaarthika, which is absolutely real.

If truth is self-existent, and the false non-existent, there is no need for a theory of truth or a test of truth based on abaadha (the principle of non-contradiction). Absolutism recognizes the distinction between reality and existence. But this distinction is not an opposition. To Ramanuja, the Brahman is the sat or supreme reality that is the pervading essence of the universe, and its indwelling self and it is, therefore, true. The universe is not the Brahman enveloped by maya or avidya. It is brahmanmaya, pervaded by the Brahman. Its radiant light illumines it. It exists in the Brahman, and not as the Brahman. Nor does it exhaust its content.

Reality exists as the Brahman as cit and acit. Acit is matter, which is ever-changing and may be called asatyam. Cit is the eternal self with a uniform nature or intelligence, which is realized as distinct from the ever-changing prakrti or matter. It is, therefore, called satya or the true, and the inner self of the existent prakrti. The Brahman may be called satyasya-satyam, the real of all real, the true of the true, Vaasudeva.

Reality and value coexist. Matter has an extrinsic and ephemeral value, while the self has intrinsic value. The self is, therefore, satya and matter is asatyam. The Brahman is the true of the true, and gives value to both. This view repudiates realism, idealism and monism as one-sided and abstract. It recognizes the reality and value of nature, the individual self and the Brahman.

Truth is the knowledge of a thing as it is and as it works, or as it satisfies the practical interests of life. According to Ramanuja, every kind of knowledge is true if it is consistent with experience in its exactitude. He accepts the trustworthiness of the three pramanas, namely, pratyaksa including abhaava, anumana including upamana and arthapatti, and sabda.

In pratyaksa, the indriya (sense organ), in its normal state, has a direct knowledge of the thing as it is. Anumana arises from the knowledge of vyapti or the invariable concomitance between cause and effect. The inference need not consist of the five senses in all cases. Reasoning is both deductive and inductive. It should be free from prejudice and lead to truth. It should avoid fallacies like contradiction (viruddha), unending reasoning (anyonyasraya), and infinite regress (anavasta).

Sruti is verbal testimony. As such it is eternal and impersonal. All its parts are interconnected and have a unity of import. It is, for these reasons, considered true.

All the three pramanas are coherent, and they are not contradictory. Pratyaksa is the foundation of knowledge.
Reasoning is based on it and does not supercede it. *Sruti* is the consummation of all knowledge. But it cannot be at variance with *pratyaksa*. Truth is an immanent criterion. It includes the more of itself. The three *pramanas*, in their integral unity and perfection, enable the truth-seeker to know the whole of reality.

**Error**

According to Ramanuja, truth is revelatory, *svatahpramana*, and cognition is real. Therefore, strictly speaking, there is no need for a theory of truth. Consequently, any theory of error becomes meaningless.

Truth is, in fact, the natural and normal feature of knowledge in the state of spiritual freedom where there is no distinction between *prama*, truth and *bhrama*, error. While the *jnaana* of the self is eternally pure and perfect, and free from *avidya*, the intelligence of the finite self is subject to self-contradictions, and contradictions of *avidya-karman* which deprive it of its pure and all-pervasive character. This privation is called error.

*Jnaana* is normally true cognition. Even a false cognition like the bent stick is perspective and is real. Its extent and variety are determined by the logical and moral development of the self. If error is traced to the fissure between knowing and being, and the self-contradictions of relational experience, and if *avidya* is the obscuring principle of reality, it is not possible for us to go from degrees of truth to the Absolute. Indeed, the Absolute would itself be infected by illusion. The *Advaita* theory of non-contradiction is no theory at all, for it says that error is *abhava* or non-existent, and reality is beyond *prama* and *bhrama*.

Ramanuja’s theory of error saves the Absolute from its self-deceptive *maya* or *avidya*, and its illogical appearances. It attributes error to the finite self, which has inexplicably allowed itself to be obscured by *avidya*. According to this theory, every empirical experience is incomplete or partial knowledge. Even *prama* is only partial truth. The distinction between *prama* and *bhrama* is one of degree, and vanishes when *jnaana* is freed from the moral determinations of *karma*. 
Visistadvaita utilizes every theory of error, which fits in with its central idea and accepts the tests of pragmatism and realism so far as they go in harmonizing experience. The experience of an object as having gray colour owing to colour-blindness is a psychic fact, and is real. The shade of colouration is an aspect of the spatial order.

The criterion of truth comprises the three theories of coherence, correspondence and workability in so far as they conform to the method of Visistadvaita. There is coherence if the given judgment is consistent with all other judgments and with the whole of knowledge. There is correspondence if there is exact conformity between the object as it is, and its perception by the senses. Knowledge is true if it satisfies the ends of life by its workability. Correspondence thus follows coherence, and verification results from the inner value of truth. Thus pragmatism, realism and idealism are interrelated in the Visistadvaita epistemology.

Falsity is abnormal and pathological as in mental disorders. Each case has to be judged on merits. Error, too, is difficult of classification. But it can be of different types like hallucination, illusion or dream, which may be explained psychologically and by the criteria furnished by pragmatism and realism.

In hallucination, an object is felt to be physically present though there is no such object. An illusion is an erroneous perception in which one thing is mistaken for another. In a dream, one seems to have experience of things, which may not exist in the objective world. A psychologist explains these phenomena in terms of interpretative factors and psychophysical disorder. All these are psychic occurrences and manifestations of jñāna that subsist, and are facts of experience that cannot be dismissed as non-existent.

The cause is real; therefore, the effect also is real. For example, the illusion of the double moon is traceable to the distorting medium. In this case, the illusion arises from some defect of the eye or the pressure of the finger on it. The illusion of the white conch seen as yellow is traceable to neural disorder. In this case, the yellowness of the diseased eyeball is transmitted to the conch. One colour of the spectrum is abstracted from the whole, and the experience is purely subjective. The illusion of a continuous circle of light when whirled round is traceable to the law of rapid rotation. In this case, successiveness is omitted, and simultaneity is felt.

In the above mental states, if they do not serve an end and satisfy the needs of practical life (vyavahaaraanuguna), they are false. In the experience of a mirage, for example, the water element that is seen is apprehended owing to some defect in the eye, and the experience is not verified.

Truth is selective and serviceable. As it promotes the ends of life, it has a pragmatic value. On the other hand, logic is related to psychology. It explains thought as a thinking process, and truth as a practical value. Truth, thus, is what works, but whatever works is not true. Truth is prior to its workability. It is not only vyavahaaraanuguna, but also yathaarthā. It has both conative and cognitive values.

A judgment is true if the idea corresponds to the external object. It is objective in the sense that truth is true for all, and is not personal and private. In accounting for illusions like the snake in the rope, Ramanuja accepts the fundamental unity of nature, prakṛti as composed of the five elements and the thing-hood of things singled out in the act of sense perception. He defines truth as the apprehension of the dominant and relevant parts of the perceived object, and error as the non-observation of this essential part.
The Upanisadic theory of quintuplication states that every object in nature is composed of the five elements in varying proportions though its thing-hood is largely shaped by one predominant element among the ingredients. In the normal perception of the external objects, jnaana reveals only this main part. But, in error, owing to certain psychophysical conditions, the self perceives only the non-essential and insignificant portion of the thing. For example, in the shell-silver illusion, the silver element, which resembles the shell, is singled out from the complex of experience. This experience leads to disillusionment when the silver content is known to have no practical value.

Everything participates in the nature of everything else. All things (bhautikas) are composed of all the elements (bhutas). The thing-hood of a thing, as part of the whole spatial order, is so complex that the particular sciences (sastras) can have only a practical and partial knowledge of those aspects of the thing that are relevant to it. It is only the jnaanin, whose jnaana is perfected, that can know all things as a whole. His mind transcends the one-to-one relation and acquires knowledge of the whole truth.

But fragmentary knowledge is not a fiction or illusion projected by avidya. The reality of nature and its interrelatedness is due to the pervasive character of the atman that has entered into it as its self. Even the dream state is a psychic experience, which may be traced to previous experiences registered in the psychophysical complex. Dreams often reveal the character of the dreamer, and sometimes have a prophetic value.

Ramanuja explains dreams morally as the wonderful creation of Iswara in accordance with the merit or demerit of the dreamer. In dreams, the Divinity creates specific objects suited to the specific merit or demerit of the jiva. The pleasure or pain experienced in that state is the result of the law of retribution, and is as real as the moral life lived in the waking state. But it is purely subjective and does not have the objective reality of waking state. The distinction between the subjective and the objective character of experience is only one of degree, and does not affect the reality. The theory of sublation does not apply to these distinct and real experiences.

Epistemology is ultimately founded on the philosophy of religion, which combines validity and value in the concept of the Self as real reality and the true of the true. Thus, all empirical knowledge is a partial revelation of reality, the Self. The distinction between prama and bhrama (truth and error) is not absolute. When the ideal of knowledge is realized in mukti, jnaana becomes all-pervasive, and the mukta realizes everything. Essence and existence, then, become one.
**Avidya**

The Advaita theory of *avidya* holds that *avidya* is neither real nor unreal, nor both, and is, therefore, inexplicable. For example, in the illusion caused by mistaking the shell for silver, there is a misunderstanding, which is indeterminable. It is first felt to be real and then rejected as unreal when there is true knowledge of the thing. It cannot be both real and unreal. It is *adhyasa* (false superimposition), for the silver cognition is superimposed on the shell cognition.

The Mimamsa theory of *akhyati* (non-apprehension) accepts the reality of the cognitions, the perceived shell and the conceived silver. It traces the mistake to a defect in the tools of knowledge on account of which we fail to notice that silver is a recollected element.

In the Naiyayika theory of *anyatha-khyati*, both shell and silver are real things. Shell is wrongly perceived as another real object, namely silver. The non-existence of shell means the existence of another object, silver and this error is subjective.

In this regard, Ramanuja’s method of verification is pragmatic, but is not consistent. Truth may work, but what works is not necessarily true.

*Avidya*, according to Advaita, is the innate obscuration of pure consciousness, which, somehow, divides the Absolute to distort it into the world of difference. It is an innate error without a beginning, positive and indeterminable. However, *jnaana* can remove it.

The universal experience ‘I do not know’ refers to ignorance and is indefinite. In sleep where there is a temporary cessation of consciousness of duality and difference, ignorance remains in its causal state, *karana-sarira*. It is owing to *avidya* that the Brahman, which is *sat*, *cit* and *ananda*, is confused with the empirical self, which is *anrta* (transient), *jada* (inert) and *duhkha* (miserable). This state is called *adhyasa*, which is the cause of all the evils of *samsara*.

*Avidya* is thus, according to Advaita, the root of error in philosophy, original confusion or misconception. It is the basis of the baseless world of space-time-cause like the snake in the rope illusion. The Brahman alone is. What is not the Brahman is false as it is different from It as in the snake in the rope illusion.

Difference cannot exist by itself. It is only a distortion of reality. To trace the cause of *avidya* is illegitimate as the concept of causality itself has its origin in *avidya*. Pure consciousness is the locus (*asraya*) of *avidya*, and also its object. It is ever self-effulgent. *Avidya* cannot conceal it. The pure consciousness does not reside in the *jiva*, as the *jiva* itself is its creation. Like the sun that shines unaffected by the mist, the *atman* is self-effulgent, and is not affected by *avidya*.

*Avidya* is somehow there in the Brahman and we do not know why. We do not know it, as thought cannot go beyond thought. *Avidya* is, therefore, indefinable and inexplicable, as it is neither real nor unreal nor both. It is not real as it is dissolved in the state of liberation. It is real, as it now exists. It cannot be both, too. It is a frank admission of the self-contradictions of life, though the Absolute is beyond such discrepancy.

Though *avidya* defies explanation, several theories attempt to explain its origin and nature. According to the Reflection theory, the *jiva* or *ahamkara* is a reflection of the Brahman in the *antahkarana* due to *avidya*, which is the subjective side of *maya*. It makes the world a dream and a delusion, and the *jiva* a mere phantasm.
The Phenomenon theory refutes the Reflection theory. It defines avidya as a fact of finiteness, which seeks to limit the unlimited. Avidya is a fall from jnaana, and is not a fictitious something. The world is unreal but not illusory. The jiva is a fact of experience, and not a phantasm. The world has relative reality though its relation to the Absolute cannot be explained.

The third view of avidya denies phenomenal reality. It explains the external object as the illusory projection of the perceiving consciousness and makes Iswara Himself a super-jiva.

The fourth view denies avidya itself, as its recognition as a separate entity is an admission of the reality of two states, jnaana and ajnaana. The Brahman exists forever. Avidya is non-existent like the son of a barren woman.

All the sub-schools of Advaita agree on the whole that it is avidya, which is the root cause of all misery and confusion in life. Though it has no beginning, it has an end in liberation, mukti. The chief value of the concept of avidya, in the philosophy of Advaita, is that it exposes the inadequacy of all dualistic theories, though it remains inexplicable itself.

Ramanuja, in his introduction to his Sribhashya, refutes the Advaita theory of avidya. His refutation is known as saptavidha-anupatti (sevenfold inadmissibility). He levels seven charges to dispute the Advaita theory.

The first charge is that there can be no basis for the baseless fabrication of avidya. The illusionist posits a locus, substratum for avidya. The seat of avidya should be either the jiva or the Brahman. But neither is conceivable. It cannot be the jiva as the jiva itself is the fictitious creation of avidya. It cannot be the Brahman as the Brahman is self-illumined, and can never be enveloped by avidya. To trace the locus of avidya to the jiva, and that of the jiva to avidya is to commit the fallacy of mutual dependence (anyonyaasraya). Avidya has no resting place, and is, therefore, nothing.

The second charge is that there can be really no obscuration (tirodhana) of the Brahman at all. Brahmavimarsha is jnaana and is self-luminous. Either it is pure consciousness or nothing. If it is pure consciousness, it cannot be obscured, obstructed or destroyed by nescience. On the other hand, if it is covered by avidya, it is virtually destroyed by it. How or why does self-effulgence veil itself?

The third charge relates to the understanding of the nature of avidya. Avidya is either real or unreal. If it is an entity (bhavarupa), then it is inherent in the Brahman as mulavidya, and cannot be destroyed. If it is unreal, there is no mulavidya or tulaavidya as one or many.

The fourth charge is against the anirvacaniya theory of indefinability. Theorizing activity is actually the work of thought. To say that there is a theory, which is indefinable, carries no meaning. If avidya is an indeterminable something infecting reality, it is something that can never be sublated. The advaitin first explains avidya as a phenomenon, then as an illusion, and finally as an indeterminable. This kind of explanation is not acceptable.

The fifth charge is that the theory of avidya is not substantiated by any sastra or pramana. Illusion is an abnormal phenomenon and it is opposed to the first principles of philosophy to treat the abnormal as the starting point. The terms asatya (unreal) and naasti (is not) as opposed to satya (real) and asti (is) refer not to the unreal or the non-existent, but to non-sentient objects.

The sixth charge is that ajnaana cannot be sublated or dispelled by jnaana. If it is something arising or given, it can be
removed only by spiritual discipline, and not by the mere knowledge of self-identity. If the Brahman is ever existent and avidya non-existent, then the term mumukṣutva carries no meaning at all.

The seventh charge relates to the Advaita theory of liberation. For the advaitins, brahmajñaana is not the jñaana of the Brahman but it is the jñaana, the Brahman. The advaitins argue that jñaana stultifies ajñaana, and then stultifies itself. If so, jñaana is an act of spiritual suicide. With the dissolution of avidya, jagat and Iswara no more exist, and Advaita turns to be nihilism.

Vedanta Desika, the follower of Ramanuja, elaborates the charges further. According to him, from the standpoint of epistemology, the theory of avidya and adhyasa leads to agnosticism and skepticism. If the Brahman is ever self-realized, there is no need for a philosophy to expound it. If the Brahman cannot be the object of knowledge, the mumukṣu cannot seek it. If whatever knowable is false, the Brahman is also false. The indeterminate has the quality of being indeterminate. But to say that it transcends all relational thought including Vedic knowledge is to commit intellectual suicide and sruti-cide. The theory of knowledge is thus the theory of the denial of knowledge.

He argues that the monistic ontology of Nirguna Brahman as pure consciousness without any content borders on nihilism. Nirguna Brahman has the quality of being nirguna. Consciousness cannot be aware of itself without the self as its subject. Advaita fails to explain the relation between the one and the many, being and becoming, affirmation and negation, and the absolute and the relative. Difference cannot be denied without denying identity, as the two are relative.

Advaita cosmology suffers from the defects of panillusionism and a-cosmism. If the Brahman, the subject or substratum, is real, the universe is equally real and not an illusion. If the universe is an illusion, the Brahman is also illusory as the Brahman is conditioned by it. Nescience is an inexplicable something, and the distinction between maya and avidya is meaningless. To say that the world is a magic show created by the mayin makes the creator a conjurer. If the effect is an illusion superimposed on the cause, the cause is also infected.

The psychology of Advaita is equally defective, for it virtually refutes the existence of the jīva and is engulfed in subjectivism. The denial of many selves on logical grounds is also the denial of even the single-self theory. If the self that has consciousness is false, consciousness itself is false. There is no need for the theory of saaksin, as the self, as a knowing entity, serves its purpose.

Advaita ethics brings out the discrepancy between karma and jñaana, as it stresses that the pure consciousness sublates the moral ego, and transcends the distinction between good and evil. In Advaita, religion occupies a position subordinate to philosophy. The god of religion is said to be less than the Absolute, owing to the discrepancy between two wills, finite and infinite. In such an event, religion gets sublated in philosophy, and has no meaning at all.

Jñaana is said to dispel the dualistic consciousness arising from avidya. But even jñaana results from ajñaana, and is not different from it. Jivanmukta is self-contradictory, as jivatman with embodied-ness cannot coexist with muktī. This is for the simple reason that muktī itself is freedom from embodied-ness. Mukti cannot admit of degrees, stages and divisions. If the jīva is identical with Iswara, then muktī is absolute. In such a case, there can no longer be any question of other jivas and Iswara existing in the empirical state of avidya and maya. Further, the world process should cease to exist after the first instance of jivanmukti. But it
continues. If avidya or maya is ultimately non-existent and the Brahman is ever identical with Itself, there is no problem for the mumuksu and, therefore, no need for mukti. Thus, according to Vedanta Desika, Advaita is found to be inconsistent with every kind of pramana.

Ramanuja sums up the defects of the monistic theory of avidya ending in the philosophy of eka-jiva thus: ‘From the standpoint of pure consciousness, everything is false. Sastra is false; the knowledge derived from the sastra is false; and the guru-disciple relation is false. The idea that everything is false arises from the falsity of sastra itself.’

This refutation of Advaita leads him to the reconstruction of philosophy in terms of sat-khyati or yathaartha-khyati. It affirms that what exists (sat) is alone known. Reality is always savisesa and not nirvisesa. In comprehending a thing as it is, we comprehend what it is. The ‘what’ qualifies the ‘that’.

Sat-khyati is not realism in its modern sense as it insists on the reality of nature in all its aspects – physical, spiritual and the divine. It is, indeed, sad-vidya – that by knowing the one all is known (eka-vijnaanena sarva-vijnaanam). By knowing the Brahman, the ground of the universe, the universe also is known. The Brahman ensouls the universe. It comes from sat, not asat, and, therefore, is sat. The Brahman is one as the prakarin, and the many as the prakaras; and both are real.

Nature and the community of the jivas derive their meaning and value from the Brahman who is the inner self of all. Therefore, everything, thought and word, ultimately connotes the Brahman. Thus, by knowing the one who knows the many as its visesana, prakara or sarira and, by knowing the many, we know the one that is changeless and eternal.

Ramanuja thus argues that as the Brahman is real, the world also is real and true. He equates avidya ethically with karman and concludes that the jiva freed from avidya-karman sees all things in the Brahman and the Brahman in all things.
6. Saguna Brahman

Of all the Vedanta schools, Advaita alone makes a distinction between Saguna Brahman and Nirguna Brahman on the authority of the Sruti and the Brahmasutras. To substantiate this dual view, Sankara relies on the Vedantasutras dealing with sadvidya, anandamaya, ubhayalinga and karya-Brahman adhikaranas.

According to Sankara, the sadvidya brings out the contrast between the Sat without a second, the indeterminate, and Iswara, the determinate. The Sat is advitiya (without a second), and nirguna. The moment it wills the many and becomes the manifold, it is said to entangle itself in the illusions of relatedness. Caught up, as it were, in the duality of the subject-object relation, It becomes Iswara, the determinate. Determination is negation. Therefore, according to Sankara, Saguna Brahman is finite and is a mere appearance. But Nirguna Brahman is pure undifferentiated being or consciousness without the distinction of subject and object.

Second, according to monists, the Brahman as anandamaya is saguna, the logical highest made in the moulds of thought. ‘The moment we think of the Brahman, ananda lapses into vijnaana and the not-self enters into the integrity of being, and makes it being-becoming’ in the words of S. Radhakrishnan. The Absolute as the intuitional Highest becomes Iswara as Its highest conceptual being. Predication as a logical relation perverts reality. When the bliss of the Brahman is logically defined as blissfulness, it is only maximum bliss with an element of imperfection. In Saguna Brahman, there is a ‘balance of pleasure over pain’. But it is not absolute bliss.

Third, in the ubhayalingadhirkara, Sankara makes the same distinction. Logically, the Brahman cannot, at the same time, be transcendentally formless being, and phenomenalized Iswara, on account of the self-contradiction of the finite-infinite, inherent in the dual idea. The neti method denies only the pluralistic consciousness fictitiously superimposed on the Brahman, and not the Brahman itself. If there were to be denial of the Brahman, it is total nihilism and a stultification of Vedanta. The formless, characterless Brahman is, however, spatialized and personalized by the religious consciousness in the interests of devout meditation.

Fourth, the Brahman is apprehended metaphysically as the self-identical Absolute, and is the metaphysical Highest. The Highest is not Iswara or Karya-Brahman who is the God of theology. It is only the effected Brahman that has a world of His own which is attained by devotion. Spatial and temporal categories apply to the empirical world and cannot have a transcendental use. The metaphysician rejects the illusions of space and time, and the values of progress and attainment. Nirguna Brahman is a-logical, a-moral and impersonal. According to Sankara, the idea of the Saguna Brahman is only a concession to ignorance.

Except absolute monists, all Vedantins repudiate the theory of Nirguna Brahman and uphold the reality of Saguna Brahman. For them, the Saguna Brahman in the bhinna-abhinna relation does justice to the philosophic aspects of identity and difference. Even Sankara accepts that the Brahman, though nirguna, can be considered saguna, though at a relatively lower level than the Absolute, to satisfy the religious consciousness of the spiritual seekers. Ramanuja is the foremost to uphold the concept of Saguna Brahman which is the basis of Visistadvaita.

According to Visistadvaita, the Absolute is not an altar to an unknown god. It is the Infinite that expresses Itself as the finite, as its informing self with a view to infinitize it. The Vedantasutras begin with the philosophic definition of the Brahman as the ground or reason of finite existence, and end with the knowledge of the Brahman as the goal of spiritual experience. The sadvidya enquires
into the meaning of sat as the ultimate fact of knowledge, and concludes that the sat without the second is the supreme self and is the home of the eternal values of life.

The Taittiriya Upanisad states that the Brahman is anandamaya. This is in the nature of an aesthetic description of the abounding and boundless bliss of the Brahman. It is beyond explanation in terms of the logical intellect. It has no reference to the dialectic opposition between what constitutes ananda and the antithesis of anandamaya, as a fall from ananda. The relevant text starts with brahmajnaana and ends with brahmananda as the highest end of life. As such it does not postulate the distinction between the knowledge of Nirguna Brahman as the intuitional highest, and the attainment of Saguna Brahman as the logical highest.

The Brahman is and has bliss. The predication of bliss to the Brahman does not pervert Its nature, but enriches It. The idea of transcendental bliss does not sublate Saguna Brahman, but affirms its know-ability by purified thought. Sastra or practical reason does not support the description of Iswara as a self caught up in the contradiction of pleasure and pain.

Sruti would stultify itself if it defined the nature of the Brahman as saguna (having attributes), with a view to depriving it of all content by later thought. The neti (negative) method applied by the Upanisads denies only the adequacy of employing the categories of logic to establish the reality of the Brahman. Its chief aim is the criticism of the pantheistic view that all is the Brahman and the denial of the finitude of reality, but not of the finite itself.

The Absolute is in the conditioned as cit and acit, but it is not as the conditioned. It transcends the world of relativity, but does not sublate it. The Brahman is formless, but not characterless. If the Absolute of metaphysics is not the god of meditation (upasana) and worship but the effectuation of illusion, there may be no need for spirituality, and the striving for liberation. Vedantic freedom is won by spiritual effort by transcending the phenomenal world in its macrocosmic and microcosmic aspects.

The Brahman is transcendental because It is beyond the empirical world, samsara-mandala. If mukti (liberation) is the sublation of avidya, which is really non-existent like the square-circle, it is immaterial whether it is freedom in embodiment here and now, or freedom from embodiment in the world beyond.

The religious consciousness is outraged by the relegation of the Saguna Br-ahman who is at first described as the creator of the cosmic process to the level of Hiranyagarbha, the first born of the Brahman, when evaluating mukti. If the Saguna Brahman is considered less than the Absolute, it suffers from self-deception, as it is the first figment of cosmic nescience. It also suffers from the self-contradiction of the finite-infinite nature, and from the infinite hardships of samsara as the aggregate of jivas.

For Visistadvaita, the Advaitic view of two Brahmans – Saguna Brahman and Nirguna Brahman - is self-contradictory. This is also refuted by the other Vedantins, notably the bheda-abheda-vadins. The latter uphold the monistic view of the Absolute as sat or the Saguna Brahman. Bhaskara affirms the reality of the Brahman as formless, but not characterless. Yadava and Nimbarka deny Its being attribute-less and formless. Nimbarka’s view is that the Brahman is the self-related (svatantra-sadbhava) in Its abheda aspect, and the distinct and dependent (paratantra-sadbhava) in Its bheda-abheda aspect. This view of Nimbarka has affinity to Ramanuja’s concept of God as niyantr, the immanent and eminent cause of the world order.

The philosophical transition from Nimbarka to Ramanuja is the transition from Bheda-abheda to Visistadvaita. Visistadvaita
considers that the Brahman is saguna, and realizes Himself through His prakaras (modes), acit and cit. The Saguna Brahman has infinity of perfections of which some are defining qualities (svarupa-nirupaka-dharma) and the others are derivatives of these defining qualities (nirupita-svarupaka-visesana). Ramanuja considers that the Brahman has attributes the five essentials of which are satya, jnaana, ananta, amalata and ananda. The Brahman is a-logical and amoral as It transcends reason.

The Vedantic exposition is often clothed in symbolism, and analogical ideas. Ramanuja uses the analogy of light and luminosity, or the relation between sarira and saririn. He uses these analogies to bring out the nature of the Brahman and Its relation to the world of cit and acit. For him, the metaphysical sat, which is the One without the second, is the supreme self of all beings, and that the Absolute of philosophy is the God of religion.

Ramanuja’s siddhanta of the Brahman runs thus. The Brahman is at all times differentiated by the sentient and non-sentient beings that constitute Its body. It can be said to be one only, without a second, previous to creation. At that time, the differentiation of names and forms did not exist. That which makes the difference between plurality and unity is the presence or absence of differentiation through names and forms. The Brhadaranyaka Upanisad also establishes Ramanuja’s view thus: ‘Now all this was undifferentiated. It became differentiated by name and form’.

Those who hold that the finite self is due to nescience, those who hold it to be due to a real limiting adjunct, and those who hold that the Brahman, whose essential nature is mere being, assumes by Itself the threefold form of enjoying subjects, objects of enjoyment and supreme ruler - all the three categories of them - explain the unity of the Brahman in the pralaya, dissolution state only on the basis of absence of differentiation by name and form. But the threefold distinction of subjects, objects of experience and their ruler persists in the pralaya state also by virtue of the potentiality of differentiation.

As to differentiation of the Brahman into the world of name and form, there are different views. One view implies that the Brahman is under the illusive influence of the beginning-less avidya. The second implies that the Brahman is Itself in the state of bondage owing to the real and beginning-less limiting adjunct. The third implies that the Brahman assumes different forms, and experiences the unpleasant consequences of karma.

But, for Ramanuja, the Brahman has for Its body all sentient and non-sentient beings in the subtle and the gross state. In the effected as well as the causal condition, the Brahman is free of imperfection, and infinity of perfections. All imperfection and suffering, and all change belong not to the Brahman, but only to the sentient and non-sentient beings, which are Its modes. Ramanuja upholds that the universe has its being in God, but is not God. It does not exhaust His infinity.

How the Absolute divides Itself into finite centres may be a riddle or a mystery. That it does so is a fact to the mumuksa. Visistadvaita explains it in terms of making the sentient beings into muktas.

For Visistadvaita, the Vedantasutras identify the Brahman as the cosmological ground of all existence, acit as well as cit, with the same Brahman as the spiritual goal of experience. The term ‘cause’ is not a category of the ‘understanding’ as it cannot be really applied to transcendental reality. It is a cosmological ‘idea’ to bring out the self-identity of the Brahman in the pralaya, dissolution and the srsti, creation stages. The sat without a second is the ‘unity of composition’ in the pre-cosmic stage; and it is the cosmic self as the ‘unity of manifestation’ in the srsti stage. In both the stages, acit qualifies and embodies cit, and cit qualifies
and embodies the Brahman, which is the Self of the self. But in pralaya, the manifold of acit and cit is a real possibility.

Ramanuja accepts the theory of sat-karya-vada, and denies asat-karya-vada. Creation is not out of ‘nothing’, but out of something. Sat is pre-existent, and not non-existent. The possibility is so subtle that it is practically non-existent. Even in the non-dual experience of sound sleep, nescience coexists with the saksin as a real possibility. Possibility is said to be real when it can become actual. The difference between the two is thus only the difference between what is potential and what is actual.

The term ‘non-existence’ connotes the absence not of non-differentiation, but of cosmic self-differentiation into the world of nama-rupa. There is non-division in the sense that there is no distinction of name and form in pralaya. In both the states, the Brahman, cit and acit are distinguishable, but not divisible.

Srsti is the self-differentiation of the Absolute into the pluralistic universe of nama-rupa. The Brahman with the creative urge wills the many and becomes the manifold. It is the Absolute that externalizes into the endless variations of space-time and embodied beings, by entering into matter with the living self, and energizing it.

The cause and the effect in the Vedantic sense are not different. Their relation is not external or arbitrary. It is internal and organic. Effectuation is not an illusion or self-enveloping process of reality. It reveals the inner purpose of the divine nature, and enriches spiritual life.

The Brahman as the cause is natura naturans. The Brahman as the effect is natura naturata. The Self is the same in both the states. The world is non-different from the Brahman in so far as it is the effect (upaadeya) of the Brahman. The essential nature of the Brahman is, however, pure and perfect, and is not affected by these changes.

As a philosophy of religion, Visistadvaita is not a mere metaphysical enquiry into the nature of the Brahman as the ground of existence. It is the spiritual method of attaining the Brahman as the supreme end of life. The first four Vedantasutras establish the reality of the Brahman as the ultimate reason of the universe. They connect this knowledge by the method of coordination, samanvaya with the supreme value of life, which is the realization of the Brahman. This is the essence of the Upanisads.

The self is subject to karman. It undergoes moral expansion and contraction in accordance with the law of retribution. The endless variety of moral experiences accounts for the variations in the birth and status of the migrating jiva.

Spiritually, the self is eternal. It is only its jiva that is subject to adventure. It has, therefore, history. The self can attain freedom only when it regains its religious consciousness, and realizes its relation as the prakara of the Brahman. The process of nature and the progress of the self can thus be understood only in terms of the inner purpose of the Brahman.

The universe is a place for making muktas. Matter is moulded for the making of souls. The Brahman is ever pure and perfect. But It realizes Its nature only by entering into matter with the jiva for creating the world of nama-rupa and brahmanizing the self. The natural cause of parinama, the moral cause of karman and the cosmic cause (brahmanization) have their own ultimate explanation in the concept of acit, cit and the Brahman.

Every school of Vedanta admits the futility of logical and temporal categories to account for the origin of the world. In the phenomenal sense, time has no beginning. When the sadvidya
speaks of the world process, it refers only to a particular event in the series of srsti and pralaya, which is cyclic, and not a sudden creation out of nothing. The beginning-less-ness of the cosmic process is thus a logical mystery.

But the Vedantic schools seek to explain the inexplicable in terms of maya, upadhis, parinama-sakti and karman. While some schools such as the Bheda-abheda, Mayavada attribute the imperfections of life to the Absolute itself, Visistadvaita, as a philosophy of religion, traces the imperfections to the finite self alone. It does realize the sacred mystery and the wonders of nature. The Brahman, according to Visistadvaita, is immanent in the jiva as its antaryamin. At the same time, It is unaffected by the modifications of the matter and the imperfections of the self.

This view satisfies the metaphysical demand for an all-inclusive unity and the religious quest for the pure and perfected self. It fits in with the theory of saamaanaadhiyacharya according to which words, having different meanings, may denote only one thing. For example, a term connoting the ‘effect’ state of the Brahman, including its modal state, connotes also the same Brahman in the causal state. The ‘unity of manifestation’ is the ‘unity of composition’ owing to the non-difference of the cause and effect, and the self-identity of the Brahman. Every term or part that refers to the finite being also connotes the Supreme Being or Logos because It enters, along with the individual selves, into the world of matter for the evolution of names and forms.

The term sarira denoting the body connotes the saririn, the self, ultimately the Brahman Itself. This resolves the problem of the sadvidya, namely ‘what is that by knowing which everything else is known’ satisfactorily. By knowing the cause, the effect is known; by knowing the Brahman, the one without a second, the universe of cit and acit, which is its effectuation, is also known. This view bridges the gulf between monism and pluralism. There is no self contradiction or discrepancy as the Brahman is eternally existent as the Self of all beings.

This concept satisfies the quest of the mumuksu for eternal life. Muktí (deliverance) from samsara would be impossible if the Brahman is enveloped by illusion, or conditioned by upadhis. Complete freedom would then be impossible as long as there is infinity of avidya-ridden or conditioned selves to get muktí. No mumuksu would seek the Brahman if It is infected by avidya, or affected by upadhi.

The Brahman is the ‘Infinite’, not in the sense of quantitative endlessness, or in the sense of the infinite conditioned by the finite and, therefore, finite. The Brahman is the Infinite that dwells in the finite with a view to infinitize the self, and give it the eternal value of deliverance.

The Brahman is the ‘Whole’ of existence not in the sense of an aggregate or totality, an identity in difference or an all-inclusive unity. It is the immanent self in all beings, and is, therefore, purna (infinite) and perfect. The Brahman is the ‘Whole’ of metaphysics and the ‘Holy’ of religion.

The Brahman is the first ‘Cause’ and the final ‘Cause’ of creation. The potential (enfolded) becomes the actual or the unfolded. This becoming is the inner purpose of soul making. The cause is ultimately identified with the ground. This means that the form and the function of the self are rooted in the Infinite.

The self emerges from the Brahman and merges into It. The seed of the jiva is sown in the womb of matter in order that it may have its fruition in muktí. The Vedantic aphorism ‘kaaranam tu dhyeyah’ elucidates that the Brahman is the all-inclusive Whole, and the ultimate home of eternal values. It is the ground of the universe of cit and acit, the goal of religious endeavour.
The Brahman is the ‘Substance’ that exists in Itself and by Itself. The world of acit and cit is depending on It as Its inseparable attribute. The finite self has substantive being, and lives and moves. It has its being in Vaasudeva, the Self of all beings, the saririn. The jiva is a ray of the supreme light of the Brahman and is, therefore, Its attribute. But it is also a self sustained by the Brahman and is different from the abstract determining qualities of the Brahman like infinity.

From the denotative point of view, the jiva is a unique being. But, from the connotative point of view, it refers to the Brahman as its ultimate meaning. The visesana (attribute) is a prakara (mode) that is inseparably related as avinaabhaava to the prakaarin (the inner being). Thus the Brahman imparts substantiality to the self and makes it one with Itself.

The term ‘Subject’ connotes the Supreme Self, the real subject of all knowledge. Consciousness stultifies itself if there is no self as the subject of predication. The Brahman is the Inner Self of the subjects and objects of experience. The cosmic Self which thinks in all beings is identical with the inmost self of the jiva. Realization of this truth ensures spiritual intimacy between God and the soul. The idea of the Brahman as the sariran is thus the key to the philosophy of Visistadvaita.

The theory that the Brahman, the Inner Self of the jiva, is the same Brahman as the Cosmic Ruler is better appreciated if the unity of the subject and the object is established philosophically.

Visistadvaita provides for religious adoration and mystic intimacy by its idea of the Brahman as the cosmic Ruler who is at the same time the Paramatman in the jivatman. The Chandogya text ‘Thou art That’ does not posit the identity of Iswara and jiva by removing their self-contradictions. The principle of ‘jahat-laksanaa’ postulates that the jiva and Iswara become identical by the sublation of the self-contradictions of nescience.

Visistadvaita emphasises the truth that Iswara, the cosmic Lord, is the Inner Self of the jiva, and guarantees the bliss of spiritual communion between the two. The Infinite that transcends the finite is the same Infinite that is immanent in the finite self. Thus the ‘I’ of the subject philosophy or the Self that illumines the jiva within is the ‘Thou’ that is the Iswara of the object philosophy. This approach frees the subject philosophy from the charges of subjectivism and atheism, and the object philosophy from the charges of deism and divine determinism. It defines the Brahman as not only What Is, but also What Is Self-revealing.

For Visistadvaita, Iswara, the cosmic Ruler, the omniscient and omnipotent, is greater than the jiva with its nescience and impotence. The concept of God or the Brahman varies and develops with the spiritual development of the seeker. When the concept is exalted into an intuition of the Brahman, the seeker apprehends the Brahman as such. The Brahman is the Highest Self or Vaasudeva having the fullness of being and bliss.

Visistadvaita is thus the philosophy of religion that frees philosophy from agnosticism, and religion from dogmatism. It enables the finite self as a seeker after deliverance (mukti) to go from visayajnaana (sense perception) to brahmajnaana (intuition of the Brahman)
The Brahman as Adhara

The philosophic enquiry into the Brahman as the supreme reality is the central theme of Vedanta. The aim of the Visistadvaitin is the clear and distinct knowledge of Saguna Brahman with Its defining attributes as enshrined in the Upanisads. Vedantic philosophy is a comprehensive consideration of spiritual experience without sacrificing its integrity, and exhibiting, in a systematic way, its fundamental truths. The truths of Vedanta are self-valid, impersonal and eternal. They can be intuited by consciousness when it is freed from the imperfections of avidya-karman. The philosophy of religion makes such intuition intelligible, and evaluates it in the light of Sruti.

The philosopher thinks God’s thoughts after Him in the light of revelation. These thoughts are mainly metaphysical, moral and aesthetic; and they are the determining qualities of the Brahman. Brahman is knowable by relational thought which is revelatory, and not self-contradictory. There is no self-contradiction or discrepancy in the defining qualities.

Metaphysics, morals and aesthetics are interrelated, and related to the whole. They bring out the nature of the First Cause as well as the Final Cause of all things. The Brahman is the whole of the reality, and the home of all eternal values like truth, goodness and beauty.

Vedanta defines the ontological nature of the Brahman as satya (reality), jnana (self-consciousness) and ananta (infinity). Its ethical philosophy predicates amalatva (goodness) as the moral content of the Brahman as Iswara. Its aesthetics defines the Brahman as sundara, the beautiful and anandamaya, the blissful.

The Vedantic study of reality, as tattva, relates to the nature of the Brahman per se, and its modal expressions of cit and acit. It is not, however, concerned with the problems of cosmology and psychology. The ontological theory of being or reality is governed by the religious need for realizing it, because it is a philosophy of religion with the objective of knowing the tattva with a view to attaining it as purusartha, the aim of life.

The metaphysician is also a mumuksu, a seeker after salvation, and seeks the revelational truths of the Veda relevant to his spiritual needs, and specializes in the knowledge of the essentials of Vedanta. Vedic knowledge thus deepens into Vedantic wisdom.

The most essential truth of Visistadvaita is the concept of the Brahman as saririn, and of cit and acit as His sarira or sariratma-bhava (the relationship of body and soul), and its differentiation. It is called saariraka-sastra, a keyword of Vedanta. It is as simple as it is comprehensive. It satisfies the tests of logical consistency, the Mimamsa rules or Vedic interpretations, linguistics and the requirements of ethics and aesthetics, as also the needs of religious consciousness.

Ramanuja defines sarira as substance which a sentient soul or self can completely support and control for its own purposes, and which stands to the soul in a subordinate relation. The self abides in the Absolute, and lives, moves and has its being in it. The self depends on the Absolute for its form and its functioning, and sub-serves Its end. The Brahman sustains the jiva as its Self and inner Ruler, and uses the jiva for its satisfaction in the same way in which the jiva animates and sustains the body, and uses it for its own satisfaction. This relation is known as that of aadhara and aadheya (the sustainer and the sustained), niyantr and niyaamya (the controller and the controlled), sesin and sesa (the independent and the dependent). These relations are generally called the metaphysical, moral and aesthetic aspects of reality.
The philosophy of Visistadvaita is a synthetic exposition of these foundational truths. They can be analysed, but not separated.

Every school of Vedanta relates to super-sensuous and supra-rational knowledge as its ultimate truth. In formulating it, it has to rely on analogies drawn from sensuous experience. The concept of saririn is an analogical explanation of the vital intimacy between jivatman and Paramatman. The Brahman, the saririn, is metaphysically the ground of existents, morally their inner ruler, and aesthetically the beauty and bliss of life.

The first basic ontological truth of the knowledge of the Brahman as aadhaara is the Taittiriya definition that the Brahman is satya, jnaana and ananta. The three ontological predicates of satya, jnaana and ananta define the Brahman saguna. The advaitin considers that this definition is negative and cannot, therefore, be a definition. The laksanika declares that the definition refers to Nirguna Brahman. He argues that, since determination is negation, the saguna idea is negated by the nirguna truth.

When two cognitions are conflicting and self-discrepant, what is self-explained sublates what can be accounted for in other ways. Nirguna is non-dual consciousness which is self-established, and saguna is the consciousness of duality and difference, which is relational and, therefore, self-contradictory. Abheda-jnaana or the knowledge of non-difference thus sublates abheda-jnaana (the knowledge of difference).

The pramanas are a process of self-criticism based on the theory of non-contradiction and degrees of truth. Sruti is self-valid, and has greater authority than the testimony afforded by sense perception and reasoning. Incidentally, the nirguna texts in the Sruti which teach non-difference have greater force than the saguna texts. They sublate the saguna ideas which teach duality and distinction. Thus, what comes later in the Vedantic development of truth like abheda-jnaana stultifies the earlier and less developed idea. However, the Brahman transcends all degrees and values, and there is nothing that can be subsumed and sublated.

The three determining qualities of the Brahman, namely, satya, jnaana and ananta, differentiate the Brahman from acit and cit. The first excludes the ever-changing world of prakrti and the evolving jiva. The second excludes the muktas, whose jnaana was earlier imperfect. The third excludes the eternally free jivas, nitya-muktas, who have no cosmic control.

The Taittiriya definition of the Brahman as satya, jnaana and ananta is negative and is, therefore, no definition at all. The term satya denies the temporal and phenomenal nature of the Brahman. It affirms the Absolute as the sat without a second. The term jnaana refutes the ultimate reality of matter or acit. The term ananta negates the limitations of space and time. These three terms are not synonymous. They controvert the three different states of empirical and illusive experience of anrta, jada and vicchinna. But, in the light of the linguistic rule of saamaanaadhikaaranya, they mean only one and the same thing.

The unity of judgment is not a unity underlying difference, or a whole consisting of parts, as unity cannot coexist with difference. The judgment ‘the Brahman is satya’ implies absolute identity. Bare difference is unthinkable and sterile; and identity in difference as the identity of opposites or distinct phenomena is self-contradictory.

Ramanuja rejects the maya-vaada view of the Brahman as nirvisesa-cinmatra, pure consciousness. He argues that the Brahman is saguna and savisesa with the ontological predicates of satya, jnaana and ananta. The quality of thought and self-luminosity belongs only to thought. There is no self-contradiction.
in the subject-object consciousness. The relation between the subject and the object is between distinct phenomena, and not opposites.

Ramanuja gives a new orientation to Vedantic thought by insisting on the coordination of logical, ethical and aesthetic experiences. Several non-contradictory attributes may define the same reality by distinguishing it from other objects. The plurality of these qualities does not mean the plurality of the object defined. Plurality qualifies reality, which is not itself plural. The qualities coexist as distinct phenomena and as the ways of knowing the Brahman.

Ramanuja accepts the logic of the bheda-abheda theory regarding the reality of the Saguna Brahman, but condemns its ethics which traces the imperfections of life to the bheda element in the Brahman. The Saguna Brahman has dharmabhuta-jnaana, which is eternal and all-pervasive unlike that of the finite-self. It is not featureless.

The idea of the Brahman as the adhara of cit-acit is the lifeblood of Visistadvaita. It affirms the reality of the separate elements, but denies their separate reality. It offers the mystic assurance that every jiva lives, moves and has its being in the All-Self or Vasudeva.

The Brahman as Satya

As satya, the Brahman is absolutely the unconditioned reality, as distinguished from the conditioned reality of cit and acit. The satkarya-vaada or parinama-vaada, the cosmological law of causation, which affirms the non-difference of cause and effect, explains the philosophy of acit, prakrti. This theory is opposed to the theories of asatkarya-vaada, vivat-vaada and also to the parinama-vaada of the Samkhya philosophy. The asatkarya-vaada relates the effect as creation out of nothing. Vivat-vaada relates creation an illusory appearance. The parinama-vaada of the Samkhya refers only to the evolution of prakrti, and ignores the progress of purusa and the inner purpose of Purusottama.

The satkarya-vaada affirms that the cause is preexistent, and not non-existent, and that the effect brings out the continuity, and does not betray any self-contradiction. What is non-existent cannot become the existent, and what exists cannot be unreal. A substance enters into different states in succession. What passes away is the substance in its previous state, avasta and what comes into being is the same substance in its subsequent state as effect. It is the same object that changes, and the plurality of change is the outcome of the primal unity of the thing. Parinama is a perpetual unfolding of what is enfolded. It is the potential or implicit that becomes the actual or explicit.

The one physical substance, clay, enters into many states like pots and pitchers. It is their immanent cause, upaadaana-karana. The same prana has biological variations of form as well as function. The same mind has varied psychic states. Every being changes from day to day and yet it is the same being. Such continuity, which is physical, biological, psychical and historical, does not show any opposition between one state and another. This development or change brings out the inner value of the thing and does not suffer from self-discrepancy.
Prakrti is subject to the law of parinama and evolves into the ever-changing phenomenal universe. Matter is not merely what is, but what becomes, and is a series of particular perishing presentations. It is a perpetually fleeting flux. Each object passes over into different states, and each later state has no connection with the earlier one. Events in the temporal order similarly vary and vanish. The body is subject to mobility, metabolism and catabolism. One form of energy is transformed into another, and the psychic process is a stream of momentary modifications. No thought repeats itself exactly in the same way.

Thus, every phenomenon, physical or psychical, is happening by way of cause and effect. It happens and then disappears. Thus, what is considered static is an endless becoming. The becoming moves on without beginning and end, and without intermission. The ever dynamic change implies self-maintenance and stability.

Prakrti is not pure passivity or non-being. Its movement is not the outcome of the strife of the opposites of pure being and non-being. Prakrti is eternally real. Its primal unity is in constant change and it never stands still. It is perpetually in change.

The pralaya state is the reverse order of srsti in which each effect is re-absorbed into its immediate cause. Srsti and pralaya thus succeed each other in endless cyclic order. In the causal state, sat is subtle and undifferentiated. But, in the effect state, it evolves itself into the infinite variety of nama-rupa.

Both acit and cit, as the modes of the Brahman, have their being in the Brahman as their ultimate ground. They are sustained by Its inner purpose. The parinama, transformation of pradhana, prakrti is not self-originated, but sub-serves the divine purpose of soul-making. Matter is moulded for the making of the self.

Similarly, the moral law of karman is governed by the supreme Divine Will. In pralaya, universal dissolution, the Sat is alone and one, without a second. It is in the context that cit and acit, the modes of the Brahman, are in a state of non-differentiation. Srsti is the self-determination of the same Sat into the universe. The creative act gives content and outward form to the cosmic will. The Brahman with acit and cit as its modes in the subtle or causal state becomes the Brahman with acit and cit in the effect state for the reason that cause and effect are non-different in the light of the principle of coordination. Natura-naturans becomes natura-naturata.

The definition of the Brahman as satyasya-satyam, the true of the true, brings to light the full implication of the idea of the Brahman as satya. When acit is termed asat and the self is termed sat, the Brahman is termed the true of the true. Reality is not opposed to existence. The distinctions in reality are due to the relative values of the real entities. Acit is a fleeting flux passing over into different states with no relation to the preceding one; it is asat, non-existent from the pragmatic point of view.

The self is eternal though its self-consciousness undergoes contraction and expansion according to karman. Its essential nature does not contract or expand. It is, therefore, called satya. It is beyond the perishable and the imperishable. Thus, cit, acit and Iswara have their own reality and value.

The negative definition of the Brahman in the Upanisads in the neti method does not deny the Brahman as finite, but denies only the finitude of the Brahman. The Brahman is beyond the perishable and the imperishable. Thus, cit, acit and Iswara have their own reality and value.
The monist confuses distinct phenomena with opposites. The distinct phenomena may coexist without any contradiction. The different states of the same substance at different times do not betray any self-discrepancy. They are not false, mithya or futile, tuccha. *Sat* is the unconditioned one without a second, and is the supreme self unaffected by falsity or error, and untainted by falsehood or error.

When the non-differentiated enters into the finite and becomes self-differentiated, it does not expose itself to the perils of the contradiction between being and becoming, or reality and existence. The world is real as it is rooted in the Brahman and is sustained by It as Its eternal self. The supreme end of the self-determination of the Brahman is the moulding of the self. When the empirical self is freed from *avidya* or *karman*, it realizes its non-difference from the Brahman and realizes the being of its being. The manifold distinctions of *jivas* into gods, human beings, animals, insects, etc are traceable to *avidya-karman*.

The Brahman is the *sat* without a second, the self-existent and self-contained substance that is self-caused. At the same time, It is the creative source that differentiates itself into thinking entities and objects of thought. It realizes Itself in Its infinite determinations.

Substance as *sat* is not the negation of determination but is its affirmation and explanation of the diversity of life. The substantive is immanent in its adjectives. ‘Whatever is’ is the Brahman.

### The Brahman as *Jnaana*

Being and consciousness are not one. The Brahman as *Jnaana* transforms the idea of *sat*, substance with differentiation into the self-conscious subject with self-determination. It has infinite consciousness, unlike the *jnaana* of the *jiva*, and is never limited by *karman*.

One who knows the Brahman becomes the Brahman-like and realizes Its infinite intelligence or consciousness. The Vedantin is not merely interested in apprehending the existence of the Brahman, but also in comprehending Its nature. What he looks for is not knowledge about the Brahman in an external way, but the integral knowledge of the Brahman as the ultimate subject of experience.

The Brahman is self-luminous and does not depend for Its light on any outside object. It is, therefore, defined as *jyotisam jyotih*, the light of lights that illumines the stars above and the self within. By the light of the Brahman the universe is lighted; the sun, the moon or the stars do not shine on their own.

The self is distinct from its consciousness just as light is from its luminosity. The self illumines itself and its objects. It shines by itself as self-consciousness, *pratyak*. But its consciousness is not in itself, but exists for it. That is why it is called *parak*. The Brahman thinks in the self and as the self. It is the eternal of eternals, and also the thinker of thinkers. The Absolute is self-realized and self-subsistent. It is above relations, and yet It includes them.

Consciousness shines forth through its own being to its own substratum at the moment of experience. Pure consciousness without a self is non-existent like the son of a barren woman. It is un-definable.
If a theory is said to be self-proved, it means that it is the proof of some truth to someone. Thought presupposes distinction and difference, and demands their ground, that is, their underlying unity. If there is no diversity, the intellect would rather invent it.

The philosopher of identity insists on the denial of difference and distinction, and also on the affirmation of absolute identity, that is, pure consciousness. This pure consciousness transcends the subject-object relation. But identity is not bare existence. The view of the Brahman as Being, the highest generalization of existence, is the result of regressive abstraction. Existence without content and character is inconceivable and self-contradictory.

Absolute consciousness without the self is equally unthinkable. Brahma-jnana, Self-knowledge is the knowledge of the self as the Absolute. The self is affirmed even in denying it. If consciousness is considered identical to the self when jnana sublates ajnana and thereby itself, it follows that the self cannot sublate itself. This dialectic destroys the self and, in the process, consciousness. It, therefore, leads to skepticism.

Self-hood presupposes and precedes self-consciousness. The Absolute is not ‘a self-absorbing sponge which sucks in its own self-hood’, and destroys it. The Absolute is self-conscious Being that is beyond the rational thought, and knows that It is so.

The Brahman is eternally self-realized, is above relations and yet includes them as their pervading identity or self. Identity means different things. It may be bare identity lapsing into nothingness. Or, it may be the systematic unity of selves or elements based on identity in difference of the bheda-abheda theory, which is self-contradictory. Or, it may be numerical identity, which is a mechanical whole of thoughts or qualitative sameness, which is only partial identity. Or, it may be personal identity based on recognition.

The Visistadvaita view of the Brahman as the Self is contradistinguished from all the above views. If self-consciousness is an inner defect of thought which veils reality, it can never reveal it. If the self is destroyed in the process of discovering itself, there is no desire for deliverance (mumuksa), or deliverance (moksa) at all. There is no way from the philosophy of nescience to that of identity-consciousness. The view that thought collides with reality offers no scope for escape from its self-contradictions; and there is no spiritual hope of freedom from its imperfections.

Identity in difference is an original confusion infecting systematic unity, and there is no way of ending it. Re-blending the material cannot help to transcend discord and division. The theory of numerical identity that the Brahman is the whole of cit, acit and Iswara is equally inadmissible as no mumuku is known to adore a whole consisting of many parts. Mere togetherness, as in the case of a multi-coloured cloth, is only an external relation. This does not bring out the real conjunction or identity, which is the inner ground of content.

Personal identity is, no doubt, a fact of recognition, as it recognizes self-sameness and continuity. But the self is not a construction or a creature. It is eternal and self-realized, and its existence does not require mere psychological proof.

The idea of the Brahman as the ever-effulgent Self is free from the defects inherent in other theories. The Self cannot exist without content or character. As the Absolute, It is above relational thought. At the same time, It is the ground of thought. The Brahman is conscious (cit) and has consciousness (caitanya). The two attributes can be philosophically analyzed, but cannot be really
separated. The Self without self-consciousness is as inconceivable as self-consciousness without the self.

The self, according to Visistadvaita, has dharmabhuta-jnaana, attributive consciousness as its sine qua non. It is elaborated thus: ‘Consciousness is either proved or not proved. If it is proved, it follows that it possesses attributes; if it is not, it is something absolutely nugatory, like a sky-flower’.

Consciousness is the attribute of a permanent conscious self. In the judgment ‘I know’, the thinker is different from the thought. Yet the thinker, the dharmin and the thought, the dharma are inseparable like light and its luminosity. Where the self is, there its consciousness is, and there is agreement in presence. Where the self is not, there its consciousness is not, and there is agreement in absence. But the negative test is not applicable, as the absence is not real. The self is the whole; and is the whole only in the self in the sense that it is self-complete, and jnaana is its self-explanation.

Jnaana cannot exist without the self as its ground, and the self cannot exist without the jnaana to reveal it. The Brahman is self-realized, and jnaana is revelatory. This attribute of jnaana enriches the self, and does not impoverish it. The finite self, like the Brahman, has self-consciousness. But, karman contracts the finite self. It, therefore, becomes mutable and imperfect in the empirical state of samsara, though it is really self-effulgent. Jnaana is what differentiates the self. It has, however, infinite self-expressions in the divine nature, but with modifications in the finite self. In either case, knowledge is of reality, and not reality itself.

Dialectical monism is pregnant with self-contradictions concerning the Brahman and Its nature. According to monism, thought in all its levels is self-discrepant and cannot know reality. The moment the Brahman, the Pure Being thinks and wills to be the many, negation enters, and monism is caught up in the self-contradiction of the subject-object relation. For example, the knower cannot be known as it transcends thought. But, when it becomes the known, it is infected by maya or avidya, and is the non-self or the object.

Whether Iswara is the illusory highest, the first figment of cosmic nescience, or the conceptual highest made in the moulds of logic, or the aggregate of avidya-jivas, He is ‘subject-object, one-many, being-becoming or the light affirmed in and through darkness’. His omniscience is nescience on cosmic scale. When once Iswara lapses from the Absolute and is objectified by illusion, He falls by degrees from the summit of Being, loses His Iswarattva and becomes eka-jiva, the finite self. At first, Iswara exists conjoined with maya, then becomes its creation and reflection, then an aggregate of individuated phantoms, and finally becomes the avidya-ridden jiva itself. As Being-non-being, Iswara is Absolute-relative and mediates between the Brahman and the non-self, and is finally rejected as of no consequence.

Vedanta is not dialectic, but a darsana (perception) on the path of self-realization. The Absolute is the self of all beings, cit as well as acit, as It is the highest and the most real. It is not riddled with the self-contradictions of the subject-object relation. The knowing self is different from the known object. It is not opposed, confronted or externalized by it. The subject is never objectified by the negative element of avidya, and robbed of its reality.

If the logic of adhyasa, false appearance is accepted, ajnaana infects jnaana; the jiva is a figment; mumuksatva is mockery; and mukti is make-believe. There is no transition from the unreal to the real. What is called the non-self, anatman is not self-opposition, but is a positive entity.
When a mukta realizes the Brahman, communicates his jnaana to another atman, and is aware of the world of space-time, he does not, by the fact of that knowledge, become anatman or jada. Non-self is not negative, but has positive sense. The physical object is out there, and it exists for the evolving self. It is the object in relation to the subject that experiences it, without the opposition of the self or the non-self. Inter-subject interaction becomes impossible if the other selves are considered anatman on the ground that what is known is jada.

If the self is defined as personality, the Brahman is more than personal, as It is free from the limitations of prakrti and karman, but is not impersonal. If Advaita identifies the Brahman with sat, and not satta, bare being, then it defines the Brahman as an entity. In this event, it is not very different from Visistadvaita.

The term atman has a specific spiritual meaning beyond the concepts of spirit, self or soul. When the term atman refers to a finite self, it connotes the eternal, essential self, intuited in atmajaanaa and different from the empirical temporal self of ahankara. The theory of nana-jiva-vada, ‘many selves’ of Advaita affirms the reality of the inter-subject interaction. The transmission of brahmajnaana by a guru to a disciple is one such interaction. Otherness is not hostile to the self. The atman is distinguishable not from the Brahman, but within the Brahman, and it is not shut in by any externality or exclusiveness.

The true meaning of the Brahman as Paramatman can be understood in the light of Sruti (revelation), yukti (reasoning) and anubhava (experience). The Paramatman is the All-Self, Vaasudeva that pervades all beings as their inner self or reason. The intuition carried from the Sastras that He is the universe does not equate the two as a pantheistic identity of the pervading self and the pervading object. The Brahman is in the world, but not the world.

To the brahmajnaanin, the Brahman alone is real; and the world viewed apart from the Brahman is unreal and worthless. The Absolute exists in the finite centres of experience as their ground and ultimate meaning. The Brahman is not the substrate of nescience. It is the ultimate subject of experience.

To the spiritual philosopher interested in atmajaanaa or kaivalya, the atman is also a self different from prakrti, and persists in all states of consciousness including mukti. Even in deep sleep, it shines in its own light as saksin, seer with its jnaana only, but without objective consciousness. The aham (ego) consciousness is different from ahamkara, the bodily feeling arising from avidya-karman that accounts for the cycle of life and death. In visaya-jnaana, the attributive consciousness contacts the external object, and it results in the awareness of the external object.

Jnaana is thus substantive and adjectival, whether it is brahmajnaana (God-consciousness), atmajaanaa (self-consciousness) or visayajnaana (world-consciousness). This knowledge, in fact, enhances the value of Vedantic life. If reality is brahmamaaya, everything is jugglery or make-believe. If reality is brahmamaya, everything is pervaded by the Brahman as its inner self, and throbs with its life and light. The Brahman is a thinker that thinks in the self and as the self, with a view to imparting brahmabhaava to it, and perfects it.

The theory of Visistadvaita related to brahmajnaana is neither realistic nor unrealistic. It is rather the criticism of both the theories. The realist, who insists on the primacy of matter, and traces consciousness and self-consciousness to mula-prakrti, becomes materialist. Idealism is at the pole opposite to realism, as it explains the external world as the mental construction. All schools of idealism such as subjective idealism, mentalism, objective idealism, absolutism are only variations of subjectivism. If the object-philosophy makes prakrti, nature the whole of reality
and leads to pan-materialism, the subject-philosophy makes the ‘I’ the sole reality and leads to super-solipsism.

Visistadvaita reconciles these extremes by recognizing the equal reality of prakrti and purusa as the expressions of the All-Self. It evaluates them in the light of religious consciousness. Matter exists for the evolving self, and the self has its being in the Brahman, and has supreme value. Subject and object are externally related, but they are not external to the Brahman which is their indwelling self. There is a difference in ‘denotation’ and ‘identity in connotation’. All thinking beings and the objects of thought connote the Brahman as their ultimate meaning and truth.

In other words, cit, acit and the Brahman denote different entities. But in essence, cit and acit connote the Brahman only, as It is their self. The omniscience of the Brahman as a metaphysical predicate connotes the eternally all-pervasive character of Its jnaana in the universal as well as the particular aspect.

**The Brahman as Ananta**

Human knowledge is finite and fragmentary. It offers no analogy to the all-knowing character of the Brahman. But when the discursive intellect is perfected, it expands into the intuitive knowledge of Reality. The self, freed from the contraction of karman, has cosmic consciousness and sees everything with the eye of the Brahman.

The Brahman has the character of infinity, anantatva as a determinate quality, which distinguishes it from prakrti and the finite self. The Brahman is free from all the limitations of space, time and causality. Infinity belongs to the essential nature of the Brahman, its svarupa, its jnaana (perfection) and its spiritual form. The Upanisads define It as higher than the high, and as indestructible.

The Brahman is also different from the Hiranyagarbha, Samasti-purusa, the aggregate of finite souls known as jivagana. The Brahman is free from all imperfections, which are attributable only to the empirical self. It is formless, as embodied-ness arises from subjection to karman. Though It abides in all beings, it is not soiled or sullied by their changes and imperfections. The Visistadvaita concludes that there is no being higher than the Brahman, and it is the Supreme Self that is the goal of experience.

The term ‘infinite’ has different meanings in philosophy. There is considerable ambiguity and misconception attached to it. If it is the ‘not-finite’, it is non-existent. If it is what is not finite, it is bounded by the finite, and, therefore, finite. If the ‘infinite’ implies endless series without a last term like infinite space, time or number, it is indefinite, and has no meaning. In such an event, it is empty generalization, devoid of any content.
We appreciate the term ‘infinite’ better when we consider that the term ‘finite’ is itself, and not the opposite of ‘infinite’. The finite excludes the other, and is yet invaded by it. It exists through its other. But the opposites are absorbed by the inner dialectic of thought in a higher unity. It is then the identity of opposites. The Absolute, as the Infinite, is self-complete and all inclusive. It transcends the contradictions of relational experience by the re-blending of material.

There is another view of the ‘infinite’. As the relational thought with its categories is deceptive and illusory, the ‘infinite’ stultifies thought that is dual consciousness, and remains identical with itself as pure-consciousness without any content. According to this view, every category is infected by avidya, and is abhasa, illusory. Cinmatra, pure thought, without the opposition of self and non-self, alone is real. The neti method is supposed to deny dual consciousness. When the ‘false’ is denied, the ‘true’ remains as a self-identity.

The term ‘infinite’ in the philosophy of religion corrects the tendency of thought to abstract itself from the thinking process. It gives a positive meaning to the ‘infinite’ as actual and determinate. This meaning is defined by the idea of ‘inner plan and purpose’ for which it is employed.

The ‘infinite’ may be perceptual, conceptual or intuitional. The infinite of space-time is called the quantitative infinite. In the negative sense, it is without end, and indefinite. The endlessness of an infinite series is a mathematical abstraction. Philosophically, it is worthless. As the ‘infinite’ is defined as the unconditioned, the quantitative infinite is condemned as a contradiction in terms.

But the infinity of space-time has a positive meaning. As mere parts of a series, they may exist externally in conjunction. But, as parts of a whole, they reveal a plan and a purpose. The particulars in some sense-perception may be disconnected, and cause an endless fission. This is due to the sundering of reality into abstract units, and the ignoring of their inner unity. What are called infinitesimally small or infinitely big are still concepts referring to space, time or number.

Space is a totality and is real. Time is a real process and is not an appearance. The infinity of space-time is an ordered and orderly plan of creation, and it has its own value in the religious consciousness. The immensity of the cosmos overwhelms scientific imagination. It inspires humility and reverence. The cosmic consciousness of Arjuna brings out the spiritual significance of the infinity of space-time as a partial expression of the wonderful maya of Iswara.

The ‘infinite’ of the mathematician and the philosopher is a concept and is, therefore, determinate and not endless. The endlessness of an infinite series is the result of abstraction. Infinite number is yet number, and its succession is governed by that central idea. There thought may refer to endless ideal possibilities. But the true infinite excludes their possibility; and the possible is the real positive concept. The barely possible may be logically valid. But, in reality, it may be void. When it is said that the finite world is a self-limitation of the Infinite, it means that the Infinite excludes mere possibilities as abstractions. Thought is not thought till its possibility is realized as an inner purpose.

The ‘infinite’ as ananta is ultimately the quality of the Absolute as a single experience. It excludes bare possibility, and is determinate. Experience presupposes the experiencing self. The self remains the self even in transcending its selfhood. It is beyond distinction. Even if the Absolute absorbs the many, It should be aware of this absorption. It is to have the quality of transcending manifoldness.
The Brahman is *ananta*, the eternal of eternals. The Infinite is the unconditioned and perfect. While the Brahman is in the finite, it transcends the limitation of the finite. The Brahman encompasses the finite to infinitize its content and thereby imparts eternal value to it.

When one reflects that one knows that one knows and so on, the process is not liable to the fallacy of endlessness. This is for the reason that knowledge presupposes the self having that knowledge. There can never be a thought without a thinker thinking it. Thought reveals reality and has no lying nature. It can find itself only in the self which it reveals.

The Absolute is unconditioned and perfect, and is the supreme self or the ‘individual of individuals’. It is beyond *prakrti*, the fleeting flux of time and the endless chain of causation. The Brahman is in the phenomenal world of space-time, but exceeds their content. The empirical self, subject to the series of births, does not have the perception of the transcending Self, which is higher than the highest.

The true meaning of the Infinite is the eternally unconditioned and perfect Brahman, which is beyond the phenomenal changes of *prakrti*, the imperfections of the empirical self and the finite nature of the freed self.

Reality as the Brahman has the quality of truth, which is the True of the true, the Self-consciousness which is ever self-effulgent as the Light of lights, and of infinity as the Creator of creators and the Eternal of eternals.

According to Ramanuja, the Infinite shines by Itself with Its infinite radiations, and these radiations enhance the glory of the self-effulgent Absolute. The *Saguna* Brahman has infinity of perfections of which some are defining qualities (*nirupaka-dharma*) and the others are derivatives of these defining qualities (*nirupita-svarupaka-visesana*). Thus, Ramanuja considers that the Brahman has attributes the five essentials of which are *satya, jnaana, ananta, amalata* and *ananda*. 
The Brahman as Bhuvanasundara

The aesthetic experience of beauty is immediate, and not mediate. It is more a possession than a problem. Though beauty is a-logical, it can be analyzed and rendered articulate. Beauty is more attractive than truth and goodness.

Visistadvaita is the only philosophy that recognizes the eternal value of beauty as an essential factor in the divine plane of soul-making. While the Vedantasutras systematize the truths of Vedanta and the Gita formulates its ethics, the Bhagavata intuits the nature of the Brahman as Bhuvanasundara, the beauty of the world that is expressed in nature and is not exhausted by it. The cosmos is concord, and not discord. It is the creative expression of the divine lila, sport of love. The Lord vivifies the jiva by sowing the seed of His primal beauty into its inner being. The beauty of nature and the fair forms of human and celestial beings are but partial revelations of the unsurpassed beauty of the Brahman.

Reality is essentially beautiful. But the world-ling, steeped in sensuality, renders it ugly. When, however, the world-ling turns into a mystic, his vision is transformed, and he communes with Beauty. In the ecstasy of that communion, he loses himself. The aesthetics of Visistadvaita is a systematic exposition of the nature of the Brahman as Bhuvanasundara. It satisfies the triple ideals of value philosophy commonly known as truth, goodness and beauty.

Beauty is not the quality of a thing that causes pleasure to the subject, nor is it a subjective creation. It is an immediate spiritual experience exalted by disinterested imagination. It is, therefore, the object of universal appreciation and satisfaction. As an intuitional expression, beauty has more aesthetic value.

Aesthetics, as an organ of philosophy, defines beauty as an essential quality of Reality, which is transfigured into a mystic vision. This way, the aesthetics of beauty is reinterpreted as a philosophy, first by a process of creative criticism, and then as a mystic view. Art criticism may be made in a realistic and idealistic way. While the realist relies on the representation of external beauty, the idealist defines beauty as a mental construction and an inner contemplation, and makes art subjective.

Visistadvaita corrects these impressions by explaining beauty as both immanent in nature and transcendent. Beauty is also evaluated from the standpoints of classicism and romanticism. The former type follows the a priori way, accepts absolute standards and breeds the attitude of loyalty, and reverence to tradition. But the latter type revolts against dogmatism and scholasticism. It delights in self-creative freedom and spontaneity. Its motto is not acceptance, but adventure. It is expression for its own sake.

But Visistadvaita avoids scholasticism and sentimentalism in regard to rasa and dhvani. It insists on the intuition of the beautiful as the fulfillment of a disciplined mind freed from sensual ugliness. Aesthetics, as art criticism, applies the criteria of immanence and transcendence. It elevates the science and art of aesthetics into a philosophy as the critique of the creative impulse. It is the intuitive expression of infinite beauty through the medium of the finite. It portrays the beauties of nature and the embodied self as partial revelations of the absolute beauty of God as param-jyotis, the Supreme Shining-Self, Bhuvanasundara, without any shade of ugliness.

Aesthetics, like ethics and epistemology, is ultimately rooted in metaphysics. Reality is essentially beautiful. It is ugliness that is a problem and not beauty. The proneness to see the world ugly is traceable to the creative freedom of the finite self, and not to the Infinite. Aesthetic philosophy affirms the intrinsic nature and eternal value of the beautiful as an essential quality of Reality.
and not as an illusory appearance. It presupposes the distinction between the beautiful and the ugly.

To say that the distinction is due to avidya which is sublated by jnaana is to deny the value of aesthetics itself. The pluralistic view that there are atomic bits of beauty, which cannot be unified and harmonized, is not true. So is the view that beauty and ugliness are relative and discrepant, and that they should be absorbed or annulled. Ugliness is an empirical experience, but, in the transcendental state, it ought not to be.

Beauty is formless, and yet has a form of its own. The form of beauty varies with its matter and determines its own value. The soul of beauty vanishes if it is not embodied in its spiritualized medium. Beauty is in the look and feel of the medium. The beauties of nature are less attractive than the fair forms of birds and animals. The human form is the ultimate triumph of beauty. But absolute beauty has transcendent charm and eternal value.

Visistadvaita recognizes the relativity of form and matter, and constructs a ladder of beauty from earth to heaven. Its view of absolute beauty is finally transfigured into an enchanting vision of the Divine. Ugliness is the result of the finite self being soiled by sensuality. But when the self is released from its dross, it realizes itself as the embodiment of divine beauty.

The aesthetic philosophy of Visistadvaita transforms the Brahman of metaphysics and the Isvara of ethics into the Bhuvanasundara of the Bhagavata. The Absolute of metaphysics becomes the beautiful God of aesthetic religion. The self-resplendent and unsurpassable beauty of the Brahman is embodied in the universe, but exceeds its finiteness and imperfections. The Brahman is without limbs (parts), niravayava. In the ontological sense, the Brahman transcends the psycho-physical changes of prakrti, and is nirguna. In the ethical sense, the Brahman is free from the imperfections of the karma-ridden self and has infinite perfection. As the ultimate Truth, the Brahman is infinite and beyond all conceptual categories. At the same time, He has infinity of perfections.

But to the mumuksu, who seeks the intimacy of communion, the ontological Beyond and the ethically Perfect, has no value or attraction. It is aesthetics that mediates between metaphysics and ethics, and brings down heaven to earth, and elevates earth to heaven. Aesthetics is midway between sensuousness and spirituality, and bridges the gulf between the finite and the infinite.

The triple idea of the Brahman as possessing svarupa, rupa and guna expresses this truth beautifully. His svarupa as sat without a second creates a feeling of remoteness. His gunas arouse the feeling of reverence. But his rupa as Bhuvanasundara acts as an aesthetic copula between His svarupa and His gunas. It brings to light the attributes of intimacy and attractiveness, which are very vital to the mystic consciousness. The Brahman that transcends the world of cit and acit enters into the atman with a view to deify it. To satisfy the mumuksu, who is a mystic, the Brahman individualizes a super-sensuous form of His own with bewitching beauty designed to remove the fleshly feeling of the jiva.

The Brilliant-Self, Param-jyotis that illumines the sun and the stellar worlds is the inner beauty that illumines individuality. He who dwells in the sun, the moon and the stars, whom the sun, the moon and the stars do not know, but whose body they are, is the inner Ruler Immortal. The golden Person within the solar orb is the Person that shines in the atman with a divine form of infinite beauty. This beautiful form of the Brahman is the incarnation of the super-sensuous Beauty that allures the self and ravishes it out of the fleshly feeling. The mundane beauty of Manmadha or Eros that soils the jiva is conquered by the supra-mundane beauty of Bhuvanasundara. He is, therefore, called madana-mohana, and
not madana-dahana, who transforms and transcends Eros but does not destroy him. The cosmos, a concord, is a living expression of the beauty of the Brahman.

The idea of an extra-cosmic Deity with an increasing cosmic purpose militates against the ideas of omniscience and perfection. The theory of lila remedies this defect by insisting on the primacy of aesthetic consciousness and regarding the cosmic process as spontaneous creative expression of the Brahman as the divine artiste. The Brahman is pure and perfect, and His will is externally self-realized. But His omnipotence and perfection cannot be reconciled with the reality of evil and the fact of unmerited suffering. What we live in is the most irrational and the worst of all possible worlds, and no merciful divinity would make a world so full of evil and suffering. This is a dichotomy which needs rational explanation.

Aesthetic philosophy, which encompasses metaphysics and ethics, elevates the problem to the level of mystic intuition and gives a new meaning to existence and experience. While thought dissects life and creates ultimate doubts, moral earnestness breeds a sense of responsibility and sinfulness. The aesthetic consciousness disciplined by logic and freed from the ugly effect of karman sees everything with the eye of the Brahman. Creation is then intuited as a sport of divine artiste and is regarded as His lila. Srsti, creation is the creative joy of self-expression and self-division, and the evolution of nama-rupa is the evolution of infinite forms of beauty from the infinite Beauty whose form is formless. The world of space-time is the eternal interplay between the static and the dynamic aspects of beauty.

The creative activity of God in the world of space and time is symphony without any jarring note. Each self is like a note on the musical scale, and marks a rhythm in the dance of divine beauty. The world is a song of beauty. Its sonorousness is imparted to every part of it and makes it vibrate with its music. The divine Artiste pours beauty into nature with a view to removing the fleshly feeling and other blemishes of the finite self, beautifying it and playing the game of love with it.

The beauty of the Brahman is self-resplendent. It radiates its entrancing joy to the world by beautifying the self. In mystic literature, this art is known as the process of spiritual alchemy. The divine Artiste assumes five enchanting forms of beauty to beautify the ugly self sullied by the lust of the flesh. These forms are para, the transcendent; vyuha, the infinite; antaryamin, the immanent; avatara, the incarnation; and arca, the permanent.

The Upanisads glorify the transcendental beauty of the Brahman as jyotisam-jyotis where the sun does not shine, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor lightning. The Vedantasutras identify the Light which shines above this heaven, higher than everything else in the highest world, beyond which there are no higher worlds, with the highest Person of infinite splendour in the supreme world of eternal glory, nityavibhuti, of which this phenomenal world is only a partial expression owing to His yogamaya. In that yonder world of Beauty, nature shines forever as suddhasatva, as spaceless space, without the passing shadows of parinama, bodying forth the ideas of absolute beauty.

Brahmopanisad, Pancaratra, exalts the vyuha form of beauty and the Puranas glorify the sleeping beauty that reposes on the milky ocean of infinity. They portray the creation of the cosmos as the awakening to life of the archetypal forms of beauty. The divine Artiste is an alchemist who makes a beautiful soul by removing its dross of sensuality, kama and plays with it the game of love.

The antaryamin, the Beauty that indwells every jiva as its enchanter, makes it pulsate with creative life and participate in its
inner joy. The body is not composed of dust or conceived in sin, but brahmapuri, the abode of the Brahman, and is a living temple of divine beauty. The devas delight in dwelling in the human body, and Deva-deva, the God of all gods, as Bhuvanasundara, abides in Its daharakasa with a view to vivifying the moral self and making it immortal.

The Ramayana and the Bhagavata have specialized in the philosophy of the beautiful and have glorified the avataras as incarnation of the super-sensuous and supra-personal beauty of the Brahman in sensuous forms. The avatara-rahasya, the most sacred truth, sums up the wisdom of Vedanta, which cannot be described in words or defined by thought. The incarnation is not an illusory appearance of the Absolute (indrajala). Nor is it the embodied self with psychophysically organized mind-body conditioned by karman, and subject to birth and death. The beauteous form of the avatara is aprakta, not made of perishing prakrti nor the product of karman, but is self-determined and self-evolved.

Even the view of the ethical religion that the avatara is the descent of Isvara into the empirical life of the jiva and the history of humanity, in moments of cosmic moral crisis, with a view to punish the wicked, by taking away their tools of wickedness and reestablish the law of righteousness is not adequate.

The avatara satisfies the mystic yearning of the jnalin, who hungers for God and pines for the soul-sight of His enchanting beauty. The Ravisher of souls, He cannot bear separation from His ‘other’. f avatara is elusive, but not illusory. It has a seductive and irresistible charm. The beauty of Sri Rama was so entrancing that the rishis and yogins of the forest of Dandaka, rapt in samadhi, were spellbound and became the gopis of Brindavan to relish its immortal bliss.

The Bhagavata is a composition par excellence of the dalliance of divine Beauty with the beloved beings of the enchanted land of Brindavan. The transcendent Beauty that is infinite and eternal incarnates, according to a divinely ordained plan, on the metamorphosed beauty spot Brindavan, with a world-bewitching form to play the lila of love. The metaphysical concept of maya is now changed into the aesthetic idea of the Mayin, the divine Artist. All nature wears a festive garb. The shining gods abandon their celestial homes and the rishis renounce their meditation, drawn by the strange spell of beauty. The Holy of holies, absolutely free from evil (yogesvaresvara), transforms Himself into the Ravisher of souls, Manmatha-manmatha. It is only the pure in heart, free from the lust of the flesh, that can revel in the bliss of Krishna-lila. The righteousness of Sri Rama is consummated in the rapture of Krishna-lila, and the Lord of beauty is jara-cora-sikhamani, who steals away the hearts of all, and ravishes them out of their fleshly feeling.

The other abode of Beauty is the permanent incarnation of arca in which the transcendental Beauty, beyond the phenomenal world, enters into the chosen forms of prakrti as vigraha. Arca is not the idealized projection of creative imagination touched by religious feeling. Nor is it the symbolic expression of the Infinite in the finite. It is the incarnation of divine Beauty itself, and the embodiment of His accessibility even in the world of sense-perception. Infinite Beauty enters into finite forms without losing His infinity and Isvaratva, to commune with the devotee to infinitise his aesthetic consciousness.

Thus, the sleeping Beauty of kspirabdhi, the Ocean Pacific, reposing on infinity, becomes the speaking Beauty in the stone. Only those who have eyes can see the enchanting form, and only those who have ears can hear the divine song. The Alvars with a genius for intuiting the arca had a soul-sight of Beauty. Their
inspiring utterances are an invitation to humanity to share in the mystic rapture of such aesthetic communion.

The philosophy of art in Visistadvaita is ultimately founded on the idea that the beauty of the Brahman leads to eternal bliss. The exposition of this truth brings out the vital relation between aesthetics, Alamkara-sastra and Vedanta. In the synthetic philosophy of Visistadvaita, science and art are exhibited as a way of approach to brahma-jnaana and brahmananda. Alamkara-sastra, as aesthetic science, has its ultimate meaning in the artistic philosophy of the Brahman as the Beautiful and the Blissful.

Every aesthetic experience has its emotional content, though every emotion is not aesthetic. The theory of is a basic concept in Hindu art. Every being or jiva is attracted by beauty. But man alone knows that he has such responsiveness, and constructs an aesthetic philosophy. When the philosopher is moved by beauty, he becomes an artiste and poet.

Beauty is an expression of intuition. Without a medium or sensuous content, it loses its soul. On the other hand, literature as poetry or kavya is word-magic, having a moving appeal and leading to immediate enjoyment. Rasa, spiritual exaltation is the very soul of poetry (vakyam rasatmakam) and is experienced by responsive minds, as aesthetic joy accompanies the contemplation of a bhava. Rasa is the feel of a ruling aesthetic mood. It is not, like taste, a physical joy, but is an inner spiritual enjoyment. It is an intuition with its own artistic expression. Each rasa is a specific feeling tone having its own aesthetic necessity and value; it is not a response to an alien situation.

Being self-creative, a bhava involves the more of itself and its joy is fecundated. The immortal beauty of Ramayana is intuited and cannot be linguistically explained on account of its infinite suggestiveness, sweetness and inner grace. These qualities have an eternal appeal to the heart of humanity.

The aesthetic moods are classified, according to their feeling tone, into nine types. They are bhibhastha, disgust; bhayanaka, fear; vira, heroism; adbhuta, the marvelous; raudra, the angry; hasya, the humorous; karuna, the pathetic; santa, the peaceful; and sringara, love. Sringara-rasa is the queen of the rasas, and has supreme value in aesthetic religion.

Aesthetic religion utilizes the emotions of fear, anger, wonder and sex. By sublimating and spiritualizing them, it removes their sensual content and directs them God-ward. This view makes feeling furnish the dynamic element of the religious motive. Aesthetic religion is founded on normal psychology. It recognizes the truth that the instincts can only be spiritualized and not destroyed.

The Bhagavata, in its own inimitable way, declares that those who, with devotion, direct their kama, sexual passion; krodha, anger; bhaya, fear; sneha, friendship; aikya, comradeship; bhakti, love ceaselessly to Hari, become one with Him and attain His likeness, tanmayata. Hari destroys the evil in them and leads them to godliness. In the alchemy of Krsna love, the blemish of the jiva is removed, and the jiva is brahmanized.

When the bhavas are spiritualized, they become the essential factors of aesthetic religion. The vision of the cosmic form, Visvarupa granted to Arjuna by the Lord is an instance of the sentiments of bhayanaka, vira, raudra and adbhuta, which are intrinsically spiritual. Arjuna was awestruck by the vision of the formless form of Krsna as Isvara, with its endless stretch of space and sweep of time, appearing as the destroyer of the world.
The infinity and omnipotence of Isvara contrasted with the impotence and the infinitesimal nature of the jiva generate the feeling of one’s own insignificance, and arouse the sentiment of reverence. Cosmic aesthetic pleasure results from the experience of the incongruities of life, and is opposed to serious-mindedness and light-heartedness alike. In the blending of the joy of the eternal realm and the tragic tension of the realm of samsara, there results the aesthetic feeling that the cosmos has a comic touch.

The Ramayana is the epic of the reign of karuna-rasa and, with poetic genius, the other rasas are harmoniously blended with karuna by the author to arouse the mood of pity and develop it to perfection. Sringara-rasa is the joy of seeking the beauty of sex and reveling in love as in Saakuntala. It is regarded as the rasa par excellence, as it is the consummation of human love. Sex is the master device of nature to draw souls together. The science of eroticism, kama-sastra is an aesthetic education, which consists in changing the brute feeling in human love, and bringing about the psychophysical unison of two souls. The joy of samslesa, the union of lovers is more than the logical satisfaction of the synthesis of opposites. The paradox of love lies in conquest by submission, and the heightening of love by separation. Mystic idealism utilizes the fidelity and mutual-ness given in sringara-rasa, and elevates it to the level of divine love of Radha and Andal. It is not eroticism, but the fulfillment of divine love. The love of Sri Krsna as Manmatha-manmatha turns the visaya-kama of the earthbound selves into the bhagavat-kama of the bhakta, and the sringara-rasa becomes brahma-rasa and brahmananda.

The attainment of bliss and the removal of sorrow are the end and the aim of life. But the nature of bliss and the means of securing it can be determined only by Vedantic aesthetics. To the materialistic and egoistic hedonist, the highest good of life is the feeling of pleasure derived by the gratification of the cravings of the senses. But sense-pleasures are fleeting and defective. As they arise and disappear, they have no stability or inner value.

On the other hand, man finds satisfaction in the life of reason, aesthetic contemplation and altruistic service. The mental happiness so derived is more valuable than the external pleasures derived from the senses. More valuable than mental happiness is the spiritual joy of self-realization, kaivalya. The knowledge of atman as contrasted with prakrti is an inner joy, which is qualitatively different from the hedonistic pleasures. While the pleasures of prakrti are fleeting, the joy of self-knowledge is stable, and is an instance of santi.

But even this state is not the highest end, as it is egocentric, and may lapse into quietism. The value of bhagavat-kama is higher than that of atma-kama and visaya-kama. By intuiting the beauty of the Brahman, the atman is immersed in immortal bliss.

Visistadvaita is the only religion that equates the Absolute with the God of Beauty and Bliss. It may, therefore, be called aesthetic religion. In this regard, it is allied to mysticism, which is the spiritual yearning of the jiva for communion with its inner self of Beauty, and absorption in the ecstasy of such communion. The Anandavalli, the Bhumavidya and the Madhuvidya portray the beauty of this truth in unsurpassable poetry.

The Taittiriya Upanisad states that all living beings are born in ananda, live, move and have their being in ananda, and enter into it. It defines the Brahman as anandamaya. The Sruti employs a calculus of pleasures in an ascending scale of values, and ends with the highest bliss of the Brahman. The Brahman is supreme and not to be surpassed. It cannot be adequately described and defined. The pleasures of the finite self are tinged with pain, and pale into nothingness when compared to brahmananda. Though
the Brahman is the inner self of the jiva, It is not touched or tainted by the imperfections of the jiva. It is absolutely blessed.

The term anandamaya does not connote maximum pleasure. It implies the presence of pain. The concepts of quantity and causality of pleasure and pain are applicable to the self of samsara, and have no transcendental use. Further, the mantra which defines the Brahman as satya, jnaana and ananta also defines It as abounding bliss. In the light of the rule of coordination, the term anandamaya connotes only the Brahman, and not the jiva. The Upanisadic dictum ‘he who knows the Brahman attains the highest’ distinguishes between the self that attains bliss and the Brahman that is attained.

The Brahman, the cosmic self, is also the inner self of the jiva, and It finally imparts Its bliss to it and brahmanizes it. The enjoyment of brahma-rasa by the jiva, on its being freed, does not connote the absolute identity of the experiencing subject and the experienced object. The Madhu-vidya of Visistadvaita, a Brahmapanisad, explains the nectar of the sun extracted by the devas in a Vedic way as the bliss of the Brahman that is the Light of lights, and the inner self of the sun. The self within the eye is the Brahman, the beautiful and the blissful. The Brahman is called vamanih, the bestower of all blessings, and also bhaminih, the jyotis or splendour that shines in all the worlds. He is ka, pleasure and kha, the all-pervading infinite.

In the exposition of the Bhuma-vidya, Ramanuja establishes that the Brahman is bhuman, infinite bliss. By intuiting the Brahman, the freed self intuits His vibhuti or aisburya, where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else and knows nothing else. There is nothing apart from the Brahman. The mystic, who rejoices in the self, revels in it and sees everything with the eye of the Brahman.

To a patient suffering from excessive bile, drinking water, though pure, is not pleasant. But to a healthy person, it is wholesome and pleasant. Similarly, the jiva suffering from avidya-karman views the world as distinct from the Brahman, and subjects itself to the ills of samsara. But the mukta, freed from avidya-karman, intuits the same world as aisvarya, the gift of the Brahman. The intuition of the Brahman as the All-Self leads to infinite and immortal bliss. Visistadvaita, with its genius for coordination, affirms that the Absolute as the sat without a second is anandamaya, without any shadow of imperfection. It is the Highest Self.

The philosophy of aesthetics is as valid as metaphysics and ethical thought, for it is the enquiry into the nature of the Brahman as the beautiful and the blissful. As a speculative philosophy, it synthesizes its formal and material character. The aesthetics of Visistadvaita defines the Brahman as Bhuvanasundara and identifies cosmic beauty with the inner beauty of the self. It then expounds the five beautiful forms of the Brahman and the different kinds of rasas, giving the highest value to sringara-rasa in its spiritualized aspect. Beauty leads to bliss. After controverting the nirguna theory, it insists on the aesthetic definition of the Brahman as Bhuvanasundara and Anandamaya. It emphasises that the absolute of metaphysics is the anandamaya of the philosophy of art.

Visistadvaita is thus the only philosophy of religion that recognizes the eternal value of beauty and defines the Brahman as the beautiful and the blissful.
The Brahman as *Saririn*

The Absolute is not only the Being of being, but is the super-subject that is the *prius* and presupposition of predication, and the ultimate reason of things. It is the universal which, while giving meaning to the universe, exceeds its content. It is the true subject that does not sublate thought, but is its ultimate source. It is the true infinite different from the mathematical infinite of quantity.

From the cosmological point of view, it enters with the finite self as its *sarira* into nature, evolves names and forms, and thus becomes the cosmic ground. The cause, *upadana* itself becomes the effect, *upadeya*. The infinite is in the finite without losing its infiniteness. In this way, epistemology, ontology and cosmology as branches of metaphysics determine the nature of the Brahman as absolute truth and consciousness, and as the world-ground.

According to Visistadvaita, the Brahman, the subject of Vedantic enquiry, is also the goal of the spiritual quest. Enquiry after, and the apprehension of, the Brahman are followed by the eternal values of the experience of beauty, goodness and truth, and their conservation in the divine content. The philosopher, who thinks after God alone, sums up the ultimate values of life in terms of cognition, conation and feeling. These are not merely subjective experiences, but are objective factors that constitute the determining qualities of the Brahman. They are considered divine qualities revealing the character of God.

The finite is rooted in the Infinite, is sustained and controlled by It, and exists for its satisfaction. The Brahman is the metaphysical ground of the world of *acit* and *cit*, the inner ruler of the finite self and the goal of life. The key thought of Visistadvaita, which reveals this inner relation between the Brahman and the world of *acit* and *cit*, is known as *sarira-sariri-bhava*. It is regarded as the differentia of the whole system, *pradhana-pratitantra*. Vedanta is, for this reason, known as the *Sariraka-sastra*.

This is the central idea of the philosophy of Ramanuja, and it alone satisfies all the *pramanas*. It solves the riddles of thought, and dispels the ills of life. It is philosophically satisfactory and fulfills the claims of the *samanvaya* method. It is spiritually satisfying as it harmonizes the apparent discords of the scriptural texts.

The supreme test of a philosophy lies in its simplicity and suggestiveness. The idea of the Brahman as *sarva-saririn*, the Self whose body is the universe, eminently conforms to this test.

The concept of the Brahman as the *saririn*, and the world as the *sarira*, is the key note of the ontology of Ramanuja as revealed in *sadvidya*, and developed by *satkaryavada*. The *sadvidya* states that the Brahman is the real Reality by knowing which everything else is known. The Brahman is self-truth. It can be known because It is real. It is not true to say that It is real because It can be known. It is not only self-revelatory, but is also the Inner Self of all beings. It enters into the world of *acit* along with the finite selves, and evolves the names and forms that constitute the world of space-time.

The universe is rooted in the True and rests in the True. Knowledge is not a passage from falsity to reality, but from reality to more and more reality. Because the Brahman is real, the world, which is only its effect and not different from it, is also real. This view is different from pan-illusionism and a-cosmocism which deny the reality of the world order. Visistadvaita affirms that the finite is real because it is rooted in the Infinite, and pulsates with its life. It negates the view of Advaita that the finite is a fictitious
imagining of the Absolute owing to the distorting and pluralizing power of avidya.

If the Brahman is mere indeterminate consciousness, nirvisesa-cinmatra, and the world is a baseless fabrication of maya, then Isvara, the first figment of cosmic nescience or avidya is unreal. The jiva, the reflection of the Absolute in avidya, is unreal. Every social relation is then a magic show. Metaphysics itself is then a mere make-believe.

The only way of avoiding this skepticism and nihilism is the acceptance of the theory of the divine nature of Reality and of the immanence of the Brahman, without the pan-cosmic identification of the cosmos with God. Vaasudeva is the All-Self that pervades the universe as paramakasa, without being affected by its imperfections. Srsi, creation is a self differentiation of the Absolute in which the possible becomes the actual. The One, without a second, wills to be the many, and differentiates Itself into the pluralistic universe. This self-differentiation is not an act of self-deception or false predication, but the process of self revelation.

The Brahman enters into the world of matter with the jiva as its sarira, vivifies it and evolves the heterogeneous world of space-time. The Brahman with cit-acit as its sarira in the undifferentiated, avibhakta state becomes the Brahman with cit-acit as sarira in the effect state of differentiation, vibhakta. As the effect is the cause in another form and not different from it, by knowing the Brahman, natura naturans, the world order, natura naturata is likewise known. The world is false only if it is viewed as separate from the Brahman. The world is as real as the Brahman.

Ramanuja utilizes the principle of samanadhikaranya in the exposition of the sarira-saririn relation between the world and the Brahman. It carries the idea of one thing being equally qualified by several attributes each of which has its own distinctive meaning and motive, and embodies the unity of difference. The principle of samanadhikaranya is the grammar of Vedantic thought. It enables us to understand the epistemological exposition that the world of matter and souls is the aprthak-siddha-visesana of the Brahman.

Every proposition, secular or Vedic, predicates a quality or qualities of a subject in reality and is, therefore, significant. The meaning is gathered by reference to the context, convention and relevance. Every term as such has meaning only when it is functionally related to other terms in a living language, and language is itself a system of meanings due to the operative identity that pervades differences. The ultimate subject of language which ensouls it is the Brahman.

The determining qualities of the Brahman like satya, jnaana and ananta bring to light Its infinite perfections. It is not correct to say that such predication is a perversion of reality. If the Brahman were identified with Itself, there would be no point in enquiring into Its nature. Such enquiry would be self-discrepant and suicidal. The cosmological truth is that the Brahman as upadana-karana is also the Brahman as upadeya. This is in line with the law of coordination. There is no discrepancy between the two states, as there is no discrepancy between the childhood of a person and his youth. The pantheistic affirmation that the world is the Brahman brings out the all pervasive nature of the Brahman as the inner self or saririn of all beings. Further, the Vedantic dictum ‘Thou art that’ refers only to coordination and no contradiction, as it reveals the self-identity of the Brahman existing in the objective and subjective forms. It states the truth that the cosmic self connoted by ‘That’ is the same as the inner self or saririn of the jiva connoted by the term ‘Thou’. This concept stresses the inner intimacy between the Paramatman and the jivatman.
The problem of the relation between *guna* and *gunin* is a crucial test for deciding the rival claims of Advaita and Visistadvaita. The Advaitic view of *Nirguna* Brahman as indeterminate consciousness is a philosophy of negation, which seeks to establish the reality of *Saguna* Brahman as religious necessity, with a view to demolishing it dialectically by subsequent *jnaana*. But Visistadvaita affirms everything and denies nothing, owing to its insistence on the self-revelation of the Brahman in the universe as its all-sustaining soul.

Determination is not negation, as negation itself is determination and has positive meaning. The *sat in sadvidya* of Visistadvaita is *savisesa* and not *nirvisesa*. This is for the reason that the creation is considered as self-differentiation of the Absolute, which is consistent with the principle of coordination and the requirements of the *pramanas*. What is called *Nirguna* Brahman in philosophic thought is itself *saguna*, as pure consciousness emptied of content is the hypostatization of an abstraction.

‘To be intelligent’ means ‘to have the quality of intelligence’, and there can be no *visesana* without a *visesya*. The judgment ‘the lotus is blue’ refers to the substance, *visista*, namely the lotus, having the quality of blueness and the predication of an ideal content to a subject in reality. Reality or *visista* is the organic unity of the *visesana*-*visesya* relation, and the two are distinguishable, but not divisible.

The unity of the Brahman and the world as *visesya* and *visesana* is *visista-aikya* and not *svarupa-aikya*. For Visistadvaita, the world is the *visesana* of the Brahman.

In the judgment ‘man is rational’, the quality is the differentia of the subject. When the attribute is distinctive of the subject, it is called its *aparthak-siddha-visesana*. The genus, *jati* is vitally related to the individual, *vyakti*. The quality, *guna* is embodied in its subject, *gunin*. Terms denoting *jati* and *guna* denote also *vyakti* and *gunin*, according to the rule of coordination.

The constituents of the world are not unrelated or isolated bits, but are interrelated, and related to the whole of Reality. Every judgment, scriptural or secular, is an attribute of the Brahman which is the ultimate Reality. The *jiva* is related to the Brahman as its *aparthak-siddha-visesana* like the light of a luminous body, the fragrance of a flower and the body of the self.

The distinguishing self-consciousness, *dharmanubhuta-jnaana* is different from the self, *dharmin* distinguished by it. Yet the two are non-different in the sense that the essential attribute of a subject cannot exist apart from the subject. The non-sentient world is likewise an *amsa*, attribute of the Brahman, for it cannot be apprehended apart from the Brahman. The Brahman is thus *visesya*, and matter and self are *visesana*; and the *visesya* is *nirvikara*, and is not affected by the imperfections of the *visesana*.

The *jiva* is a *prakara* of the Brahman and is, therefore, called the *prakarin*. One thing is called the *prakara* of another if it cannot subsist by itself without its substrate or sustaining life, and final cause, *prayojana*. Like *jati* and *guna*, a *dravya*, substance may be regarded as the determining attribute of another in so far as it is its mode. The body is the mode of the embodied self. The body of a *deva*, man or animal is the mode of the self which sustains it, and uses it for its own satisfaction. Words connoting the physical bodies of the *jivas* connote also the *jivas* to which the bodies belong. Likewise, words connoting *prakrti* and *purusa* also connote *Paramatman* or the Highest Self of which they are the *prakaras*. The body is a mode of the self, and the self is a mode of the Highest Self. Thus all sentient and non-sentient beings are the self-differentiations or modes of the Absolute, as they are derived from It and depend on It for their own form and function.
The Brahman, with Its energizing creative will, differentiates into the aggregate of matter, with the finite self as its sarira, and as their informing spirit, becomes sat and tyat or self and material things. Thus, the Brahman evolves the heterogeneity of names and forms which make up the universe. All words, therefore, ultimately refer to the Paramatman with Its modal modification of cit and acit. On the principle of coordination, it follows that the Self or prakarin is one, though the prakaras, that is, cit and acit are many. That the Self is their substrate and supreme end is thus established.

It is to be borne in mind that Visistadvaita is not a mere adjectival theory of the Absolute. The finite self has not only an adjectival, but also a substantive, mode of being. Matter and self are the adjectives of the Absolute only in the sense that the attribute cannot be known apart from its substance or subject. The self has substantive being in the sense that it is different from the Absolute, as it is itself a centre of experience.

If the self is a mere visesana, the world of souls would be a sum of adjectives housed in the Absolute. But infinity of universals cannot constitute the universe with its infinite wealth of individual experience. The Brahman is the visesya, prakarin, and the world is the visesana, prakara. The two are indissolubly blended as the self and its body. The Brahman with the attributes of cit and acit in the gross state of creation is the same as the Brahman with the attributes of cit and acit in the pralaya state, because of the principle of non-difference of cause and effect and of the unity of coordination.

The self as aprthak-siddha-videsana has both modal dependence and monadic uniqueness. This view mediates between the pluralistic theory of self-subsistent and atomic realms, and the monistic theory of the Absolute as the substance that exists in and by itself without any determination. By knowing the Brahman, the visesya or prakarin, every visesana or prakara that constitutes the universe is known. The view that the world of cit and acit is the prakara of the Brahman, the prakarin is deduced from the ultimate truth of the Brahman being the saririn and the world the sarira.

The ideal of the Brahman as the saririn is the key to the understanding of the Vedanta. The Brahma sutras, which constitute part of the Vedanta, are called the sariraka-sastra, the philosophy of pan-organism monism. The scriptural texts only aim at enabling the mumuksu to apprehend the Brahman to attaining eternal bliss. The truths of revelation are impersonal, apauruseya and infallible. They can be verified by intuitive experience, and are thus rationally justified.

The philosopher of Visistadvaita, with his genius for synthetic knowledge, intuits the sarira-saririn relation as the central truth of Vedanta. By knowing the Brahman as the saririn of all beings, everything is known. It is the thread, sutra that binds plurality into unity. It reconciles the apparent contradictions and confusions in spiritual texts, and secular experience. It solves the riddles of reason, and dispels the sorrows of samsara.

The sadvidya brings out the inner unity between the Brahman and the jiva by such similes as salt dissolved in water, honey gathered from different juices, rivers merging into the sea, the seed and the tree, the sap of the tree, etc. Just as the branches and leaves of the tree draw their sustenance from the life of the whole tree, the universe pulsates with the life of the All-Self. But the antaryamividiya (Ch III-7 Brhadaranyakopanisad) reveals explicitly the truth of the sarira-saririn relation. Ramanuja extols it as the ghataka-sruti that reconciles the extremes of pluralism and monism, and satisfies the highest demands of life in all its aspects.
The brahmavadin Yajnavalkya defines the nature of the Brahman in the immortal words of the vidya. He refers to the Brahman as the antaryamin and amrta, the indwelling immortal self that abides in all beings as their antaryamin and rules them from within. In defining the essential nature of the Brahman, he makes an exhaustive division of the kinds of beings that form Its sarira. Starting from the elements that constitute the objective world of space-time, the division ends with the subjective world of the jiva or vijnaana, which is the subject of all knowledge.

The central teaching of the antaryamividya is enshrined in its last mantra. ‘He who dwells in the jiva and with the jiva, whom the jiva does not know, whose body the jiva is and who rules it from within, He is the Self, Inner Ruler immortal.’ In other words, the antaryamin is unseen, unheard, unperceived, and unknown. But He sees, hears, perceives and knows, not like us with the help of the senses, but directly without their help. There is no other seer like Him, no other hearer like Him, no other perceiver like Him, and no other knower like Him. Everything else is of evil. The objects of sense and the living beings are not self-existent and self-maintained, but spring from the Brahman. They are sustained by Its pulsating life, and exist for Its satisfaction.

This mantra is, as it were, the mahavakya of Visistadvaita in the sense that the universe has its meaning and motive only in the Brahman without the imperfections of the sarira.

The exact meaning of the sarira-saririn relation is worth detailed study. In ordinary language, the word sarira does not, like the word ‘jar’, denote a thing of a definite character. It applies to beings of entirely different make like worms, insects, moths, snakes, quadrupeds and human species. In the Veda, the term sarira is classified into higher and lower types on the principle of duration. The body of Isvara, suddha-satva, time and the self are eternal, while the ephemeral sarira is either created for the atman or made by karman. The created bodies of the Lord and the eternals, nityasuris belong to the former class, while the latter are subdivided into bodies which are both volitional and karma-made. The karma-made sariras are further classified into the immovable like trees and shrubs, and movable like devas, human beings and animals.

On the principle of division, according to genesis, the beings are seed-born, ubhij-ja; sweat-born, sveda-ja; egg-born, anda-ja; and womb-born, jarayu-ja. There are also sariras not produced in any of these four ways. In the case of bodies that are injured or paralyzed, there is no actual control and coordination. But the power of control is only obstructed for the time being and not destroyed.

The above classification leads to four categories of sariras. One is the physical bodies that are perceived by the senses, and traced to biological conditions. The second is the subtle bodies, suksma-sariras caused by karman and conserved in the moral order of the universe. The third is the gross elements of prakrti that form the physical basis of reality according to Vedantic cosmology as defined in the antaryamividya. The fourth is the spiritual bodies, aprakrta-sariras which embody the spiritual universe.

Broadly speaking, the sariras comprise cit and acit. The Brahman is essentially niravayava, without the material forms of prakrti; nirguna, free from the gunas of prakrti; and unconditioned by karman. While the ephemeral sariras are subject to the perishing forms of matter and the moral vicissitudes of karman, the saririn, the atman is pure and perfect.

According to Ramanuja, as observed in the Vedartha samgraha, that is called the atman, saririn which is always the container, adhara and controller, niyantr of another, and which uses it for its own satisfaction, sesin. The sarira is so called by reason of its being in its entirety the adhaya, the niyama and the
sesa. It is inseparable from the saririn and forms its aprthak-siddha-visesana or prakara.

To sum up, any substance which a sentient self can completely control and support for its own purposes, and which stands to the self in an entirely dependent relation is called its sarira. All sentient and non-sentient beings together constitute the sarira of Paramatman, for they live, move and have their being in Him and exist for His satisfaction. Owing to the entry of the Infinite into the finite as its antaryamin and the evolution of names and forms, each term that connotes the sarira of Paramatman also connotes Isvara, the saririn.

The Brahman is the source and sustenance of the self and uses it for its satisfaction. It is only saririn. But the finite self is both sarira and saririn as it ensouls its body and is ensouled by its inner Ruler. When we say that the Brahman is the saririn of the self, we refer to the inner Self as different from the self of the karma-ridden jiva.

Thus the concept of sarir-a-saririn satisfies the triple pramanas of revelation, reasoning and sense-perception in their integral unity. It fits in with the ontological realism of satkaryavada, the grammatical rule of samanadikaranya. It means that the logical correlations of aprthak-siddha-visesana are in tune with the mimamsa rules of interpretation. It furnishes the inspiring motive for the mystic communion by insisting on the ultimacy of the Brahman and the inner intimacy between the Brahman and the self. It offers spiritual service to all jivas owing to the similarity of their spiritual nature, and the kinship due to their one indwelling Ruler. In this way, every thought, word and deed refers ultimately to the saririn who is the life of our life and the light of the universe. This explains everything satisfactorily.

The Brahman as Sesin

Ethical idealism or monism has the merit of establishing the unity of finite endeavour and the supreme end, and of viewing the sesin as both upaya and upeya. Its idea of the Holy One arouses the numinous sense of Isvara as the inspirer of awe revealed in His visvarupa-darsana to Arjuna. Ethical idealism instills reverence rather than love. It exalts Will at the expense of feeling. As such it propounds that the good, the satvikas are saved and the wicked, the tamasics are destroyed. This ideal is not in line with the doctrine of Visistadvaita of universal redemption.

The metaphysics of Visistadvaita defines the Brahman, as an intellectual quest, as satya, jnana and ananta. Its ethics is based on the idea of amalatva, and its aesthetics on ananda. These five qualities may be grouped under the ideas of the Brahman as adhara, niyantr, sesin and sundara.

The Brahman and the self can be metaphysically analyzed, but cannot be physically divided owing to their inseparable relation. The Brahman is the nimitta-karana, the instrumental cause. It is the quality of moral eminence and holiness that does not equate the Brahman with the world. While cit and acit have their being in the Brahman, the Brahman is not in them. The Brahman exceeds their content and is absolutely perfect.

The value of this concept consists in the ethical realization that the self has the freedom to gain supremacy over its animal nature and attune its will to that of the Infinite. The self derives its being and form from the Brahman and depends on Its will for its functioning. Thus, the concept of aadhyeyatva brings out the truth of modal dependence of the self on the Brahman. On the other hand, niyamyatva, the state of being ruled, explains the dependence of the self on the Divine Will.
The idea of the Brahman as sesin is the consummation of the moral consciousness. The Brahman is not only the ground of our being and the inner ruler, but is the goal of our entire endeavour. He is the endeavour, upaaya as well as the end of life, upeya. All thinking beings and objects of thought exist not in their own right, but as means to His satisfaction. Acit or cit is not a being-in-itself, but a being-for-another.

According to this concept, matter exists as a medium for self-realization. Self-realization is not for self-satisfaction, but for the satisfaction of the inner Self. In the religious view, Paramapurusa, the Supreme Self, wills the true and the good, and the conation is immediately self-realized. But moral life implies an aspiration which is not yet realized. This leads to the paradox of ethical religion that moral and spiritual life is both a pursuit as well as a possession.

The spiritual faith solves the riddle, if it considers that religion is the truth of moral life, and that the inner Ruler is Himself the way and the goal. Just as a moral law is the truth of the natural law, ethical religion is the philosophy of fruition in action. This is consummation of the view that the finite self has its being in the Brahman, belongs to It and exists for Its satisfaction, and the Brahman enters into the jiva as its self to realize It. The joy of such fruition is not a pleasure of self-adulation, but the divine quality. In the divine nature, activity and attainment go together.

While everything in the universe, acit as well as cit, has its being in the Brahman and depends on Its will for its form and function, cit alone is conscious of this sustenance and dependence. The self-consciousness of the jiva implies freedom of the will and reason by which the atman eliminates everything that belongs to the world of prakrti from the motive of conduct, and realizes its spiritual nature. If the atman falsely identifies itself with prakrti and its gunas, it becomes the slave of desire. But if it exercises its moral freedom, it realizes its noumenal nature as a spiritual being. Then it attains self-mastery.

Every cetana, as a rational being, has the self-legislative will to free itself from the fetters of sensuous, spurious individuality. It is free to elevate itself to the autonomy of the pure atman. The true meaning of spiritual freedom thus secured by moral effort consists in the knowledge that the real author of all our actions is the inner Ruler of all beings. It also leads to the knowledge that every act so done is the adoration of the highest Self or Paramapurusa. The transition from the spiritual consciousness of the atman to the religious consciousness of the Paramatman is a transition from egocentric outlook to the theo-centric. The motive of conduct shifts from the self to its inner-self. As a result, every karman is consecrated as kaimkarya. In other words, the self gains its freedom to dedicate itself to the inner atman which is eternally free and self-dependent. In this way, the sesa-sesen relation between the finite and the Infinite is transformed and deepened into the relation between servant and master.

The ahamkara-ridden jiva regards itself as the centre of the universe and suffers from self-conceit and moral destruction. But the spiritual self attunes itself to the will of the Infinite. It conceives that there is only God and nothing else. He alone is omnipotent and His will is eternally self-realized. Every creature depends on His redemptive will for its being and function. But the self has the creature-consciousness that it is made in the image of God, and owes its nature and value to Him as the svamin. Dasyattva or the idea of being a servant of God is thus the jiva’s consciousness of the eternal self-dependence of Isvara and the dependence of the jiva on Isvara, and its free submission to His redemptive purpose.

From this point of view, the supreme end of life is attained not in the natural world of prakrti or the spiritual world of atman, but in the religious sphere of Paramatman. The idea of the sesin
gives the highest meaning to moral and spiritual experience as He is the means as well as the end of conduct. This is the true meaning of conduct as kaimkarya. The highest freedom of life lies in the selfless service to the Supreme who is the only Self without the second. When the aham or 'I' is offered to its inner Ruler as svamin, selfhood has its true meaning and culmination in consecrated service to the Lord. It is in the nature of self-oblation to Him, free from the taint of self-conceit and self-righteousness.

The principle of selfhood is central to religious experience. To know the self is to know the sesin who is in us and with us as the Self of our self and is the fruition of our moral and spiritual consciousness. Fruition is not the attainment of hedonistic pleasure, but is the end attained by self-effacement. It is the freedom of absolute self-surrender to the redemptive will of the sesin as svamin. Moral experience has its true meaning only in the religious consciousness that the sesin alone is the actor. This view provides for the freedom of the self, and also for the self-activity of the Lord as the ultimate determiner of human destiny. The Absolute is, therefore, the Self of selves, smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest.

The idea that the sesin is the means and the end of ethico-religious consciousness entitles Visistadvaita to be called the monistic philosophy of fruition and activism, for it does justice to the claims of the jiva as a self and the sesin as the Self of the self, and solves the dualism between human freedom and divine determinism (Spinoza defines ‘the Self is the eye with which the Seer of all things sees Himself and knows Himself to be divine’).

The svamin-dasa relation is rooted in the living faith that Bhagavan as svamin alone is the Lord of our being, and in the feeling of absolute dependence of the jiva on Him. Dasya or service is the self-gift of the atman that is the sovereign of the ethical realm that exalts itself by submitting to the will of the svamin, as the servant of God.

The finite self is the atman which is different from matter, life and mind. It abides forever as an eternal entity. Paramatman is the Self of all selves, and is immanent in them without being tainted by their imperfections of avidya and karman. Isvara is the personality of Paramatman, as contrasted with the personality of the jivatman. The will of Isvara differs from the will of man, and He is absolutely pure and perfect with no self-contradiction. Man is made in the image of God, and not the other way.

Prakrti is a non-moral process of nature. Good and bad, and pleasure and pain are entirely determined by the moral law of karman. The divine purpose consists in the deification of the self by Paramatman entering into it and atmanizing it. The will of Isvara is redemptive, and the making of muktas is the supreme end of the mundane order. The Brahma as the sesin is not personal God, but antaryamin, the indwelling Self. The philosophy of religion expounds the identity of existence and value while it refers to Paramatman as the Absolute. The Absolute is the supra-personal self that enters into matter with jiva with a view to atmanize it. Thus the relation between the sesin and the sesa is both personal and spiritual. The concepts of svamin in terms of the Fatherhood and the Motherhood of the Deity bring out symbolically the spiritual experience of this relation in different forms.

In Judaism and other schools of monotheism controlled by ethical ideas, law dominates love. On the other hand, in mystic religions, love overflows law. But ethical monism coordinates the two sides by the non-dual unity of law and love. To the mumuksu who seeks God and is sought by Him, His faith in the Lord is like the fragrance of flower and luminosity of light. Narayana and Sri are indistinguishable to him. The ontological problem whether Sri is finite or infinite is not so important to the mumuksu as the problem
of mukti. From this point of view, the faith in Sri as the concretion of karuna and the heart of divinity is vital to the religion of redemption.

Atmadasya is realization of the atman as different from the bodily-self made by prakrti and the three gunas, and is the self-gift of the realized atman to the Lord who is its real Self. The self has monadic being, and is, at the same time, a mode of God. The more it sheds its spurious individuality made of ahamkara and the dross of sensuality, the godlier it becomes. Atmadasya, self-gift changes the egocentric outlook into Isvara-centric insight. In self-gift, exclusive selfishness alone is abandoned, and not the self.

Dasyatva connotes self-gift to God, its inner Ruler in the vertical sense, and the attribute of serviceability to other jivas in the horizontal sense. This truth may be formulated as the idea of God as divine Fatherhood and Motherhood, and the fraternity of all jivas as regards their essential nature. It brings out the spiritual intimacy between Paramatman and jivatman more truly than the ideas of Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man alone.

Every jiva is made in the image of Paramatman, and has His eightfold perfection in so far as it is not obscured by avidya-karman. All jivas are alike in so far as their essential intelligence is one. In their spiritual nature, all jivas are one as they are selves different from the embodiment of prakrti. As selves, all jivas are alike, though not identical, and in their essential intelligence they are one.

The social ethics of Visistadvaita is thus founded on the solidarity of the spiritual universe and on the fraternity of all jivas. The philosopher, who has realized the atman, has the spiritual consciousness of samatva, the similarity of all jivas. But, when the philosopher becomes religious, he knows that Paramatman is the meaning of his self, and the means and end of his conduct. The self belongs to God, exists for His satisfaction, and surrenders itself to His redemptive mercy.

Bhagavat-kaimkarya, service to God implies service to all jivas. It extends in its meaning to acarya-kaimkarya, service to the guru, who has the mercy of God without His juridical severity. It also extends to service to the bhagavatas who have devoted their lives to the worship of the Supreme, and ultimately to all jivas owing to the indwelling of Divinity in their hearts.

Visnu pervades the universe as its Self and communicates His love to all beings. As such the whole world, vaisnavized as it were, pulsates with daya. The true vaisnavite prefers repeated births, as an opportunity for spiritual service to the suffering jivas, to his salvation. He never rests satisfied till all jivas are freed from the ills of life. He makes no distinction between the elect and the eliminated. This concept is in line with the Mahayana concept of Buddhism that the perfected being seeks to lead the other beings to salvation in preference to his own liberation from the cycle of life and death.

The ideas of Visistadvaita in regard to indwelling of God in all jivas and of jiva-karunya leading to kaimkarya to all jivas are more comprehensive than those of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This is for the reason that the term jiva includes all living species, and the term antaryamin stresses the intimacy between the two atmans.
The Brahman as Niyant

In a true philosophy of religion, the Absolute of metaphysics is the Isvara of religion. The pure reason of metaphysics has to ally itself with the practical reason of moral consciousness, and become the philosophy of spiritual activism.

Consciousness is essentially co-native and purposive. It is more an act of the will than a fact of knowledge. Reality is rooted in ethical experience. It is ethical religion that takes to the heart of reality. It gives a new meaning to the Brahman by predicating the quality of nyantripa to the inner ruler of all beings, who is absolutely pure and holy. Visistadvaita, as a philosophy of spiritual activism, defines the Brahman as Isvara who has purity and holiness as His essential quality, apahataapmapatva.

A reconstruction of the theories of dharma and niyoga, expounded by the Mimamsakas, has developed the idea of Isvara as nyantr. Karma-mimamsa, the elucidation of Vedic dharma or duty, is the metaphysic of morals. It is different from artha, the goods of earthly life, and psychological hedonism which makes egoistic pleasure the end of conduct.

The important element in karman is the endeavour to achieve something, and karman is not the end itself. The Vedic ideal of karman lies not in the phala or the satisfaction of a desire, but in the moral law of dharma as a duty to be done. It is kaaryataajnaana, the knowledge of what ought to be done, which instills the sense of duty, the will to do it and the overt act. Dharma is thus not a means to an end, but is the end itself. It is a Vedic imperative of the form ‘do it’. It is unconditional and absolute. The only motive for the Vedic ‘ought’ is the moral feeling of reverence for the law.

The right, as conformity to law, cannot, however, be separated from the good as an end to be attained. Every act has its own result. The end of good conduct is the attainment of pleasure here or hereafter, and the avoidance of pain. Every act of karman leaves a moral effect which cannot always be perceived physically. It is to generate a new super-sensuous force called apurva or niyoga in the agent or action, which is a mediating link between the act and its function.

For example, if a person performs the jyotistoma sacrifice, the act creates an unseen super-sensuous potency in him leading to beneficial sensible results in the future such as happiness in the life hereafter. It is apurva, the unseen force that distributes rewards and apportions pleasure and pain to the agent in accordance with his karman. Owing to the plurality of effects, there should be a corresponding plurality of causes. As such it is not justifiable to trace them to a single supreme cause called Isvara. Each cause remains a potency leading to the attainment of its result. Apurva is the one eternal potency that manifests itself in different ways. The potency of the action takes sometime before it produces the desired effect.

Every act of karman presupposes the kartr, doer. This relation is due to adhyasa by which the immutable appears as the changing until avidya is sublated by jnaana. What is eternally existent is opposed to what is to be accomplished. Jnaana and karman can never coexist. It is only by sublating avidya, on which the dual consciousness of karman and kartr is based, that the knowledge of the existent Brahman is intuited.

The direct intuition of the Brahman can be attained only by a process of meditation on its nature in the light of the Vedantic imperative. The self should be heard and reflected upon. Intuition and injunction relate to the same subject. The object of injunction and the subject of intuition are thus one. Therefore, by following the imperative, the mumuksu attains unity with the Brahman, freed from avidya.
On the other hand, *karman* is both for the *avidvan* and for the *vidvan*. While activity is the same for both, the inner attitude differs. The former is impelled by inclination and utilitarian ideas. It seeks pleasures of life here and hereafter. The activity is tinged with pain and is, therefore, ephemeral. But when *karman* is done in detachment, it becomes an offering to the Brahman, *brahmarpanya*. It then becomes one with *jnaana* and the dynamic element in spiritual life.

*Jnaana* does not mean identity-consciousness. It connotes the intellectual knowledge of the Brahman and spiritual meditation on Its nature as *saguna* and not as *nirguna*. The Brahman is thus the perfect self that is apprehended as well as attained. By His self-transforming will, *parinama-sakti*, Isvara emanates into the finite as *cit* and *acit* without abandoning His moral perfection of purity. The spiritual object of the emotional process is to transform the finite self, removing its limitations of finitude.

Ramanuja criticizes the *nisprapancarana-niyoga-vadin* more acutely. He enquires the *niyoga-vadin* whether the world to be destroyed is real or false. If it is false, it can be put an end to only by knowledge and not by *niyoga*, injunction. If the world is true, the injunction that seeks world destruction is either from the Brahman or different from the Brahman. If it is the former, the world cannot exist as the Brahman is eternal. If it is the latter, persons perish along with the world, and *niyoga* remains without a substratum.

The ‘immanence’ theory has the merit of recognizing the divinity of all realities. But it has the fatal defect of predicating evil and error to the Brahman. This theory leads to the concept that the Brahman is both the supreme ground of the universe and also the source of all imperfections. In such a case, He has to suffer from the sorrows of *samsara* in His own infinite way.

The absolutism of Visistadvaita thus differs from the Schools of Advaita and *Bheda-abheda* in its insistence on the equal value of metaphysics and morals. It also accepts the philosophic validity of divine immanence and the moral value of eminence.

To Ramanuja, the needs of ethical religion are as important as the demands of the dialectic method of metaphysics. With the aid of revelation-insight, he concludes that the absolute purity and perfection of the Brahman can be maintained only by affirming the reality of the finite self, and attributing the imperfections of life to its moral freedom. The empirical life of *samsara* is traceable, if at all, to the *upadhis* whether they are false or true. But, according to him, the true meaning of *avidya* or *upadhi* is contained in the moral concept of *karman*. Ethical religion restates the *adhara-adheya* relation of metaphysics in terms of *niyantr*, the ruler, and *niyamya*, the ruled and arrives at the concept of the Brahman as Isvara, the moral ruler of the universe who controls maya and is not conditioned by it.

Ramanuja repudiates and rejects the *niyoga* theories of the *purva-mimamsaka*, the *dhyana-niyoga-vadin* and the *nisprapanca-niyoga-vadin* as mere mental constructions without any Vedantic foundation. He reformulates the system in the light of the theistic idea of Isvara.

*Niyoga* is a mechanical device without any spiritual content and immanent purpose and is, therefore, atheistic. It is to be reinterpreted as *niyantr* or the creator and the ruler of the universe who dispenses justice according to merit. The motive of conduct is an imperative to be obeyed. Besides, it is also a good to be attained. There can be no endeavour without an end.

The Vedantic imperative of *dharma*, the subject matter of the *purva-mimamsa*, *karma-vicara*, requires reorientation in the light of Vedantic philosophy of the Brahman. The end of moral
endeavour is the realization of the Brahman and the attainment of eternal bliss. The ethics of the *purva-mimamsa* has its value only when it is related to the Vedantic good as revealed in the *uttara-mimamsa*. And there is no contradiction between the two. The two *mimamsas* are really integral parts of the systematic whole. Their objective is to lead the seeker after truth, step by step, till he ascends to the Absolute.

Ramanuja, therefore, considers, similar to Bodhayana, that the entire Mimamsa Sastra has a definite spiritual meaning and value. The path of Vedic duty is the devious way to *svarga* and its pleasures are petty, *alpa* and perishing, *asthira*. But the path to the Brahman is straight and shining. It leads to eternal and infinite bliss. The ritual-sacrificial cult of the *Purva-Mimamsa* is frail and leaky, while the way to *brahma-jnana* of the *uttara-mimamsa* leads to infinity. The Veda-vadin who follows *karman* thus realizes its perishimg value and tries to become the *brahmavadin*.

The transition from *karma-vicara* to *brahma-vicara* thus involves temporal sequence as well as logical consequence. The seeker after truth goes from *karman* to the Brahman, from the world of petty and perishing pleasures to eternal bliss. The finite self, which is essentially *jnaanaamandamaya*, self-effulgent and blissful, forgets its nature in the process of *brahma-vicara* and finally attains immortality duly realizing its true nature and purpose.

A parable often quoted by Ramanuja and Vedanta Desika illustrates the point. A young prince strays from his royal father and joins a group of wild tribes. A trustworthy friend weans him away from the wicked surroundings and rejoins him to his father. On meeting each other, they are reunited in love. Likewise, the *atman*, which actually belongs to the Brahman, somehow superimposes on itself the idea that it belongs to *prakrti*, identifies itself with the body of a *jivi* in creation, and subjects itself to the wheel of *samsara* till it is made to realize its folly by an enlightened *guru*. The *atman* retraces its steps, regains its self-knowledge and, freed from the fetters of *karman*, reenters its home in the Absolute. It is thus *brahmanized*.

The realization of the Brahman is an awakening as well as an attainment. The world of *samsara* is not subjective imagining like a dream, but an objective order. It is the same to all the infinite *jivas* experiencing it. The view that space and time are mental constructions and that the world is created and destroyed by the mind suffers from the fallacy of super-subjectivism and its fatal consequences. Sankara admits that there is difference in kind between the world imagined or ideally constructed by the mind as *jiva-srsti*, and the world par excellence created by Isvara. Similarly, what is of the waking consciousness is more real and valuable than that of dreams and of the inert state of sleep and stupor.

Life is real and arduous. *Mumuksutva* is not make-believe, but involves strenuous effort. Isvara is not the Brahman reflected in *maya*, or a *mayin* that suffers like the *jiva* from the hazards of the three states of consciousness and the hardships of cosmic evolution. On the other hand, Isvara is the inner ruler of all beings without any taint or trace of imperfection. He is eternally self-realized and enables the *jiva* also to realize itself.

*Mukti* is not like moon-like effulgence, *chandrodaya* that is an awakening from *avidya*. On the other hand it is like *suryodaya*, sun-light that is an awakening of God-consciousness by the destruction of *avidya-karman*. Visistadvaita steers clear of the extremes of the *purva-mimamsa* view of the mediacy of *niyoga* and the monistic view of the immediacy of Advaitic consciousness. It regards the Brahman as *niyantr*, who is the ruler of the moral universe and the supreme end of the spiritual life.

The central truth of the Upanisadic ethics that the Brahman is the inner ruler of all the subjects and objects of experience is in
the antaryamin text of the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad. Uddalaka questions: ‘Do you know the ruler who is the inner controller of the entire universe?’ Yajnavalkya replies: ‘That is the Brahman who is immanent in all beings as their eternal ruler, having the quality of sarva-niyantrtva.’

Subala-Upanisad defines Purusottama as the Supreme Self, eternally pure and perfect. He sees without eyes, hears without ears, and knows everything without instruments of knowledge and the impediments of avidya-karman.

The antaryamin-vidya of the Vedantasutras states that the essential quality of the Sarvatman, the All-Self, is the attribute of inner ruler-ship, niyantrtva, and immortality, amartva that differentiates Him from the finite centres of experience and their objects. The Sarvatman is metaphysically the aadhaar in which all beings live, move and have their being. It is thus the immortal ruler. The Sarvatman, the universal Self is identified with Purusottama, the Supreme Self of the universe, who wills the true and the good, and whose will is eternally self-realized. He is the ruler of the rulers. Because of Him, suns and stars and the whole universe move.

Cosmic ruler-ship cannot, therefore, belong to the non-sentient pradhana or the self-conscious purusa. The Mundaka Upanisad makes the point succinctly: ‘Upon the same tree there are two inseparable birds of beautiful plumage. One of them on the lower branch eats the sweets and bitters of life in turn, and is bewildered by its own impotence. But the other on the top is the glorious Lord (Isa), the brilliant Maker who is ever serene and majestic, and by knowing Him, he shakes off his sorrows and shines in His glory’. Bhagavad-Gita narrates that, with a divine vision granted by the Lord, Arjuna beheld the cosmic form of Isvara, and was awe-stuck by Its sublimity and infinity.

The idea of the Brahman as the inner-self of the self implies the eternal distinction among prakrti, purusa and Purusottama, but denies their externality. As a philosophy of religion, Visistadvaita recognizes the equal reality of the three existents, but gives different values to them in the realm of ends.

As Sankara says, self-hood and internal ruler-ship cannot belong to pradhana, matter. It is a materialistic view of morals to regard the self as a mode of matter subject to the determinism of prakrti and its gunas, and the causal chain of karman. Matter is not a thing in itself, but is a thing for the self. It is not a projection of thought or a non-ego. The physical order has objective reality. But the natural ego that identifies itself with the physical world has no moral value as it becomes the slave of sense and sensuality.

Atman is essentially free. But it cannot escape the determinism of karman and the endless perils of samsara. When it realizes its spiritual nature and attunes its will to the will of Isvara who is its inner Ruler, then it overrides the impact of the karman. Nature is adapted to the moral needs of the self. The moral law demands finally the immortality of the self and the existence of Isvara.

The difference between the two atmans lies in the truth that the Paramatman is eternal, while the empirical self, the individual atman can attain immortality only when it frees itself from the impact of karman and the earthly life. When the Supreme Self in a jiva thinks and acts as the sariran, it becomes the empirical self. On the other hand, when the empirical self, which has its own being, possesses the idea of antaryamin as the indwelling self of the jiva, it gets consummated in the Absolute. The Absolute of philosophy, which is the Sat without a second, is thus the same as the inner ruler of all beings, distinct from prakrti and purusa, on account of His essential eternity.
Visistadvaita reconciles the claims of absolutism and theism by coordinating the values of epistemology based on ‘intelectus’, and ethics based on ‘voluntus’, defining the Brahman as adhara and niyantr. The first category expresses the ontological immanence of the Brahman as the upadana-karana, material cause. The second category defines the Brahman as the nimitta-karana, operative cause, stressing Its ethical eminence and holiness.

The Absolute is the one that is the meaning of the manifold. But It is not infected by the imperfections of the universe. As the sat, the Brahman is the all-inclusive whole. But as the niyantr, the Self, the Brahman is transcendentally pure, perfect and holy. Sat is in space-time, and not as space-time. It is the self. On the other hand, prakrti is parinama-ridden while purusa is karma-ridden. Paramatman is the All-Self, but is absolutely free from the mutations of matter and the ethical defects of empirical self. Thus He is the Purusottama. There is no other good than God, and the supreme end of life consists in attaining godliness.

The subject-object relation is applicable to ethical as well as intellectual experience. The ultimate subject of every moral judgment is the inner ruler or the Paramatman. To elicit this truth, the Gita analyses every act of karman, voluntary action into five factors of the body, namely, the vital functions, the mind, the sense organs, the finite self and Isvara.

The body composed of the five elements provides the physical foundation for moral life. The five pranas, the vital functions, sustain the life of the bodily organism, as without the prana the physiological organs cease to function. The mind and the sense organs, in their volitional aspect, represent the dynamic side of moral endeavour. The finite self with its freewill is the doer of the deed and is the subject of moral experience. It uses the tools of action when it chooses to do so, and does not use them when it ceases to act. But the final subject of all actions from the religious point of view is the inner Divinity that is in the self as the Creator of creators. The ethical religion loses its integrity if any of the above factors is omitted. Consequently, the philosophy of morals will be fractured.

The true aham, ego is a serene spiritual self as realized in the state of liberation. But ahamkara, egotism is the pseudo-self of prakrti that claims to be Isvara Himself. It betrays its egocentric nature, fights against goodness and seeks to destroy the moral and spiritual order of the universe.

What is generally considered the fight between God and the devil is really the fight in our moral nature between the soul power of the atman and the brute force of the ahamkara. The moral philosopher recognizes the religious foundation of morals and discovers Isvara as the real subject of all action, perceived in the light of the Upanisads. It gives a new orientation to moral and spiritual life. For it shifts the centre of activity from the little ‘I’ of ahamkara to the absolute ‘I’ that is the real Ruler of the cosmos.
The living body is the ksetra, the arena of moral warfare. There the conflicting desires fight for supremacy while the self deliberates, decides and acts on account of its free will. Finally it knows the truth that its will is the fulfillment of the Divine Will.

Freedom and activity belong to purusa and not to prakriti. If it is said that activity is a feature of prakriti, all jivas have to experience all actions as prakriti is common possession of all jivas. This is absurd. The world of prakriti is the common theatre for moral and spiritual life. It is, therefore, the object and not the subject of experience.

In the transition from ethics to religion, moral freedom is transfigured into spiritual attunement to the will of the Supreme Self. The self as the kartr, free agent becomes the willing instrument of the highest Self (Para-the Supreme). The empirical self, in a sense, suffers from the dilemma of determinism. As a mode of matter, its action is subject to causal necessity and is not free. As a mode of the highest Self, its activity depends on the inward Ruler who, by His wonderful maya, moves all creatures as if they were mere machines. The self, as a passive instrument of Isvara, becomes a conduit of His cosmic energy.

Kousitaki Upanisad expounds forcibly the concept of divine determinism and pre-destination thus: ‘Whom the Lord elects to lead upwards from these worlds, He makes him do a good deed. Whom He elects to lead downwards from these worlds, He makes him do a wicked deed.’ Freedom of the self is thus a fiction from the religious as well as the scientific points of view.

Duty is the command of the inner voice, and the imperative implies the obligation to obey it. Sribhasya illustrates this truth by an analogy of joint ownership of the same property by two persons. A and B jointly own a property. If B wishes to transfer the property to C, he can do so only after obtaining the consent of A. The consent of A depends on the imperative, initiative and persuasive effort of B who desires the transfer. Similarly, Isvara permits its ‘other’ to use its freedom. At first, He is a silent seer, unaffected by good and evil, but enters into the moral life of the jiva, and permits it to exercise its freedom. He then apports pleasure and pain which are the fruits of action according to desert.

Ethical religion supports the doctrine that the self is not a thing or means to an end. Rather, it is a kartr that can choose its way in a conflict of desires without drifting between destiny and divinity. It does not follow karman or sastra (which connotes an imperative or moral ‘ought’), but has the free will to choose its own career. When moral realm is autonomous and cannot be reduced to the physical realm or religious absolutism, the doctrine of determinism does not stand ground.

Ethical religion reconciles ethics and religion by its conclusion that the self acquires moral sovereignty over its animal inclination with a view to surrendering itself to the Supreme Self, which is the ultimate subject of moral endeavour. In that event, the two wills coexist as one will. The finite will is then in tune with the Infinite. There is no contradiction in such coexistence or self-communication. Anyway, this view is preferable to the illusion theory of ethics, which concedes that the Lord, with super excellent limiting adjuncts, rules the jivas with inferior limiting instincts. This illusion theory of ethics makes morality a make-believe and moksa-sadhana a semblance.

To sum up, the Brahman, the all-inclusive One, is Isvara, the inner Controller of all beings. Ontologically, the Brahman is the Life of our life and the True of the true. This view stresses the idea of divine immanence which pulsates through all beings and sustains their form and function.
Reality as the Brahman has the quality of truth, which is the True of the true, of self-consciousness which is ever self-effulgent as the Light of lights, and of infinity as the Creator of creators and the Eternal of eternals.

Truth is an essential quality of reality, and is not reality. The idea of niyantr gives rise to the idea of the ethical eminence of the Brahman. It postulates that the finite is not only rooted in the Infinite, svarupasrita, but is also controlled or directed, sankalpasrita by It.

By His entry into the jiva as its inner self, He is at once the Sovereign and Saviour of all jivas. Like a ruler that inspects a prison as a freeman, the Brahman is the ruler of the dark chamber. He is within all beings, and without, near and yet far. In view of the unity of purport of all Vedic knowledge, the terms sat, antaryamin and the Brahman connote the same Being. In the light of the chaagapasu-nyaaya, these terms ultimately connote Narayana as the Supreme Self.

**The Brahman as Redeemer**

Isvara is not the illusory highest or the highest conceptual interpretation of the Absolute. Isvara is the ethical highest in us. His omnipotence makes for righteousness. The will of the Almighty is not an arbitrary fiat, but is rooted in justice.

Sastra, the only authority for discerning spiritual truths, attributes absolute power to the Brahman which transcends human understanding. But the idea of the Brahman with infinite benevolence cannot be reconciled with omnipotence. It may be contended that no merciful Divinity would ever create a universe full of inequality and cruelty (vaisamya and nairghrnya). The existence of evil and unmerited suffering appears as a blot on the Almighty. This is treated as evidence of the reign of a malignant power rather than of a benign ruler. This is a serious charge against theism.

Badarayana, the Vedantin, traces evil to the moral responsibility of the jiva. He explains that the inequalities in the moral experiences of men and communities, and the injustices are the outcome of their karman, and are not due to any caprice in the Creator. Parasara says that the material cause of creation is the karman of the jiva. The law of karman is the law of causation on the moral level, and every being reaps what it sows. Karman and its juridical rigour are so remorseless that even the gods cannot escape the consequences of their karman.

The law of karman does not connote any mechanical or mathematical necessity. It is not that each deed is the child of the past, and the parent of the future. But it presupposes a free agent who is accountable for its actions. The moral judgment is passed not on the deed, but on the doer doing the deed. The law of karman recognizes the intrinsic value of moral freedom.
When ethics develops into a religion, it becomes a theodicy with a moral and spiritual faith in the law-giver. Duty is a divine command. Its transgression is a moral perversity or evil that deepens into sin, and merits punishment. Righteousness is fulfilled in the law of retribution. The demerit in the soul arouses moral disapproval and incurs wrath. It is by punishment alone that the righteousness of the law is vindicated.

But the picture of a vindictive God who punishes the offender in the everlasting hell-fire is revolting to the religious consciousness of Ramanuja. The will of the Almighty is rooted in the righteousness by which He dispenses justice according to the merit of the doer. Theology insists on the absoluteness of the Divine Will, and ethics on the value of righteousness.

Ethical religion defines Isvara as satya-kama and satya-samkalpa, who wills the true and the good, and realizes them at once. The view that God wills the good is preferable to the view that what God wills is good. The former view makes Him righteous and the latter despotic. The idea of Isvara as karma-phala-datr, the Lord that judges man according to his karman, steers clear of the evils of deism. The theory of an external Designer or Absolute Deity, who makes the world and lets it go, is repugnant to ethical religion. So is the idea that God forever fights with the devil, or that devil exists as an impediment to goodness to be finally overcome by it.

The view of Ramanuja that Isvara is the operative cause and the karman of each jiva the material cause of the diversity of moral experience, satisfies the needs of ethical transcendence and logical immanence. The Brahman as the sat is the immanent unity of the universe. Parama-Purusa is transcendentally pure and perfect. The evils of life are traceable to the moral freedom of the finite self. If it is said that evil is an illusion that envelopes the Brahman, a limitation that conditions the Infinite, it speaks of a defect in the Absolute. It carries no conviction and admits of no religious satisfaction.

Ramanuja traces avidya to karman, instead of karman to avidya as Sankara does. Finally, he equates the two. Ramanuja thus attributes the illusions and ills of life to the jiva, and leaves the Absolute perfect.

The bottom-line of the ethical religion of Visistadvaita is the theory of Isvara as Redeemer, Raksaka. The idea of Isvara as karma-phala-datr, who apportions pleasures and penalties in exact proportion to the moral worthiness of the doer, is legal conception and does not admit of religious consolation or hope of salvation.

Evil exists as a fact of experience. The mumuksu seeks to destroy it by active endeavour. Physical evil is equated with suffering, and may not be the effect of sin. Sin may result in suffering, but suffering may not be due to sin. But moral evil arises from the violation of moral law. It deepens into sin when duty, which is a divine command, is violated. Duty is the voice of God in the will of man. It is a sin to omit what is commanded, and commit what is prohibited, as it is an offence against Isvara. The sinfulness of sin is so deep that it cannot be exhausted by expiation. The law of recompense has religious value only when righteousness is fulfilled in redemption.

Justice is not merely tempered with mercy, but is consummated in it. The aim of punishment is not retribution, but redemption. Punishment, dandana is daya-karya, the work of compassion. Punishment is for the redemption of the wrong-doer from his career of sin by the inflow of divine grace, krpa. Forgiveness does not cancel karman. It transforms it by the organic blending of goodness and mercy.
The grace of the Redeemer is not a supernatural potency that is infused into the sinner from without. The law of karman finds its fulfillment in the redemptive grace of God. Forgiveness is the foundation of the moral law. Redemption from sin is its religious fruition. This view overcomes the dualism between the supernatural realm of krpa and the moral realm of karman. There is no contradiction or discontinuity between the supernatural and the natural, as the former is a consummation of the latter.

While philosophy explains the quest of Reality by a mumuksu through the self, religion explains the quest of the self by the Redeemer. The idea of the Brahman interested in brahmanizing the jiva is the bottom-line of religion. God seeks the self even more than the self seeks God, and God is aptly called the ‘Hound of Heaven’. To the logical intellect, the Brahman is beyond understanding, description and definition. But to religious consciousness, He is the inescapable Redeemer who, in His infinite mercy, assumes suitable forms to recover, and reunite with, the lost self. The ascent of the self to the Absolute is not as valuable as the descent of the Absolute into evolutionary forms and into humanity.

The five forms of the Brahman known as para, vyuha, vibhava, antaryamin and arca are not emanation categories, but concrete expressions of divine krpa. Daya is eternal and infinite. It incarnates into humanity and is immanent in all living beings. Para-Brahman is the self-realized Absolute as the Eternal of eternals, formless, changeless and transcendental.

In Paramapada, matter exists without its mutability. There time exists as eternity, and the mukta lives without the moral limitations of karman. In that divine life, there is no scope for daya. If everything is perfect, perfection has no meaning or value. But there is more joy in the pursuit of the lost self than in the possession of the free selves of Paramapada. As such, the metaphysical Absolute becomes Vaasudeva, the perfect, to satisfy the meditation needs of the mumuksu.

Srsti is a redemptive process. After the refreshment of the pralaya, when srsti recommences, the jiva wakes up to moral activity, enters on a new life, and is given a fresh opportunity for attaining freedom. The making and the unmaking of the universe thus reveal the redemptive mercy of the Redeemer. As such, cosmology is to be reinterpreted as a daya-sastra, the philosophy of redemption.

Another concrete form of daya is the immanence of the Brahman in the hearts of all beings as their antaryamin without being affected by their evils. It transforms the perishing body into a living temple of the Redeemer. The Supreme Self manifests Itself as Vaasudeva in such body in the interests of the meditation needs of the devotee.

Incarnation is the invasion of divine mercy in a supernatural way into the history of humanity with a view to redeeming it from its sinful course. The sinner is made righteous by the infusion of grace into his inner nature so that the burden of sin is removed forever.

Avatara or vibhava, incarnation is a concrete manifestation of krpa, kindness. It is the periodic invasion of krpa into all species, mainly humanity, when evil triumphs over goodness and creates a crisis in moral life. An avatara is the Redeemer embodied in human form with a view to recovering humanity from its sinfulness.

The Bhagavad-Gita is the exposition of the avatara of Sri Krsna, the perfect incarnation. The value of the incarnation of Krsna is the intuitive vision, the soul sight of the Redeemer as its self. Such soul-sight destroys avidya-karman. The Gita guarantees God to everyone and offers universal salvation. Even an
uncompromising infidel like Sisupala becomes worthy of the grace of the Incarnation.

The theory of the *avatara* is ultimately a spiritual truth entirely opposed to the geographical idea of descent, the evolutionary idea of the progress of *purusa* into *Purusottama*, or the super-naturalistic view of a miraculous advent against the laws of nature. Visistadvaita is faithful to the Gita when it expounds the *avatara* as the invasion of the grace of the Redeemer to humanity in moments of moral crisis with a view to arresting the progress of social disruption, redeeming the sinners from their sinfulness, and commune with the devotees who thirst for His living presence.

Besides the historic incarnations, there are permanent incarnations known as *arcaa* or the concretion of the *krpa* consecrated by *bhakti* and *mantra*. *Arcaa* worshipped in temples is the reservoir of the redemptive mercy of the divine, who enters into a formless form of His own without being effected by the changes of *prakrti* and *purusa*.

*Arcaa* is a Vaisnavite idea, often misinterpreted as image worship or idolatry. To the idealist, image worship is the projection of the idea of God into forms of matter or a symbolic representation of spiritual truths. The pantheist who sees God in everything sees Him in the image as well. The monotheist may not like the anthropomorphic view that humanizes the transcendental Holy. The non-dualist accepts that the Infinite cannot be spatialized and localized. But he draws a different conclusion by recognizing the psychological needs of the devotee, and conceding the distinction between the two Brahmans. Sankara says that the Lord may, when He pleases, assume a bodily shape formed of *maya* in order to gratify thereby His devout worshippers. The contemplation of God in the form of sacred *saligrama* is not, therefore, contrary to reason.

Visistadvaita does not accept the theory of two standpoints with its double view of philosophy and religion. It is also against monotheism that attributes qualities to Divine-personality, but denies His divine form. If the theory of two standpoints is true and the real needs of the *mumuksu* are conceded, it logically follows that the Brahman is *nir-avayava* and *nirguna* in the spiritual sense, that It is beyond *prakrti* and its constituent qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and *saguna* in the religious sense that He is the redeeming self. The Infinite finitizes Itself by having an *aprakta-sarira* or eternal formless form of Its own for the sake of the finite self that seeks it. This divine form is the concrete embodiment of the will to save humanity. It is made of love, and not of matter or *karman*. It is not a concession to the mass mind steeped in avidya.

The Infinite is the boundless Lord of tenderness and compassion. Self limitation of the Infinite in the form of incarnation enriches the divine nature instead of conditioning or diminishing its content. The Incarnation with sun-like splendour individualizes the form as special providence with a view to gratifying His devotees. The Incarnation is the image of the Infinite, and not in the image. The divine form is called *subha-asraya* as it purifies and is accessible to devotees.

The *arcaa* is the divine form perceptually obvious and accessible to all. It is in the nature of self-manifestation, and is a miracle of mercy. The five forms of the Brahman as *para*, *vyuha*, *vibhava*, *antaryamin* and *arcaa* are equally real in the philosophical sense. From the point of view of religious value, each succeeding self-manifestation may be more valuable to the *mumuksu*.

Visistadvaita equates the Brahman and the *antaryamin* of the Upanisads with Vaasudeva of the *Pancaraatra*, the Bhagavan of the Puranas, the *avatara* of the Itihasas and the *arcaa* of the Alwars. It is equally opposed to the theories of sublation and subordination.
Ramanuja considers that the Brahman, Bhagavan, Paramatman and arca connote the one Absolute as the perfect Self whose sole aim is to perfect the finite self and make it immortal. The self-manifestations of the Absolute are, therefore, not due to self-contradiction, bheda-abheda limitation or emanation.

The redemptive motive of daya dominates the infinite perfections of Isvara. This view is a reorientation of the metaphysical qualities of satya, jnaana and ananta, the ethical idea of amalatva or purity, and the cosmological ideas of omnipotence and omniscience.

The Brahman transcends the form and matter of prakrti. He is, therefore, nir-avayava or formless, and nirguna or without attributes. He embodies Himself as daya to redeem the jiva. God of daya is unique and without a second. His mercy endures forever and is showered on all.

The infinite perfections of the Absolute become valueless without daya. The Lord blesses the pure in heart, that follow the way of righteousness and keep the Vedic commandments. He also saves the sinner that transgresses the law, and has done evil in His sight. He is love embodied, and the sole refuse of those in desolation and distress. As judge, the Lord saves the righteous. As the deliverer, with His infinite loving kindness, He seeks the iniquitous and forgives their transgression. His forgivingness overtakes His juridical severity. He, therefore, redeems the wicked, and gives succour to the lowly and the meek.

Daya inspires confidence in God as the God of salvation. It soothes the broken heart and the contrite spirit. The unique feature of Vaisnavite experience of mercy is its universality. Deliverance works in various ways. It enriches the nature of the Deliverer who is referred to in varied ways.

He is sarva-bhuta-suhrt, the friend of all beings. He is parama-udaara, all bountiful. He is gambhira, whose quality of mercy cannot be measured qualitatively. He is sulabha, easily accessible to all jivas. He is aasrita-para-tantra, one who depends on His devotees. He is saumya, approachable by all irrespective of their birth and worth.

He embodies the qualities of sausilya, vatsalya, mardava, sthairya, karunya, madhurya, audarya, aarjava and sauhardra. Sausilya is the intimacy between the infinitely great Isvara and the infinitesimally small jiva. Vatsalya is the tenderness and affection that makes it forget the sinfulness of the sinner in spite of the divine omniscience. The Lord of love may tolerate physical but not moral evil. Mardava is the softness of love that cannot bear the pangs of separation from its lost self, and includes sweet reasonableness.

Sthairya is the will to save the postulant in spite of his sinfulness. Karunya is the sympathetic love of the Redeemer to seek and heal the afflicted jiva and give it succour and stability. Madhurya is the inner sweetness that ever resides in the Saviour, who conquers evil by His seductive beauty and love, and imparts His bliss to the jiva.

Audarya is the quality of the bestowal of boons as a privilege granted to the Giver of all good by His beloved, without end. Aarjava is the full, frank and free expression of the redemptive quality without reservation. Sauharda is the heartfelt desire to help all beings and redeem them from their sinfulness. The motive of all these mercies is to transforming the nature of Isvara as righteous judge into the Deliverer or Universal Saviour.

The Visistadvaita philosophy of the sat without a second transforms itself into the Vaisnavite pantheism that extols Vaasudeva as the All-Self, and the Srivaisnavite theism that equates Godhead with the dual-self of Laksmi-Narayana or Sriyah-pati.
This transition is the self-expression of the inner redemptive necessity that follows from the divine nature of daya.

The Brahman, who is beyond prakrti and purusa, expresses Its will to redemption in Its twofold spiritual form of the Lord and Sri that are philosophically inseparable, though functionally distinguishable. Love rules the cosmic Ruler, and Sri resides in the ever-blooming lotus of love. Sri is the very heart of the divine nature.

Isvara rules the world by His relentless law of karman. His holy wrath against the evil-doer is inescapable. But the redemptive love of krpa overpowers the rigour of karman. This leads to destruction of the evil, but saves the evil-doer. The Lord rules by law, and Sri rules by love. The love of law and the law of love are so intertwined in the divine nature as to render nugatory any attempt at the philosophic analysis of their exact nature. The law of justice is eternally wedded to the might of mercy.

Ethics insists on the reign of karman, and religion on the absoluteness of krpa. But ethical religion reconciles the claims and counter-claims of karman and krpa regarding the law of righteousness as the root of moral and spiritual endeavour and deliverance by daya as its fruition. Daya changes goodness into godliness by its inner mediating link.

Karman is a criticism of caprice and is rooted in justice. But, in its relentlessness, it affords no hope of deliverance. It might lead to despair. Krpa, on the other hand, is a criticism of karman, and is rooted in forgiving-kindness. But, in its inner flow, it may afford no scope for moral responsibility and contrition. But the dual principle of karman and krpa overcomes their dualism by harmonious interplay. In this situation, love pervades law and law pervades love. In this interdependence lie the stability of the moral order and the guarantee of the universal salvation.

Visistadvaita discusses the question of origin and meaning of evil. Physical evil is suffering due to hunger, poverty, disease, misery inflicted by nature as earthquakes, and pain caused by supernatural agencies. It is classified as adhyaatmi, aadhibhautika and aadhidaivika, centrally, peripherally or supernaturally originated.

Physical evil is contrasted with moral evil. Suffering is not always considered the consequence of wickedness. Selfless workers devoted to the welfare of others often court suffering. Further, pain is not always a punishment for transgressing the moral order. Matter is not essentially evil. Embodiment is invariably conjoined with misery. But there is no causal or necessary relation between the two. Embodiment is an evil only when it is the result of the false identification of the atman with the body on account of avidya-karman. But it is not so when it is sought voluntarily by the Lord or the mukta.

The theory that Isvara has created the world to provide for human wants and that He bestows His wealth on virtuous men assigns a commercial value to karman. Such approach destroys its intrinsic worth. On the other hand, it is not true to say that evil is a blessing in disguise, and that pain is beneficial, especially when it is unwarranted.

Moral evil is the violation of the laws of conduct based on rational determination. It is rooted in sensuality and the self-will of ahankara. Ahankara is the demonic propensity in man that impels him to gratify the lust of the flesh and indulge in self-aggrandizement. It is, therefore, the matrix of all moral evil.

The quality of sattva impels virtue. It induces the moral agent to choose a course of conduct that avoids egoism, and promotes the ends of social welfare. A good act is better than a good motive or intention. But a wicked motive is worse than a
wicked act. It is worse when it deepens into villainy. It taints the
inner moral nature, and subtly infects society itself. The demonic
man makes evil his good, and is moved by malignity and cruelty
for their own sake, and without any motive. Moral evil converts
into sin when it is a deliberate transgression of a moral law regarded
as a divine command. It is a revolt against the law of God.

The world of samsara is the battleground between dharma
and adharma, which is considered the fight between good and evil.
Zoroastrianism refers to the eternal warfare between the God of
good and light, and the Demon of evil and darkness. This eternal
warfare involves dualism opposed to the theistic idea of Redeemer.
Even the view of Christian theology that Satan fights against God,
and that man suffers from original sin does not help in solving the
problem of evil.

Good and bad are mutually exclusive. This logical truth of
exclusiveness applies to the realm of ethical religion. This becomes
the basis of the division of the persons into the good and the wicked,
based on the principle of exclusion or antagonism. The good man
keeps the commandments of God, and thus merits His loving
kindness attaining salvation. The sinner who offends God is
considered a heretic and hurled into eternal hell-fire.

Ethical religion affirms the theory of predestination. It is
more pronounced when it holds that the Lord Himself elects some
to pursue the good and follow the path of liberation, and others to
follow the path of malignity and sin leading to torture in hell.

From the metaphysical point of view, evil is, but ought not
to be. When God is good, the existence of evil and other
imperfections has to be traced to the freedom of the finite self.
Moral freedom is a real choice between different possible courses
of action. The jiva is responsible for the choice of evil. But Isvara
is responsible, not for the choice between good and evil, but for
the pleasures and pains that follow the deed. The existence of evil
in the divine plan is only a bare possibility. But it is the self that
makes the possible actual, and enjoys the fruits of its karman.

The nature of karman determines pleasure or pain and it
varies from person to person and from time to time. The hedonistic
value of a thing is relative to the moral differences caused by
karman. Thus it is the finite self that is accountable for the existence
of evil and the experience of pain. The Supreme Self is in no way
concerned with this experience, as It is ever pure and perfect.

But the ultimate problem of evil is not solved by analyzing
it into the physical, moral and metaphysical aspects, and making
the finite self accountable for its existence. To say that Isvara
permits the possibility of evil, which He could have prevented,
does not free Him from His responsibility. This difficulty results
in the dualism between human will and divine will, and their
collision.

The existence of evil as an instrument of goodness having
an educative value is still a menace to theism as an ethical religion.
If evil is real, it denies the omnipotence of the Lord and makes
Him finite and helpless.

Ramanuja recognizes the equal claims of pure reason and
practical reason. He rejects the monism that traces evil and error
to the heart of reality, as wild and vicious. To him, it is an outrage
on the moral and religious consciousness. To him, evil is a grim
reality. But he throws the blame on the finite self. He absolves the
Absolute from any taint and trace of evil.

Evil is neither an original sin nor an inherited propensity.
It is neither an illusion nor a self-limitation. But it presupposes
freedom of choice. To the mumuksu seeking liberation from the
samsara, the removal of evil and sin is more urgent than the logical
analysis of its cause. When he develops divine vision, brahma-
dristi, he sees God everywhere and good in all beings.

What a man sows, he reaps. Karman, therefore, involves
the inexorable law of retribution. There is no hope of escape from
the chain of necessity. It is this aspect of karman that savours of
fatalism, and breeds pessimism and passivity. But it applies only
to a part of karman called prarabdha-karman, which has already
been set in motion, like the birth of an individual.

Every karman presupposes a kartr, who determines himself.
In every voluntary situation he deliberates on possible alternatives,
and decides on a particular course of action. The act of decision is
an evidence of moral freedom and value. The moral self is not a
phenomenalized thing of prakrti, subject to the law of causality.
But he is a person, self-legislative in nature. He can attain self-
sovereignty by subduing his animal nature.

Thus, an individual has the freedom to grow into the
goodness of God or lapse into wickedness to be the slave of
sensibility. Freedom of the self presupposes the possibility of self-
realization as different from the bodily self of prakrti. When the
moral self thus realizes its spiritual nature, the theory of karman
acquires a religious motive based on the redemptive nature of krpa.
Then work is transfigured into worship of God. Freedom is the
gift of God so that it may be turned into the gift of the self to God,
which is its inner Self. Karman is then consecrated into kaimkarya.
The conflict of the two wills ceases when the finite self attunes
itself to the Infinite.

The relation between karman and krpa involves dualism
between the principles of righteousness and redemption. It indeed
constitutes the paradox of Srivasnavism as an ethical religion. In
all humility, it accepts it as holy mystery, which cannot be solved
by logic but can only be solved by direct divine experience. The

mumuksa cannot rely on the inner light of reason without the grace
of God and the guru.

But the ethics of karman and dharma is rooted in the
religion of redemptive krpa. The moral feeling of the law of
retribution is a failing which gives way to the religious faith in the
Lord of redemption. The religious faith is that the world is not the
domain of karmic necessity. On the other hand, it is the living
expression of the incarnation of mercy.

The Christian religion of redemption is the gospel of the
forgiveness of sin. According to it, the propensity to evil is an
innate depravity. The evil deepens into sin, when it is a
transgression of divine law. Sin does not arise from ignorance or
error. It is the sense of guilt arising from the collision of the human
will with the divine, and is blameworthy entailing punishment. It
is the doer that is punished, not the deed.

The hideousness of sin is a measure of the forgiveness of
God. Forgiveness is the assurance of mercy, and the free gift of
God. It is the offer of pardon to the sinner. To consider that mercy
is the reward of merit is only legalistic. ‘To merit mercy’ is self-
contradictory, for it breeds the bargaining temper. Justification for
mercy is the work of God, and human merit does not win it. The
good man has the consciousness of ‘desert’, and does not look for
mercy. It is the sinner that seeks mercy, that God pardons.

Forgiveness and penitence go together. The fact that sin is
forgiven presupposes the faith that it is forgivable. Penitence is
what accounts for mercy. It is analyzed into three factors, namely,
the knowledge of the sinfulness of sin, the feeling of sorrow
resulting from the thought of sin and the will to abandon the way
of sin by seeking the mercy of God, the Redeemer. Human history
is the process of the pardoning God incarnate in human society,
with a view to annexing it to God pardoning its sins.
7. Cosmology

The sadvidya of Chandogya-Upanisad explains Vedantic cosmology. It states that the Brahman is the ground of the universe by knowing which everything is known. Deity is the beginning of the evolutionary process and its end.

The non-difference between the Brahman and the universe is brought out in illustrations like a lump of clay or a bar of gold entering into different states in succession, and thereby assuming different configurations. The one transfigures into the many, and the process continues. What exists as a real possibility in the subtle state becomes actualized in the gross state. It is the non-differentiated, which exists without name and form, that becomes differentiated. This principle explains the true meaning of cosmology, and shows the unity of the causal relation.

The Upanisads repeatedly proclaim the truth of causal immanence in different ways - ‘All this indeed is the Brahman’. ‘There is no plurality here’. ‘When the Self is known, all this is known’.

By knowing the cause, the effect is known. By knowing the Brahman, the Absolute, the universe with its manifold differences is known. This cosmological unity leads to the spiritual intuition that the Brahman is the cosmic ground and also His own inner Self. The Upanisadic dictum ‘Thou art That’ is a realization that the cosmic ground is the same as the inner self of the jiva.

The central principle of the theory of the origin and development of the universe is satkarya-vada. According to it, nothing new comes into being, nor is anything created out of nothing. In creation, it is not the emergence of something new, but the self-differentiation of the same reality. Being alone becomes, and is the cause of the becoming. The one alone becomes the many, and is the cause of the manifold. In this way, the cause is immanent in the effect, and is non-different from it. The Brahman with cit-acit in a state of non-differentiation becomes the Brahman with cit-acit in a state of differentiation, with infinity of distinctions in name and form. The Absolute becomes the many by evolving into the world-body, parinamat.

According to Ramanuja, the sadvidya brings out the non-difference between cause and effect as applied to cosmology. The creative urge of the One to become many is the energizing, dynamic idea of self-revelation. Being alone becomes, and becoming has its meaning only in being. The same substance enters into different states without losing its substantiality. The One enters into the many, and becomes sat, the sentient, and tyat, the non-sentient. It is only a process of the un-differentiated becoming the differentiated. In the causal as well as the effected state, the same Brahman exists with its modes implicit or explicit. Cause and effect are, therefore, non-different. By knowing the Brahman, the cause, the effect, namely the universe, is also known.

The cosmological problem is the threefold problem of philosophy relating to nature, self and God. It is by the will of Isvara that nature changes and the self progresses. It is by knowing Him as the inner-Self of all beings that all beings are known. The Brahman is thus the ultimate meaning of the universe. This explains the nature of the Brahman as the world ground and goal.

The order of creation as set forth in the Sastra is the evolution of prakrti. Prakrti is differently conceived as aksara, avidya and maya meaning eternal, obscuring the knowledge of the Brahman and manifest creation, in that order. Prakrti, static in its primordial state, energizes, begins to grow and becomes the infinite world. It evolves into mahat with the three states of sattva, rajas and tamas. Mahat changes into ahamkara. From the ahamkara, the eleven sense organs or indriyas originate. The indriyas are
two-fold - jnanendriyas and the karmendriyas. The jnanendriyas enable the self to comprehend sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. The corresponding karmendriyas are eye, ear, tongue, nose and skin. Manas is the inner sense organ; and antahkarana, the sense commune that coordinates sense knowledge, is the sheath of memory. The indriyas are neither good nor evil by themselves, and they are very subtle.

Prakrti consists of five gross elements - bhutas - ether (akasa), air (vayu), fire (tejas), water (ap) and earth (prthvi). From these gross elements arise tanmatras - sound (sabda), touch (sparsa), colour (rupa), savour (rasa) and odour (gandha) - in successive evolution. From ether springs air, from air fire, from fire water, and from water earth. When vayu sustains in the body, it is called vital air and is five-fold - prana, apana, vyana, udana and samana. In this way, the universe is self-differentiation in successive forms of the same acit into the twenty-four categories of prakrti, mahat, ahankara, eleven indriyas including manas, five bhutas and five tanmatras. As all evolve from one cosmic source, there is continuity of nature.

The universe is composed of the five mixed elements, namely, ether, air, fire, water and earth, and each substance is so called because of the preponderance of one or other elements. The principle underlying its composition is quintuplication, according to sadvidya. Quintuplication is what creates particular things with specific names and forms.

The souls are eternal. Even in pralaya, they are in a subtle state, devoid of names and forms, and are, therefore, not apart from the Brahman. In srsti (creation), the Brahman, as the omnipotent Isvara, bestows on all jivas bodies and sense organs suited to their karma. He enters into them as their inner Ruler. Each jiva or sarira has its own sarira or ksetra composed of prakrti, mahat, ahankara and five elements. The eleven senses are joined to the sarira through karma. Pralaya and srsti form a regular succession of involution and evolution to bring out the rhythmic perfection of the cosmic plan. This view ensures the unity of the universe and its uniformity and stability, while providing for infinite individual variations.

The sadvidya admits the inequalities of life of individual jivas, but traces them to their karma. Parasara puts it thus: ‘Isvara is the operative cause only in the creation of the new beings; the material cause is constituted by the karma of the jivas created.’ Isvara, as the moral ruler of the world, dispenses justice according to the nature of the karma resulting from the free will of the jiva. The Lord makes the soul act having regard to its past karma, whether meritorious or non-meritorious. Every person is primarily responsible for his conduct and it is morally unjustifiable to throw the blame on supernatural agencies or the highest Lord. The cosmic system has moral foundation, and Isvara is Isvara only because He is righteous. Divine justice is same to all, and it reigns supreme in the kingdom of moral experience.

The Vedantasutras say that what is called the creation, sustenance and destruction of the world by Isvara is mere sport. The logical and moral ideas of the Brahman as the upadana and nimitta-karana of the universe are transfigured in the aesthetic idea of lila.

A true theory of cosmology has to recognize the reality of nature, self and God by avoiding the extremes of naturalism, personalism and singularism. Nature as prakrti or ksetra evolves into the world, but is not itself purposive. It serves the purpose of Isvara as a suitable medium for the perfection of purusa or jiva, an eternal entity distinct from prakrti. The evolution of jiva is not a mere becoming or happening. It is a self-choice of infinite forms of life as god, man, animal, insect or any other species, till it discovers or recovers itself. Isvara is distinct from both, and is the
The ultimate meaning of cosmology is spiritual and mystic. Ramanuja explains cosmology in terms of the sarira-saririn relation. The Brahman, in all its states, has souls and matter for its body. When they are subtle, the Brahman is in the causal state. When they are in the gross state, the Brahman is the universe, the effected state. The non-sentient matter is ever changing, sentient souls are liable to suffering, and the Brahman is ever pure and perfect. The Brahman is Narayana with cit and acit as its sarira, and He creates the nara-s, implanting immortality in them. Srsti is the evolution of the cosmic purpose, and pralaya is the involution and reversal of the whole process. These two processes alternate as the waking and sleeping states of the jiva.

Srsti provides an environment for the evolving self to grow into godliness. On the other hand, pralaya is the withdrawal of the instruments of activity when the Lord finds that the self chooses the way of darkness and sin. This way the process repeats till the jiva realizes its ultimate destination and returns to the Absolute. The freed self withdraws itself for ever from the twenty-four tattvas of prakrti in the same way in which it entered into them and became matter. When the seer sees the brilliant Self, he shakes off avidya-karma, realizes his self as the sarira of the Brahman, and becomes a mukta. Svetaketu realizes that the Sat without a second, which differentiates into the universe as its saririn, is identical with the Self that is the saririn of his own self. The Gita expounds the same principle thus: ‘At the end of many births in the universe, the wise man reaches Me, saying all is Vasudeva’.

The cosmology of Visistadvaita follows from its ontological view of the Brahman as the saririn of the universe of cit and acit by a suitable application of satkarya-vada. The Sat without a second is undifferentiated in pralaya, but differentiates itself into the world of nama-rupa. The pre-creational stage is a real possibility in which cit and acit are pre-existent in a subtle but indistinguishable way and not non-existent. In creation, srsiti, the potential, becomes actual. In both the stages, the Brahman exists with its prakaras or modes. The Absolute, according to Ramanuja, is not the Brahman and the world of cit and acit in the mathematical sense. The Absolute is the Brahman in the cosmos in the metaphysical sense. The three are distinguishable, but not divisible, eternal but not external. The Brahman enters into the world as its immanent cause, but is unaffected by the world process. Therefore, He is transcendental. This view reconciles the pantheistic and theistic views. The process of nature is in the interests of the progress of the self, and both sub-serve the inner purpose of the Brahman to grow into the universe with a view to moulding muktas. The chief value of cosmology lies in its insistence on the truth that the ground of the universe is also the subject of religious meditation.
8. The Psychology of Jivatman

In the Gita, the jiva is described as immutable, eternal and indestructible. It is said not to be a product of the material world, but of a higher ‘spiritual’ nature. At or after the point of physical death, the jiva takes a new physical body depending on karma, and the individual desires and necessities of the particular jiva in question. More specifically, the jiva is the immortal essence of a living being (human, animal, fish or plant etc...) which survives physical death. It has a very similar usage to atman. Whereas atman refers to the ‘cosmic self’, the word ‘jiva’ is used to denote an individual ‘living entity’ or ‘living being’ specifically. The word jiva originates from the Sanskrit word jivás, with the root jīv meaning ‘to breathe’.

In ontology, knowledge of the spiritual self - atman is essential to Vedantic culture. The psychological study of the atman has a unique value and meaning in determining the nature of such culture. The nature of the atman is discovered by yogic intuition, and not by the method of behaviourism, psycho-analysis or ideational construction. The self is its own evidence and its continued existence is self-posed, and not proved by metaphysical tests. The self abides in its own self. The self is a spiritual entity different from the material changes of the organism, mind-body.

In Visistadvaita, the atman or self is a knowing subject, jnātṛ. Visistadvaita defines the self negatively as the Purusa, different from the twenty-four categories of prakṛti. Purusa is the twenty-fifth category and is termed the higher prakṛti on account of its being spiritual. The Gita says that the body is the ksetra, while the atman is the ksetrajna, knower or the field of knowledge. The body is mutable, asat and, therefore, perishable, vināsin. But the atman is immutable, sat and, therefore, indestructible, avinasin. The atman is eternal, nitya, and stable, sasvata. The atman is beyond gunas, nirguna. It cannot be perceived by the senses, avyakta, nor conceived of, acintya. The atman cannot logically be proved, aprameya. It is only the basis of proof, pramātra. It works through the means of knowledge, pramāna to obtain knowledge, jnāna. The nature of the atman is thus difficult to know and, therefore, it arouses philosophical wonder, ascrayavat. Owing to avidya-karman, the atman mistakes itself for the anatman, is entangled in samsara and migrates from body to body. But it is ever without change, pure and eternal. As the atman cannot be logically defined in terms of genus and differentia, it can only be defined in terms of experience by direct intuition, atmanubhava as the eternal knower or the subject of experience.

The atman is self-illuminated, svayamprakasa. Its intelligence is both substantive and attributive. While the atman exists by and for itself, pratyak, its dharmabhuta-jnāna exists for another, parak, that is the Atman. Thus, the atman is self-realized and, at the same time, the subject of jnāna or jnānasraya. Selfhood is knowledge of itself, but jnāna is knowledge about the objects. Selfhood is dharmijnāna but jnāna as the knowledge about the objects is dharmabhuta-jnāna. The two are inseparable.

Self-experience, atmanubhava is different from the experiences of the self as the expression of its consciousness. The jiva is infinitesimal in its monadic existence, but its attributable jnāna can be infinite and all-pervasive like the light of the sun. The self is infinite in its range, though it is smaller than the smallest. The jiva perseveres in its unique being, but its consciousness can have a cosmic range and mirror the whole universe. Like light and luminosity, the atman and its jnāna are logically distinguishable, but physically inseparable. The two are organically related. Jnāna is the determining quality of the atman, but is also substantive and it is subject to the changes of contraction and expansion. It is eternal and all-pervasive. But, in the empirical sense of samsara, it is enveloped by avidya-karman and undergoes contraction, samkoca and expansion, vikasa. Jnāna is ever identical with itself, though
its manifestations are liable to change. In the state of salvation, mukti, jnaana regains its essential state, and is eternal and infinite.

Visistadvaita conjures dharmi-dharma relation between the atman and its jnaana. This concept rescues knowledge from scepticism and solipsism. The denial of the guna, dharma is the denial of the gunin or dharmin itself. There can be no quality without the substance possessing it, no experience without an experiencing entity. Jnaana functions as a congnitional process of the nature of the logical ego employing the criteria of truth and the pramanas, with a view to discriminating between truth and falsity including doubt, samasya; wrong opinion, viparyaya; illusion, bhrama; and false knowledge, durmati, by means of discrimination, viveka; and seeking final beatitude, sreyas.

In the moral situation, the self does not remain an indifferent spectator watching the conflict of motives, and the triumph of the strongest motive. On the other hand, the self identifies itself with the whole process as the doer doing the deal. Freedom is a skill or capacity as well as an activity. Self can become a god or a dog, and no one can destroy its consciousness of freedom and initiative.

Feeling is the essence of the empirical self as the experiment, bhoktr. Pleasure-pain is the stuff of feeling and is regarded as its hedonistic tone. Every state of consciousness has a feeling tone which includes organic and bodily feeling, psychic feeling and the feeling caused by the reaction of the subject to the object that is presented to it. There are said to be five meanings of feeling, namely, touch, organic sensation, emotion, purely subjective state and pure affective state like pleasure or pain. When an emotion qualifies a more stable centre, it is called a sentiment. The highest sentiments of the social self are friendship, maitri; mercy or benevolence, daya; devotion to God, bhakti; and self-surrender to God, prapatthi.

The atman as the material self is imprisoned in its mind-body or gross (sthula) and subtle (suksma) sarira, and enjoys the pleasures of sense and sensibility. When its desires are rationalized by viveka, it rises to a higher level of self-feeling, and enjoys the happiness of self-realization. When it intuits the Lord who is its inner Self, it enjoys eternal bliss.

The three states of consciousness are one continuous context, and are not contradictory. Each state shades off without any leap or gap into other states which are equally real. Dharmabhuta-jnaana with its possibility of becoming infinite has a unity and identity of content running through all its varying and vanishing presentations. It is one single affirmation about the dharmin and is sustained by its intelligence.

All the states of consciousness mark the transition of jnaana from the conscious to the sub-conscious and to the unconscious determined by karman. From the ethical standpoint of the karman, moral life presupposes the freedom and eternity of the self. The religious consciousness insisit on the preservation of the eternal values of the freed-self. When the gross body is dissolved in death, the jiva goes to heaven, svarga or hell, naraka, to enjoy the fruits of its good or evil deeds as the case may be. No jiva can escape the consequences of its karman. The law of retribution presupposes the immortality of the jiva, the existence of Isvara as the dispenser of justice, and the unity of the universe of space-time as the field of activity and the sphere of retribution.

When the merit, punya or demerit, papa is exhausted by enjoyment in svarga or suffering in naraka, the jiva returns to the earth and reincarnates in a new body determined by its residual karman, and begins a fresh career in the new environment. The self has thus freedom to grow into sattvic goodness or lapse into tamasic wickedness. While the evil karman drags the jiva down to sorrow, the inner divinity in each jiva urges it to choose the way
of blessedness. The *jiva* thus drifts between destiny and divinity and subjects itself to numberless births and deaths, till it decides on *mukti* and becomes a *mumuksu*.

Visistadvaita psychology of *jiva* has a metaphysical basis. It refers to a plurality of eternal and immutable *jivas* having *jnaana* as their essential attribute. The *jiva* is an atomic entity, but its intelligence is infinite, though limited by *karman*. The *jiva* is substance-attribute; it is a *visesya* and *visesana*. It derives its sustainability from the Brahman and is called Its *aparthak-siddha-visesana, upadeya* and *amsa*. As the ethical self, the *jiva* has moral freedom but dedicates itself to the service of the Lord, *svamin*. As the aesthetic ego, it is made of beauty imparted by the absolute beauty of the Brahman. The *atman* derives its form and function from the Brahman, depends on His redemptive will, and exists for His aesthetic satisfaction. It is, therefore, His *sarira*. The *jiva* is different from the Brahman in the denotative aspect because of its unique individuality, but one with Him as it connotes Him as His self. This is the paradox of the theory of *prakara* in Visistadvaita. But this theory satisfies the needs of theistic monism, and reconciles monadism and pantheism. This view has the merit of ascribing the evils of life and the irrationalism of the universe to the *avidya*-ridden *jiva*, and purity and perfection to the Brahman. Visistadvaita affirms the fundamental similarity of the intelligence of all the *jivas* and also the Brahman. Thus it promotes spiritual brotherhood and social solidarity.

The Vedantic psychology is founded on its philosophy of religion as expounded in the Vedantasmrutras. The nature of the *atman* cannot be known apart from that of the *Paramatman* as the two are integrally related as *sarira* and *saririn, amsa* and *amsin*. Visistadvaita explains that the *jiva* or finite self is a *prakara* of the *Paramatman* as a logical, ethical and aesthetic ego, and is finally intuited as His *sarira*. The logical relation between the finite self and the Brahman is in the categories of cause and effect, substance and attribute, and whole and parts. The *jiva* is the effect of the Brahman in the sense that a term connoting the Brahman in the effected or differentiated state is coordinated with another connoting the same in the causal or non-differentiated state.

This view leads to the second concept of the *jiva* as the inseparable attribute, *aparthak-siddha-visesana* of *Sat*, the ultimate substance. The substance is the subject of qualities, and there is connection of content between the Supreme-Self and Its quality, the *jiva*. The *visesana* is not only an eternal differentiation of the Absolute, but also an eternal part, *amsa* of the Brahman, the Whole, the Reality, while the *jiva* is a spark of the brilliant Self. The *jiva* is not merely a mode of the Brahman but is a spiritual monad. The idea that the Brahman is one entity and that the *jiva* is separate is only mathematical, but not metaphysical. This is for the reason that the true Infinite, the Brahman transcends the category of quantity. The *Vibhu* is the *Virat* immanent in the *anu*, the monadic *jiva* as its inner Self, but it exceeds its finite content. Though monadic as a substance, the *jiva* has intelligence which is capable of becoming infinite. The *jiva* is the *upadeya, visesana* and *amsa* while the Brahman is the Supreme Source, and the Inner-Self. Visistadvaita thus reconciles the discrepancy between monism and pluralism by its interpretation of the terms causality, substantiability and infinity.

The ethical ego stresses the aspect of transcendence and external relation with Isvara in terms of *sesa* and *sesin*, and *dasa* and *svamin*. A quality is inherent in a substance and a relation is strictly between two substances. The *jiva* is not a *visesana*, but is a self-active personality or *visesa* which is essentially free. Isvara is *Purusottama, niyantr*, who wills the true and the good, and whose conation is immediately self-realized. He is absolutely pure, perfect and holy. The *jiva* attains self-sovereignty by subjugating sensibility and egoism, *ahamkara* and dedicating its freedom to the service of Isvara. The self realizes its utter dependence, *sesatva* on Isvara,
its inner Ruler, and its being a means to His satisfaction as sesa. Cit is conscious of such instrumentality, and is, therefore, called dasa. Every deed is consecrated service to Isvara as kaimkarya, and the gift of the self is the supreme kaimkarya to the Lord who is its real Self and Redeemer.

The aesthetic ego reconciles immanence and transcendence by the concept of the jiva as not only the knower, jnatr; and the doer, kartr; but also as the enjoyer, bhoktr. While the logical view promotes intimacy and unity, the ethical view fosters reverence to the Holy. The aesthetic view combines the two by intuiting the Brahman as Bhuvanasundara, who creates for Himself a beautiful form of His own to attract the self and transmit beauty and bliss to it. The logical, ethical and aesthetic egos are ultimately transfigured into the threefold expression of the sarira of the Brahman in terms of adheyatva, vidheyatva and sesatva. The term saririn as applied to the Atman should satisfy the three conditions of modality, dependence and serviceability. First, as a mode, it derives its being from the Brahman as the very life of its life, svarupasrita, and is sustained by Its immanence, atmaika-prakaratva. Second, it is controlled by Its will, samkalpasrita, and absolutely depends on It, atmaikasrayatva. Third, the self subsists as a means to realization of the divine purpose, atmaikaprayojatvā.

Thus the jiva derives its substantiality from the Brahman as the adhara, depends on His redemptive will as the niyantr, and exists as a means to the satisfaction of the sesin. The Brahman as the source, sustenance and satisfaction of the finite self is called its saririn. Every term connoting the sarira connotes the saririn, and the jiva also connotes the Brahman, its saririn. There is a plurality of jivas, each having its own distinct character, although all jivas are alike in so far as they have their intelligence for their essential nature.

The Visistadvaita view that the jiva is both a monad having an existence of its own and a mode or inseparable attribute of the Brahman draws criticism for inconsistence. A visistadvaitin replies to such criticism thus:

1. A thing can be both substance of and an attribute to another substance. For example, the lamp emits light; light here is an attribute of the lamp and, at the same time, is in itself a substance.

2. The experienced object is not always acit or jada. When X perceives or infers Y while, the latter, though experienced by the former, is himself a thinking or experiencing self.

3. The relationship of sarira and saririn as between the self and the Brahman adequately brings out the intimacy between the two in spiritual communion. This view also conveys the truth that the Paramatman as saririn enters into the jivatman which is its sarira with a view to imparting substantiality, and communicating Its infinite love to the jiva.

The existence of plurality of selves is a fact of experience in all its levels. Visistadvaita recognizes not only the plurality of jivas, but also the need for moral and spiritual endeavour on the part of every jiva ultimately to attain the Brahman.
9. Mukti-Mumuksutva

Mukti

The spiritual destiny of a mumuksu, according to Visistadvaita, is his attainment of the supreme abode of the Self, Paramapada. The ecstasy of union even in the mystic quest is only momentary, and has no security and stability. It is only by attaining Paramapada that the mumuksu has an integral experience of the Absolute, paripurna-brahmanubhava and enjoys eternal bliss.

The ladder to perfection, the paramapada-sopana, as described by Vedanta Desika, consists of nine stages, namely, viveka, nirveda, virakti, bhiti, prasadana, utkramana, arciradi, divyadesa-prabhava and prapti.

Viveka is the clear philosophic thought of the Brahman as saririn and sesin. Nirveda is the moral feeling of remorse arising from reflection on the sinfulness of sin and the sorrows of merit-demerit. The off-shoot of nirveda is virakti leading to vairagya, renunciation of the hedonistic pleasures. Bhiti is the spiritual dread of the hideousness of samsara, which awakens the religious consciousness inducing the mumuksu to practise bhakti and prapatti. When bhakti and prapatti develop into hunger and thirst for God, God grants the jiva His grace, prasadana. The last four stages deal with the summum bonum of spiritual endeavour, purusartha and portray, in a pictorial way, the ascent of the redeemed soul, mukta to his home in the Absolute. The mystic, paramaikantin is practically freed from the fetters of karman including prarabda-karman, and mukti may be realized immediately or eventually. In any case, he is a krta-krya who has no more problems to solve, or evil to subdue. At the time of the dissolution of the body, the mukta ascends to Vaikunta by the straight shining path of arciradi, and attains intimate union, sayujya with the Brahman.

Ramanuja establishes, following the interpretation of the Sutrakara, that arciradi-gati is the direct way to mukti. Mukti, according to him, is not only the direct apprehension of the Brahman, but a progressive attainment of brahmaloka. In the world of the Brahman, the Paramapada, matter shines without mutation and time exists in the form of eternity. ‘The sun does not shine there, nor the moon, nor the stars; by His light everything is lighted.’ ‘The Brahman is before and behind, above and below’. The freed soul gloriously enters into vaikuntha which is the heart of brahmaloka and its headquarters, reaches the hall of anandamaya, bliss and has a direct soul-sight of the Supreme Light, Paramapada, with a shining form more luminous than a million suns on the couch, paryanka, of which, till then, the mumuksu had only inferential and sastraic knowledge.

The Brahman, as infinite Beauty, is enthroned on a paryanka supported by dharma, jnaana, vairagya and aisvarya. That throne is wisdom, prajna and the Brahman is the True of the true, satya. The released self on seeing the Brahman realizes the unitive consciousness. The infinite of space-time pales into infinitesimal littleness in the light of the Infinite and the eternal glory of vaikuntha, which transcends thought. The brahmavid enjoys all the perfections of vaikuntha such as identity of abode, salokya; proximity, samipya; similarity of form, svarupa; intimate union, sayujya; etc, and is ever immersed in the eternal bliss of the Brahman. Salokya leads to samipya and sarupya, and is consummated in the bliss of communion, sayujya.

The nature of mukti, as elucidated in Visistadvaita, as the attainment of the blessedness of Paramapada, cannot be described or defined. Brahmaloka is the nameless beyond, which cannot be proved by logical thinking or even scriptural knowledge. The
Absolute of ontology is beyond space, prakrti and time, kala. It is, therefore, formless, nirayava; indeterminate, nirguna; or eternal, kalatita. As Paramatman, the Brahman transcends the limits of materialism and spiritualism. Ethical religion is equally helpless in knowing the redemptive will of Isvara as the Creator of creators, and overcoming the dilemma of freewill and determinism. From the religious point of view, He reveals Himself unto him whom He chooses as He is Himself the upaya, the upeya. In this context, it is difficult to decide between voluntarism and predestination. On the whole, the Visistadvaitic idea of mukti transcends the theorizing activity of thought. It cannot be labelled as a form of theism, non-dualism or, for that matter, any ism.

On the other hand, the Upanisads describe the inexpressible experience of the mukta by positive predicates. They insist on the fact of intuitive perception of the Brahman by the purified and perfected consciousness, jnaana. The brahmavid can apprehend the Brahman with the divine eye, comprehend His nature and have an integral experience of the Absolute, paripurna-brahmanabhava. He is led from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light and from death to immortality. Though this experience is alogical and amoral, the Upanisads make it intelligible to the empirical consciousness in terms of cognition, conation and feeling. The Brahman is the All-Self, and by the expansive consciousness of dhammahuta-jnaana, the mukta realizes the unitive state. His self-feeling melts away at the sight of the bewitching beauty of the Brahman and his Vedantic thought expires in the ecstasy of the mystic union.

Ramanuja appears to understand by mukti the integral experience of the Brahman that has infinite jnaana, ananda and other perfections. This indeed is the true nature of the jiva realized by the destruction of avidya-karman. The jiva is a prakara or sarira of the Brahman, and its jnaana, which is infinite, has, as its essential nature, the unitive experience of the bliss of the Brahman.

The Chandogya Upanisad explains mukti as the self-realization of the atman by self-transcendence, and the Sutras bring out its full implication. The serene self attains the Being of its being when it has a soul-sight of the boundless light of the Brahman. Thus it attains its essential and eternal nature. Self-realization is not the attainment of something new, but is the self-manifestation resulting from the cessation of the avidya-karman. In mukti, the atman is free from sin, old age, death, grief, hunger and thirst, and its desire of oneness with the Brahman is at once realized.

Karman conditions jnaana and creates the bodily self which is subject to contingency, change and sorrow. But in mukti, the mortal becomes immortal and the self regains its eternity. While consciousness in the empirical states of waking, dream and sleep is obscured by avidya, in the expansive state of the unitive life, it realizes its infinity. While the atman is, as it is, changeless, avikara and eternal, nitya, the limitations and obscurations of its attributive intelligence affect its integrity indirectly. But in the state of self-realization, the self shines in its own effulgence like the cloudless sun. The atman itself is a ray of the Paramjyothi, Supreme Light, and its luminosity is the revelation of the boundless light, which is the source of the light of the suns and stars, and the serene self itself. Self-realization is thus the unitive knowledge of the atman and its self, and is not bare identity.

Ramanuja accepts the concept of avibhaga to explain the relation of the mumuksu to the Brahman in mukti. Brahmajnaana is the intuition of the Brahman as the Supreme Self. The atman has the Brahman as its inner self and prakarin, and the consciousness of the mukta, in mukti, is revealed in the experience, ‘I am the Brahman without any division, vibhaga’. This does not mean absolute identity, svarup-aikya, but visista-aikya in which the self is realized as inseparable mode, aprthak-siddha-visesana, and not as total mergence as in identity. The jiva abides as an entity different from the Brahman in that, though there is difference
in denotation, there is identity in connotation, as every concept connoting the prakara also connotes the prakarin. This inseparability, avinabhava abolishes the sense of exclusiveness and externality that belongs to the bodily self of egoism, ahamkara. But it does not annul the ego consciousness of the atman. Rapt in love, the mukta is ever drawn by the beauty of the Brahman, and enjoys Its bliss. When the brahmanized mukta sheds his body, his self acquires the purity of the Brahman. This concept underlines the truth that the sarira depends for its life on the saririn and serves as an instrument of His will.

Avibhaga, non-division, thus connotes existential difference between the Brahman and the mukta, and experienced unity owing to the joy of intimate communion, sayujya. It is not the loss of personality. In the mystic sense, the self-feeling is swallowed up in the supra-personal experience of avibhaga, that is, the unitive experience of the bliss of the Brahman. This brings out the nature of brahmarasa more than coexistence, salokya; similarity, sarupya; and intimacy, samipya. The Visnu-purana says that the mukta attains atmabhava like magnetized iron, but is not identical with the Brahman. The Gita defines mukti as the attainment of equality of attributes with the Brahman.

Though the Brahman imparts Its nature to the atman of the mukta, and infinitizes its jnaana, the atman persists in its monadic being with a view to utilizing the freedom gained in moksa in service to the Supreme Self. The finite-self lives, moves and has its being in the Brahman as the All-Self, sarva-saririn. The mukta has the freedom to move in both the worlds – the world of eternity and the world of samsara. While the ascent to the world of eternity is an escape from the sorry scheme of samsara, the descent of the freed self into the finite world expresses the cosmic freedom of the mukta. His all-pervasive consciousness destroys the barriers of space and time. The worlds of lila and nitya constitute the world of the Brahman as a whole, and are comprised in the all-inclusive cosmic consciousness.

In Visistadvaita, mukti is realization of the meaning of the relation between the jiva and Isvara as stated in the Upanisad, ‘Thou art That’. Visistadvaita explains that the self, in mukti, surrenders to the Self with total self-effacement, but still retains its identity. In this state, what the self experiences is kaimkarya-rasa, not kaivalya-rasa. It is the experience of the bliss of the Brahman, the ecstasy of the unitive consciousness that expresses the supreme value of mukti. The mukta is immersed in the supreme bliss of brahmanubhava, without losing his self-being. It is a state of sayujya in which the unitive experience of bliss is present without the loss of self-existence. In this state, according to Visistadvaita, the soul-hunger of God and the God-hunger of the soul are satisfied and the separate consciousness of both is swallowed up in the enjoyment of bliss.

Mukti is not the cessation of sorrow, but is the positive experience of ananda, ineffable and incommunicable. In this ananda, the experients exist, but their feeling of separateness melts away in the irresistibility of ecstasy. In the mystic union, the mukta is mad with God and sings His glory and greatness. The bliss of the union is ever fecundative, and it enhances the value of the released state. The bliss of the self-realizedness signifies the self that is realized and its value is eternally conserved. This concept is fully in line with the recorded self-realization of the mystics like Nammalvar, Andal, etc.

Visistadvaita establishes that reality is realizable and is, therefore, the home of eternal values. The Brahman is the Absolute, and finite thought purified by the sadhanas can transcend finiteness and intuit the Brahman. The vedantin as a philosopher can think God’s thought after Him, and realize His godliness. By knowing
the Brahman as the reason of the universe, the jnanin is freed from worldliness and attains the realm of ethical values.

It is only when the soul reaches perfection in mukti that perfect satisfaction arises. The universe as lila-vibhuti exists not for pleasure, but for moulding the soul into a mukta. Cit and acit are eternally real, and do not admit of degrees of reality. But values admit of levels or degrees. Values have meaning only in relation to the self and the satisfaction of its desires. The values of spiritual life are more lasting than those of the sensuous life in the phenomenal world. But it is only in mukti that the jiva is perfected and brahmanized. The mukta is no longer affected by the flux of prakrti or tainted by evil, error or ugliness. The values of truth, goodness and beauty then attain their highest degree of perfection. Mukti is not merely freedom from ignorance, sin and sorrow, but is also the regaining of Paramapada, the realm of eternal values.

Visistadvaita does not agree that values alone survive in the Absolute, and not selves. The freed self is not a vanishing illusion, nor does it merge in the whole like the dew-drop slipping into the shining sea. Its content is no doubt transmuted; but it is not true to say that it contributes to the whole. The offering the freed self makes to the Brahman is self-gift without selfishness. Every value is trans-valued and perfected. The self gains itself by renouncing its empirical and exclusive nature and acquires the colour, brahmarupa; flavour, brahmarasa; and fragrance, brahmagandha. It is immersed in its everlasting and fecundative bliss.

Free of the limitations of prakrti and time, it lives in spaceless space and timeless time. It is supra-personal, but not impersonal. In Paramapada, the jiva attains its infinite consciousness and regains the eternal values. Eternity is not the prolongation of the present life, nor is it personal survival, but is a state of self-transcendence. In this state, the self renounces the phenomenal activity and realizes its noumenal state.

The world of Paramapada is a shining spiritual world, and is made of bliss itself, aprakrta, paramakasa and anandaloka. It is the realm of suddhatattva made of peculiar kind of matter that is immutable. It is ajada, and is self-luminous like jnaana, and exists for the enjoyment of the atman. Space and time do not disappear in the Absolute, but are transfigured and contribute to the infinite riches of divine experience. Paramapada transcends the world of prakrti, tamas, and has more resplendence than that of a million suns and stars. In its purity and perfection, it is beyond the obscurcation of avidya. It is a noumenal realm which can be neither perceived by the senses nor conceived by the intellect. It cannot adequately be described by sastra, and can only be intuited in the form of eternity by the mukta. Only the mukta can experience the bliss of anandaloka. He, too, cannot explain it as it is beyond the conception of mind.

Ramanuja explains in his Vaikuntha-gadya the nature of experience of bliss in the anandaloka. The Brahman has His own transcendent nature, svarupa; infinity of perfections, guna; and supreme, unsurpassed form of beauty, rupa; which are alogical, amoral and supra-mystical. Metaphysics deals with what can be known, and that is the world of the Brahman. Ethics deals with what should be known and that is service, kaimkarya. Religion deals with what we may hope for and that is the attainment of the immortality of bliss. In this way, metaphysical knowledge ripens into virtue and virtue is crowned with happiness. The supreme end of life is the enjoyment of the bliss of the Brahman. Logic and ethics have their consummation in aesthetics and mysticism, and the crowning glory of mystic experience is to revel in the beauty of anandaloka. Visistadvaita is the only philosophy of religion that identifies existence and value, and defines the Brahman as
real Reality, satyasya satyam, which brahmanizes the mukta and imparts its beauty and bliss to him.

Paramapada is the realm of self-luminous sattva-sattva, free from the evolutionary, parinamic modifications of prakrti and the influence of its three gunas. Paramapada is beyond prakrti and its twenty-three successive emanations. It is, therefore, not conditioned by the five elements that compose the cosmic matter. It is also not affected by the psycho-physical changes of the mind-body of the migrating jiva. In Paramapada, Visistadvaita claims, matter exists, without modification, in a non-material, aprakrti form. But its value in mukti is more important than its eternal existence. It shines in its own light as ajada, but exists as a medium and means for the enjoyment of the mukta. Beauty consists of form and matter and can never be attribute-less, nirguna or formless, niravayava. The Brahman, who is nirguna and niravayava, wills to be and becomes the Beautiful by creating a body of His own which has divine symmetry, softness, fragrance, colour and eternal youthfulness with a view to imparting His beauty and bliss to the mukta. The radiant form of the Brahman is set forth in matchless lyrics in the Bhagavata, the Vaikuntha-gadya and the Paramapadopana, the chief scriptures of Visistadvata. The jnaana of the mukta is all-pervasive. If he desires the enjoyment of his cosmic freedom with the body, the desire is immediately realized, and he attunes himself to the will of Isvara as in the waking consciousness. The freedom of the mukta is no longer obscured by avidya-karman, and he enjoys eternal self-rule and universal sovereignty.

According to Visistadvaita, time does not vanish in the Absolute. Time is the succession of events, and not a series of exclusive moments. Nothing is static, and everything is in a state of ceaseless becoming. Worlds are dissolved periodically at the end of each epoch, kalpa. The destruction and withdrawal of the cosmic process is itself conditioned by time, kala. Even the cosmic will of Isvara is self-conditioned by kala.

In the exposition of time, Visistadvaita affirms the eternal as immanent in the temporal and transcending it. The world of splendour, lila-vibhuti which exists for the sport of the Lord, is the play of the eternal in the temporal; and the eternal splendour of Paramapada, nitya-vibhuti is time as eternity. The lila-vibhuti is the realm of causal necessity, karman without any contingency. It is the sphere of soul-making and is not a realm of relativity rooted in avidya. The finite self feels its finitude, and seeks freedom from the empirical life by attaining immortality. As the eternal alone gives meaning to the temporal process and is its final consummation, the reality of the progressive attainment of eternal life is assured.

Moral and spiritual endeavour is a sadhana for such transcendence. Truth is the passage of the self from the lila-vibhuti to the nitya-vibhuti. In lila-vibhuti, time is finite and affected by gunas. Nitya-vibhuti is infinite and beyond space-time. Samsara is determined by time series, but mukti determines the time series by the self gaining mastery over it. The Lord is the link of love between the two realms. In the attainment of eternal life, the self transcends the transient dimensions. The mukta views everything in the form of eternity; and his bliss of sayujya is ever creative, and is an eternal now. No human experience can ever explain the ecstasy of eternal life.

Visistadvaita states that brahmanubhava differs from mukta to mukta, though the Brahman is the sat without a second. The mukta is free to realize the Infinite in infinite ways, and this function is determined by his own will. While the nature of the meditation, upasana varies from mumuksu to mumuksu, the goal of intuition or realization of the Brahman remains the same. Every upasana has its own adequacy and efficacy in securing the stability of mukti. Every specific experience of mukti is immediate experience of the Brahman. The mumuksu may be a jnanin, a devotee or one of works or of yoga, and he attains the realization of the Brahman in
The mumksu may meditate on some single quality of the Brahman such as satyatva, jnatrta, anantatva, apahata-papmatva, ananda, according to his inclination. According to scriptures, even the eternal seers have sought and enjoyed one aspect of the divine nature. The bliss of the Brahman is irresistible and every Vedantic philosophy seeks ananda as the supreme end and aim of life.

**Mumukṣutva**

A mumksu is a spiritual seeker after the Brahman. He is a metaphysician who enquires into the nature of ultimate reality and truth at the religious level.

Visistadvaita, as a philosophy of religion, is founded on the fundamental Vedantic truth that the knower of the Brahman attains the highest, brahmavid apnoti param. The enquiry into the Brahman, brahmajijnasa is governed by the spiritual end of attaining immortality, na ca punar avartate. The knowledge of the Brahman as the ground of existence obtained by employing the pramanas enables the self to determine the practical methods of attaining liberation, mukti from the hazards of birth and death.

Ontology is to encompass teleology and value philosophy if it is to be a logical account of reality. The Brahman, as the ultimate tattva, is spiritually realizable as the supreme purusartha by moral and spiritual discipline, the hita. The word vedana in the Upanisads connotes not merely the philosophical apprehension of the Brahman, but also the spiritual attempt at realization in which jnaana deepens into meditation, upasana on the Brahman. The attainment of God is a supreme and ultimate good which includes the moral and spiritual effort to realize it.

The Brahman is eternally self-realized and perfect, but the jiva in its empirical state forgets its divine destiny. The finite self has its source and sustenance in the Brahman, but it forgets its divineness, wanders in the wilderness of samsara, and finally regains the paradise, Paramapada. Brahmajnaana is a spiritual ascent of the enlightened self to its home in the Absolute. The supreme end of the mumksu is thus the realization of the Brahman, the consummation of moral discipline.
The atman is essentially free and eternal, and has its being in the Paramatman as its inner Self. Visistadvaita states that, somehow, owing to the influence of avidya-karman, the atman falsely identifies itself with prakrti and images itself to be the mode of matter. As like attracts like, the prakrti-ridden purusa acts as if it was a body-self, drawn by the objects of sense, and thus becomes the slave of sensibility. It is then caught up in samsara, the cycle of birth and death, and pleasure and pain. Avidya creates the confusion of dehatma-bhrama, abhimana owing to failure to distinguish between the self and the body. Abhimana generates lust, kama. Kama leads to hatred if the desire for the objects of sense is frustrated. The effect of avidya-karman is conserved in the mind-body as the infinite causal change of karman leading to the possibility of future births and deaths.

The jiva ascends to svarga by its meritorious karman, or to naraka by its demerits in action. The pleasures of svarga or the pains of naraka follow the law of retribution with mathematical precision. With exhaustion of merit and demerit of the karman, the jiva enters into the body of another living being – human, subhuman and celestial – and subjects itself to the hazards of metempsychosis. Visistadvaita accepts the reality of the cosmic order and the solidarity of society in all its levels in the three layered universe of the sub-human, human and celestial orders.

If the jiva seeks the infinite bliss of the Brahman, to become a mumuksu, the first requisite is self-renunciation, virakti, freedom from the desires of the terrestrial and celestial pleasures. The idea of self-renunciation as a spiritual ideal implies the abandonment of the lower self of sensibility in favour of the higher self in the state of kaivalya or the aloneness of the atman. The mumuksu regards God as a centre and source of his life, and gets totally absorbed in Him. Renunciation of ahankara and the realization of the self go together. Virakti, essential to spiritual life, destroys the sensualism and the self-complacency of the worldly life. A mumuksu is one who realizes that the desire for the pleasures of sense, visayaraga is insignificant, alpa and evanescent, astira, but the love of God, bhagavad-raga leads to infinite and eternal bliss.

The ontology of Vedanta establishes that the Brahman is the ground of existence as well as the supreme good of life, purusartha. The good that which all rational beings aim as of supreme value is four-fold - dharma, artha, kama and moksa. What is right or dharma cannot be separated from the goodness of the end, and moral good has no value apart from the supreme good. In this context, the highest end of life is neither the acquisition of wealth and power, nor the performance of moral duty or dharma, nor the satisfaction of desires, but the realization of the Brahman which is the highest good, the supreme duty and the infinite bliss.

When virtue and knowledge go together, bliss is inseparable from them. Brahma-jnaana, brahma-prayatna and brahmananda are not really separate. The mumuksu who enquires into the nature of the Brahman as the supreme Sat or Reality also desires to realize the Brahman as the highest end of moral and aesthetic life. What is apprehended as the most valid truth is also attained as the most valuable end or good.

Visistadvaita recognizes the value of spiritual progress and the philosophical truth of the self-realized nature of the Brahman. The mumuksu endowed with jnaana and vairagya seeks the Brahman because he is aware that the Brahman is his self. He lives in moral discipline brought about by the performance of duty, karma-yoga; spiritual illumination, jnaana-yoga; and loving meditation on the Brahman, bhakti-yoga. The mumuksu with his sadhana transcends a philosopher who only speculates on the nature of Reality. The mumuksu, seeker after immortal bliss, realizes that there is no bliss in anything finite, but in the infinite alone. The Brahman alone is free from evil, sin and suffering, and the mumuksu
seeks to return to the Brahman, his real self to regain the eternal values of divine life.

10. Ways to Salvation

Karma-yoga

Karma is different from karma-yoga in that karman is the datum of the moral life, while karma-yoga is its discipline. The study of karman is the subject matter of the psychology of the moral self, while karma-yoga deals with the moral determination of the ideal involved in conduct.

Cessation from karman in thought, word or deed is a psychological impossibility. As voluntary action, it is purposive and involves the idea of end, which is called desire, kama. Kama is either externally originated, sparsaja or centrally initiated, sankalpaja. In either case, it is the desire for the objects of sense. Owing to the conservation of moral values, the effect of every karman leaves its impress on mind-body known as vasana. The mind-body acts on the empirical self resulting in the infinite chain of causality of karman. Karman is a matter of moral faith, the result of beginning-less ignorance, anadi-avidya.

The jiva is impelled by its propensity of avidya-karman to seek the pleasures of sensibility, and plunges into samsara. But the infinite within the jiva urges it to emerge into higher stages. The karma-yoga strikes a middle path between activism and asceticism, favouring renunciation in action as opposed to renunciation of action as ideal of conduct. This leads to the ethics of niskama-karma, action without desire for the fruit thereof.

According to the Gita metaphysics of morals, while every living being does its karman according to a purpose, man alone has the conception of karman owing to his moral consciousness, including reason and will. In a moral situation arising from a conflict of desires, he can exercise his discrimination and arrive at a decision. By his buddhi, he can distinguish between the ksetrajna
and ksetra. As the atman, he knows that he is aparinama, free from the mutations of matter, prakrti. He realizes that he is the subject conscious of himself, pramatr. He also knows that the atman is different from the world of nature. He is the immortal self, avinasin, distinct from prakrti, which is subject to a cycle of births and deaths.

Buddhi develops into vyavasayatmika buddhi, the disciplined thought of the mumuksu, which frees karman from the distractions of sensual desire, visaya-kama and fosters the aim of desire for release, moksa-kama.

Niskama-karman, as a negative concept, excludes raga and dvesa, and also the objective ends of utility, namely, gain and loss, labha and alabha. Niskama-karman is the performance of action without being impelled by the ends of pleasure, sukha and avoidance of pain, duhkhhah; or securing success, labha or avoiding failure, alabha. Niskama-karman is good in itself without qualification, and has its own intrinsic value. It is performance of duty for the sake of duty irrespective of consequences.

None in this world is free from karman. The whole cosmic order is a moral order sustained by the law of karman. The law of karman rules the cosmic order whether its causality is conditioned or free. The jiva, imprisoned by the chain of avidya-karman because of its identification with prakrti, can never escape the wheel of karman as long as it is in the world of samsara. Inaction, akarman is a psychological impossibility.

Ethically, it is possible for the self to dissociate itself from the guna-ridden karman as it is essentially the atman, and not the bodily-self moulded on the pattern of prakrti. The moral philosopher is aware that karman is due to action and reaction of gunas because of the conjunction of the atman with prakrti, but he seeks to renounce the egocentric mentality, ahankara. Karma-yoga thus consists in abandoning not the deed, but the doer-consciousness. It is the process of self-realization by self-renunciation. The essential requisite of karma-yoga is giving up the false notion of doer-ship. Karma-yoga combines rational insight and active endeavour. It is a synthesis of scientific theory and moral practice.

Niskama-karman is an imperative of duty of the form ‘do your duty without caring for the consequences’. The law of karman is founded on, and fulfilled in, the divine idea of justice and righteousness. In a true ethical religion, omnipotence and justice go together. The imperative of niskama-karman is a divine command, which has an absolute claim on our obedience. Conversely, the violation of the law is the repudiation of the divine will and the refusal to listen to the voice of God in the inner moral consciousness of mankind.

The kind of duty one is to do may be determined by one’s temperament and station in life. But the nature or inner motive of karman is the same in all, that is, duty for duty’s sake, irrespective of inclination within and utility without. In ethical religion, it is truer to say that Isvara wills the good than to say that what He wills is good. The ethics of niskama-karman is that man must choose the way of goodness so that he may grow into the goodness of God. The highest moral good is in doing a duty that ought to be done, and not as a coercive law that must be followed.

Tapas, dana and yajna are classical illustrations of niskama-karman. Tapas is a duty to the self, and is the practice of self-purification in thought, word and deed. It connotes the virtues of truthfulness, ahimsa and patience. Dana, as a duty to others, is the exercise of benevolence to the needy without any ego. It is a gift to the needy without any publicity. Yajna, as a duty to gods, is offering sacrifices to the devas, who help in maintaining the cosmic order, without looking to any boons. A karma-yogin attains moral
autonomy. Disinterested duty fosters reverence for the moral law, and arouses the feeling of dignity and sublimity. The moral idea of equanimity, samatva brings out the superiority of soul power over brute force.

The true moral evil is not the existence of the self in the world of embedded life, but the falsity and falsehood of the ahamkara-ridden ego that pretends to be the atman, but is not really so. Matter is not in itself evil, but the materialistic view fosters evil-mindedness. The body is a living temple of God, brahmapuri, and evil is in its wrongful possession and enjoyment. The true karma-yogin sheds the egoistic feeling of ahamkara and the commercial view of karman. In him, the moral self ascends to the higher stage of jnaana-yoga. Niskama-karman is not an end in itself but is a means to mukti through self purification and self-knowledge. Karma-yoga is thus rationalized karman, and is a direct path to self-realization, atmavalokana. It is generally the preferred path in view of its ease and naturalness.

Jnaana-yoga

In jnaana-yoga, the knowledge of the atman is mediate, but in atmavalokana, it is immediate. The best evidence of the proof of the atman is in direct experience. Atmavalokana presupposes the speculative knowledge about the self as a real possibility. There is a gradual transition from the metaphysics of morals of niskama-karman to the spiritual philosophy of atmakara. It is a transition from the moral ideal of what a man ought to do to the spiritual enquiry of what a man ought to be. It is the development of moral ‘ought’ into a deeper ‘is’. While doing a good is an external duty, being good is an inner virtue. The mumuksu who desires to know the atman is the one to strive to ascend to spirituality. He ought to do his duty till he realizes the atman and becomes the awakened spirit. In the intuition of the atman, all activity is absorbed. When the end is reached, there is no longer any need for endeavour. While moral life is a pursuit of truth, spiritual life connotes its possession.

The spiritual seeker is not a slave of the causality of karman or avidya. To the mumuksu, spiritual seeker, manas is the free cause of either samsara or mukti, salvation. Though his prarabdha-karman is a consequence of his vasanas, he is not a necessary agent or instrument of karman, as he has the will to win freedom or lose it. The jiva, as a spiritual entity, is the real self, and its desire for self-knowledge is the real process of self-revelation, involving the conquest of karman and the removal of avidya. Spiritual freedom is thus different from the determinism of karman and the illusionism of avidya; it is freedom from the joint influence of avidya-karman. It is the aim of yoga – karma-yoga or jnaana-yoga to help the atman to free itself from the confusions of avidya and the causal determinations of karman, and shine in its own splendour.
When the *atman* falsely identifies itself with *prakrti* in a *jiva*, the *jiva* is termed *dehatman*, embodied soul. In this event, the moral self is the *karma-yogin* who does his duty in a disinterested way. While the metaphysic of morals analyses the nature of *niskama-karman*, the philosophy of the spirit, *atman* expounds the rationale of *atmaavalokana*. It is only by means of self-purification that the ideal of self-perfection can be achieved.

The *atman* shines as an eternal substance, subject or self. The world of souls is a spiritual realm transcending conceptual knowledge. It is the self that enquires into nature and God, and, by relinquishing its materialistic associations, seeks to know itself and its inner self. Visistadvaita lays special stress on the philosophy of the self, and insists on *atma-darsana*, vision of the self as a prelude to the philosophy of religion.

The goal of *jnaana-yoga* is realization of the inner-self, *pratyagatman*. This is possible by a rigorous moral and spiritual discipline. The first requisite in this *yogic* process is securing spiritual equanimity, *samatva*. The spiritual seeker secures spiritual equanimity by renunciation of economic goods. The *dvandas* like success and failure, pleasure and pain, and likes and dislikes lead to the dilemma of the divided life. *Samatva* includes the virtues of indifference, endurance and detachment in that order. Introspective life implies indifference to the utilitarian ideas of success and failure. Both pain and pleasure are to be treated with equal indifference. The spiritual seeker is to overcome *raga* and *dvesa* by dissociation of the self from the fleshly cravings.

The sadhana for *jnaana-yoga*, *jnaana-nista* starts with the reflective analysis of the ideas of the inner-self, *pratyagatman* and the embodied self, *dehatman*, and the progression in the spiritual endeavour. The body is not the *atman*, though physical well-being is essential to spirituality. *Sattvic* habits are only means to self-knowledge. Spiritual endeavour is both a negative method of self-renunciation, *vairagya* and a positive way of introversion, *abhyasa*. Self-renunciation is the method of self-induction. This method removes *ahamkara*. This is not to be confused with self-mutilation or self-extinction. The renunciation of the lower self and the realization of the higher self go together. The more spiritual a thing is, the more real it is, and the *mumuksu* seeks to unveil *ajaana*, and enters the domain of *atmajnaana* as the witness of the psychic changes.

Practice of introversion, *abhyasa* consists in withdrawing the mind, *manas* from the *vasanas*, and the distractions of *prakrti*, and focusing on the inner-self. Focusing on inner-self, consciousness is free from the sensuous plane and concentrates on the inner-self. This leads to inner quiet. In this state the mental modes of *prakrti*, *vrittis* are destroyed, and not the self. The *atman* is enriched in the process of *abhyasa*, repeated practice.

The *mumuksu* desirous of *atma-jnaana* is no longer allured by wealth or bound by social ties, as his consciousness is withdrawn from external activities and turned inward. The *yogin* focuses his mind, *citta* on the *atman*, subduing its fickle minded-nature. The intuition of the *atman* is his only endeavour and end.

By way of choice, a *mumuksu* may take to *yogasadhana* as a way of realization. *Yogasadhana* consists of eight stages of *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. *Yama* is the moral practice of truthfulness, non-violence, contentment, continence, poverty and the will to receive no favours or benefits. Continence is the sublimation of sex-energy, *retas*. *Niyama* is the discipline of the mind-body resulting in self-purification, study, reflection, austerity and the attunement of the mind to the will of God. *Asana* is the physical control of the body to overcome its *tamasic* languor and * rajasic* restlessness. *Pranayama* is the control of the vital breath, *prana* by balancing the respiratory function of *prana* and *apana* to attain
psychic control. These four stages are steps to \textit{yogic} introversion, and are not \textit{yoga} in the strict sense of the word.

\textit{Pratyahara} is the arresting of the outgoing senses, and attuning them to the inner sense. \textit{Dharana} is the focusing of \textit{manas} on an object, by withdrawing it from the distractions of sense and the tumult of dispositions, \textit{vasanas}. When the self-centred \textit{citta} passes into the state of ceaseless introversion, \textit{dharana} deepens into \textit{dhyana}. The habit of the philosophic reflection spiritualizes the mind by removing the distractions of \textit{manas}, the restlessness of \textit{citta} and the egocentric conceit of \textit{ahamkara}. Thought ceases when it reflects on itself, but is not a case of suppression or extinction.

\textit{Dhyana} has its consummation in \textit{samadhi}, when the contemplation of the \textit{atman} becomes a direct intuition. In \textit{samadhi}, consciousness ascends from co-native and reflective levels, and returns to its own pure state ofaloneness, and the self-effulgent joy of \textit{sahasrara}.

The process of \textit{yoga} is thus a philosophic and spiritual discipline, and not mere psychic control or occultism. The \textit{yogic} endeavour of the spiritual seeker to ascend is consummated in the intuition of the \textit{atman}, self-realization with the \textit{karma}-complex entirely burning out in the fire of spirituality.

The Vedantic ideal of society is not that of an aggregate of individuals or of an organism, but that of a spiritual community of \textit{jivas} providing an opportunity for the gradual realization of each self as an \textit{atman} and not as a thing. The ultimate end of this ideal is self-realization as the goal of individual and social life. In such a spiritual community, the external goods have value only in so far as they promote the goods of the soul or spiritual welfare. The spiritual scheme of society consists in doing our duty to the cosmos, and not in the assertion of exclusive rights. The ideal of the \textit{yajnas} and \textit{yagas} is thus based on the consciousness of giving back to the universe what has been received from it. Though a man’s duty is determined psychologically by his station in life, \textit{svadharma}, his ethical motive is derived from the universal ideal of righteousness. The final spiritual ideal of the \textit{jiva}, according to Visistadvaita, is the realization of the inner worth of each self, the similarity of the attributive consciousness of all \textit{jivas} and the solidarity of life in all the levels of the three-storeyed universe.

The experience of the spiritual unity of all \textit{jivas} is expounded in the Gita. Looking alike on all things, the \textit{yogin} who has intuited the \textit{atman} sees the same self in all the \textit{jivas} owing to the similarity of their spiritual intelligence, \textit{dharmabhuta-jnaana}. It is only the bodily feeling caused by \textit{karman} that creates the separatist consciousness and generates \textit{raga-dvesa}. The seer who has soul-sight, \textit{atma-dristi} and sweet reasonableness, \textit{vinaya} intuits the same \textit{atman} in a dog as in a god. In a higher stage, the \textit{yogin} has a glimpse of \textit{Paramatman}, the Supreme Self, as the pervading identity in all \textit{jivas}. He sees Him in all beings and all beings in Him. In the next higher stage, the seer acquires \textit{atma-jnaana} exhibiting universal sympathy in which he realizes the kinship of all \textit{jivas}, and regards the joys and sorrows of all as his own.

The spiritual philosophy of the \textit{atman} refers to self-realization, \textit{atmavalokana} which is different from the religion of God-realization attained by \textit{bhakti} and \textit{prapatti}. The seeker who prefers the joy of \textit{kaivalya} to the bliss of divine life is called \textit{kevala}. To him, seeking God is only a means to realizing the self. He seeks spiritual freedom arising from dissociation from \textit{prakriti}, also dependence on the cosmic ruler. The \textit{kevala} is a contemplative devoting himself to \textit{yogic} introversion by withdrawing his mind from the external tendencies. The goal of the \textit{kevala} is to intuit his self by abandoning the ideas of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ regain his eternal nature and thus attain freedom from birth and death, the cycle of \textit{samsara}. The state of \textit{kaivalya} thus attained may be called the
flight of ‘the alone to the Alone’ in which the atman enjoys inner
quiet and is self-satisfied.

Visistadvaitic philosophers regard the value and destiny of
kevala differently. One school maintains that kaivalya is not on
the road to mukti, but mukti itself, but does not encompass
Paramapada. The kevala has no hope of intuiting God and
enjoying the bliss of communion. Another school maintains that
the kevala is on the path to perfection and will eventually reach
the divine goal. The kevala frees himself from the shackles of
prakrti, transforms into the jnanin and attains the bliss of immortal
communion with Him. Gita says that the jnanin and the kevala
return no more to the world of samsara. The spiritual consciousness
of the kevala has its fruition only in religious consciousness.

The religious consciousness consists in shifting the centre
of reference from the atman to Paramatman. The knowledge of
the finite self has its religious fulfillment in the integral experience
of the Infinite, which is its ground and goal. Kaivalya may be on
the plane of mukti or on the path to it, but the satisfaction of atma-
jnaana has no value when it is contrasted with the bliss of the
Brahman.

**Bhakti-yoga**

*Karma-yoga, jnaana-yoga and bhakti-yoga are different
stages in the progressive realization of mukti. Karma-yoga is the
path of disinterested duty with the knowledge of the distinction
between the eternal atman and the empirical ego of prakrti, and
the gradual renunciation of the feeling of ‘I’ and ‘mine’. Jnaana-
yoga is the process of self-realization with the consummation of
moral and spiritual culture. Karma-yoga and jnaana-yoga are
means to mukti only through bhakti-yoga. Bhakti-yoga is the direct
pathway to perfection, as it leads to the very heart of the religious
consciousness. Each yoga is a stepping stone to the higher stage.

Ramanuja upholds the view that the spiritual authority of
the Upanisads, the Brahmasutras and the Gita is an integral unity,
and the validity of the system depends on its coherence with the
whole Sastra and its spirit. As a systematic and self-contained
philosophy of religion, Visistadvaita sees no difference between
the Absolute of philosophy and the God of religion. It reconciles
the claims of logic with the needs of religious feeling. The Brahman
is one, and is the goal of the different upasanas.

Visistadvaita follows the logic of religious intuition to state
that the Brahman of the Upanisads and the Sutras, the Vasudeva of
the Gita, the Bhagavan of Pancaratra and the arcaas of the Alwars
connote the same Supreme Self. It insists on bhakti-yoga as the
direct means of knowing the Brahman. It meets the demands of
metaphysics, and satisfies the supreme call of love by its theory of
bhaktirupapanna-jnaana or jnaana turned into bhakti.

The practice of bhakti presupposes certain disciplines
including the sublimation of feeling, and the training of the intellect
and the will. These disciplines are known in Visistadvaita as the
sadhana-saptaka in contrast to the sadhana-catustya, the four-fold
discipline of Advaita. The Advaitic sadhana consists of the triple
discipline of thought, feeling and will, defined as viveka, vairagya and the disciplines of sama, dama and the rest. Advaitic sadhana is not a progressive attainment, as its idea of avidya. For advaitins, brahma-jnaana is immediate as the Brahman is ever self-realized. But Ramanuja’s Sribhasya reveals the contrast: ‘May my buddhi or jnaana blossom into bhakti, devotion to the Brahman or Srinivasa whose nature is revealed in the Upanisads as Self, that, out of the lila or sport of love, creates, sustains and reabsorbs the whole bhuvana, universe with a view to saving the jivas that seek His love’. The Brahman as the saririn of the jiva is the prapaka as well as the prapya, the endeavour as well as the end. The scheme of sadhana-saptaka is helpful in the building up of bhakti.

The seven sadhanas to upasana or bhakti, in Visistadvaita, are viveka, vimoka, abhyasa, kriya, kalyana, anavasada and anuddharsa. Viveka is the purification of the body, kaya-siddhi by means of sattvic food. The body is brahmapuri, living temple of God. Bodily purity is necessary to purity of mind, sattva-suddhi which leads to spiritual concentration, dhruta-smrti. Vimoka is freedom from the cycle of kama and krodha. This mental detachment is necessary to the meditation on the Brahman. Abhyasa arises from bodily purity and mental detachment. It is continuous practice of the presence of the indwelling Self so that the mind is brahmanized, tadbhava-bhavita. The practice of such introversion does not free the upasaka from his moral obligation to others. As such, the next sadhana is kriya, the performance of the five-fold duties according to one’s ability, as such moral obligations develop into meditation on God. The upasaka seeks to know the Brahman by Vedic recitation, sacrifice, benevolence and tapas. The five-fold duties constituting kriya are to sub-human species, human society, the guru, the forefathers and the gods, in discharge of obligations for his psycho-physical existence. The upasaka needs the performance of duties as a means of purification.

While kriya is overt action, duty, kalyana is the practice of virtue, the inner side of duty. It consists of satya, truthfulness; arjava, integrity or purity of thought, word and deed; daya, compassion; dana, benevolence; and ahimsa, non-violence. The next sadhana is anavasada, freedom from despair owing to disappointment, remembrance of past sorrows, and horrible imaginings. Anudharasa is the absence of exaltation and is a mean between the extremes of excessive joy, ati-samtosa and absence of joy, asamtosa. Good and evil actions are the result of karman, and niskama-karman is duty emptied of the subjective inclinations of the objective ideas of utility. The aim of the seven sadhanas is the practice of moral and spiritual disciplines by the harmonious development of thought, feeling and will, which are partial expressions of the attributive consciousness of the meditating devotee.

Equipped with these disciplines, sadhanas, the upasaka enters on the life of meditation and cultivates the love of God. Upasana is a divine command like the performance of dharma. While the Vedic ‘ought’ is of the form ‘do your duty without caring for the consequences’, the Vedantic ‘ought’ is of the form ‘know the deity that is your self’. Of the three Upanisadic injunctions of sravana, hearing; manana, reflection; and nidhidhyasana, meditation, the first two lead to the third, and dhyana is the only divine command. Sravana and manana have no value until they deepen into dhyana. It is by absolute devotion to God, and not by Vedic study, meritorious work or austerity that the Brahman is realized. The knowledge of the Brahman is not academic or speculative, but is a spiritual intuition which transcends logical thinking. Dhyana, meditation alone deepens into upasana, devotion or worship.

Upasana is the practice of the presence of the atman, and admits of the three stages of firm meditation, dhruvanumsrti; repetition, asakrdavrtti; and the vision of union, darsana-
Every cognition of the Brahman is recognition of the inner-self of the upasaka, and is a recollection of the a priori idea of God as an archetype. Dhyana or ekagra-cittata is a continuous process of mental concentration on the nature and the form of the Brahman, which is practised daily till death or dissolution of the body. Dhyana, as upasana, is a ceaseless remembrance of the Lord, which is likened to the uninterrupted flow of oil. It is the process of focusing the mind on the Brahman in a proper environment. For this reason, the spiritual seeker is advised to choose proper place and time and to adopt proper sitting posture, most conducive to dhyana.

The eight stages of yoga are specially designed to draw the mind from its outgoing tendency, to subdue its vasanas and to centre it in samadhi. Astanga-yoga, the eight-fold yoga, is thus essential to brahmopasana. As bondage is a descent to the world of samsara, mukti is the process of retracing the steps and returning to the spiritual home in God, and the whole scheme of upasana is governed by this central concept. Upasana deepens into bhakti, when recollection acquires by practice the clearness and distinctness of a direct perception of the beatific form of the Paramatman, the Supreme Self. This upasana promotes spiritual intimacy and the unitive consciousness.

The jiva, as materialist or sensualist, seeks the goods of life. But when he turns into a worshipper of God, he prays to Him for the boons of life, and they are bestowed on him. The jiva then ascends to a higher stage when he prays to Isvara to the boon of atmavalokana; then he intuits his atman. The mumuksu does not bargain with God for pleasures of this life or of kaivalya, but meditates on Him as his real self, and utilizes his spiritual freedom for the service of the sesin. The karma-yogin who does his duty in a disinterested way, becomes a jnaana-yogin, who prefers self-knowledge to activity. He is transformed into a devotee to whom karman is neither niskama nor akama, but is kaimkarya, consecrated service. The offerings to the devas like Agni, Indra and Vayu are really dedicated to the Devadeva, God of gods, who is their inner ruler. Thus every Vedic work is really the Vedantic worship of the supreme sesin. Isvara, the bestower of boons according to karman, transforms Himself into the redeemer of moksa. Thus the fruit of upasana is not earned by merit alone, but by the redemptive mercy of the saviour, raksaka. The Lord accepts the devotion of the mumuksu flowing from ahimsa, kindness, patience, truth, self-control, tapas, inwardness and jnaana, and redeems mukti to the seeker.

When brahmajijnasa, the philosophic enquiry into the Brahman develops into brahmopasana, the ceaseless meditation on His nature, self-effort is transfigured into self-giving and the saving faith in the grace of God. Moksa is not attained by mere moral and spiritual discipline. The practice of niskama-karman and ceaseless dhyana make the mumuksu to rely on divine grace as the only means to mukti. In Visistadtaita, mukti is liberation through the saving grace of God and it arises by the conquest of avidya and karman by the knowledge developed into bhakti, devotion, called bhaktirupapanna-jnaana. When the idea of God as sesin is clear and distinct and the religious emotion is disciplined, upasana has its fruition in bhakti.

Bhakti is meditation on the Brahman in love, priti. It is absolute devotion to Bhagavan as the life of our life, and is love for love’s sake. The true bhakta is true jnanin, as he knows that Bhagavan alone is the source and satisfaction of life. So he lives, and has his being in the divine love. The Lord of Love seeks the jnanin, and sees him as his very life and self. Thus the jiva who, as the prakara of the Brahman, seeks the prakarin, is now sought by the Brahman and loved as His prakarin. The true jnanin does not meditate on himself, svasvarupa-anusamdhana. He meditates on the Self of his self, and thus he transforms himself into a bhakta who loves Bhagavan as his very life and rejects mukti itself, if it is
dev void of divine life. To him, the muktipada of the Sutras is transfigured into a bhaktipada.

The essentials of bhakti are constituted by the ideas of absoluteness, reciprocity and un-conditionality. The supreme value of bhakti is the accessibility of the Lord to His bhakta, and adaptability to his devotional needs. The Brahman, the transcendental one, is overpowered by His compassion, daya and enters into the heart of humanity, jivaloka and incarnates in any form to satisfy the needs of love and bhakti. The ideas of antaryamin and avatara are not the phenom enalized forms of the Brahman, but are the manifestation of divine love. The true joy of bhakti is in the building up by the jiva of a ladder, sopana from the earth to Paramapada, the eternal abode, and the descent of the Brahman from Paramapada to Ksirabhdi and from Ksirabdh to the realms of immanence and incarnation.

Love ignores inequality of status and function. While Isvara tries to shed His Isvaratva to become one with the jiva, the beloved, the bhakta sheds his avidya and karman, and communes with the Lord. Bhakti is for the sake of bhakti and has its fruition in absolute self-surrender to Bhagavan as the means, upaya and end, upeya.

The Gita affords spiritual insight into the nature of the Brahman or Bhagavan as Sri Krsna, who is the supreme tattva, truth; the real hita, means; and the purusarth, aim of human effort. According to the Gitartha-samgraha of Yamunacarya, the Gita consists of three satkas, sections of six chapters each, which throw light on the path from sensuality to spirituality and from spirituality to bhakti. The first satka defines the nature of karma-yoga and jnaana-yoga as the limbs of atmaavalokana, intuition of the atman as a means to bhakti-yoga. The second satka extols bhakti as the supreme means to mukti. The last satka sums up the whole truth, and insists on absolute self-surrender to the Lord as the only way of redemption.

When meditation, upasana deepens into innate and intense love, preman, bhakti becomes its own end marked by fidelity and fervour, and is called paramaikantya. The building of bhakti through karma-yoga and jnaana-yoga develops into paramaikanta-priti, definitely determined love to Bhagavan as the adhara, niyantr and sesin. The paramaikantin knows, feels and acts with the conviction that Bhagavan is both the means and the end, the prapaka and the prapya. As the adheya, the bhakta realizes his inseparability from Paramatman like the radiance of the sun, and lives only in the love of God. He feels that the Brahman is absolute bliss, and renounces the pleasures of wealth, aivarya and the happiness of kaivalya. He realizes that he exists for the satisfaction of the sesin. Bhakti increases with the intensity of self-renouncement, vairagya. Every karman by thought, word and deed is transfigured into kaimkarya, worship of Bhagavan as He is Himself the ultimate doer and the deed.

The bhakta recognizes Bhagavan as his only Lord, and serves His will, as such service is the only goal of religious experience. Such service constitutes the highest joy of life, rasa. It is the self that primarily experiences bliss, ananda and not its body, sarira. All delights of life belong not to the jiva, but to the jiva-saririn, the Supreme Self who lives within the self. Pararthya is unconditioned self-surrender to the will of God, the only sesin. The paramaikantin thus lives and has his being in bhakti. Aivarya or kaivalya has no charms for him. Even mukti has no value if it is devoid of bhakti. Samsara with uninterrupted bhakti has itself the value of apavarga or moksa. Vedanta Desika’s preference of varada-bhakti here and now to the bliss of vaikunta that is beyond, is a typical Vaisnavite experience. This has practically more value than jivanmukti.

Another feature of paramaikantya is the intense love of Bhagavan to the bhakta whom He regards as His prakarin or saririn. Such bhakta is extolled as mahatma who intuits Him
everywhere as Vasudeva, and is sustained by Him as his *adhara* and *sesin*. *Bhakti* as service to God is consummated only in the ideal of service to godly persons and to all *jivas*, and is the supreme end of *paramaikantya*.

For a true *bhakta*, his devotion is controlled by the single idea of attaining *mukti*. When *bhakti-yoga* becomes a means to *moksa*, it is called *para-bhakti*. This *bhakti* is awakened by the knowledge of the Sastras, purified by *karman* and sanctified by *jnaana*. When it develops into a thirst for direct intuition of Bhagavan, it is called *para-jnaana*. Love of God leads to continuous and deep longing for God, and unquenchable spiritual thirst. Then *para-bhakti* becomes *paramabhakti*. The *bhakta* at this stage is not satisfied by mere visions, voices and auditions which are only intimations of immortality. But he eagerly and restlessly seeks the stability of eternal bliss. The *bhakta* longs to see the beauteous form of Bhagavan with the eye of the soul, and hear the music of love with the spiritual ear. The *bhakta* eagerly seeks at this stage for union and communion with the Self in the innermost of his heart. The *bhakta* does not desire the gifts of God like *aisvarya* and *kaivalya*, but seeks the Giver Himself. By renouncing his egoism, he seeks to attain the Brahman who is all in all. When the *bhakta* seeks God, God also seeks him, and they are finally united in the realm of *mukti*.

*Bhakti* is not merely the act of pleasing God by external worship, but is an inner spiritual attitude enriched by the eight virtues, *atmagunas*. The *atmagunas* are purity, *sauca*; patience, *ksanti*; absence of jealousy, *anasuya*; absence of depression, *anayasa*; absence of covetousness, *asprha*; strength of mind, *akarpanya*; good deeds, kind words and noble thoughts, *mangala*; and love to all beings, *sarvabhutesu daya*. When *bhakti* deepens into *para-bhakti* or *ananya-bhakti*, absolute devotion, it becomes a deep yearning for God. God is also seized with soul-}

hunger and yearns for communion with such *bhakta*. God and the *bhakta* are thus united together forever in love.
**Prapatti-yoga**

*Prapatti* is devotion and self surrender to God as *Radha-Krsna*. This method of attaining salvation, known as *prapatti sadhana*, contains elements of all the other means, and is most importantly, available to all. Men, women, all classes and castes (or non-castes) are permitted to seek liberation through this *sadhana*. It is referred to as *sadhana (apara) bhakti* - devotion through regulations. This in turn leads to *para-bhakti* - the highest devotion characterized by *madhurya-rasa*, the sweet emotions of devotion experienced by those perfected in *sadhana bhakti*. This is in the nature of *yoga*.

The Upanisads prescribe *prapatti* and *bhakti* for the *mumuksu* leading to the grace of God, *brahma-prasada*, as the prerequisite for *mukti*. In the systematic exposition of the *vidyas*, the Vedantasutras, according to Surtaprabhasa, insist on the unity of all *brahmavidyas*. The intention of the Sutrakara is to include *nyasa-vidya* or *prapatti-yoga* among the important means to *moksa*. The spiritual experience of the Tamil seers, Alvars is epitomized in the *nyasa* of Nammalvar, considered the super *prapanna* of Srivaisnavism.

Although *bhakti* is a desirable means to *mukti*, it is not easily practised owing to its arduousness. *Prapatti* preserves the essentials of *bhakti*, but dispenses with its predisposing causes or conditions. They can only be contingent. It omits the non-essentials like the need for ceaseless practice. It is thus a direct and independent means to *moksa*.

The only requisite for *prapatti* on the part of the *mumuksu* is absolute confidence in the saving grace of the *raksaka*. It is not the possession of merit that is the operative cause of grace, *daya*, but the sense of one’s unworthiness and the sinfulness of sin. The Lord is the only way and goal to the *mumuksu*, and *prapatti* is the act of self-surrender to His grace. It implies an intimate relation between the self-gift of the *mumuksu* and the flow of divine mercy, *daya*,

Redemption is a justification by faith, *mahavisvasa* and not by works. It is not won by merit as the result of continuous process. It is the essence of *prapatti* that the Lord of grace seeks the *prapanna*, and draws him to Himself. The act has a summary effect, as it destroys *prarabdha-karman*, or *karman* that has begun to operate. The supreme merit of *prapatti* lies in the universality of its appeal to all castes and classes, the guarantee of salvation to all *jivas* who cannot follow the arduous path of *bhakti*. *Prapatti* has an intrinsic and independent value as means, *upaya* and the naturalness in securing immediate effect, *sarvadhirakatva*, *sukarata*, *sakratatavyata* and *avilambha-phalatva*.

In terms of *tattva*, *hita* and *purusartha*, according to Vedanta Desika, the inner meaning of *prapatti* is stated in the Gita-Upanisad, in three sacred truths, *rahasya-traya*. The three sacred truths are said to be *mula-mantra*, *dvaya-mantra* and *carama-sloka*. The first one states in a nutshell, the second makes the meaning more explicit, and the third elaborates it further.

The *pranava AUM* in the *mula-mantra* sums up wisdom in the sacred sound, and is the supreme *mantra* of the *nyasa-vidya*. The letter *A* connotes *Paramatman* as the source of all things, ideas and words, the twenty-sixth *tattva* which is the truth of all things and also the bottom-line of language. The letter *U* denotes Sri in the dual sense of Sriyah-pati. The letter *M* refers to the *jiva*, the supported, *adheyia* and the dependent of Sriyah-pati, *sesa*. The *nyasa-vidya* condemns self-conceit and self-love, and affirms the truth of the soul’s utter dependence on God, *paratantrya*. It signifies the self-oblation of the *jiva* to *Paramatman* who is its self. The *mula-mantra* is an expansion of the *pranava*, and it equates the
Brahman with Narayana. It explains the means of moksa as self-gift, atma-nivedana to the sesin.

The term Narayana in the mula-mantra is Yogarudha, significant and singular. Yogarudha is one without a second, not in the mathematical but in the metaphysical sense. As akara, Narayana, Paramatman is immanent in all beings as their life. He does not lose His transcendental eminence. He redeems all jivas from their evil career, sarva-raksaka. He is the ground of all existence and the giver of all good. Nara refers to the universe of cit and acit of which Narayana is the pervading Self. Narayana is immanent in the nara, and is also the goal, ayana of nara. The middle world namaha of the mantra prescribes the abandonment of all egoism, ahamkara, and saranagati as the chief hita or upaya. It also connotes the truth that God is the only goal of life. Thus the mula-mantra, as a whole, and in each of its parts, proclaims that Narayana alone is the source of all existence, the goal of all experience and the means of realizing that goal. He is the saviour of all jivas, and all actions should be dedicated to the sesin who is the real actor. The highest offering of a jiva is self-gift to the sesin to whom the self belongs by divine right.

The mumuksu, as a philosopher-devotee, trains the intellect in all its eight aspects, and offers the eight flowers of bhakti to Bhagavan. Intellect, buddhi is disciplined in eight ways namely quick grasp of Vedantic truth, grahana; retention in the mind, dharana; reproduction, smarana; lucid exposition to others, pratipadana; inferring the unknown from the known, uha; apperception and application in new contexts, apoha; discrimination, vijnaana; and the knowledge of basic principles, tattva-jnaana. The eight flowers of devotion to be offered to the Lord are the avoidance of harm to others, ahimsa; control of the senses, indriya-nigraha; benevolence to all beings, sarvabhauda-daya; forgiveness, ksama; knowledge, jnaana; austerity, tapas; meditation, dhyana; and truthfulness, satya.

The second sacred truth dvaya has pre-eminence over other mantras. It brings out the full implications of the supreme truth, tattva as Sriman Narayana and Sri. Its first part states that Narayana is not only the source and centre of the universe, Jagatpati, but is also the Lord of Love, Sriyaphati, and that Sri resides in the heart of Narayana to redeem the self, the jiva from its sinfulness. The dual form of the Godhead signifies the Fatherhood and the Motherhood of God designed to inspire the hope of universal salvation. The jiva, realizing its utter unworthiness, casts itself on the mercy of the Lord which is spontaneously showered on it. Prapatti as an act of self-surrender presupposes the shedding of egoism, and also implies responsiveness to the operation of grace.

The second part of the truth dvaya deals with prapatti, and the prapanna realizes that his self-feeling is swept away by the downpour of divine mercy, leading him to live by religion. It states that divine justice is not only tempered by compassion, daya, but is dominated by it. The word Sri has six meanings in the religion of redemption of which the most relevant is the idea of Her converting Isvara as Ruler into Saviour, saranya by Her timely intercession and mediation on behalf of the repentant sinner. In the sphere of the religion of redemption, mercy, daya dominates over retributive justice, dandadharatva, and transforms the love of law into the law of love.

Sri is svamini to the jiva and as mediator, purusakara, she mediates on behalf of the sinner and is eternal link of love between the Saviour and the seeker after pardon. The words prapadye and namah in the dvaya-mantra insist on the need for renouncing egoism, svarupa-samarpana and the sense of self-responsibility, bhara-samarpana on the ground that the Lord and Sri are the endeavour, upaya and the end, upeya, and for performing kaimkarya for the satisfaction of the sesin.
The saranagati of Nammalvar is the pattern of prapatti set by a Saviour, saranagata, and the soul that seeks refuge in Him, saranagata, in terms of saranagati. Sri (Lakshmi) is indistinguishable from the Lord like the fragrance from the flower. The two, Isvara and Sri, are one ontologically, but different functionally owing to the redemptive needs of the jiva. In the interests of redemption, Sri becomes the Isvari of Isvara, and changes His law of karman into the rule of krpa. Isvara overpowered by compassion, daya and affection, vatsalya renounces His supreme greatness, paratva, and incarnates as Srinivasa of unsurpassable beauty and love. He is the only refuge and strength, saranya of the jiva. Alvar as saranagata seeks refuge at His feet with the intercession of Sri as mediator, purusakara, as saranagati or prapatti is self-surrender at the feet of Srinivasa with the conviction that He is the only upaya and upeya.

The religion of saranagati is enshrined in the carama-sloka, final teaching of the Lord in the Gitopanisad. This is considered the supreme secret, rahasyatama. Its knowledge is intended to remove the sorrows of life, and is to afford the stability of salvation. In the philosophy of religion, the Brahman is the Infinite beyond the world, the Holy that exacts reverence and the Immanent that brings out mystic intimacy. The conception of the same Brahman as the Redeemer brings to light the qualities of saulabhya, vatsalya and karuna which are indispensable in a redeemer.

Every karman presupposes five factors of which the real operative factor is the redemptive will of God working through the freedom of the jiva. This is the basis of the concept of niskama-karman by the jiva, while meditating on the Brahman. The teaching of Lord Krsna ‘renounce all dharmas and take refuge in me’ is the essence of the prapatti-yoga. This divine imperative implies the freedom of the jiva to follow it. The freedom of the self is dependent on Isvara, isvaradhina and it is fulfilled only when it is attuned to the will of the raksaka. Even the will to serve the Lord by self-effacement is only the gift of His grace.

The consummation of karman is service, kaimkarya consecrated to the saranya. The Lord is ultimately the endeavour and the end, the prapya and the prapaka, and the upaya and the upeya. The sadhyopaya is the act of self-surrender, saranam-vraja to the will of the raksaka who is the inner ruler. The siddhopaya is the Lord Himself, mam-ekam. Such saranagati is the most efficacious means to moksa and the removal of suffering. The Lord reveals Himself to the prapanna, who seeks Him as his absolute refuge.

The carama-sloka explicitly prescribes saranagati as the means to be adopted by the mumuksu incapable of bhakti-yoga. It explicitly promises the one following it, release from the entire accumulated load of sins, and secure him absolute service to the Lord in Paramapada. It is the call of the Redeemer to the whole of humanity: ‘Come unto me, all ye who are heavily laden, abandoning your egoism, and I shall give you eternal life and Myself’. The sinner seeks God and is saved, and God seeks the sinner and is satisfied. The unique value of the carama-sloka is in its universal appeal to all sinners to seek refuge in Him, and be saved.

The scheme of prapatti is elaborated in its six parts, angas known as anukulya-samkalpa, pratikulya-varjana, mahavisvasa, karpanya, goptritva-varana and atma-niksepa.

Anukulya-samkalpa furnishes the sattvic motive to follow the will of the sesin. When the human will is emptied of egoism, ahankara, it is divinely enriched and attuned to the redemptive purpose of the raksaka. It also connotes the will of the mumuksu to serve all jivas, sarvabhidhushanakulya.
Pratikulya-varjana is the negative way of stating the same truth, and consists in the renunciation of what is repugnant to the Lord.

Mahavisvasa is absolute faith in the saving grace of God as the universal raksaka. It is absolute confidence in prapatti as guaranteeing God.

Karpanya expresses the feeling of incapacity to follow the prescribed path of karman, jnaana and bhakti. The sense of utter helplessness creates this feeling of humility.

Goptrtva-varana is the act of seeking the daya of the Lord as the only hope for moksa.

Atma-niksepa consists in self-oblation to the sesin with the conviction that such self-surrender is itself a gift of God’s grace.

The religion of saranagati dispels the skepticism of the moral consciousness. The fears of spiritual fall are dispelled by the assurance that krpa reigns in the realm of religion and ousts the evils of avidya-karman, and that no sin is so sinful as to exhaust the redemptive grace of God. Mahavisvasa is the distinct knowledge of the omnipotence of daya and is, therefore, the central and ruling motive of prapatti-yoga. The other conditions follow from this spiritual conviction and exalt the levels of conation, feeling and cognition. Prapatti is thus the way of divine daya and is the descent of krpa into the realm of karman. It is illumined faith in the saving grace of God as both the upaya and the upeya. The motive also determines the nature of the end. He who seeks Bhagavan attains Bhagavan. The jnanin seeks God as his saririn and offers himself to Him. God, in turn, seeks the jnanin as His saririn and guarantees mukti to him.

Prapatti, as the religion of atma-niksepa, is also considered under the aspects of renouncement of hedonism, phala-samarpana; moralism, bhara-samarpana; and egoism, svarupa-samarpana. Of the three, phala-samarpana or phala-tyaga is the abandonment of the hedonistic motive that self-satisfaction or happiness is the supreme end of prapatti. The true follower of prapatti knows that, as an absolute dependent, he subsists in the sesin and exists for His satisfaction, and so gives up every form of egoistic or selfish satisfaction. True sesatva is realized when the sesa knows that he is nothing, has nothing and does nothing. He thus renounces the egoistic feelings of ‘I’, karrtrtva; ‘my’, mamata; and ‘mine’, svartha. The verbs ‘to be’ and ‘to have’ agree with the subject egoism, ahamkara, but not with prapatti. Even the consciousness of religious individualism arising from the joy of freedom, atmaraksa savours of selfishness and has, therefore, to be abandoned.

The second aspect bhara-samarpana is the renunciation of the sense of responsibility involved in the saving act. Redemption, atmaraksa comes from the raksaka who is Himself the end, sadhya and the means, sadhana, and not from the will of prapanna owing to his impotence to follow the ordained path. Prapatti removes the heaviness of heart owing to the sense of duty and effort, and to the burden of sin. Prapatti requires only a living faith in the saving power of daya. By casting himself on daya, the prapanna becomes fearless, nirbhaya.

The third aspect svarupa-samarpana is the elimination of ahamkara and also the gift of the self, atman to God who is its real owner or Self. The jiva lives not as the jiva as such, but as the saririn or sesin that lives in it. The term aham is the self that has its being and worth only in the saririn. Therefore, svarupa-samarpana consists in giving back the self to its owner.

All these forms of sattvika service are deduced from religious experience consisting in the life of God in the love of
This experience marks a radical change from the ego-centric view of *svasamitva* to the Krsna-centric view of *paratantrya* summed up in the truth *sarvam krsnarpanam astu*. This means that everything belongs to Krsna, and is offered to Krsna.

A karika of Vedanta Desika summarizes the Visistadvaitic meaning of *prapatti* thus:

*Svamin svasesam svahasam svabhavanena nirbharam!
Svadattasvadhiya svartham svamin nyasyasi mamsvayam!*

The word *svartha* denotes *phala-samarpana* signifying that the *sesa* exists for the satisfaction of the *sesin* and that the only end of *atma-samarpana* is the realization of His will as the only will. The words *svabharatvena nirbharam* signify *bhara-samarpana*, that is, the idea that *atmaraksa* is the concern of the *saranaya* and not of the *saranagata*. The word *svaseva* connotes that self-oblation is the main motive for *prapatti*. The karika thus expounds the Visistadvaitic idea that the *atman* has self-consciousness, *jnata*-trtva; freedom, *karta*-trtva; and feeling, *bhokta*-trtva; but the *jiva* as the *sarira* of Paramatman has its triple function of knowing, willing and feeling fulfilled organically in the life of the *saririn*.

*Prapatti* is thus the religious conclusion of the philosophy of the *sarirasi-saririn* relation. It affirms that the *saririn* is Himself the *upaya* and the *upeya*. The terms *svartha*, *svadatta* and *svayam nyasyasi* proclaim the truth that *atma-samarpana* is self-donation to the *para-sesin* who is the giver and the gift, the end and the endeavour. The theory of justification by faith, *vyaja* as developed by Vedanta Desika illuminates the meaning of *prapatti-yoga* and its ultimate relation to the saving grace of the *saranaya*.

The seeker after *prapatti* has spiritual freedom to serve the Lord and become an instrument in the divine scheme. His will is divinely determined, *paradhina*, and not self-determined, *svadhina*. *Prapatti-yoga* is a free act of absolute self-surrender to the raksaka without any utilitarian considerations. It is justification by faith. Merit has ethical meaning, but *daya* is a divine quality and is, therefore, amoral. *Daya* as the amoral is the fulfillment of the moral, but not hostile to it. The self seeks God’s grace and strives to deserve it, and the grace of God is his.

The Sutrakara affirms the truth that if grace, *krpa* is not considered rooted in righteousness, arbitrariness and cruelty have to be attributed to the divine nature. The forgiveness of the raksaka presupposes the quality of forgivableness in the *jiva*, and a change of heart. The gift of *daya* may be unreserved, but should not be undeserved. The theory of *vyaja* reconciles the claims of human endeavour and divine *daya*. An infinitesimal effort by the *jiva* may lead to infinite mercy by the raksaka. *Vyaja* results from the feeling of one’s moral and spiritual littleness. This should, however, be genuine and not a mere show of penitence to serve as an excuse for divine intervention. The act of forgiveness presupposes change of heart and this is qualitative in character. Contrition alone opens the flood gates of *krpa*, and it is more in spirit than in letter. The words *saranam vraja* in the *carama-sloka* of the Gita emphasize the fact that the grace needs an occasion, *vraja* to reveal itself. *Daya*, *krpa* cannot take root in the soil of hard-heartedness, dissimulation, hostility or aesthetic skepticism.

Srivaisnavism extols Ramayana as a text book of practical religion *par excellence*. It regards it as *saranagati-veda*. The acceptance by Rama of Vibhishana’s surrender to Him, *abhaya-pradana* is considered a Upanisad.

The central theme of Ramayana is the redemption of the *jivas* by self-surrender to the Lord. It is the epic exposition of the metaphysical, *tattva*; moral, *hita*; and religious aspects, *purusartha* of Vedanta. The supreme truth, *para-tattva* is the transcendental
Brahman of the Upanisads that incarnates into humanity from time to time as the saviour of all beings, sarva-saranya. Saranagati is the universal means of salvation and is, therefore, the greatest good, paramahita; the supreme end, kaimkarya or service to Him and to all jivas.

The main theme of all the six kandas of Ramayana is the divine assurance of forgiveness to all who seek refuge at the feet of God, whether they are human, sub-human or celestial jivas including demons that are ever hostile to the cosmic redemptive purpose of Isvara.

Ramayana records in yuddhakanda thus: ‘……None that seeks me as Saviour will ever be given up by me. Him shall I succor and save from all his enemies. I can never give up such a person. No one who seeks protection shall ever be forsaken. This is the law of love approved by all good men.’ The universal Saviour, sarvaloka-saranya, the inner-self of all jivas, frees the jiva from the fears of samsara and gives him eternal life and joy. The Ramayana is, therefore, extolled as the shrine of saranagati or the scripture of self-surrender, inspiring everyone with the hope of everlasting life and joy.

Prapatti-sastra defines daya as the soul of Bhagavan Himself, as it is the source, sustenance and satisfaction of the divine nature. Daya dominates the creative urge of Isvara and is the underlying motive even in destruction. Creation, therefore, does not really travail in pain, but is conceived in love. Daya dwells forever as the inner ruler of the self, and enters into the heart of incarnation. It is the source of all redemption which is not restricted by the distinctions of birth and status. It has universality of appeal, and extends to the jivas in the sub-human bodies. Daya is unaware of distinction, election and elimination. It runs counter to the doctrine of the Judgment Day when the good are saved and the wicked are smitten. In Srivaisnavism, redemptive love overpowers justice. ‘Love works no ill to anyone. Love is kind and never fails. It bears all things and believes all things. It is never provoked and takes no account of evil.’ In essence, it is nirhetuka-daya.
11. The Mysticism of Visistadvaita

Mysticism is not magic, mystery-mongering or siddhi-seeking. It is different from occultism and spiritualism. The true mystic rejects the values of supernatural powers and yoga siddhis, as he seeks only God. Visions and voices, phantasms, auditions, automatisms, etc may simulate spiritual experience, but they do not lead to God. Rather they lead away from God.

Mysticism is a genuine experience of God which illumines the intellect, purifies the will and exalts the feeling. The intuitive insight of the mystic is immediate and ineffable. God is intuited, not inferred. He can be contacted directly, though He cannot be categorized.

The mumuksu, as a mystic, has a natural craving for the Brahman. He longs for love, bhakti, not for mukti or freedom from the sorrows of samsara alone. He craves for the immediate experience of God in this very life. For him, the proof of existence of the Brahman is His immediate experience, the soul-sight of the Self, and reveling in His love. The mystic delights in communion with God, and not in the surrender of will or in the negation of thought. The mumuksu has no use for soulless ritualism and dry dialectics.

When love generated in bhakti and prapatti becomes a longing, the bhakta or prapanna craves for God and pines away. The soul-hunger of God gets very intense, and the prakarin becomes a prakara longing for communion with the jiva as His very self, atman. The relation between the two is changed from the logical, the ethical, the aesthetic and the religious into the mystic love between the lover and the beloved. The mystic anubhava of the Brahman arising is supra-rational and is completion of the different realms of knowledge gained in sense perception, science and philosophy. Visistadvaita emphasizes that mysticism reaches the heart of love, and feels directly its inner pulsations.

Mystic experience is not mere feeling or thought, but an integral experience including the elements of sense, and transcending their limitations. When the seeker subdues the emotions in the light of reason, emotion and intellect become one. Love is for love’s sake, and it knows no fear and seeks no favour. God is the Lord of love, and the mumuksu is totally filled with love; the lover and the beloved are united. The bliss of such union is not the result of emotionalism and is entirely free of sensuality and sin. It transcends philosophic thinking as its state is beyond mind. Intuition, tattva-darsana is the consummation and transcendence of the logical intellect, tarka-drsti. The mystic experience of the Brahman is full, perfect and free from the limitations of intellectualism and is, therefore, a-logical.

The mystic hungers and thirsts for God, feels the life of God in the depths of his being and is absorbed in ecstasy. He surrenders himself totally to the Absolute. The self dies to live, and it is deified by contacting God, and entering into eternity. The mystic is always aware that he is only an instrument of the Divine Will and the basis of his activity is shifted to God as the All-Self, krtsnavit; and Cosmic Actor, krtsnakrt. By attuning to the will of God and thus becoming one with Him, the mystic transcends individualism and the moral distinctions of merit and demerit.

The life of the mystic is supra-moral in the sense that it is the crown and completion of all moral life. The chief quality of God is to transmit His godliness to His other, and make him perfect. Saintliness and unrighteousness can never coexist. The personal worth of the mystic is enhanced by self-effacement and self-gift. Devoid of ego, the atman of the mystic sheds its exclusive feeling and realizes the unitive consciousness. The mystic reaches the heights of moral and spiritual consciousness and sees all beings in
God and God in all beings. The mystic no longer seeks the good, but becomes goodness itself.

Thus the amoral is the fulfillment of moral life and not its negation. Visistadvaita does not encourage the method of self-extinction ending in the stir-less rest of nirvana, but insists on spiritual activism, and the fullness and freedom of deified consciousness. Spirituality is perfected in service, and mystics like Prahlada and Nammalvar work ceaselessly for the welfare of fellow beings till their end.

To the mystic, the tattva is the Brahman, the Beautiful; the hita is prema; and the realization of the bliss of the Brahman is the purusartha. In mystic philosophy, both the Brahman and the mystic are the essential elements of love, and the dualism between the two is overcome by the attainment of unitive consciousness. To the mystic, Reality is realization itself.

Mysticism, according to Visistadvaita, transforms the monistic view of Isvara as the arch-illusionist into that of elusive enchanter of souls, the cunning and thievish Lord of love who steals away the hearts of devotees, jara-cora-sikhamani, and ravishes them out of all their feeling of fleshliness. He is the cunning artist who allures the self by His beauty, transfigures its lusts of the flesh into holy love, and by a strange alchemy makes it His own.

The recorded divine experience of Nammalvar is a classic case of unparalleled mystic experience. Pining for God, the Alvar gets a sudden glimpse of God, and feels a strange joy sweeping over him. It is but a glimpse, a mental vision or trance which is physically imperceptible. It lacks sensory vividness and substantiality. Unsatisfied, the Alvar yearns for the aesthetic enjoyment of his outer senses. He longs for physical contact with the Divine Beauty. He realizes that his vision is only a sensory image resulting from intense mono-ideistic love, manobhava. He swings back to the mood of depression and relapses once again into passiveness and emptiness.

Once again he reproaches his beloved, the Brahma, but does not feel any love, and rebukes Him for His callousness and cruelty. Yet his love overflows his inner being and his spiritual cry assumes cosmic dimensions. The thought of oscillation between earth and beyond is deeply distressing to him, though earthly life with God is preferable to Vaikuntha after life. The Alvar is caught up in the dilemma of devotion. Love yearns for physical communion here and now and longs, at the same time, for transcendental life. The former is eagerly desired but not desirable on account of its impermanence, sensuous setting and content. The latter is desirable but is not actually desired on account of its remoteness of time and space. Mystic love is tossed between the spiritual longing for release and the divine dalliance in the lila of love. At one time, overpowered by the sense of forlornness, the Alvar was on the verge of suicide, but gave up the attempt feeling that the disposal of the self belonged only to the saririn and that he had no freedom in the matter. The Lord alone is the source, dharaka; sustenance, posaka; and satisfaction, bhogya. He alone satisfies spiritual hunger and thirst, and is the end of all hedonistic desires.

The intensity of love, anuraga destroys the distinction and difference between the lover and the beloved. On one occasion, the Alvar imitates, like the gopis, the ways of Isvara and experiences cosmic consciousness. From this stage, he suffers the anguish caused by vishlesa. Life becomes unbearable for him as he struggles and suffers till the time of his final union with the Divine.

Vishlesa provides the opportunity to the Alvar to think of the perfections of the Lord, His kalyanagunas and arouses devotional ardour. The Alvar is allured by the Enchanter and thrilled
by His touches. The Unknown and the Indistinct is now intuited as the ‘dark gem’. It may not be the integral experience of the Brahman in the super-sensuous sphere of Paramapada. But it has all the vividness of that experience owing to his devotion of love. His God-intoxication finally leads him to samslesa - the soul-sight of His bewitching beauty. With his self-feeling dissolved in the Supreme Self, the Alvar has sudden onrush of joy, rapturous and ecstatic. When Beauty rushes to the embrace of the beloved, the Alvar dissolves himself in the arms of Ecstasy.

The Alvar expresses the nature of the Brahman as Bliss insatiable. The joy of communion with Him is never ending; the self emerges from ananda only to merge in It. The rapture of communion overflows and inundates the senses. The Lord of love enters into the whole being of the Alvar, communicates His joy to it and makes it pulsate with joy. The Alvar is immersed in divine deliciousness, and the thirst of ages is satisfied.

Melting with gratitude, the Alvar offers himself to the Beloved and then feels that, since the jiva is the body of the Lord, self-gift to Him has no meaning as He alone is the giver and the gift. The Lord is the life of the Alvar and the Alvar is the life of the Lord, and the joy of union is reciprocal on account of the reversibility of relationship. The relish of love increases with enjoyment and is, therefore, fecundity. Even moksa has no value if it is not for His satisfaction.

In his exalted mood, the Alvar loses himself in the love of all living beings and feels that every jiva should attain the state of the Brahman and be free from the sorrows of karman. The Brahman seeks His home in the inner self of the Alvar, and thus satisfies His soul-hunger. The Brahman realizes His nature only by enveloping the Alvar and devouring his individuality. Sensation, form and self melt into Him, and finite thought expires in infinite bliss. When the body of the Alvar is at last dissolved in death, the freed self merges into the Absolute, the sphere of eternal bliss.

Atmavivaha, spiritual marriage, is another extraordinary delight in mysticism. It is based on the eternal value of bhagavat-kama. The most inspiring example of such spiritual marriage is furnished in the life of Andal who, filled with Krsna-preman even in her girlhood, pours out her flaming love in lyric poetry in Tamil, unmatched for its thrilling power.

In her Tiruppavai, Andal gathers together a band of mystics who, like her, were seized with Krsna-preman and became God-intoxicated like the gopis. They all hurry to the Home of Love in Vrndavan to awaken the sleeping Beauty and pray for the fulfillment of their spiritual longing. In another poetic work Nacciyar Tirumoli, she pours out her burning passion for union with Krsna. When there is no response to her message of love, she pines away in gloom. Then she invokes the aid of Manmatha, the lord of conjugal love. Even his shafts have no effect on the Ravisher of souls. Her passivity gives way to aggressive love. In its frenzy, she assaults the Lord with a view to piercing His heart with wounds of unrequited love. The Lord could no longer resist the call of such unearthly love. The mystic consummation follows with the doors of the sleeping Beauty of Srirangam Temple flung open. Soul meets soul, and Andal rushes into the arms of Love, and her separate being melts away in the ecstasy of union.

Krsna-lila, as enshrined in the Bhagavata, is the expression par excellence of the divine lila of love and is the foundation of Vedantic mysticism. In Bhagavata, Krsna is a mystic who shines in every jiva as its uncreated light, and sports with it. Metaphysics is transformed into mysticism when the tattva is defined as absolute Beauty with an aprakrt, formless or super sensuous form of its own. The supreme hita is preman or bhagavat-kama. The
attainment of bliss is purusartha. Beauty feeds love and love has its fruition in bliss.

12. The Theology of Srivaisnavism

Ramanuja’s Visistadvaita, which is the theology of Srivaisnavism, seeks to determine the exact relation between the Lord and Sri. Sribhashya of Sri Ramanuja is the substratum of the theistic School of Srivaisnavism. It has later given rise to two distinct Schools of interpretation formulated by Vedanta Desika and Pillai Lokacarya, over centuries.

As elucidated in Sribhashya, the first two chapters of the Vedantasutras form a metaphysical enquiry into the nature of Sat as the supreme Saguna Brahman, tattva. The third chapter defines the nature of hita as vedana, upasana or bhakti, and prapatti. The last chapter brings out the meaning of purusartha as the attainment of the Brahman. The four chapters of the Vedantasutras are a systematic elucidation of the truth, step by step, from the first sutra till the last. Every adhikarana, section of this Sariraka-sastra is an intuition, anubhava of the Brahman. What is metaphysically determined as ultimate ground of all existence is also the supreme end of man’s spiritual quest, and yields a specific anubhava of the divine perfection.

Vyasa-siddhanta-martanda establishes that each adhikarana proves a philosophic truth, and is a spiritual experience, anubhava of an attribute of Narayana. The adhikarana-ratnamala equates Narayana with Srinivasa. The Vedantasutras consisting of 156 adhikaranas, sections are valued as gems of the perfections, kalyana-gunas, strung together by devotional art. The Absolute of the Upanisads is equated with the supreme Narayana, the God of religion, and is finally identified with the Redeemer, Srinivasa.

The first iksati-adhikarana discusses the Chandogya text and establishes the truth that the Sat without a second is the Brahman, the Supreme Self. The one without a second is the metaphysical self, and not the mathematical aggregate or whole of
parts. By its self-creative urge, it wills to be the many and becomes
the manifold of cit and acit, and becomes their source and sesin.
The cosmic process is the self-differentiation of Isvara.

From the religious standpoint, the adhikarana is a religious
experience, anubhava of the Sat as the self of Svetaketu. The
Brahman, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe, is
the Atman of the atman of Svetaketu. The Self that is the ground
of the macrocosm is also the self of the microcosm. It brings out
the Visistadvaitic truth that the self of the external world is the self
of every finite self. The world order as the expression of the creative
urge of the Brahman is really His lila. The creative urge becomes
an aesthetic impulse and is transformed into the religious motive
of redemption. Soul-making is the sport of the raksaka, and He
shapes matters and moulds the soul to make it His own.

The next anandamaya-adhikarana discusses the Taittiriya
text and establishes that the Infinite alone as the prakarin can have
infinite bliss and not the finite self. The Brahman is blissful and
imparts Its nature to the jiva. The Highest and the one who attains
the Highest are not identical. This adhikarana expounds, from
the anubhava aspect, the nature of the ecstasy of the unitive
consciousness, brahmananda. The Brahman is the transcendentally
blissful Being of beauty delighting in communicating His bliss to
the devotee, bhakta and enabling him to revel in the rapport of
communion.

The next Antar-adhikarana refers to the supreme sinless
Self with a transcendental form, aprakrita of His own whose
ravishing beauty fills the yogin with ecstasy, even more than His
svarupa. The next adhikarana refutes the mechanical theory of
the universe and states that the term akasa in the Chandogya text
is not the elemental ether, but refers to the Supreme Self, Paramapurusa as a world ground with an infinity of perfections,
who is at once the supreme and the only way to life. This

adhikarana explains that the jyotir-vidya in the Chandogya
Upanisad refers not to physical light but to the Highest Self with
infinite splendour. On the religious level, this adhikarana points
to the existence of an absolutely luminous region of eternal bliss,
as distinguished from the phenomenal world of lila-vibhuti which
expresses His sportive activity and redemptive joy.

These opening adhikaranas define the experience of the
Brahman as the ground of existence, His blissful nature, His
svarupa, kalyana-gunas, paratva, bhogyatva and divya-mangala
vigrahavta. They also establish the truth, according to Visistadvaita,
that the Brahman is the Supreme Self other than prakrti and jiva,
is possessed of infinite auspicious qualities, and has a divine form
of His own which is not due to prakrti and karman. They also
state that the loving meditation on the Self as the self of one’s self
leads to the attainment of eternal bliss.

In its anubhava aspect, the brahmavidya directs the aspirant
to the practice of bhakti and prapatti as the supreme means of
attaining oneness with the Brahman, samya. The Brahman is
identical with Vasudeva who resides in all and from whom all derive
their being, and also Bhagavan with the six attributes, namely,
jnaana, bala, aisvarya, virya, sakti and tejas. Samya consists in
attaining the likeness of Bhagavan. Spiritual and divine
consciousesses are similar in content, but not identical in
existence. The essential idea of bhakti is to intuit the Infinite as
the meaning and goal of the finite, and thus enable the seeker of
God to attain the world of the Brahman.

The Sutrakara establishes in these adhikaranas that the
Brahman is the All-Self, the inner ruler of all jivas, the Infinite in
the finite, and the source of its vision. The Supreme Self is smaller
than the smallest and higher than the highest.
Ramanuja establishes that the Being described in the Mundaka Upanisad as warp and woof of earth and heaven is the highest Self as the saririn, and not the jiva. The Paramatman as the inner self of the jiva enters into the warp and woof of the world process with a view to spiritualizing the jiva and finally brahmanizing it. This includes logical immanence and spiritual transcendence. Visistadvaita accepts the reality of all things and thinking beings, but insists on a sense of proportion. It distinguishes between the demands of the logical intellect of unity and the spiritual needs of the union with the Brahman. The Brahman as the immanent ground of existence is the goal of transcendent experience. The Infinite is in the finite self with a view to infinizing its content. The metaphysician who thinks of the Brahman in the universe becomes the mumukṣu who seeks the same Brahman beyond it. Therefore, in the anubhava stage, the arithmetical idea of the whole and the metaphysical view of a self or a system gives place to the mystic consciousness of God, brahmadrsti, and attaining the world beyond of the Brahman or Isvara. As any perennial river finally loses itself into the sea, the finite self absorbs itself into the Brahman by divesting itself of the differentiation of name and form due to karman. It becomes one with the Brahman by losing its separatist self-feeling, but not its self-existence.

As for the aksara-vidya of the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad related in the Sutras, Visistadvaita states that the Brahman is the sustainer of all beings. From the point of view of spiritual experience, anubhava, the vidya inculcates the worship of the Brahman as the cosmic ruler, the father of all jivas. Besides, He is the inner ruler and His redemptive will is self-revealed on earth and beyond. From the anubhava aspect, the Brahman is higher than the highest in a world beyond the terrestrial and celestial worlds, and is alone the object of apprehension and attainment. Paramapada, the supreme abode, transcends the sphere of karman, and the mukta enjoys the ecstasy of the intuition of the Brahman in the world beyond.

Visistadvaita states that the Brahman exists in five forms. They are the eternal in the world beyond, the infinite that creates the finite, the immanent that resides in all beings and incarnations, historical and permanent. The inner purpose of this five-fold function of the Brahman is to enter into humanity and redeem it from its avidya-karman. Sarira-sariri-sambandha is the three-fold relation between the Brahman and the world of cit-acit. It means that the finite is rooted in the Infinite, sustained by Its will, and serves Its redemptive end as a free agent. The Brahman, according to Visistadvaita, is the saririn and is the life of our lives. He is the inner Ruler immortal in all beings. Every term, thing or thought that connotes the sarira also connotes the saririn, as He enters into cit and acit, and gives them name and form.

Visistadvaita emphasizes that the Brahman is infinite bliss and when the devotee intuits the Brahman as immanent in all beings, he does not see anything apart from Him and, therefore, experiences infinite bliss. The world of phenomenal experience is essentially blissful as it is pervaded by the Bhuman. But the finite self, affected by avidya in the form of karman, has a fragmentary view of the world as, owing to its distorted vision, it sees apart from the Brahman. It, therefore, suffers from the sorrows of the divided consciousness. But the seer who has brahmadrsti is immersed in the bliss of the Bhuman. He revels in the Self and enjoys the universe as his wealth, aisvarya. The finite self connotes the Brahman as its true self, and this meditation on the Bhuman leads to the attainment of brahmananda. Thus, the philosophic knowledge of the bhuma-vidya leads to the mystic experience of the bliss of the Bhuman.

As for the dahara-vidya of the Chandogya Upanisad related in the Sutras, Visistadvaita states that the Brahman is infinite and
omnipotent while the *atman* (*jiva*) is finite. The predication of will to the Brahman, as stated in the Upanisad, is in no sense a bar to His infinity. The Brahman is absolutely free from the self-contradictions of the finite-infinite and even from a shadow of the imperfections of *karman*, and merit and demerit. Omnipotence is expressed in the absoluteness of His mercy. Out of His boundless love, Isvara sets aside His supreme glory, and becomes easy of access to all *jivas* by entering into their hearts. Within each *jiva* is hidden the *brahmapuri*, the rich treasure of absolute truth, goodness and beauty. Blinded by *karman*, the finite self is unable to discover it. When the self is morally cleansed, it intuits itself, becomes serene and radiant with *bhakti*, and reaches the resplendent region of everlasting bliss with the saving grace of its inner light.

The thirty-two *vidyas* expounded in the Upanisads, and stated in the Sutras, only relate to meditations on the Brahman with the essential qualities of *satya*, *jnaana*, *ananta* and *amala*. They all point to the realization of the Brahman as the *summum bonum* of life. It, therefore, establishes that the ‘logical’ Highest of what may be called the ‘Pure Visistadvaita’ of the Sutras is also the ‘Intuitional Highest’ of the ‘Practical Visistadvaita’ of the Bhagavad-visaya.

The Arthapancaka, the main philosophic work of Visistadvaita, brings out the essentials of Visistadvaita in its fivefold aspect, namely the nature of Isvara, the *jiva*, the *purusartha*, the *upaya* and the *virodhin*. Each is analyzed into five forms with its own special features.

Isvara exists as *para*, *vyuha*, *vibhava*, *antaryamin* and *arcaa*. *Arcaa* as the permanent incarnation of the grace of God is most accessible to the *mumuku*. The *jiva* is classified into five kinds, namely, the ever free, *nitya*; the freed, *mukta*; the bound, *samsarin*; the one enjoying *kaivalya*, *kevala*; and the *mumuku*. The five chief ends of conduct are the performance of Vedic duties, *dharma*; the acquisition of economic goods of life, *artha*; the enjoyment of sensual pleasures in this life and after, *kama*; *kaivalya* or *atmanubhava*; and the experience of the Brahman, *bhagavad-anubhava*. The five means of attaining the Brahman are *karman*, *jnaana*, *bhakti*, *prapatti* and absolute loyalty to the guru as a living mediator between the Lord and the *mumuku*, *acarya-abhimana*.

The obstacles are also five-fold, namely, faith in other gods, means and ends other than those prescribed for the *mumuku*, the mistaken faith in *svarupa-jnaana* as an end in itself, godlessness and the confusions relating to *prapatti*.

The Tattvatraya, another important philosophical work of Visistadvaita, is modeled on the Brahmasutras, and consists in three parts. Part I describes *atman* and its *jnaana*, and explains the classification of *atman*. Part II describes *acit* in its three aspects of *kala*, *suddhasattva* and *misratattva* or *prakrti* evolving into twenty-three categories. It is also known as *avidya* or *maya*. Part III is devoted to the understanding of Isvara including His *svarupa*, *rupa* and *guna*.

Vedanta Desika, three centuries after Ramanuja, defines Sriyah-pati as Lord and Sri as a dual-self, which is one in two, and two in one, and their cooperative identity is indispensable to the seeker after *mukti*. Redemptive mercy is coeval with exacting righteousness. In the eternal marital fusion of Divine Law and Divine Love lies the assurance that *krpa* is the crown and consummation of a contrite heart. If Isvara is omnipotent and mercy has only monadic power, the triumph of *krpa* over *karman* will only be contingent. Therefore, Sri is infinite, and not in finite. The concept of Sriyah-pati, in this context, recognizes the foundational truth of ethical religion that the holiness of law is ever wedded to the forgiveness of love. Each acts and reacts on the other. In their interaction lie the stability of the social and moral order, and the salvation of the sinner.
Pillai Lokacarya, after Vedanta Desika, argues, on the other hand, that there cannot be two infinites, which are all pervasive. The idea of dual-divine personality is against the monotheistic truth that there is only one God. Laksmi is, therefore, finite like the jiva. But she is ever-free, unlike the bound-self. She is to be regarded as finite-infinite, and as a living link of love between Isvara and the jiva. She is the divine mediating link that intervenes between human culpability and the holy wrath of the Lord. She softens the severity of divine justice and changes the responsibility of the sinner into the mood of responsiveness to mercy. Daya conquers Isvara by its innate sweetness and beauty. It connotes the sinner by love. It thus mediates between the saviour and the sinner.

Thus, one School of Visisadvaita stresses the logic of monotheism. But, the other School recognizes the validity and value of the logic of the heart and the heart of logic. This School refuses to subordinate the ethical claims of theism to the religious demands of redemption. Visisadvaita, in either case, considers that Isvara is not merely a judge, but is also a deliverer. And the essential nature of the Brahman is to brahmanize the jiva.

13. Srivaisnavism of Visisadvaita

While Visisadvaita defines the Brahman as the Godhead that is the source of all creation, Srivaisnavism, in its religious aspect, identifies the same Godhead as unity in Trinity with Visnu pervading all jivas, and vaisnavizing their nature. It defines the function of Visnu as Srijahpati (Visnu and Lakshmi), which consists in universal redemption.

In the history of Indian philosophy, Visisadvaitic Srivaisnavism occupies a central position both as philosophy and religion, as a meeting of the extremes of monism and pluralism, and of non-dualism and theism. Its main thrust is devotion to Visnu with His consort Lakshmi as the All-Self and Redeemer of all. The cardinal teaching of Srivaisnavism is that God who is transcendental Love incarnates again and again into human history without renouncing His infinity to redeeming the wicked, and to seeking the jnanin

The concept of Fatherhood and Motherhood of God connotes more spiritual intimacy than the external view of Isvara as the Lord. The true Infinite is not the Almighty, but the Giver of all good to every jiva which is an image of the Infinite. Isvara is not a mere life force or creative will, but a self communicating love and the conserver of the eternal values of life. The Creator sows the seed of the self into the womb of the matter and makes it into His own image. The divineness of the self consists in its regaining the quality of godliness and the eternal values of life. Prakrti is moulded for the making of the cetana. Every jiva is thus, as it were, the son of God, and is the heir to immortal life and joy.

The theistic idea of God as the Father of all is a living faith in the Lord of the supreme abode entering into the self with a view to redeem it from its career of self-alienation and sinfulness, and transforming it into His own likeness, sarupa and sayuja.
Theism, in the strict sense, holds that the Lord is the life-giver as well as law-giver, who demands absolute obedience to the law of righteousness. Creative unity presupposes the uniqueness of the Creator and the fidelity of the creature to God the Father, and collision with His will entails punishment. He elects the good, and eliminates the wicked. He is thus a savior and judge. Meek submission to the will of Father, in utter self-effacement and prayerfulness, is pleasing to Him, and merits redemption.

The act of prayer arises from the inner attitude of prayerfulness. It is not a vain repetition of words or bargaining with God for worldly goods. It is the absolute trust in the Father, which consists in the thought ‘Thy will be done’. It is the attitude of the blessed son to the Father blossoming the relation of the jiva to Isvara in the form of father-son relation, pitr-putra-sambandha. This concept presumes that every jiva is divine and its divinity consists in regaining the quality of god-likeness.

When religion is conceived in terms of will and justice, it demands the adoration of the Creator as the Father of all, jagat-pitr. But when religion is conceived in terms of redemption, justice is transformed into mercy. Mahalakshmi resides in the heart of religion as the embodiment of saving grace. She is the concretion of krpa and karunya. She offers an eternal assurance to the erring humanity that the reign of righteousness is at heart the reign of redemptive mercy.

The Lord is the dispenser of justice according to merit, karma-phala-datr. Though He is the saviour, justice is an insistence on the fulfillment of the moral law by retribution and recompense. But, in the case of Lakshmi, retribution is transformed into forgiving love. Love pervades law, and tenderness overpowers it. Lakshmi lives in the ever-blooming lotus of creative life and is the heart of divinity. She depends absolutely on the Lord, belongs to Him only, and is depended on by the sesa. As the link of love, She mediates between the Infinite that is omnipotent and the finite that is impotent. Thereby She transforms the majesty of law into the might of mercy.

Daya has supernal beauty and sweetness. By Her beauty, Lakshmi lures the Lord and turns Him into the saviour. She draws the sinner by Her sweetness, and the sinner is saved by total submission to His will. Thus, in the ethical religion of Visistadvaita, Srivaisnavism, the metaphysical truth of the Absolute as the Supreme Self, and the jiva as His aprthak-siddha-visesana is restated as the creator of the world and the conserver of values.

To the mumuksu, the Lord and Lakshmi are one though, to the analytic intellect, they may appear as different and discrepant. The ethical idea of justice, dandadharatva and the religious idea of redemption, daya are reconciled in ethical religion. It has its roots in justice, and fruition in forgiveness. The Lord rules by law and Sri lives by love, and the two are eternally wedded to each other.

The Srivacana Bhusana of Ramanuja, a principal work of Srivaisnavism, is aphoristic. It is quite popular on account of its main religious motive and value. It consists of four chapters. The first chapter brings out the status of Sri in the salvation scheme as the divine mediatory, purusakara between the cetana and the Lord, with her unique qualities of being His alone, ananyarhatva; dependence on Him, paratantrya; and krpa as exemplified in Sita’s life. She joyfully submits herself to Isvara, as she has her being in Him and belongs to Him. She always intercedes on behalf of the sinner by pleading for his being forgiven. On the other hand, she subdues the retributive will of Isvara by the beauty of her enticing love. On the other hand, she melts the heart of the sinner by her infinite tenderness.
The divine grace is spontaneous and not conditioned by the effort of the self as in the case of the *bhakta*. Of the five-fold forms of divine grace, *para*, that of the Brahman in *vaikuntha*, is remote like the raindrops in cloudland. *Vyuha* is like the waters that encircle the cosmic egg. *Antaryamin*, the indwelling Lord is like the spring in the earth to be discovered. *Vibhava* is like the occasional freshets in a river that come and go. It is only the *arca*, the reservoir of divinity, which remains and is ever available to the *cetana* who thirsts for God. The Lord is Himself the *upaya* and the *upeya*. The true meaning of *prapatti* is not winning the grace of God by self-effort but by responding passively to its free-flow.

The second chapter dwells on the superiority of *paragata- svikara*, the Lord seeking the sinner to *svagata-svikara*, the devotee seeking the Lord. Grace is the gift of God flowing spontaneously like mother’s milk. Total faith and self-surrender result in operative divine grace, stable and spontaneous. When man seeks God, even *prapatti* is futile. But when God elects the devotee, even his sinfulness is ignored. *Prapatti* has its fruition only in service to God and the *bhagavatas*, in a spirit of utter humility and with no trace of egoism.

The third chapter assigns the highest value to the benediction offered by the devotee, *mangalasasana* in his intense solicitude of love to the Lord for His eternal reign of grace, like the Nammalvar. The fourth chapter prefers the grace of *acarya*, *acaryabhimana* to the grace of God. This is for the reason that, while the Lord is both just and merciful, the *acarya* is moved only by mercy. The worship of the *acarya* became in later days a main feature of some sects of Srivaisnavism. The work concludes with the statement that service to the *acarya* and the *bhagavatas* irrespective of their station in life is the highest and the only means of attaining God.

Vedanta Desika is another great philosopher of Visistadvaita. He is unrivalled in *jnaana* and *vairagya*, and is the main propagator of *Ubaya Vedanta*, spreading the gospel of *prapatti* as a Vedantic means of attaining the Brahman. He bridges the gulf between *bhakti* and *prapatti* duly reconciling the moral and spiritual needs of *karman* and the religious needs of *krpa*. He is a metaphysician and a devotee of the highest order.

His contribution is immense in the areas of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics and religion. In logic and epistemology, he reconstructs the Nyaya-Vaisesika system in the light of Visistadvaita. He simplifies the categories and includes, among the *pramanas*, the teachings of Alvars terming them Dramidopanisad. His work Nyayaparipaksha expounds the nature of the three main *pramanas*, and proves the authority of the *Pancaratra*. His Sesvara Mimamsa is a reconstruction of Jaimini’s Purva Mimamsa by integrating the two Mimamsas, and controverting the atheistic interpretation of the former.

Sri Desika’s metaphysics has a negative and a positive side. On the negative side, it is a refutation of rival systems. In his Tamil work Paramatabhanga, he refutes the prevailing philosophical systems of Madhavacarya, in the light of Visistadvaita. In his works Satadusani and Vaditraya-khandana, he repudiates *mayavada* on the lines of Ramanuja’s criticism known as *saptavidhanupapatti*, and also the two Schools of *Bhed-abheda*.

On the positive side, his philosophical work Tattva-muktakapalika is a Visistadvaita exposition of the nature of *acit* or *jada*, *cit* or *jiva*, *mukti*, *adravya*, *buddhi* and *Isvara*. Another work Sarvarthasiddhi is a more detailed exposition of the same truths. Nyayasiddhanjana, another work, consists of six sections dealing with *jada*, *jiva*, *Isvara*, *mukti*, *buddhi* and *adravya*. His commentaries on Isavasya Upanisad and Bhagavad-Gita controvert the Advaitic theory of *ajnaana* and *akarman*, and defend the
Visistadvaitic view that the Brahman is *saguna* and not *nirguna*, and that *karman* is transfigured into *kaimkarya*.

Vedanta Desika’s Vedantic ethics insists on the performance of the imperatives of duty as divine commands according to each man’s station in life determined by his *karman* and *gunas*. In his work Vairagypancaka, Desika insists that man cannot worship God and mammon at the same time. The divine treasure is infinitely more valuable than the earthly pleasures. His aesthetic philosophy defines the Brahman as the beautiful and blissful. He prefers *bhakti* to the *rasas* exorted by mere aesthetics.

Vedanta Desika expounds the essentials of theistic Visistadvaita in a popular way in his masterpiece called the Rahasyatrayasara. In this work he follows the *Sutra* method of developing the whole theme in terms of *tattva*, *hita* and *purusartha*. The supreme *tattva* is Sriman Narayana as a *saririn*, or the self of the *jiva*, being its support, *adhara*; controller, *niyantr*; possessor, *sesin*; and master, *svamin*. He is Himself the *upaya* and the *upeya*. The means of attainment, *sadhya-upaya* is *bhakti*; its alternative is *prapatti*. The *siddha-upaya* is the free causality of God Himself. Though the prime cause of salvation is the grace of God who is the *siddha-upaya*, the aspirant has to deserve it, at least by seeking it. No doubt the mother’s milk is ever ready to flow out, but the child has to apply its mouth to the teat. This *sadhya-upaya* determines the nature of the recipients of the grace of the Lord who is neither arbitrary nor capricious ruler. This treatise also describes the life of the *prapanna* and his integral experience of the Brahman in *vaikuntha*, in the state of *sayujya*.

In another work Paramapadasopana, Desika constructs a spiritual ladder, as it were, from worldliness to *vaikuntha*, the abode of Reality. In this pathway to Reality, the main milestones are the metaphysical knowledge of the Brahman arrived at by *viveka*, the moral progress of the *mumuksu* through *vairagya*, the religious striving by *bhakti* or *prapatti* and, finally, the mystic ascent to the Absolute.

Pillai Lokacarya is another great exponent of Visistadvaita and Srivaisnavism after Vedanta Desika. After Pillai Lokacarya, the Visistadvaita philosophy split into two pronounced Schools - Tenkalai and Vadakalai. There are eighteen points of difference between the two Schools, which are mostly doctrinal. They may be grouped under the principles relating to *tattva*, *hita* and *purusartha*.

Among the epistemological ways of knowing the Brahman, the Vadakalai School insists, after Vedanta Desika, on the integrity of *Ubhaya Vedanta* and the equal validity and value of the religious authority of the *rsi-s* and the Alvars. But the Tenkalai School stresses more on the value of Tamil Prabandha on account of its pure *sattvika* and *vaisnava* character. The Vedantic view of the entry of the Infinite into the finite is interpreted by the Vadakalai School as coexistence, but by the Tenkalai School as pervasion.

The main point of controversy between the two Schools relates to the nature of Lakshmi. The Vadakalai School recognizes the equal religious value of justice and mercy. It, therefore, regards Sri as infinite, *vibhu* and defines the divine nature as non-dual ontologically, but dual functionally. Isvara and Isvari are two in one like the flower and its fragrance. Her redemptive mercy is omnipotent. The unity of the Lord and Sri, *mithuna* is vital to the *mumuksu*. On the other hand, the Tenkalai School is more monotheistic in denial of the dual nature of the Infinite. This School relegates Lakshmi to the level of a *jiva*. Both the Schools are, however, one in insisting on Her *krpa* as essential to *mukti*. As divine mediatory, She intervenes between the sinner and Holy. She transforms the former into a *mukta* and the latter into the Saviour.
As regards the nature of the *hita, summum bonum*, the Vadakalai School recognizes the superiority of *bhakti* and *prapatti* to *karman* and *jnaana*. It insists on the equal validity of *bhakti* and *prapatti* as means to *mukti*. But a Vadakalai prefers *prapatti* on account of its ease, immediacy, naturalness and universality. With a view to reconciling the opposites of *karman* and *krpa*, the Vadakalai School insists on the need for the *mumuksu* to deserve the grace of God before he desires it. It, therefore, formulates the theory of *vyaja* and *akimcmya*, consciousness of unworthiness as an occasion for redemption and restoration. The human will is to subserve God’s will as it belongs to Him. It is *paradhina-karttrtva* and not *svatantra-karttrtva*.

On the other hand, the Tenkalai School rejects the above views of the Vadakalai School. It emphasizes the absoluteness and unconditional nature of God’s grace, *nirhetuka-kataksa*. Responsiveness of the grace of God is not dependent on the human initiative, ‘Whom He chooses, unto him, He reveals Himself.’ This School believes that *bhakti* itself is the consequence of antecedent grace of God. *Karman, jnaana* and *bhakti* have independent values determined by the nature of the *aspirant, adhikaran*.

The Vadakalai School defines the effect of *vatsalya* in the divine nature as the removal of *dosa* and cleansing the soul. The Tankalai School considers that *vatsalya* connotes delight in *dosa*. It is the nature of forgiveness to welcome the sinner and not to penalize him for his wrong-doing.

For the Vadakalai School, *daya* is realized in the removal of another’s suffering. But, for the Tenkalai School, it is entering into the sorrows of another, *paraduhkhe duhkhitvam*. On the social side, the Vadakalai School insists on the performance of *svadharma* even in the stage of *prapatti* as *kaimkarya*, and in conformity to the divine command. But the Tenkalai School suggests that the acts of the *prapanna* are amoral, and *varnasramadharma* does not apply to him. As for *purusartha*, the Vadakalai School contends that the *kaivalyarthin* is on the path to perfection, *Paramapada*. But the Tenkalai School assigns to him a place in *Paramapada* itself.

Anyway, the differences between the two Schools from the philosophical point of view are negligible, and only relate to Vaisnaveite theology. Srivaisnavism, as a theology of mystic love, is deeply interested in synthesis and harmony without destroying individuality. It works for universal salvation.

Srivaisnavism, as a living religion, owes itself to Ramanuja. He has moulded it into a religion of *sattvic* love based on *sastraic* authority and spiritual experience. Visistadvaitic Srivaisnavism lays stress on personal mystic experience rather than on supernaturalism and historicity. It guarantees God to all persons, and affords a philosophic basis for spiritual democracy. For Ramanuja, God is love, the *atman* is eternal and the *Paramatman* is immanent. The idea of God as the *saririn* of all and as indwelling love is the contribution of Ramanuja. This concept offers the most inspiring motive for philosophic enlightenment and achievement of social solidarity.

Hinduism, in its literal sense, is the theory of the ‘history of the unity of nature’ as a fitting environment for the knowledge of the individual, as the eternal and immutable *atman*, and the realization by him of the Deity that is immanent in all beings as their *saririn*. This account of Hinduism is at all levels with the Visistadvaitic Srivaisnavism, which takes into account the unity of physical nature, the need for self-realization, and union with Divinity that is in every individual. Visistadvaitic Srivaisnavism thus considers God as love, and religion as the life of God in the love of man, and insists on the dual discipline of thought and feeling in its scheme of devotion as *bhaktirupapanna-jnaana*. 
14. Evolution of Vaisnavism

Narayana-Visnu

The Vaisnava religion revolves round the worship of the Supreme Deity Narayana-Visnu and His numerous manifestations. The epics and the Puranas do not differentiate between Narayana and Visnu. The Mahabharata generally speaks of the deity as Narayana, and the usage of the other name Visnu is relatively rare. It, therefore, follows that the predominance of the Visnu element in a religion known as Vaisnava is a later development. In the beginning, Narayana appeared to be the deity par excellence.

Narayana is a non-Vedic deity mentioned for the first time in two passages in Satapatha Brahmana. One passage refers to Narayana, by means of sacrifice, having placed Himself in all the worlds, the gods, the Vedas, the vital airs, etc, and all things were placed in Him. The second passage also expresses the same idea though differently. It states that by performing the pancaratrastra, or the five-day sacrifice, Narayana gained superiority over all beings and became identical with all beings. The Purusa-suktta is said to be His litany. These passages indicate that by the time of the composition of the Satapatha Brahmana, Narayana was a deity of considerable eminence.

There are different attempts to trace the original meaning and source of the term Narayana. A passage of the udyoga-parva of the Mahabharata and also the narayaniya state that the Godhead is the refuge of all men. So God is known as Narayana. The term Narayana means the resting place or goal (ayana) of nara (man), or a collection of naras, that is, men. In the Vedic literature, ayana is used in the sense of ‘going’, a ‘path’ or ‘road’. Following the Paniniya-sutras, Narayana means the place where men go. It means that Narayana stands for the entire settlement, the collective entity of human beings.

The conception of Narayana as a deity embodying the whole universe is a logical development of the meaning of the term denoting ‘the dwelling place or resort of a collection of men’. The idea of a universal form (visva-ruupa or viraat-ruupa) of the deity popularized by the Gita appears to have been originally associated with Narayana.

Aryadeva, a Buddhist scholar of the second century AD, attributes a few verses to the deity Narayana that the Godhead is manifest as Visnu among Adityas, as Vaasudeva among the Vrsnis, as Sankara among the Rudras, Kapila among the Siddhas, Prahlada among the Daityas, etc. By implication, the Godhead is Narayana Himself.

The terms bhagavat (blessed lord), bhakta, bhakti and bhagavata are derived from the root bhaj. In its earliest use in Vedic literature, the root bhaj means ‘to divide’, ‘to distribute’, ‘to allot’, ‘to share with’ or ‘to partake of’. Similarly, bhaga in Rigveda means wealth, share, a lucky share. The affix vat denotes possession. As such, the term bhagavat means ‘possessed of wealth’. The term bhakti is closely related to bhagavat, and denotes ‘a portion’ or ‘share’ of the wealth. Similarly bhakta is one that is ‘assigned’, ‘allotted’ or ‘distributed’ of the wealth.

Thus, if bhagavat, the possessor of the bhaga is Narayana, the symbol of the collective entity of men, bhakta is the individual member that receives bhakti, a share of the bhaga.

In a Rigveda hymn, a prayer is addressed to god Bhaga, described as Bhagavan. It is invoked that, through him, the worshippers may also become bhagavantar, the possessors of wealth. The worshippers are denoted bhagavat.

In Satapatha Brahmana, there is a reference identifying Narayana with Purusa, the Primeval Being, and describes him as
Purusa-Narayana. The text narrates that Purusa-Narayana conceived the idea of the \textit{pancaraatra-sattra} with a desire to pass over all beings, and become everything in the universe, through the five-day sacrificial session, described as the \textit{purusamedha}, the immolation of man. This passage discloses Narayana's connection with the institution of human-sacrifice, though a ritual.

The association of human-sacrifice with Narayana in the form of the ritual \textit{Narayana-bali} is described in some Grhya-sutras. It is said that the rite of Narayana-bali, an offering to Narayana, should be performed for the sake of those who die an unnatural death, commit suicide, or are slain, and for all those for whom cremation is forbidden.

The cult of Narayana discloses prominent influence of the ascetics. The Mahabharata speaks of Narayana as a great \textit{yogi} and ascetic, who is constantly engaged in practising penance at Badrikasrama with his double Nara, who was born as a result of his austerities. The \textit{santiparva} often connects Narayana to \textit{yogis} and \textit{yogic} practices, and describes him as a master of \textit{yoga} (yogesvara).

The vision of Narayana beheld by Narada in the White Island holding a sacrificial altar, a water pot (\textit{kamandalu}), a bundle of \textit{kusa}-grass, white gems, a deer skin, a wooden staff, and a blazing fire stick corroborates the view that Narayana is conceived of as an ascetic god (Mahabharata. XII.326.9). Narada identifies Narayana even in the midst of several classes of ascetics and hermits. This establishes that from the very beginning the \textit{Pancaraatra} has been connected with ascetics. Further, \textit{Narayana-bali} is the rite to be performed not only for those who meet with unnatural death, but also for the ascetics. An inscription of the Deccan of the sixth century AD provides for regular performance of \textit{Narayana-bali} for ascetics.

Narayana is sometimes identified with Prajapati-Brahma. In Satapatha Brahmana, Narayana is conceived of as cosmic god. In course of time, the work of creation also was attributed to him. This apparently led to his identification with Brahma, the creator god of mythology. The Manusmrti, in its account of creation, identifies Narayana with Brahma. The creation legends in the Vayupurana also identify the two deities at several places. In this Purana, Brahma, in answer to the query of god Visnu, expressly states that he is Narayana, the creator of the world. This also establishes that the identification of Narayana with Brahma precedes the former's identification with Visnu.

The Visnupurana mentions Brahma as one who is known as Narayana and attributes the Fish, the Tortoise and the Boar incarnations to the former. This passage reiterates the earlier traditions that ascribe these incarnations to Prajapati Brahma.

The Brahmandapurana identifies Brahma and Narayana at three places. The Markandeayapurana speaks of Narayana as the lord of the universe, that is the form of Brahma. These references establish that Narayana is initially identified with Brahma, and later with Visnu. As Narayana is revered more and more as a powerful deity, Brahma is relegated to a subordinate level.

As for Narayana's identity with Visnu, the Maitri-Upanisad is a forerunner. This Upanisad identifies the soul (\textit{atman}) with several gods enumerated as Isana, Sambhu, Bhava, Rudra, Prajapati, Visvasrj, Hiranyagarbha, Satya, Prana, Hamsa, Saasta,ACYUTA, Visnu and Narayana. The order of the gods enumerated suggests that Visnu and Narayana are closely associated, and have prominent similarities. In the Mahabharata and the Puranas, the first four names of the deities refer to the deity Rudra-Siva, the next three to Prajapati-Brahma and the last three to the supreme deity of the Vaisnavas. However, in the Mahabharata, the identity of Narayana and Visnu is an established fact.
Visnu is a Vedic god, and has risen to the level of the highest divinity in post Vedic times. In Rigveda, only five hymns are addressed to him; his name is mentioned about a hundred times. Statistically, he is considered a deity of the fourth rank based on the number of references made to him.

He often appears in the role of an assistant to Indra, and is considered inferior to him. But there are indications that, even in the age of Rigveda, he was considered to be a great god. It is suggested that he may have been more popular among the masses whose ideas and inclinations are not recorded in the Vedas.

A majority of scholars are of the view that Visnu represents a form of the sun in Rigveda. But others are of the view that the solar traits of the deity represent only one aspect of the deity connected with vegetation and fertility. But the principal attribute of Visnu is considered to be his power to pervade and penetrate the regions of the universe. Etymologically, the word Visnu means one that enters or pervades. Other scholars also make a similar suggestion that Visnu represents a power dwelling in all things, pervading and penetrating them.

In the Satapatha Brahmana, Visnu is identified with the sacrifice. In the early Sutra works, oblations are offered to him in many srauta and grhya sacrifices. With the rise of Buddhism, the cult of Indra becomes discredited, and Visnu appropriates many myths and features of Indra. In the Mahabharata and the Puranas, considered subsequent to the advent of Buddhism, Indra is a subordinate divinity that can maintain his position only through the grace of Visnu.

The identification of Narayana with Visnu has further contributed to the rise of Visnu in the religious movement in India. By the fourth-fifth century AD, the Visnu element asserted itself fully. The Bhagavad-rupa or the Virat-rupa of God in the Bhagavad-

Gita becomes the Visnu-rupa in the Anu-Gita. The term vaisnava as a worshipper of Visnu finds its place in the latest components of the Mahabharata. The shift to Visnu element symbolizes the fusion of diverse trends originating from Narayana, Vaasudeva and other divinities, and their assimilation into Vaisnavism, resulting in its recognition as an orthodox Vedic cult.
Sankarsana-Baladeva

Historically, there was association of the cult of Sankarsana-Baladeva with the cult of Vaisnavism as it had evolved in the pre-Christian era. Sankarsana-Baladeva appears in Mahabharata as a warrior of the Vrsnis, son of Vasudeva and Rohini, and the elder brother of Vaasudeva-Krsna.

Sankarsana is mentioned in Arthasastra, which states that spies disguised as the ascetic worshippers of the god Sankarsana could mix the juice of the madana plant in the sacrificial beverage, and offer it to the cowherds of the enemy. This passage does not specifically link Sankarsana to Vaasudeva-Krsna, but apparently links the predilection of his votaries to indulge in some kind of sacrificial drinking. Visnu Purana also speaks of the god Sankarsana as a heavy drinker with eyes rolling in the state of perpetual inebriety.

The cult of Sankarsana-Baladeva discloses many features of snake worship. A passage in Mahabharata (XIII.132.8-11) speaks of a serpent Baladeva, the foremost of the Nagas, who should be worshipped on the eighth night of the dark fortnight of the month of Karthika, for obtaining the strength of the Boar incarnation of Visnu. Some texts describe him as of white complexion wearing black or blue garments, and his icons are provided with a snake-canopy overhead.

On the basis of the iconographical similarities between the images of Baladeva and the naga statues, some scholars assert that the mythical character of Baladeva evolved out of a naga deity. The irascible temper of Sankarsana-Baladeva and his drinking habits are indicative of a naga origin. His emblem, the palmyra-leaf, also points to it. In Ramayana, it is the thousand-hooded serpent Ananta that has a three pointed palmyra banner of golden colour. The banner is said to have been established by the gods on a lofty mountain in the direction of the east.

The three-pronged motif is significant. It denotes the naga character of the emblem; and the flagstaff of Baladeva is also described as three-headed. He is regarded as an incarnation of Sesanaga, and it is said that a snake came out of his mouth at the time of his death. The naga element of the character of Sankarsana-Baladeva is what makes him distinct.

Although Sankarsana appears as a Vaisnavite divinity in Mahabharata and the Puranas, there are traces of his close connection with the cult of Rudra-Siva also. The Pancaraatra Samhitas often identify Sankarsana with Rudra-Siva. The Brahmandapurana states that Rudra is a halayudha, one who holds the plough as his weapon, that is, Sankarsana, in one of his incarnations. The Visnupurana speaks of Sankarsana-Rudra, who comes out of the mouth of the serpent Sesa at the end of every kalpa (aeon).

The process is sometimes reversed. The Harivamsa states that Ananta, another name of Sesa, is invariably identified with Sankarsana born of Siva. The palm tree, associated with Sankarsana, appears on the coins of the Bharasiva-nagas, the devotees of Siva. It is possible that the three-forked palm standard of Sankarsana may have, in its genesis, some affinity with the trident of Siva. Incidentally, it is worthy of note that the god Siva is also intimately associated with nagas.

One of the prominent characteristics of Sankarsana is his association with agriculture. The god Siva is also intimately associated with fertility and agriculture. He is usually worshipped in the form of a phallic emblem. Scholars hold that his worship prevails mostly among the agriculturist classes.
Both Siva and Sankarsana are known as musalin, the wielder of the pestle, an implement for cleaning rice. In the case of Sankarsana, the agricultural aspect is very much in evidence as he figures as holding the pestle and the plough. The Visnu Purana narrates how the river Yamuna changed its course on being pulled by his ploughshare, and how Hastinapura, pushed by his pestle (musala), became inclined towards the Ganga. He is stated to have killed the monkey demon Dvivida that destroyed crops. The term ‘sankarsana’ literally means the act of ploughing or furrowing, and it bears witness to his agricultural character. The association of the nagas with fertility is well known, and the agricultural character of the god Sankarsana further supports his naga origin.

The Arthasastra speaks of Sankarsana as a deity of the ascetics with shaved head or braided hair. Traditionally, Sesa–Sankarsana himself is said to be a great yogi, the teacher of the whole universe, who himself taught the Bhagavata-dharma described in the Sattvata Sastra. The Mahabharata records that Sankarsana expounded the sattvata-vidhi or the sattvata mode of worship at the end of the Dvapara and the beginning of the Kali.

In the Vyúha cosmogony, he is said to perform his functions through bala (power) in view of his being Baladeva, but, sometimes, through jnaana (knowledge). The work Visnudharmottara equates him with knowledge. It further associates him specifically with the Pancaraatra knowledge.

It is curious that the pre-Aryan fertility god Siva is also conceived as a great yogi and ascetic. Incidentally, the word ‘yoga’ is sourced in yoke meaning an agricultural implement. Some scholars speak of the ‘homology between yogin in the state of concentration and plant life, and the coalescence of one or the other form of yoga with agricultural magic’. All this is suggestive that the association of Sankarsana and Siva with agriculture grew out of the magical rites accompanying agriculture.

The worship of Sankarsana appears to have been quite popular in the fourth century BC. Megasthenes seems to have recorded that the Greek author (referring to Dionysus) states that the Indians speak of three individuals of the same name appearing in different ages, and they assign different achievements to each of them. The oldest of these is Indos, apparently the same as Indra, ‘who crushed grapes and discovered the use of the properties of wine’. It is said that Dionysus was aware of the method of growing figs and other fruit trees, and taught this knowledge to others whence he was called Lenaios. This name may be a corruption of Lingin, a name of Siva. The third god, spoken of in this context, is Katapogon. Megasthenes states that he was so named, as it is a custom among Indians to grow their beards with great care. Evidently, Katapogon is the same as the Kapardin meaning one wearing braided and matted hair. The epithet is usually applied to Siva; but it may have been applied to Sankarsana, too, as the worshippers of Sankarsana were said to wear braided (jatila) hair. At any rate, the three gods are apparently Indra, Siva and Sankarsana, all associated with wine and renowned for their bacchanalian habits.

Nevertheless, Sankarsana-Baladeva appears as a Vrsni hero, the elder brother of Vaasudeva-Krsna in Mahabharata. The historicity of the Mahabharata legends is generally accepted without critical evaluation. On the other hand, Sesa-Sankarsana, a naga divinity, was identified with Baladeva of the Vrsnis, who was not a deified hero, but an associate male god of the tribal Vrsni goddess Ekanamsa.

The inscriptions of the first century BC bracket Sankarsana and Vaasudeva. Patanjali seems to have known the legends of the two gods in their more or less present form. He mentions Baladeva and Vaasudeva among the Vrsni names, and speaks of Krsna as second to Sankarsana, thereby indicating their relationship. Some other epithets of Sankarsana such as Rauhineya, the son of Rohini,
Langalin, the wielder of the plough, and Rama (Balarama) are also mentioned in the Mahabhasya. Evidently, the identification of Sankarsana with Baladeva of the Vrsni lineage was accomplished long before Patanjali.

The epigraphic and the literary sources indicate that, in the beginning, Sankarsana and Vaasudeva were placed on an equal footing, and the position of the former was in no way inferior to that of the latter. An inscription of the first century BC gives precedence to Sankarsana as it records ‘Sankarsana-Vaasudevaabhyam’, and describes him as Bhagavat and Sarvesvara, along with Vaasudeva. Another inscription of the same period found in a cave at Nanaghat invokes the two deities in a similar fashion. Later, with the development of the Vyuha theology, Sankarsana is invariably mentioned after Vaasudeva in the texts of the Gupta period. This establishes that in the first century BC, the popularity and prestige of Sankarsana was quite undiminished.

A passage in Mahabharata (I.189.31) states that Sankarsana and Vaasudeva were incarnations of two attributes of the supreme God Narayana-Visnu. Thus, both are considered partial incarnations of a great god. Sankarsana is described as the first born, the older of the two.

The existence of a powerful cult of Sesa is in evidence as a passage in the Mahabharata (XII.271.50) states that some people describe the highest region as that of Visnu, some as that of Brahma, some as that of Nara and some others as that of Sesa. The Ramayana (III.14.7) speaks of Sesa as one of the Prajapatis, the progenitors. The cult may have been originally totemistic.

The cosmogony myth of Sesa balancing the world on his thousand-hoods is often referred to in the epics. Sometimes he is described as transformation, or a form of the god Narayana-Visnu, as in Mahabharata (III.187.10). Garuda once tried but failed to find the end of the serpent, identical with Visnu and Baladeva.

But, later, the cult of Sesa-Sankarsana became subordinate to the syncretistic divinity Narayana-Vaasudeva. In a passage of Mahabharata (V.154.31), Baladeva admits frankly that he could not dare cast his eyes on the world without the favour of Krsna, and so he followed and assisted Kesava in whatever he wished to achieve.

Traditionally Visnu is described as resting on the serpent Sesa, lying on the waters. The myth indicates the subordination of the non-brahminical divinity of agricultural masses to the brahminical god Narayana-Visnu. The Bhagavatapurana (X.78.21f) states of the murder of a brahmin by Sankarsana, which he had to expiate by going on a long pilgrimage.

The alliance of the cult of Sankarsana with that of Vaasudeva and Narayana must have promoted the cult of Vaisnavism by winning over a large number of agricultural populations to its fold. But it also pushed the worship of Sankarsana-Baladeva into the background, as, in the vyuha theology, he came to occupy a mere emanatory form of the supreme god Vaasudeva-Narayana.

The Puranic tradition describes Revati, the daughter of the King Raivata, as the wife of Baladeva. The Visnupurana (IV.1.67f) states that the King Raivata went to heaven to seek the advice of Brahma in seeking a bridegroom for his daughter. By the time he returned to the earth, millions of years had passed by and people had become much shorter in height. The king gave Revati to Balarama in marriage. With a view to curbing her undue height, Balarama bent her down with the point of his plough (V.95).
A passage in Mahabharata (III.219.228) states that Revati is a disease-goddess and afflicts children. The Susruta (31.10-1) states that Revati is unusually tall, fierce and hunchbacked, wearing colourful garlands and earrings. Popular mythology seems to have postulated a matrimonial alliance between the two divinities.

The region of Mathura seems to have been the strong hold of Sankarsana-Baladeva worship. Most of his exploits such as dragging of the river Yamuna, killing of the demons Dhenuka, Pralamba and Dvivida are set in this location. The Visnupurana (V.251f) states that Krsna, having once left Vraja for Dvaraka, never returns. But Baladeva comes back to dally with the cowherds and to drink the wine that flows out of a kadamba tree in Vrndavan. The Bhagavatapurana (VI.14-6) describes how Citraketu, the king of the Surasena country, after purifying himself with a bath in the Kalindi River (Jamna) received the mantropadesh, which enabled him to have a vision of Lord Sankarsana. Naga worship appears to have been very popular in the Mathura region. A large number of naga statues have been discovered in its vicinity.

In the centuries just preceding the Christian era, the worship of Sankarsana was quite popular. There is considerable archaeological and literary evidence, apart from the two inscriptions stated earlier, indicating the popularity of his cult during this period. A stone idol of Sankarsana attributed to the second century BC, discovered near Mathura, is now preserved in the Lucknow museum. It has a snake-canopy, and holds a plough in one of its hands. Two fan-palm capitals discovered among the ruins of Besnagar, and one at Pawaya, in the former state of Gwalior, now in Rajasthan, indicate the existence of temples of Sankarsana at these places in the second and the first centuries, BC. The Mahabhasya of Patanjali also speaks of the temples of Balarama and Kesava. A passage occurring in the Buddhist canonical commentary, the Niddesa of the first century BC, refers to the worship of Baladeva.

In the post-Christian era, references to Sankarsana are rather rare. The Nasik cave inscription of 149 AD compares Gautamiputra Satakarni to Rama, that is Balarama, and Kesava, in progress. There is no epigraphic mention of the deity in the third century AD.

There is a reference to Sankarsana in the opening verse of Swapnavaasavadatta of Bhasa, and in some early Tamil poetic literature. Nakkirar, an early Tamil poet of the third century AD, compares his patron, a Pandya king, to Siva, Baladeva, Krsna and Subrahmanya in various qualities. Silappadhikaram, a work of the fifth-sixth century AD, speaks of the existence of the temples of these four gods in Madurai and Kaveripattanam. This is evidence that in the South, the worship of Sankarsana-Baladeva flourished unabated till the sixth century AD.

The discovery of a number of fragmentary images of the deity Sankarsana in the Mathura art of the Kusana and the Gupta periods indicates the continuance of his worship in the North also. The Gadhwa stone inscription of 468 AD speaks of the installation of an image of Anantaswamin, who appears to have been a form of Sesa-Sankarsana. Another inscription of the last quarter of the fifth century AD, found near Gawhati, records the construction of a cave temple for Bhagvat Balabhadraswamin.

Sculptures found at Mandor in Rajasthan, and Paharpur in Bengal relating to the fourth and the sixth centuries AD respectively, depict the exploits of Balarama. They portray him more as the elder brother and associate of Krsna than an independent deity. The rock-cut statues of Balarama and Revati, discovered at Rupabasa in the former state of Bharatpur, are reckoned among the best specimens of the Gupta art.

With the growing popularity of Vaasudeva-Visnu, the cult of Sankarsana ultimately lost ground. The later iconographic texts make a distinction between the incarnate and emanatory acolyte...
form of Sankarsana. In the former, he retains traces of his naga and agricultural origins. But in the latter, he becomes quite indistinguishable from Vaasudeva-Visnu. The only distinction between an emanatory image of the Vyuha-Sankarsana, and of Vaasudeva-Visnu is only in the order of emblems held in the hands of the images. The emblems held by both the images are the same, but the order or sequence of the emblems in the hands is different. This only shows that the personality of god Sankarsana was completely absorbed into that of Visnu, as time passed by.

Thus, it may be seen that Sankarsana was originally a non-Vedic, non-brahminical agricultural divinity with considerable following among the masses. He was identified with Baladeva of Vrsnis prior to the second century BC. This led to the alliance of his cult with that of the god Narayana-Vaasudeva, which in course of time completely dominated it, and absorbed it into its ever-expanding fold.

**Pancaraatra**

The narayaniya section of the Mahabhagavata describes the worshippers of the Supreme Deity Narayana-Visnu-Vaasudeva as saattvatas, bhaagavatas, pancaraatraas and ekaantins. While the terms saattvatas and ekaantins are related to specific clan groups of devotees, the bhaagavatas and the pancaraatraas are connected genetically with Narayana. While the term bhagavata is connected to the concept of Narayana as Bhagavat, the interpretation of the term pancaraatra needs investigation.

As a name of the worshippers of Narayana, the term pancaraatra occurs, for the first time, in the narayaniya. Apparently, the epithet pancaraatrika means the performance of the pancaraatra sacrifice stated in the Satapatha Brahmana.

Pancaraatra samhitas and other related literature do not throw adequate light on the concept of pancaraatra. According to Narada Pancaraatra, raatra means knowledge. Hence Pancaraatra is a system, which deals with five kinds of knowledge, namely, cosmology (tattva), the science of liberation (muktiprada), the science of devotion (bhaktiprada), the science of yoga (yaugika), and that of pertaining to senses (vaisesika). But the other extant pancaraatra samhitas do not subscribe to this line of thought. Further, the text of the Narada Pancaraatra does not also testify to this scheme.

According to the Isvara Samhita, the religion taught by God to the five sages Sandilya, Aupagaayana, Maunjayana, Kausika and Bharadvaja in five successive days and nights came to be known among the people as pancaraatra.

According to the Srip rasna Samhita, raatri means nescience (ajnaana), and panca derived from the root pac means that which
cooks or destroys. Hence *pancaraatra* is the system that destroys ignorance.

According to Padma Tantra, the system is so named because, just as the sun dispels the night, the *Pancaraatra* dispels the other five systems namely, the Yoga, Samkhya, Buddhism, Jainism and Paasupata.

According to a passage in the Agnipurana, the five elements (*pancabhutah*) forming the body of Brahma are known as *pancaraatar*. Some scholars contend that the term *raatra* originally denotes ‘element’, and those who regard the creation to consist of the five elements are described as *pancaraatrins*, and those who consider the creation to consist of seven elements are considered as *saptaraatrins*, and so on.

There is another view that the reverence shown to the five Vrsni heroes Sankarsana, Vaasudeva, Pradyumna, Saamba and Aniruddha may have been the reason why the cult worshipping the said heroes is known as *Pancaraatra*.

The Parama Samhita, an early *pancaraatra* text, states that the five primary elements (*pancamahabhutah*), the subtle elements (*tanmatrah*), individuation (*ahamkara*), mind (*buddhi*) and unmanifest (*avvyakta*) – these five are the *raatra* (the body or the gifts) of Purusa, and are described as *pancaraatra*.

The Ahirbudhnya Samhita, one of the earliest *pancaraatra* works, states that the system which recognizes the fivefold forms of the deity, namely, the *para* (transcendent), *vyuha* (emanatory), *vibhava* (incarnatory), *antaryamin* (immanent) and *arcaa* (that which resides in idols and images) forms is known as *pancaraatra*. The believers in the fivefold manifestation of the deity are known as *pancaraatrins*. The doctrine of *pancaraatra sattra* appears to have evolved to develop the principle of the five forms of the deity Narayana.

But the concept of the fivefold nature of the deity Narayana does not appear in the *narayaniya* or the earlier *pancaraatra* literature such as the Sattvata Samhita, the Jayakhya Samhita, etc. It is, therefore, logical to presume that the concept of the fivefold nature of the deity Narayana is a later systematization when the *pancaraatra* theology had already reached a high state of development.

The Mahabharatha connects Narayana with the *sraaddha* ceremony, funeral rites performed in honour of the departed spirits of dear relatives. The rite of *narayana-bali* is also developed into a kind of *sraaddha*. In both these rituals, the offering of black sesame (*tila*) is an essential rite. Further, Narayana is not mentioned in the Veda as a deity. In this background, the *bhagavata-pancaraatra* faith is considered non-Vedic.

The literature of the *Pancaratras* is voluminous, comprising both revealed and non-revealed matter. The *Pancaraatra* texts such as Sriprasna Samhita and Isvara Samhita trace the origin of their system to the Ekayana-sakha, now extinct, of the Rigveda, mentioned in the Chandogya Upanisad. The Isvara Samhita says that the Ekayana Veda was the source of all other Vedas, and that it originated with Vaasudeva and existed in its earliest stage at the root of all other Vedas, which were introduced at a later stage and were, therefore, called ‘vikara Vedas’, according to Dasgupta.

By the time of the epics and the puranas, the *Pancaratras* had already gained an honoured place among the Sastras. Skandapurana reckons them as one of the Sastras. The Varahapurana not only places the *Pancaraatra* on par with the Vedas but also opines that where Vedic mantras are not available, one may worship according to *pancaraatra* rites. *Pancaraatra*, however,
lays emphasis on rituals and worship, though, on the practical side, the *pancaratrikas* teach the cult of *naiskarmya*.

The metaphysics of the *Pancaratras* is essentially theistic. Sankara makes it clear that the *pancaratrikas* teach Vaasudeva to be the Supreme Being with all auspicious attributes, and that the manifestations of the Lord - Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Samkarsana are, at the same time, identical with original (*mularupa*) Vaasudeva, in essence and in attributes. This establishes that, on the *pancaratrika* view, there is no distinction of substance and attributes in God or among His various manifestations. This view is further elaborated in the *pancaratrika* works such as Paramopanisad and the Brahmatarka. The doctrine attributed to the *bhagavatas* is in line also with the other *pancaratrika* works such as Naradapancaratra, Padma Tantra, Mahavara, Caturvedasikha, etc.

Ramajuna quotes from Parama-samhita, a *pancaratrika* work to prove conclusively that the metaphysics of *Pancaratra* is out and out realistic, recognizing an eternal matter, *prakriti* and equally coexistent souls. The individual soul transmigrates on account of beginningless *karma* associated with *vasanas*, at the will of God. For removal of these *vasanas*, a certain power emanates from the Brahman. Impelled by His will, it works within the inner microcosm of man to free the *jiva* from bondage and reveal innate bliss to him.

The *Pancaraatra* Samhitas lay great emphasis on the attainment of knowledge, and the practice of the eightfold *yoga*. The emphasis on *yoga* and yogic practices indicates the association of the ascetics with the cult.

The following are among the available *Pancaratra* Samhitas and Tantras.

- Agastya-Samhita
- Aniruddha-Samhita
- Ahirbuddhnya Samhita
- Brahma-Samhita
- Brihat-Brahma-Samhita
- Isvara-Samhita
- Kapinjala-Samhita
- Gautama-Samhita
- Citrasikhandi-Samhita
- Jayakhyya-Samhita
- Jayottara-Samhita
- Nalakubara-Samhita
- Naradiya-Samhita
- Pancprasna-Samhita
- Parama-Samhita
- Paramapurusa-Samhita
- Parasara-Samhita
- Padma-Samhita
- Paramesvara-Samhita
- Purusottama-Samhita
- Puskara-Samhita
- Bharadvaja-Samhita
- Bhargava-Tantra
- Mayavaibhava-Samhita
- Markandeya-Samhita
- Laksmi Tantra
- Varaha-Samhita
- Vasistha-Samhita
- Visva-Samhita
- Visvamitra-Samhita
- Visnutattva-Samhita
- Visnu Tantra
Visnu-Samhita
Visvaksena-Samhita
Vihagendra-Samhita
Vrddha-Padma-Samhita
Srip rasna-Samhita
Sanatkumara-Samhita
Sat tsvata-Samhita
Hayasirs Sa mhita