

MOKSHA IN VISISHTADVAITA PHILOSOPHY

By

Dr. R. Parthasarathy, B.E., F.I.E., M.A., Ph.D.,



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IN MY OPINION

Among the four Purusharthas, 'Moksha' is named as Paramapurushartha. In one sense it is the freedom from the cycle of death and birth. In psychological sense, it is self-realization and self-knowledge. Many a scholars, schools of Philosophy have defined Moksha in their own styles. The various Orthodox schools of Hinduism state their views in different ways like Moksha is a continuous event that extends from life to post-mortem. Likewise various Upanishads describe their own specific practice to attain Moksha. But this Vidya is beyond the knowledge and reach of common people. The Bhagavad-gita specifies on, what sort of persons reach Paramapada and the effect of Triguna on man at the time of death. It states that Lord Sri Krishna is the only refuge who removes all sins and grants Moksha.

The Alvars and Acharyas have brought Moksha to the reach of one and all, removing the barriers of Varnashrama, Gender and Castes. Many Saints have expressed their ideologies about Moksha through their works. Nammalwar in his Tiruvaymoli has brought out the secret meanings of Vedas in Tamil Language, for the benefit of those who are denied the access to study Vedas. Ramanuja in his Vaikunta Gadya states that the devotees should always be eager to realize the bliss of Srivaikunta and should always feel that Sriman Narayana should be their only Goal. He saw Sriman Narayana through Yogic Vision at Srivaikunta.

Many others like Kuruttalwar, Vastya Varadaguru, Pillai Lokacharya, Vedanta Desika have detailed their views for reaching the final Goal Moksha. To brief, the objective of this book is to present the concept of Moksha, the eligibility of persons for its

attainment, the departure of the soul, the journey to and the full and perfect enjoyment of bliss of Brahman.

I am happy to present before you this book written by Dr.R.Parthasarathy, who has in detail put-forth his best knowledge about the ultimate Goal 'Moksha'. In my opinion this book will definitely have its impact on the readers who are interested in Philosophy, Hindu Religion.

In the Service of Lord Venkateswara


Executive Officer,

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams,
Tirupati.

Preface

The *Visishtadvaita* Philosophy upholds *Tatva-Hia - Purushartha*, Realities - Means - Goal (a) *Tatva*, called as *Tatva traya*, i.e., three fold. They are (i) *Brahman-Eshwara-God*, (ii) *Chith - Jiva - Soul*, and (iii) *Prakruti - Achith - Nature*. The entire universe of living beings *Chith* and inanimate matter *Achith* is the body of the God who is the inner soul of every entity. (b) *Hia* (the way or means) by which individual soul reaches the ultimate destination. They are (i) *Karma yoga*, (ii) *Gnana yoga*, (iii) *Bhakti yoga*, (iv) *Prapatti* and (v) *Acharyabhimana* (devotion to Acharya) (c) *Purushartha* (the goal of human endeavour) is five fold namely *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, *Kaivalya* and *Moksha*. While *Dharma* is religiosity, *Artha* is economic development, *Kama* is sense gratification, *Kaivalya* is enjoyment of the soul (*atmaanubhava*) and *Moksha* is enjoyment of the Lord and Liberation (*Bhagavad Anubhava*). Out of all these *Moksha* is considered as the *parama - Purushartha*, the Supreme goal of human endeavour.

The objective of this work "*Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy*," is to present the concept of *Moksha*, the eligibility of persons for attainment, the departure of the soul, the journey of the soul through the *Archiradhi marga* to *Srivaikunta*, where he attains the ultimate goal, namely *mukti*. This *mukti* is *Paripurna Brahmanubhava* and is of the nature of perfect and full enjoyment of *Paramatma*. This

enjoyment does not stop there, but overflows into service to Paramatma - service of all kinds, at all times and under all situations, for which there is no end - in a region from which there is no return, (*Sarvadesa-sarvakala-sarvavasthoachith-sarvavidha-kainkarya*) as elucidated in *Visishtadvaita* Philosophy.

Etymology: *Moksha* is derived from the root mu (n) c (in Sanskrit) which means free, let go, release, liberate. In Vedas and early Upanishads, the word *mucyate* (in Sanskrit) appears, which means to be set free or release - such as of a horse from its harness.

The definition and meaning of *Moksha* varies among various schools of Indian religions. *Moksha* means freedom, Liberation from rebirth or *samsara*. This Liberation can be attained while one is on earth (*jivanmukti*), according to *Advaita* or eschatologically (*karmamukti*, *videhamukti*); as per *Dvaita* and *Visishtadvaita*, *Moksha* is the state of *paripurna-brahmanubhava* (oneness with Brahma, the One Supreme Self), a state of knowledge, peace and bliss. *Moksha* is also called *vimoksha*, *vimukti* and *mukti*, means emancipation, Liberation or release. In eschatological sense, it connotes freedom from *samsara* “the cycle of death and rebirth”. In epistemological and psychological sense, *moksha* connotes freedom, self-realization and self-knowledge.

There are many routes to *moksha*. There are routes for those who had acquired an eligibility to enter

Paramapada through various *Upasanas* and *Vidyas* prescribed in *Bhaktiyoga*. (i) those who practice *Madhuviddya* obtain positions like those of *Vasus*. (ii) those who meditate on the four faced Brahma as the body of Narayana reach his *Satyaloka* and stay with him till the end of Brahma's life called *Pralaya* when dissolution takes place and having fulfilled themselves they enter the highest seat *Paramapada* along with him; So says *Kurma Purana*. (iii) certain others reach *Aniruddha* and after staying with Him for some time they go to *Pradyumna*, then to *Sankarshana* and finally to *Paravasudeva* (Narayana) (iv) *Jayakhya Samhita* mentions another route for *Bhaktas* who practice some other *Vidyas*. They go from here to *Svetadweepa* and reach *Hari* who has the Universe as His Form. Then, they reach *Hari* in his form as *Aniruddha* who is in the Ocean of Milk. From there, they go to *Hari* who is the Lord of Brahma and all others. Then, they proceed to *Sankarshana* and finally to the Eternal *Bhagavan*, *Vasudeva*. These are known as ‘*Krama Mukti*’ (Release by gradation) and are applicable to those who practice *Bhakti yoga*. (v) For *Prapannas*, those who have undergone *Prapatti*, the simplest, shortest, surest, and settled route is the royal route of *Archiradhi marga*.

The Journey towards Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy : He, the omniscient Lord, who resides in the shuttle space in the heart (*Harda*) like a father who enters the muddy tank to rescue His

child that has fallen inside, at the time of departure, at the time of death, avoiding the *nadis* that lead to *swarga* or *naraka*, escorts the Jiva through the 101st *nadi*, called *murdhanya nadi*, and set out with the support of the rays of the Sun, in the shining path, *Archiradhi* to the eternal *Srivaikunta*.

The attainment of Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy: After reaching the *Srivaikunta* the Jiva is transformed into *suddha satva* called *mukta*. The *mukta* is a released soul, has the Bliss of Paramatma which is full, continuous, eternal, clear and having no other end in view. There is no return of the *Mukta* to *samsara*. Therefore the ultimate goal of attainment known as *mukti* is eternal for him and it will last forever. This *mukti* is '*Paripurna Brahmanubhava*' and is of the nature of perfect and full enjoyment of Paramatma and all that pertains to Him-His essential nature (*swarupa*), delightful form (*vigraha*), auspicious qualities (*kalyana guna*) and glorious processions (*Nithya* and *Lila vibhuti*). This enjoyment does not stop there, but overflows into service to *Paramatma* - service of all kinds, at all times and under all situations, for which there is an end - in a region from which there is no return. (*Sarvadesa-sarvakala-sarvavasthoachita-sarvavidha-kainkarya*). The Lord restores to *mukta* essential nature with the eight qualities viz, being free from Sin, Old age, Death, Sorrow, Hunger and Thirst, being endowed with all desired objects and an unhindered will. (*Satya-kama and Satya-sankalpa*). The Upanishad statement that the

mukta is one with Paramatma refers only to the equal enjoyment of the wisdom and bliss of the Brahman - (*Sanyam*) Equality.

Prescription for moksha by Nammalwar (AD 600): The entire *Tiruvaymoli* is considered as the means to *moksha*, *moksha upaya*. Nammalwar in the (*phalasaruti*) fruit of recitation of *Tiruvaymoli* has stated in 88 places that those who recite those verses will reach *paramapada*, rising above the Devas and cut as the bonds of the birth-death cycle. The Alwar in his *Tiruvaymoli* (9.1 0.5) celebrates the Lord as granter of *moksha* after death (*maranamaanal vaikuntam kottukkum piran*).

The impact of Tiruvaymoli in temple worship and the social life of Srivaishnavas: In temples on the concluding day of the '*pakal pathu, rapathu utsavam*' the entire verses of *Tiruvaymoli* are recited by the Srivaishnava goshti, in the presence of the Lord and the Alwars, to signify Nammalwar's ascent to *Srivaikunta*. Selected decades of *Tiruvaymoli* called as *Koil Tiruvaymoli* are recited. In the Srivaishna families in case of death of their members, when the body is washed and caste marks are applied, atleast one hundred verses of *Tiruvaymoli* are chanted to mark the longing of the soul to reach the Lotus Feet of God. Similarly on the conclusion of the 13th day, *Tiruvaymoli* is chanted by group of devotees to signify the Liberation of the soul.

Ramanuja (AD 1017-1137) the ocean of mercy, brought *moksha* in reach of everyone. Ramanuja

conquered the other religious faiths and established the Supremacy of Srīman Narayana, who is the goal and means. *Bhakti* and *Prapatti*, devotion and surrender were specified as the easy and direct means to *moksha*. Ramanuja advocated oneness of God and oneness of humanity. Full of mercy and compassion to uplift the entire humanity, he made no discrimination among people. Anyone with desire was accepted in the fold of Srīvaishnavas, irrespective of differences in gender, caste, *varnashrama* discriminations. The Acharyas performed *Panchasamskara*, the purification ceremony for the body, speech and mind that includes initiation of *Tirumantra*, *Dvaya mantra* and *Charama sloka*. The disciple is named afresh (with addition of *dasa* at the end of his name as Ramanuja *dasa*). The three objectives of religion - devotion to God, devotion to devotees of God and devotion to Acharya were taught. Ramanuja established *Sribhashya parampara*, *Rasasya parampara* and *Bhagavad Vishaya parampara*. He decentralized the single preceptor system which was in practice and nominated 74 *Simhasenadhipatis* to administer the *darshan*. With his concern for the whole humanity Ramanuja brought *moksha* to the reach of common man. There is no wonder that Ramanuja is worshipped as Empermanar. Even today the Acharya parampara established by Ramanuja is serving the whole community.

The eligibility for securing *moksha*: The Acharya understanding the limitations of his disciple

performs *Panchasamskara* and *Prapatti*, Acharya - *nishtha*, to the Lotus Feet of the Lord and secures *moksha* easily to the disciple. The followers of Tenkalai *sampradaya* include as part of *Panchasamskara* surrender to the Lord through the Acharya who introduces the initiation to the Lord and request him to be saved by the virtue of the *Prapatti* that Ramanuja performed in the *Saranagatigadya*. The followers of Vadagalai *sampradaya* practice *Prapatti*, the surrender to the Lord, quite separate from *Panchasamskara*. They usually consider *Prapatti* until later in life.

Prapanna is one who had performed *Prapatti*. *Saranagata* is one who had surrendered to the Lord. *Mumukshu* is the seeker of *moksha*. All have the same objective of attainment of Liberation.

Pillai Lokacharya (AD 1213-1323) in his *Srivachana-Bhushana* (sutras 96, 97) explains that the Jiva with qualities *Samam* (tranquility) and *Tamamum* (self restraint) gets hold of Acharya, the holy mantra and the Lord, having reached the Lord, the land of attainment, *Vaikunta* comes within his reach.

Vedanta Desika (AD 1268-1369) in his *Paramapada sōpanam* states that the Lord has constructed the nine stepped path to get his *adiyars* there. They are *Viveka*, *Nirveda*, *Virakti*, *Bheeti*, *Prasadhana*, *Uthkramana*, *Archiradhi*, *Divya Desa Prapti* and *Prapti*. These steps have to be ascended one by one and there is no way to jump over them in an inconsequential manner.

The contents of the books are briefed as follows. The Chapter 1 is Introduction. The Chapters 2 and 3

elucidate the Soul's journey as described in the *Upanishads*, and *Bhagavad-gita*. The Chapter 4 presents Nammalwar's prescription of *moksha*. The meanings of the (phalasaruties) fruits of reChithation of 88 decades have been listed. The Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present Nammalwar's experiences of *Archiradhi marga*, Ascent to *Srivaikunta*, and Enjoyment of the Lord's exquisite form. The Chapter 8 describes the *Archiradhi* of Pillai Lokacharya. In his composition of *Archiradhi*, the journey, reception, description and enjoyment of the Lord has quoted 210 references from the works of the Alwars out of which 140 are from the *Tiruvaymoli* of Nammalwar. The Chapter 9 details the nine steps to *moksha* from the *Paramapada sopanam* of Vedanta Desika. The chapter 10 elucidates the departure of the soul. The Chapter 11 describes The journey of the soul and the Chapter 12 provides a beautiful picture of the full and perfect enjoyment of the Bliss of *Brahman*. The Chapters 10, 11 and 12 are based on the *Rahasya Traya Sara*, of Vedanta Desika. To make his concept authoritative the author has quoted 71 references from various sources. The Chapter 13 presents *moksha* - with reference to *Sri Vishnu Sahasranama*. The Chapter 14 describes *Srivaikunta* - the ultimate destination, The Lord and The Bliss. The descriptions are based on *Srimad Bhagavata*, *Vishnu purana*, *Mahabharata*, *Vaikunta gadya* and *Vaikunta stava*. The Chapter 15 pictures The *Nithya -Vibhuti*,- the world of eternal splendour,

where the Lord's assembly hall, divine throne, Mukta's ascent, prayer and state of release are detailed. The Chapter 16 is the Conclusion.

As the subject discussed is of high end Philosophy, transcendental and beyond the comprehension we have to rely on the statements of *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad -gita*, *Srimad Bhagavata*, *Vishnu purana*, and *Mahabharata*. The works and experiences of the Alwars and Acharyas are the authority. Hence, a number of references have been quoted from Nammalwar, Ramanuja, Kuttandavan Pillai, Lokacharya, Vastya Varada Guru and Vedanta Desika. We could notice the oneness in their messages.

A tourist who wants to visit a foreign country plans his trip ahead, collects details of places for visit from various catalogues and through persons, who had visited earlier, plans his travel ticket, Visa etc. He starts to dream about the pleasure and happiness of his visit. As the day of travel is nearer he gets exChithed and likes to share his happiness. Similarly it is no wonder that the Prapanna who has been assured of his journey to destination at the end of his present life, starts to devote his time to study, understand and contemplate more about the *Nithya-vibhuti*, *Srivaikunta*, the Lord, the journey and the enjoyment of eternal Bliss, of services awaiting at *Paramapada*. He spends his post-prapatti life in accepting whatever comes to as the grace of God, performs actions with dedication, to please the God (*Sriman Narayana preethyartham*) or as a

form of service to God (*Bhagavad Kainkarya rupam*), spend his days without fear or burden. Like a bride, whose marriage is fixed, eagerly waiting for the day of wedding, the Prapanna is looking for the day of his departure from this world.

Ramanuja says that the vision of *Srivaikunta* and the Lord should be remembered every day atleast once so as to sustain oneself. That is why he says, “*tatascha pratyaham atmo jjeevanya evamanusmarathe*”. He adds that the devotees should be eager to realize this bliss and should be itching to be taken into His service. *Sriman Narayana* should be the only goal. Ramanuja states that one should show desire to call Him and use Him for doing eternal services, of all types, at all places, at all times to Him (*Sarva desa, Sarvakala, Sarvavastha Chitha atyanta seshabhavaya*).

In daily meditation, the Prapanna reminds himself of the *Archiradhimarga* since such remembrance becomes an end in itself, producing a keen delight in knowing that very soon he would be treading the same path to *moksha*. Srivaishnavas start their daily worship with surrender to Sri Paravasudeva with four arms, holding conch, disc, mace and Lotus, who is accompanied by His Consorts Sri, Bhumi and Nila devis, chanting (*Kurmadin divya lokam tadanu manimayam mantapam tatrasesam senesam dvarapalan kumudamukhaganan vishnu bhaktan prapadye*).

I hope that the book will be welcomed by all. The *Prapannas* would be delighted, while the non-

Prapannas would be influenced to seek out, surrender to an Acharya and save their souls. *Srimathe Ranga Ramanujaya Namaha*. I surrender at the Lotus Feet of my Acharya Srimad Srimushnam Andavan, and invoke his blessings. His grace has given me the knowledge, capacity and confidence in compiling this work.

I pay my obeisance to my father, Sri. U.Ve. Chetlur Serangulam Sri Ranganathacharya Swamy (1902-1997), *kalakshepa adhikari* under the guidance of Srimad Vedanta Ramanuja Maha Desika (Srimad Tirukudanthai Andavan). His blessings are responsible for my interest in spiritual studies.

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* * *

1. Introduction

Prelude:

Any intelligent person will have queries like “Why am I suffering through the process of birth, old age, disease and death?”, “What is death?”, “What happens after death?”, “What is Liberation?”, “How does and by what means does one achieve Freedom?”. This work is dedicated to provide answers to all the above questions and much more.

The very first step in religion is the understanding the true nature of the soul (*Jiva*), and the realization that the physical body is not the soul. The visible body is not the whole reality. The *Jiva* is not only different from the body but also from the various sense organs and mind which vary from body to body. The body and sense organs will perish, but the soul (*Jiva*) is indestructible, (*avinashika*) is not born and die (*najayate mriyate va*) and is eternal (*nityam*). The soul is not apparently visible, is incomprehensible and unchangeable.

The *Chandogya-Upanishad*, states that what produces a child is not the father or the mother. It is the whole cosmos that produces the child. The universe is the parent of this little baby. It may be a human baby, a sub-human one or a super-human form. The *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad* states in its own beautiful style, the way in which the soul can assume various forms, psychic as well as physical. The goldsmith does not create new gold. He only creates a

new shape of the gold after melting it in a furnace. That is how he prepares ornaments, etc. Likewise, the material forces, earth, water, fire, air, and sky are the elements out of which bodies are formed. The present body is made up of these elements. The carpenter can arrange the pieces of wood in various ways according to the need or the requirement of the time. But the wood is the same. It is not a new wood that he is using. Likewise, they are the same elements that work wherever you go, whatever be the birth that you take, and whichever be the shape the soul assumes in whichever realm, in its new incarnation. The psychology or philosophy of rebirth is “As is the desire, so is the will; as is the will, so is the action. And as is the action, so is the consequence, or the result there of”. The actions which were performed earlier, having produced results correspondingly, bind the soul once again, so that the body which was shed has gone, but a new body comes.”

The *Chandogya-Upanishad* very extensively explains with ‘*Panchagni vidya*’ (a special treatise on the journey of the soul from death to rebirth) according to which such a soul passes through five fires after falling down from Moon (*Apram*) viz. (i) Heaven (*Swarga*) where the soul enjoys the fruits of the extraordinary good deeds and falls into the sky (*Sraddha*). (ii) After enjoying, the soul enters the rain bearing clouds (*Soman*). (iii) Then, along with the rains (*Vrishti*), it comes down to earth and is united with paddy, etc., that grow on earth. (iv) When the food

(*Annam*) made out of these is consumed by the male, the soul gets into his seminal fluid. (v) When the male and the female unite, this creative fluid (*Retas*) enters the womb of the female and subsequently born into this world on delivery.

The concept of transmigration of the soul, the central theme of Hinduism, imparts the much needed solace to the troubled minds of those fearing death. It presents the prospect of death as a welcome experience not to feel sorry about, prepares us to cast off our mortal coils.

Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* (4.5) states that many births have been passed by Him and Arjuna. He knew them all, while Arjuna knew not. Lord Krishna in *gita* (4.10) speaks of the path to salvation, that freed from attachment and fear, absorbed in Him, taking refuge in the Supreme Lord purified by the knowledge, concerning the Supreme that itself is the (*tapas*) austerity, many have attained oneness with Him, ie., (*moksha*) Liberation.

1.1. Moksha in Hindu traditions

Moksha is a central concept and included as one of the four goals of human life; the other three goals are *Dharma* (virtuous, proper, moral life), *Artha* (material prosperity, income security, means of life), and *Kama* (pleasure, sensuality, emotional fulfillment). Together, these four aims of life are called *Purushartha* in Hinduism. In eschatological sense, it connotes freedom from *samsara*, the cycle of death

and rebirth. In epistemological and psychological sense, *moksha* connotes freedom, self-realization and self-knowledge. The concept of *moksha* is found in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism.

1.2. Etymology

Moksha is derived from the root mu(n) c (in Sanskrit) which means free, let go, release, liberate. In Vedas and early Upanishads, the word *mucyate* (in Sanskrit) appears, which means to be set free or release - such as of a horse from its harness.

1.3. Definitions and meanings

The definition and meaning of *moksha* varies among various schools of Indian religions. *Moksha* means freedom, Liberation - from what and how is where the schools differ. *Moksha* is also a concept that means Liberation from rebirth or *samsara*. This Liberation can be attained while one is on earth (*jivanmukti*), or eschatologically (*karmamukti*, *videhamukti*). Some Indian traditions have emphasized Liberation on concrete, ethical action within the world. This Liberation is an epistemological transformation that permits one to see the truth and reality behind the fog of ignorance. *Moksha* has been defined not merely as absence of suffering and release from bondage to *samsara*, various schools of Hinduism also explain the concept as presence of the state of *paripurna-brahmanubhava* (oneness with Brahma, the One Supreme Self), a state of knowledge, peace and bliss. *Moksha* (Sanskrit *moksha*), also called *vimoksha*,

vimukti and *mukti*, means emancipation, Liberation or release. In eschatological sense, it connotes freedom from *samsara*, the cycle of death and rebirth. In epistemological and psychological sense, *moksha* connotes freedom, self-realization and self-knowledge.

1.4. Moksha in epistemological and psychological sense

The meaning of *moksha* in epistemological and psychological sense has been variously explained by scholars. Vedantic school separates this into two: *jivanmukti* (Liberation in this life) and *videhamukti* (Liberation after death). *Moksha* in this life includes psychological Liberation from *adhyasa* (fears besetting one's life) and *avidya* (ignorance or anything that is not true knowledge).

1.5. Concept of Moksha in the six major orthodox schools of Hinduism

The six major orthodox schools of Hinduism have had a historic debate, and disagree over whether *Moksha* can be achieved in this life, or only after this life. They offer the following views on *Moksha*, each for their own reasons: (i) the Nyaya, Vaiseshika and Mimamsa schools of Hinduism consider *moksha* as possible only after death. (ii) Sankhya and Yoga schools consider *moksha* as possible in this life. (iii) the Advaita school concludes *moksha* is possible in this life, (iv) while the Dvaita and Visishtadvaita schools believe that *moksha* is a continuous event, one assisted by loving devotion to God, that extends from this life

to post-mortem. Beyond these six orthodox schools, the heterodox schools of Hindu tradition, such as Charvaka, deny that there is a soul or after life or *moksha*.

1.6. Moksha according to different schools of Vedanta

The three main schools in Vedanta are - Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita - each have their own views about *MOKSHA*. (i) The Advaita tradition considers *moksha* achievable by removing *avidya* (ignorance). *Moksha* is seen as a final release from illusion, and through *anubhava* (knowledge) of one's own fundamental nature, which is *Sat-Chith-ananda*. Advaita holds there is no being/non-being distinction between *Atman*, *Brahman*, and *Paramatman*. The knowledge of Brahman leads to *moksha*, where Brahman is described as that which is the origin and end of all things, the universal principle behind and at source of everything that exists, consciousness that pervades everything and everyone. Advaita emphasizes Gnana Yoga as the means of achieving *MOKSHA*. Bliss, claims this school, is the fruit of (*vidya*) knowledge and (*karma*) work. (ii) The Dvaita tradition defines *moksha* as the loving, eternal union with God (Vishnu) and considered the highest perfection of existence. Dvaita schools suggest every soul encounters Liberation differently. Dualist schools see God as the object of love, for example, a personified monotheistic conception of Vishnu. By immersing oneself in the

love of God, one's karmas slough off, one's illusions decay, and truth is lived. Both the worshipped and the worshiper gradually lose their illusory sense of separation and only one beyond all names remains. This is salvation to dualist schools of Hinduism. Dvaita Vedanta emphasizes Bhakti Yoga as the means of achieving *moksha*. (iii) The Visishtadvaita tradition, defines *avidya* and *moksha* differently from the Advaita tradition. To *Sri Ramanuja*, *avidya* is a focus on Self, *vidya* infact focus on a loving God. The Visishtadvaita school argues that other schools of Hinduism are creating a false sense of agency in individuals, which makes the individual think oneself as potential or self-realized God. Such ideas, claims *Sri Ramanuja*, decay to materialism, hedonism and self-worship. Individuals forget *Eshwara* (God). Mukti, to the Visishtadvaita school, is release from such *avidya*, towards the intuition and eternal union with God (Vishnu).

1.7. Moksha referred in Upanishads

(i) In *Kathopanishad*, Yama explains that suffering and *samsara* results from a life that is lived absent-mindedly, with impurity, with neither the use of intelligence nor self-examination, where neither mind nor senses are guided by one's Atma (spirit). Liberation comes from a life lived with inner purity, alert mind, led by *buddhi* (reason, intelligence), realization of the Supreme Self (*Purusha*) who dwells in all beings. *Kataka Upanishad* asserts knowledge liberates, knowledge is freedom. *Kataka Upanishad* also

explains the role of yoga in personal Liberation, *moksha*. (ii) *Svetasvatara Upanishad* claims that bondage results from ignorance, illusion or delusion; deliverance comes from knowledge. The Supreme Being dwells in every being, He is the primal cause, He is the eternal law, He is the essence of everything, He is nature, He is not a separate entity. Liberation comes to those who know that Supreme Being is present as the Universal Spirit and Principle, just as they know butter is present in milk. Such realization, claims *Svetasvatara*, comes from self-knowledge and self-discipline; and this knowledge and realization is Liberation from transmigration, the final goal of the Upanishad.

1.8. Different routes to *Moksha*

There are many routes to *moksha*. There are routes for those who had acquired an eligibility to enter *Paramapada* through various Upasanas and Vidyas prescribed in Bhakti yoga. (i) Those who practice *Madhuvidya* obtain positions like those of *Vasus*. (ii) Those who meditate on the four faced Brahma as the body of Narayana reach His Satyaloka and stay with him till the end of Brahma's life called Para when dissolution takes place and having fulfilled themselves they enter the highest seat *Paramapada* along with him. So says *Kurma Purana*. (iii) Certain others reach Aniruddha and after staying with him for sometime they go to Pradyumna, then to Sankarshana and finally to Paravasudeva (Narayana) (iv) *Jayakhya Samhita*

mentions another route for Bhaktas who practice some other Vidyas. They go from here to Sveta dweepa and reach Hari who has the Universe as His form. Then, they reach Hari in his form as Aniruddha who is in the Ocean of Milk. From there, they go to Hari who is the Lord of Brahma and all others. Then, they proceed to Sankarshana and finally to the eternal Bhagavan, Vasudeva. These are known as "*Krama Mukti*" (Release by gradation) and are applicable to those who practice Bhakti yoga. (v) For Prapannas, those who have undergone Prapatti, the simplest, shortest, surest, and settled route is the royal route of *Archiradhi marga*. In daily meditation, the Prapanna reminds himself of the *Archiradhi marga* since such remembrance becomes an end in itself producing a keen delight in knowing that very soon he would be treading the same path to *MOKSHA*.

The objective of this work "*MOKSHA in Visishtadvaita Philosophy*" is to present the concept of *MOKSHA*, the eligibility of persons for attainment, the departure of the soul, the journey of the soul through the *Archiradhi marga* to *Srivaikunta*, where he attains the ultimate goal namely *mukti*. This *mukti* is *Paripurna Brahmanubhava* and is of the nature of perfect and full enjoyment of *Paramatma*. This enjoyment does not stop there, but overflows into service to *Paramatma* - service of all kinds, at all times and under all situations, for which there is no end - in a region from which there is no return

(*Sarvadesa-sarvakala-sarvavasthoachitha-sarvavidha-kainkarya*) as elucidated in Visishtadvaita Philosophy.

The work covers chapters on the soul's journey described in the *Upanishads*, the soul's journey elucidated in *Bhavad-gita*, *Nammalwar's* prescription for *MOKSHA*, his experiences of *Archiradhi marga*, his ascent to Srivaikunta, and his enjoyment of the Lord's exquisite form, *Archiradhi* of *Pillai Lokacharya*, *Vedanta Desika's Paramapada sapanam*, the departure of the soul, the journey of the soul and the full and perfect enjoyment of bliss of Brahman (based on *Rahasya Trya Sara* of *Vedanta Desika*), and *MOKSHA* described in *Sri Vishnu Sahasranama*. Srivaikunta - the ultimate destination is described on the basis of works of *Srimad Bhagavata*, *Vishnupurana*, *Mahabharata*, *Vaikunta Gadya* and *Srivaikuntastava*. *Nithya vibhuti*, the world of eternal splendour, describes the position of Mukta standing before the Lord, his praise of the Lord, his ascent to the divine conch, his prayer, the conversation with the Lord and his state of release..

The soul's journey as described in *Upanishads* will be discussed in the next chapter.

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2. The soul's journey described in *Upanishads*

This chapter contains the soul's journey as described in the *Chandogya-Upanishad*, the *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad* and the *Kaushitaki-Brahmana-Upanishad*.

2.1. The *Chandogya-Upanishad*

The *Chandogya-Upanishad* tells us this secret of cosmic inter-connectedness and involution of factors which are unknown to the senses and unthinkable to the mind. The *Panchagni-Vidya* is a kind of remedy prescribed by way of a meditation which is regarded as a great secret by the *Upanishadic* teachers. However, we can have an outline of the knowledge which the great king imparted to the circle of Brahmins by way of this initiation called the knowledge of the *Panchagni-Vidya*. Now, what are these phenomena? The insight into which the *Upanishad* here leads us is the phenomenon of the descent of souls from the other regions into this world and the phenomenon of the ascent of souls from this region to the higher ones-how souls descend and how souls ascend. But those who are fortunate enough to be awakened to the fact of this divine connection of human life and meditate in this manner through the *Panchagni-Vidya* they shall be taken to the higher regions by divine forces, through the Northern Path, or the *Uttarayana-marga*, the path of light. The *Chandogya-Upanishad's* descriptions of the

Archiradhi-marga, the *Dhuma-marga*, the third way experienced by small creatures like insects, the soul's return journey, and the departure of the soul after death are shown below.

(a) The *Archiradhi-marga*

The *Chandogya-Upanishad* Chapter XV-5, describes the *Archiradhi-marga*, or the *Devayana*, the Northern Path of the Gods, of the Celestials, the path of the Liberation of the spirit from the bondage of *Samsara*. Those who meditate like this, those who live the spiritual life of knowledge, those who have an insight into the secret mentioned here in this Upanishad, those who practise austerity (*tapas*), endowed with the great faith (*shraddha*) in the efficacy of this knowledge, they rise to the realm of the divine *Agni*, or the deity of fire, on departing from this world. They are carried to a higher realm by the deity of the flame, or fire, and from there they are taken up to the still higher realm of the deity of the day. There, again, the matter does not end; they go higher up to the realm of the deity which superintends over the bright half of the lunar month. From there, again, they go higher up into the realm of the deity of the six months during which the sun moves to the north. Then they go higher up to the deity which superintends over the entire year. Then, further, they go to the sun, which is a very important halting place, as it is said, in the passage of the soul to Liberation. Then the soul goes higher up into the more subtle regions of experience and

enjoyment of a divine nature, comparable to cool lunar radiance. Then comes the realm which the Upanishad calls the flash of lightening represented by its deity. This is not the lightening that we see in the sky, but the flash of the lightening of the knowledge of Reality. We are on the borderland of the Creator, as it were. There the light flashes and then the individuality is about to drop. Effort ceases there and some other law begins to take the soul by hand. A superhuman force begins to work there, an *amanava-purusha*, a superhuman being comes there. Someone comes and recognises you. Such is the joy of the Gods when this exiled being returns after years and years of suffering. The super humanbeing catches hold of you by the hand and leads you along the path of light, higher and higher, until you are taken to the realm of the Creator Himself, the *Brahma-loka*. This is the path of light; this is the path of freedom; this is the path of Liberation. Whether the funeral rites are performed or not by their heirs, these *Brahmagnanis* (who have done Prapatti) reach only this bright and shiny path and are led by a super human force to Brahman through the *Deva marga* (Shiny path) or *Brahma marga* (Path leading to Brahman). Those who have gone through this path never return to this mundane world.

The *Chandogya Upanishad* Chapter VI-5. describes that when he departs from the body if he is a mere ritualist and ignorant of Brahman, he then goes upward by these rays toward the worlds which he has gained by his meritorious work. Or if he is a knower of the doctrines of the *Akasa* in the Lotus of the heart,

he then meditates on 'Om' and thus secures entrance into *Brahmaloka*. Or if he is ignorant he attains lower bodies. The knower attains the solar orb as quickly as one directs one's mind from one object to another. This indeed is the door to the world of Brahman for those who know; for the ignorant it is closed.

(b) The *Dhuma-marga*

This is called the path of smoke, or *dhuma-marga*, *dakshina-patha*, or the Southern movements which is, again, presided over by divinities. If people are unable to live such a spiritual life, cannot live a life of meditation like this, have no knowledge whatsoever of the higher truths of life, then, though they have done yet some good deeds in this world, they are good persons. They go along the Southern Path of return.

From the deity of the smoke there is a rise of the soul to the deity of the night; then to the deity of the dark half of the lunar month; then to the deity of the six months during which the sun moves to the south. Then what happens? It does not go to the realm of that deity which superintends over the year. Especially, this mention is made here, and this is something mystical and peculiar. Why do they not go there? One thing is missed there. This is the departing place of the two paths. For some distance they go together; afterwards they depart, one goes to the North, another goes to the South. The juncture is the deity of the year which is not touched by the soul that goes to the southern regions. From there, the soul goes to the world of the

fathers, not to the sun. Then, from there it goes to the realm of space, *Akasa*; and from there to the moon, *Chandra-loka*. In *Chandra-loka*, it is supposed to enjoy the privileges of the Gods, and is subject to return. It is subservient to the Gods who are Gods by birth. The Gods that are Gods right from the time of creation are superior to the Gods that have become temporarily such on account of the virtuous deeds performed in this life. So, when the meritorious deeds are exhausted, the soul returns. It cannot live there permanently. It is subservient, being a celestial of an inferior category.

(c) The soul's return journey

The soul comes back to the space through which it rose up; then it comes down to the realm of air, with which it gets identified very subtly. Then it comes down to the levels of smoke, the clouds and the rain. These souls which are to return to the mortal world get identified in a subtle manner by their subtle bodies through these natural phenomena, viz., space, air, cloud, rain and foodstuff, even up to the grains like sesamum and barley, beans, rice and wheat, herbs, plants and trees, etc. It is very difficult to understand how they get mixed up with these things. And they get into the body of the individual through the foodstuff with which they have been identified. Then the same process of birth takes place. It is difficult to get out of this existence, says the Upanishad (*Ato vai khalu durnishprapataram*). Once it enters into these lower

levels of grain, foodstuff, etc., one cannot say what will happen to it afterwards. Perhaps God knows what happens; ordinarily this secret cannot be known. It is a very complicated situation. Where will the soul be driven, in what direction, into the womb of which mother, for what type of experience, no one can say. The way of action and reaction is difficult to understand.

(d) The rebirth

So, the type of birth you take in this world, and the conditions of your existence here are all determined by what you did in your earlier existences. You may even be born as an animal, says the Upanishad, if the *karma* is very bad. This is what happens to the individual when it takes birth in a particular world, or in this world. Thus is, therefore, the cycle or the rotation of the wheel of *samsara*, the going up and coming down in the circle of transmigration. Thus, this path brings the soul back.

(e) The Third way

The *Upanishad*, states that there is a third way of being born and living, other than the life which we live through the Northern and the Southern Paths. It is the birth of small creatures like insects, such as flies, gnats. They live for a few hours and pass away. In the rainy season you will see moths and small insects rising up from the damp earth and then dying that very day, sometimes even in a few hours. This is another kind of birth. Hard is life, indeed! Their life is so short, of

such an insignificant duration that one may say that they are born and then dead. When you are seeing them being born, they are dead also at the same time. So short is the life of these creatures.

Why is this world not filled up with people, and why is this other world also not filled up by people even if many people die here? The answer given here is that there is a cycle or rotation of people. They go from this realm to that realm, from that realm to this realm, so that no world is completely filled to the brim or overflowing.

The *Chandogya-Upanishad* (VI.6) details the course after death and departure of the soul.

(f) The departure of the soul after death

When a person becomes weak due to old age and is awaiting impending death, people get anxious about his condition. They sit around him thinking that he is about to leave this world. And then they query, “Do you recognise us?” He is able to reply to these people in a sensible manner as long as the *Pranas* do not depart from the body and as long as the mind is capable of working in a normal fashion in respect of the body. But when the mind is compelled by the *pranas* to withdraw itself into its source, no sensation, no thought, no recognition remains whatsoever. Then what happens to that person?¹

The very same rays of the sun become the passage of the soul for its ascent into the higher regions. These

rays of the sun are the roads or the paths, as it were, for the soul when it rises upwards after the departure from this body. This description is in connection with the death of a purified person who is expected to attain Liberation by progressive stages, called by the name *kramamukti*, gradual Liberation. Such a person chants 'Om' at the time of death. Everyone will not chant 'Om' at this crucial moment. Those who are accustomed to such a practice throughout life, who had led a very disciplined life of spiritual contemplation throughout their career on earth, will be able to recollect this practice at the time of passing, when usually the mind gets confounded due to the action of natural forces. How much time does the soul take to jump into the sun? It takes as much time as the mind will take to go to any place. The soul is taken to the sun at such speed through the passage of the rays. The moment it thinks, it is there. So quickly it is taken there. This sun is the glorious passage to *Brahma-loka*, the realm of the Creator. This is the entrance to the glorious immortal Abode of Brahma. Everyone cannot go there. The knowers go there and the unknowers return. The latter will not even be allowed to touch that spot. So the sun is the check-post where there is a filtering of souls, as it were. The purified ones are allowed to go beyond and the unpurified ones are kicked back to the earth. He is an entrance to the region of Brahma to the purified ones and also a closed door to those who are unprepared for this ascent². Thus one reaches the great Abode of the Creator, *Brahma-*

loka, from where there is no return. Once we go there, we will not come back. The question of coming back does not arise because we become one with the Universal Reality. This going and coming are only ways of speaking in this phenomenal world. What happens is actually a union of Consciousness with the All-Being, the Absolute.

2.2. The *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad*

(a) The *Archiradhi-marga*

The *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad* (VI.2.15) describes the path leading to Final Liberation. It states that those who worship the Supreme God leading a way of life observing *panchagni-vidya* with devotion and those who devote themselves with intensified devotion, both the devotees on their upward journey are welcomed gradually by the presiding deities of the day, then the deity of the half month of the waxing moon, then the deity of the six months during which the sun moves northward, then the Gods of the heavenly worlds, and the Sun God, then the deity of lightning where by the providence of the God, a divine being comes and conducts them to the world of transcendence (*Vaikunta*). Then they attain final beatitude and dwell there eternally. They do not return to the mundane world at all³. In the *Chandogya-Upanishad* the *Panchagni-vidya* is of a ritualistic nature and the path of *devajana* leads one to the world of *Prajapati* whereas here this *Panchagni Sharm satyam-upasate* means that the attainment is final

beautitude in the world of transcendence, where from one never returns to mundane world.

(b) The *dhuma-marga*

The *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad* verse (VI.2.16) describes the path leading to ultimate rebirth to *samsara*. It states that those who by sacrificial offerings, charity and austerity gain the merit of entry into the wonder worlds, they reach the deity of smoke, from him the deity of night, from him the deity of fortnight of the waxing moon, from him the deity of six months during which the Sun travels southwards, from him the deity of the manes, and from him the moon. Reaching the moon they become food. There the Gods enjoy them as priests drink the palatable soma juice. And when their virtuous merit is exhausted, they pass forth into this ether, from ether into air, from air into the rain, from rain into earth. Reaching the earth they become food. When they are eaten by man, become semen and thence they are born from the womb of a woman, whence they perform meritorious acts in a view to going to other worlds. Thus do they cycle around again?⁴

(c) The third way

But those who know not these two ways, become insects and moths, and whatever are here that bites like gnats and mosquitoes etc.

(d) The path of the Spirit

The path to the eternal is very subtle, invisible to the eyes, incapable of being grasped by the senses,

impossible to understand with the reason or the intellect. Going even by the subtlest of logic, it would be difficult for us to know the way to the Spirit. It is so subtle. Our intelligence, our logical understanding is capable of grasping only objects of sense, and not the way of the Spirit. And so, it is not the senses that lead us to the Spirit. It is not even our understanding or the intellect that is going to be of any help to us. It is a subtle path which is spread out everywhere. Very interesting indeed! It is everywhere and yet it is so subtle. That which is everywhere should be a vast thing, naturally. It should be capable of perception by everyone, if it is everywhere. But it is incapable of perception, notwithstanding the fact that it is everywhere. It is everywhere, and yet, cannot be seen by anyone. It is (*vitathan*) all-pervading, (*puranah*) most ancient and yet, very subtle indeed (*anuh pantha vitatha puranah*). It is this path that has been trodden by others too who followed this very way. This path that I have trodden is the path of others, too. It is the way that has to be trodden by everyone. To attain freedom of the soul is a great, great difficulty. Hard is this endeavour, invisible is this path. It is sometimes compared to the path of birds in the sky which cannot be seen with the eyes, or the track of fishes in the water, which is also not to be seen. Such is the path of the soul to the Absolute-difficult to comprehend, still more difficult to practise! Effort alone is not going to bring anything unless it is in the right direction. And

that direction cannot be known unless you are illumined properly.

2.3. The *Kaushitaki-Brahmana-Upanishad*

The *Kaushitaki - Brahmana - Upanishad* Chapter-1, Adhyaya-1, contains the instructions of King Gangyayani to Sage Gautama, regarding the journey of the soul that bring him back to *samsara*, the journey that leads to Brahman, the welcome accorded to mukta, mukta's experiences in *Srivaikunta*, the divine conch and the conversation with the Lord.

(a) The journey of the soul that returns to *Samsara*

The King Kitra Gangyayani states that “All who depart from this world (or this body) go to the moon; in the former, (the bright) half, the moon delights in their spirits; in the other, (the dark) half, the moon sends them on to be born again. Verily, the moon is the door of the Swarga world (the heavenly world). Now, if a man objects to the moon (if one is not satisfied with life there) the moon sets him free. But if a man does not object, then the moon sends him down as rain upon this earth. And according to his deeds and according to his knowledge he is born again here as a worm, or as an insect, or as a fish, or as a bird, or as a lion, or as a boar, or as a serpent, or as a tiger, or as a man, or as something else in different places. When he has thus returned to the earth, someone (a sage) asks: ‘Who art thou?’ And he should answer: ‘From the wise moon, who orders the seasons, when

it is born consisting of fifteen parts, from the moon who is the home of our ancestors, the seed was brought. This seed, even me, they (the Gods mentioned in the *Panchagni vidya*) gathered up in an active man, and through an active man they brought me to a mother. Then I, growing up to be born, a being living by months, whether twelve or thirteen, was together with my father, who also lived by (years of) twelve or thirteen months, that I might either know it (the true Brahman) or not know it. Therefore, O ye seasons, grant that I may attain immortality (knowledge of Brahman). By this my true saying, by this my toil (beginning with the dwelling in the moon and ending with my birth on earth) I am (like) a season, and the child of the seasons.’ ‘Who art thou?’ the sage asks again. ‘I am thou,’ he replies. Then he sets him free (to proceed onward). (Verse 1.2, Chapter-1, Adhyaya-1).

(b) The journey of the soul leading to the world of Brahman

He (at the time of death), having reached the path of the Gods, comes to the world of fire (*Agni*) to the world of air (*Vayu*), to the world of rain (*Varuna*), to the world of Indra, to the world of Prajapati (*Virag*), to the world of Brahman (*Hiranyagarbha*). In that world there is the lake *Ara*, the moments called *Yeshtiha*, the age-less river (*Vigara*), the tree (*Ilya*), the Chithy (*Salagya*), the palace unconquerable (*Aparajita*), the door-keepers Indra and Prajapati, the hall of Brahman, called *Vibhu* (built by vibhu, egoism), the throne *Vikakshana*, (buddhi perception), the conch

Amitaugas (endless splendour), and the beloved (*Manasi*) mind and her image (*Kakshushi* eye) who, as if taking flowers, are weaving the worlds, and the *Apsaras*, the *Ambas* (sruti, sacred scriptures), and *Ambayavis* (buddhi, understanding), and the rivers *Ambayas* (leading to the knowledge of Brahman). To this world he who knows this (who knows the Paryanka-vidya) approaches. Brahman says to him: 'Run towards him (servants) with such worship as is due to myself. He has reached the river (*Vigara*) ageless and he will never age.' (Verse 1.3, Chapter-I Adhyaya-I).

(c) The welcome accorded to the mukta

Then five hundred Apsaras go towards him, one hundred with garlands in their hands, one hundred with ointments in their hands, one hundred with perfumes in their hands, one hundred with garments in their hands, one hundred with fruits in their hands. They adorn him with an adornment worthy of Brahman, and when thus adorned with the adornment of Brahman, the knower of Brahman moves towards Brahman. He comes to the lake *Ara*, and he crosses it by the mind, while those who come to it without knowing the truth, are drowned. He comes to the moments called *Yeshtiha*, they flee from him. He comes to the river *Vigara*, and crosses it by the mind alone, and there shakes off his good and evil deeds. His beloved relatives obtain the good, his unbeloved relatives the evil he has done. And as a man, driving in a chariot,

might look at the two wheels (without being touched by them), thus he will look at day and night, thus at good and evil deeds, and at all pairs (at all correlative things, such as light and darkness, heat and cold). Being freed from good and freed from evil he, the knower of Brahman moves towards Brahman (Verse 1.4, Chapter - I, Adhyaya - I).

(d) Mukta's experiences in Srivaikunta

He approaches the tree *Ilya*, and the odour of Brahman reaches him. He approaches the Chithy *Salagya*, and the flavour of Brahman reaches him. He approaches the palace *Aparajita*, and the splendour of Brahman reaches him. He approaches the doorkeepers Indra and Prajapati, and they run away from him. He approaches the hall *Vibhu*, and the glory of Brahman reaches him (he thinks, I am Brahman). He approaches the throne *Vikakshana*. The Saman verses, Brihad and Rathantara, are the eastern Feet of that throne; the Saman verses, Syaita and Naudhasa, its western Feet; the Saman verses, Vairupa and Vairaga, its sides lengthways (south and north); the Saman verses, Sakvara and Raivata, its sides crossways (east and west). That throne is Pragna, knowledge, for by knowledge (self-knowledge) he sees clearly (Verse 1.5, chapter-1, Adhyaya-1).

(e) The divine conch

He approaches the conch *Amitaugas*. That is Prana (speech). The past and the future are its eastern Feet; prosperity and earth its western Feet; the Saman

verses, Brihad and Rathantara, are the two sides lengthways of the conch (south and north); the Saman verses, Bhadra and Yagnayagniya, are its cross-sides at the head and Feet (east and west); the Rik and Saman are the long sheets (east and west); the Yagus the cross-sheets (south and north); the moon-beam the cushion; the Udgitha the (white) coverlet; prosperity the pillow. On this conch sits Brahman, and he who knows this (who knows himself one with Brahman sitting on the conch) mounts it first with one foot only.

(f) The conversation with the Lord

Then Brahman asks him: ‘who art thou?’ and he shall answer:

‘I am (like) a season, and the child of the seasons, sprung from the womb of endless space, from the light (from the luminous Brahman). The light, the origin of the year, which is the past, which is the present, which is all living things, and all elements, is the Self. Thou art the Self.’

What thou art, that am I.

Brahman says to him: ‘Who am I?’ He shall answer: ‘That which is true’ (*Satyam*).

Brahman asks: ‘What is the truth?’ He says to him: ‘What is different from the Gods and from the senses (*prana*) that is *Sat*, but the Gods and the senses are *Tyam*. Therefore by that name *Satya* (true) is called all this whatever there is. All this thou art.’ (Verse 1.6, Chapter-1, Adhyaya-1).

This is also declared by a verse: ‘This great Rishi, whose belly is the *Yagus*, the head the *Saman*, the form the *Rik*, is to be known as being imperishable, as being Brahman.’

Brahman says to him: ‘How dost thou obtain my male names?’

He should answer: ‘By breath (*pranah*).’

Brahman asks: ‘How my female names?’ He should answer: ‘By speech (*vak*).’

Brahman asks: ‘How my neuter names?’ He should answer: ‘By mind (*manas*).’

‘How smells?’ ‘By the nose.’ ‘How forms?’ ‘By the eye.’ ‘How sounds?’ ‘By the ear.’ ‘How flavors of food?’ ‘By the tongue.’ ‘How actions?’ ‘By the hands.’ ‘How pleasures and pain?’ ‘By the body.’ ‘How joy, delight, and offspring?’ ‘By the organ.’ ‘How journeying?’ ‘By the Feet.’ ‘How thoughts, and what is to be known and desired?’ ‘By knowledge (*pragna*) alone.’

Brahman says to him: ‘Water indeed is this world, the whole Brahman world, and it is thine.’

Whatever victory, whatever might belongs to Brahman, that victory and that might he obtains who knows this, yea, who knows this (Verse 1.7, Chapter-1, Adhyaya-1).

In the next chapter we shall discuss the soul’s journey as elucidated in Bhagavad-gita

Reference

1. *Atha yatraitad-abalimanam nito bhavati, tam abhita asina ahuh janasi mam, janarsi mam, iti, sa yavad asmaccharirad-anutkranto bhavati, tavaj janati.*
- Chandogya Upanishad (VI.6)
2. *Atha yatraitad-asmaccharirad-utkramati, athaitair eva rasmibhir-urdhvam akramate, sa om iti va ha ut va miyate sa yavat ksipyen manah, tavad-adityam gacchati, etad-vai khalu loka-dvaram vidusam prapadanam, nirodho vidusam.*
- Chandogya Upanishad (VI.6)
3. *Ta va evameat vidurye chami aranye shaddham satyamupasate.....parah paravatovasanti tesham na pannara viitiah.*
- Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad (VI.2.15)
4. *Atha ye yagnena danena tapasa lokanjayanti te dhuma mabhismbhavanti Atha ya etau panthanau na viduuste kitah patanga yadidam damashukam*
- Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad (VI.2.16)

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3. The soul's journey as elucidated in *Bhagavad-gita*

This chapter elucidates, the bright and dark paths travelled by the soul, attainments of yogis, the fate of those who are ignorant, men of right knowledge, the effect of *three gunas* on man at death and the nature of persons who attain *paramapada*, based on the verses of *Bhagavad-gita*.

3.1. The bright and dark paths

(i) The Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* (8.23) speaks of the travelling path in which the dead yogins, go not to return, not to born again and the travelling path in which they will suffer rebirth¹. (ii) The Lord continues in *Gita* (8.24) that the knowers of Brahman departing in fire, light, day-time, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern passage of Sun go to Brahman² (*Chandogya Upanishad* (4/15/5, 5/10/1.2) and *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (6/2/15)). (iii) The Lord continues in *Gita* (8.25) that the yogi travelling in the path of smoke, night-time, the dark fortnight, the six months of the southern passage of the Sun attaining the lunar light returns³. (*Chandogya Upanishad* (5/10/4) and *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (6/2/16) speak on the same lines). (iv) The Lord Krishna in *Gita* (8.26) adds that these bright and dark paths of the worlds are considered eternal. They are open only to those qualified for knowledge or for action, not for the entire world. Of the two, by the one, the bright

path man goes to return not, by the other (dark path) he returns again⁴. (v) The Lord Krishna in Gita (8.27) advised Arjuna, to know the path leading to *samsara* and the path leading to *moksha* and remain steadfast in yoga⁵.

3.2. The attainment of Yogins

(i) The Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* (6.41) states that a yogi engaged in *karma*, *gnana*, *bhakti* yogas who has fallen in yoga (called as *yoga-bhrasta*) attains the worlds of righteous (the upper worlds up to Brahma-loka) and having dwelt, enjoyed residence there for very long years, on termination of the enjoyment (in those worlds) takes birth in home of pure, those who act in the manner prescribed in *sastras* and the prosperous, those endowed with plenty⁶. (ii) The Lord Krishna continues in Gita (6.42) that a yogi with detachment (*vairagya*) without attaining the upper worlds for enjoyment, is indeed born into a family of wise yogins - that of (materially) poor yogins endowed with *Brahma-vidya* (Science of the Absolute). Verily a birth such as this, into a family of yogis, is very very rare to obtain in this world. This is more difficult to get, than the one explained in the previous verse. (Great yogins like Vasishta, Vyasa, Janaka, Yagnavalkya, Aswapathy and Raikyar were living with family and attained gnana)⁷ (iii) The Lord Krishna in Gita (6.43) speaks of the advantages of a *yoga-bhrasta* born in the family of yogins, thus, that he is united with the

intelligence (knowledge concerning the self) in the previous body, and strives more than before for perfection⁸. (iv) The Lord Krishna in Gita (6.44) explains how he gets united with the intelligence acquired in his previous body thus: By that very previous practice, he is verily born on, even inspite of himself. Even the person who entered the path of yoga with a view to understanding its nature, who had fallen in yoga, discards the fruit of performance of actions prescribed by Veda. How much more would he who understands yoga and with steadfast devotion practices it!⁹ (v) The Lord Krishna in Gita (6.45) continues that the yogi striving with assiduity, putting forth greater and greater effort, purified of taint, cleansed of sins, gaining perfection through many births, reaches the highest, the most exalted goal¹⁰.

3.3. The fate of those who are ignorant

(i) The Lord Krishna in *Gita* (9.20) explains the fate of those who are ignorant and long for objects of desire, following the *karma kanda* of Vedas. The knowers of three Vedas, *Rig*, *Yajur* and *Sama*, being purified by drinking the *soman-juice* (offered in the sacrifice), worshipping Him in the form of Vasus and other Gods, by yagna and pray for passage to (*swarga*) heaven, reach there. After reaching the holy land of devas, the Abode of Indra, they enjoy the divine, extra-ordinary super natural pleasures of the devas, Gods (*aprakruta*)¹¹. (ii) The Lord Krishna in Gita (9.21) continues that these men having enjoyed the vast

swarga-world they return to this mortal world, on exhaustion of their merit (*punya*). Thus by following mere Vedic rituals, desiring desires, longing for objects of enjoyment, they come and go. This way they never attain freedom any way¹².

3.4. The men of right knowledge

(i) The Lord Krishna in Gita (9.22) speaks of persons of right knowledge, who are devoid of desires. The Lord assures that those persons who are meditating on Him alone, as non-separate, worship Him all around, to them who are ever devoted, the Lord secures both (*yoga*) i.e., getting what is not already possessed and (*kshema*) i.e., preservation of what comes into possession¹³. We may recall that the Lord had declared that these wise men He regards as His very Self, vide Gita (7.18) and stated that he is dear to Him, vide Gita (7.17).

3.5. The effect of three Gunas on man at death

(i) The Lord Krishna in Gita (14.14) spells out the three gunas and their effect on man, at death. The Lord says that if a person meets death when *sattva guna* is predominant then he attains the spotless regions of the knowers of the highest, such as *Brahma-loka*, any how this not moksha¹⁴. (ii) The Lord Krishna in Gita (14.15) continues that if a person meets death in *rajas*, he is born in the family of those attached to action. So in like manner, dieng when *tamas* is predominant, he is born in the wombs of irrational cattle and the like¹⁵.

3.6. What sort of persons reach paramapada?

(i) The Lord Krishna in Gita (15.5) declares that persons free from pride and delusion, with the evil of attachment conquered, ever dwelling in the Self, with desires completely receded, liberated from the pairs of opposites, the agreeable and the disagreeable, pleasure and pain, the undeluded reach that goal eternal¹⁶.

The Nammalwar's prescription for *moksha* will be discussed in the next chapter.

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Reference

1. *Yatra kale ivaavrttim.....vakshyami*
Bharatarsabha.(Bhagavad-gita 8.23)
2. *Agnir-jyotir-suklah.....Brammavido*
janah.. (Bhagavad-gita 8.24)
3. *Dhumo rattris-tathakesnah.....prapya nivatate..*
(Bhagavad-gita 8.25)
4. *Sukla-krishe gati.....(a) vartate punah..*
(Bhagavad-gita 8.26)
5. *Naite sruti partha.....yoga yukto bhavarjuna.*
(Bhagavad-gita 8.27)
6. *Prapya punyakrutam(a) bhijayate..*
(Bhagavad-gita 6.41)
7. *Athava yoginnam-eva..... jamma yadidrusam.*
(Bhagavad-gita 6.42)
8. *Tatra tam buddhikuru-nandana.*
(Bhagavad-gita 6.43)
9. *Purvabhyasena tenaiva.....brahmativartate.*
(Bhagavad-gita 6.44)
10. *Prayatnad-yatamanastuparaam-gatim*
(Bhagavad-gita 6.45)

11. *Traividya mama somapah.....divi deva bhogan*
(Bhagavad-gita 9.20)
12. *Te tam bhuktva swarga-lokam....kama labhante.*
(Bhagavad-gita 9.21)
13. *Ananyas-chintayanto.....yoga-kshemam*
vahamyaham. (Bhagavad-gita 9.22)
14. *Yada sattve pravruddhepratipadyate.*
(Bhagavad-gita 14.14)
15. *Rajasi pralayam gatva.....mudha-yonisu*
jayante. (Bhagavad-gita 14.15)
16. *Nirmana-mohapadam-avyayam tat.*
(Bhagavad-gita 15.5)

* * *

4. *Nammalwar's* prescription for *moksha*

This chapter covers various aspects like, the greatness of *Tiruvaymoli*, *Tiruvaymoli* and Temple worship, *Tiruvaymoli* Social functions, and the *Nammalwar's* prescription of *moksha*.

4.1. The greatness of *Tiruvaymoli*

The Vedic texts have in several places proclaimed the glory of *Tiruvaymoli*. In the first prasa of *kathaka* portion of *Taittiriya Upanishad* comes the episode of Indra, challenging Sage Bharadwaja, of the latter mastering the Vedas, even if his span of life were extended beyond the tenure of three hundred years, already granted to him. The episode ends up with the greatly disappointed Bharadwaja ultimately attained salvation through the study of *Tiruvaymoli* taught to him by Indra. Even as *Purusha sukta* is pre-eminent among Vedas, *Tiruvaymoli* stands foremost among the *Divya Prabandham*. Even as Sanskrit Vedas have several roots, the *sahasra sakha* Dravida Vedas have also their roots, each stanza of *Tiruvaymoli* being treated as a *sakha*. Acharya Nathamuni, in his yogic comprehension of *Nammalwar* rightly saw the (savita) Sun in him and extolled him as “*Yadgo sahasram apahanti*” meaning the Sun beaming through the thousand rays of *Tiruvaymoli*, which dispelled the darkness prevailing among people. *Nammalwar's* effluence attracted the elderly *Madhurakavi*, who was touring in the far North. *Acharya*, *Nammappillai*, the

greatest discourses of all times on *Nammalwar's Tiruvaymoli* states as follows: “Hundreds and thousands of poets have, no doubt, come into this world after *Nammalwar* and yet, brushing aside their performance as nothing better than the roaring of the sea, if people stick to the hymns of *Nammalwar* with rapturous delight, it is because of the upsurge of devotion, overflowing its continent through hymns of unparalleled sweetness”. *Ramanuja* has been acclaimed as the foster-mother who nourished the *Divya Prabandham* made admirable use of *Tiruvaymoli* and looked upon it as a sure and certain guide in resolving many an abstruse point, while writing his commentary (*Sri Bhashya*) on the *Brahma sutra*. Therefore he issued a mandate, as it were, in the last of his nine works the *Nithya Grantha* dissipating the daily routine to be followed by the devout, the recitation of the hymns of the *Alvars* should form an integral part of the daily worship which should otherwise be fruitless and insipid. *Tiruvaymoli* is celebrated as *SamaVeda* and additionally considered to explain the *Dvaya mantra*. The opening song of *Tiruvaymoli* indicates *Artha panchakam* as shown below:

Para swarupam - *Araivaru amarakku adhipathi*
Atma swarupam - *en mannane*
Pala swarupam - *tholuthu elu*
Upaya swarupam - *arulinan*
Virodhi swarupam - *mayararvu*

4.2. Tiruvaymoli and Temple worship

The Lord Ranganatha after hearing the hymns of Satakopa, titled him as *Nammalwar* meaning our *Alwar*. During the days of Acharya *Manavala Mamunigal* Lord Namperumal with His Consorts, leaving aside all the daily and seasonal festivals, listened to the Etu commentary of *Tiruvaymoli* for one full year. *Guruparampara* records that as a part of reforms Ramanuja included the chanting of hymns of the *Divya Prabandham*. Selected chapters of *Tiruvaymoli* called *Koil Tiruvaymoli* are recited in temples. At the completion of *Pagal pathu* and *Ira pathu* festivals, on the concluding day all the thousand verses of *Tiruvaymoli* are recited before the Lord seated with His Consorts. On the Vaikunta Ekadasi day, when the gates of paramapada are opened, the Lord gives darshan to *Nammalwar* and honour him with garlands. Unlike the other hymns of *Divya Prabandham*, the *Tiruvaymoli* is accorded the special status of being chanted only inside the temple or in homes when the Deity is seated for congregational worship, and not when the Deity is taken out on the streets for ceremonial procession by the *parayana goshti*.

4.3. Tiruvaymoli Social functions

In Srivaishnava community, before the commencement of funeral ceremonies (in case of death to the members), when the body is washed and caste marks are applied, at least a hundred stanzas of *Tiruvaymoli* are chanted. This is done to indicate the

longing of the soul to reach the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Similarly, at the conclusion of the ceremonies on the 13th day, thousand hymns of *Tiruvaymoli* are chanted to signify the Liberation of the soul. Hence it may be noted that *Tiruvaymoli* has become a part of temple worship and the journey of the soul.

4.4. The *Nammalwar's* prescription of *moksha*

Tiruvaymoli consists of 11 verses in all decades. The decade 2.7 *kesavan thamar* alone has 13 verses. Thus the total of the verses of *Tiruvaymoli* accounts to 1102 verses (10x10x11+ 02=1102) A humble attempt has been made in the following pages to study, consolidate and present the *phala-sruti*, the fruit of recitation of each decade of *Tiruvaymoli*. We could notice that in 88 decades, consisting of 970 verses, in the concluding verse of each decade, *Nammalwar* speaks of the attainment of *moksha*, as the benefit of recitation. The recitation is our action and the God's grace will be the automatic reaction. One may not recite with the desire for, but the action of recitation will surely please the Lord. *Nammalwar* declares that those who master the decade will lead a good home, harmoniously with their wives and children, all wedded to *Bhagavata-seshatva*, service to the devotees of the Lord, as the ultimate goal. They will be made *Sri vaishnava* in this world, assured of God's enjoyment equal to the *Nithya suries* in this world of birth and death and will reach *paramapada*, rising above the devas and cut asunder the bonds of the birth-death cycle.

4.5 *Nammalwar's* prescription.....below (1) *satakopan*.....as *paramapada* (1.2.11).

In the earlier verse the Alwar has suggested that one should unite himself with the Lord Narayana's Feet by meditating on *Ashtakshara* mantra. (1.2.10) (8) Anyone who masters the decade 1.3. *pathudaiarku* will reach *paramapada*, rising above the devas and cut asunder the bonds of the birth-death cycle. (1.3.11) (9) The one who recites those ten verses of decade 1.4. *Anchiraiya* sung by *Satakopan* with charm, will be vouchsafed by the Lord of seven worlds, who concedes to the devotees commensurate with His own desire, the bliss of service in *paramapada* (1.4.11). (10) The mastery over the decade 1.5. *valavil*, will ensure unbroken union with the Lord (1.5.11). (11) The decade 1.6. *parivatil* is sure to make anyone who masters it, free from the cycle of births and deaths. (1.6.11). (12) The decade 1.7. *peravituyar* is capable for the persons who master it by removing all diseases - those of the body and the mind, passionate attachment to mean pleasure, which are all diseases-like in hindering one's progress towards realization of God. (1.7.11). (13) The decade 1.9. '*ivaikum - aviyum*' sung by *Satakopan*, composed as a result of the enjoyment of this ascent to the Lord, is a unique one. Whosoever recites it, the Lord will positively place His Feet on his head permanently. (1.9.11). (14) The decade 1.10 *porumanil* will offer effective learning that helps one to secure salvation, to those who master it with full understanding of the meanings and in agreement with

the sentiments expressed. (1.10.11). (15) The decade 2.1 *vayuntirai* is sure to secure, for whosoever masters it, a guaranteed union with the Lord of Vaikunta, surely and certainly (2.1.11). (16) Those who master the decade 2.2. *tinnan vitu* are sure to be freed of all blemishes (like lack of faith, temptation to enjoy things other than the Lord) and is assured of an inseparable union with the Lord (2.2.11). (17) *Nammalwar* observes that the decade 2.3. *unilval*, describing his experience of bliss with the Lord, will ensure to whosoever master it, a similar bliss of Godly experience, along with groups of the Lord's devotees and *Nithya suries*. (2.3.11) (18) The decade 2.4. *Atiyati*, will ensure for the master of these verses, sweet service at the Lord's Feet in *Srivaikunta* (2.4.11). (19) Whosoever masters the decade 2.5. *antamattanbu*, will be assured of Vaikunta and the company of congregation of devotees (2.5.11). (20) The decade 2.6. *Vaikunta*, if sung with good music, will ensure for the persons becoming Kesava's *adiyar* (no other qualification is necessary) (2.6.11) (21) The twelve verses of 2.7. *kesavartamar*, is sure to take, those who master them, to the Feet of the great benefactor that He is (2.7.11). (22) Those who master the decade 2.8. *anaivatu*, are sure of enjoying the bliss of *paramapada* well seated there and at good leisure. (2.8.11). (23) The verses of decade 2.9. *emnavittu*, will secure *paramapada* of spotless purity to whomsoever who master them (2.9.11). (24) The verses of decade 2.10. *kilar oli*, will confer on whosoever masters them, a unique knowledge and transport him

to the Feet of the Lord, who is known for His mercy. (2.10.11). (25) Mastery over the ten verses of decade 3.1. *muticcoti*, ensures the termination of *samsara*. (3.1.11) (26) The decade 3.3. *munir nalam*, will guarantee deliverance from bondage to the world of life and death, to whomsoever master it. (3.2.11). (27) Those who master the decade 3.3. *oliivil kalam*, will be vouchsafed a life, to go close to the Lord of Tiruvenkatam, serve Him all the time, without a gap, without a flaw, with no end in mind, except the service of the Lord, that the whole world will adore and admire. (3.3.11). (28) Those who master the decade 3.4. *pukalum nal* will be blessed with uninterrupted bliss of service to the Lord in this world, about which Nithya suries will be admiring beings enjoying in this lower world, all that is distained to be enjoyed only in Srivaikunta. (3.4.11). (29) The decade 3.5. *moyman rum* will surely turn to ashes, the sins of those who master it. (Especially the sin of being cold and unmoved by the Lord's qualities or by the sight of the Lord's form). (3.5.11) (30). The decade 3.6. *ceyya tamarai*, will make the reciter a true bhakta. (3.6.11). (31) The decade 3.7. *payilum cutar oli*, on the greatness of the Lord's devotee, will ensure absence of any more births. (3.7.11). (32) The decade 3.8. *mutiyane*, is unique with potency to vividly swallow the Lord Himself, is worthwhile to be adopted for whiling away the remaining years on earth by any prapanna. Anyone who repeats it purely verbally here will enjoy the meaning in Srivaikunta. (3.8.11). (33) Those who master

the decade 3.9. *connal virotam*, will have no rebirth and will therefore have no need to live on money acquired from praise of humans (3.9.11). (34) The decade 3.10. *canmam pala pala*, will guarantee, to whomsoever master it, the Lord's Abode, after all affluence is conferred in this world and he is fully made aware of the correct concept of servitude (*seskata*) to the delight of all people. (3.10.11). (35) whosoever master the decade 4.1. *oru nayagamay* without a flaw, will be freed from all grief and will attain the desired goal of service (4.1.11). (36) Those who master the decade 4.2. *palanay*, will be very good company to *Nithya suries* (4.2.11). (37) To those who master the decade 4.3. *kovaivayal*, of faultless and truthful statements, will be assured the unique affluence called *Vaishnava Sri*, that cannot be reckoned in terms of worldly goods, and the bliss of *Vaikunta later* (4.3.11). (38) Those who learn, master and recite more as a mode of pleasure enjoyment than a means for any other goal, the decade 4.4 *mannai iruntu*, will enjoy all prosperous *Vaikunta*, with all acts wiped away and will sit crowned in a throne in a kingdom of pious devotee servants of the Lord (4.4.11). (39) Anyone who masters the decade 4.7. *cilan illa*, with emotional identification will surely ascend to the *paramapada* (4.7.1). (40) The decade 4.8. *eralum*, would help those who master it to reach casting off the hard unyielding *samsara* (4.8.11). (41) The decade 4.9. *nannatar*, in praise of His Feet, will transport the readers to the Feet, whereafter they will ever enjoy bliss, become

one with the Lord's Feet (4.9.11). (42) The decade 4.10. *onrum tevum*, will secure the irreversible pleasure of *Vaikunta* (4.10.11). (43) Whosoever recites with mental relish the decade 5.1. *kaiyar*, will be surely destined to live in the blessed company of Srivaishnavas here for long before reaching the Lord's Abode (5.1.11). (44) The decade 5.2. *polika polika*, will remove the ills of heart of those who master it. The commentators have listed out the ills of hearts as: (i) Resorting to other demi-Gods, (ii) Not having *prati pati* to Srivaishnavas, (iii) Considering Srivaishnavas in par with others. (iv) Considering that the association with non-Srivaishnavas is not wrong, and (v) Resorting to the Lord for other aspirations or goal (5.2.11). (45) The decade 5.3. *macaru coti*, will secure to whomsoever that master it *Vaikunta* in his own place (5.3.11). (46) The decade 5.4. *tinellam tunci* will confer a passion of impatience on seeing crazy devotees and what doubt can there be in the matter of their reaching *Vaikunta*? (5.4.11) (47) Those who can sing the decade 5.7. *norra nonpu*, with mental identification are sure to be very dear to *Nithya suries* (5.7.11). (48) The decade 5.8. *Aravamute*, will secure to whomsoever mastering it, so as to wipe out their spiritual immaturity a position of great enjoyability to the Lord and vaishnavas (5.8.11). (49) Those who master the decade 5.9. *manney nokku*, shall be regarded as high as and elevated even though the birth in this world denotes a certain degree of ignominy. In their case, birth does not count as a demerit, because they have acquired an overwhelmingly

great merit (5.9.11). (50) The decade 5.10. *pirantavarum*, ensures permanent *Vaikunta* stay to those who master it (5.10.11). (51) Those who sing the decade 6.6. *vaikal punkalivay*, with real relish, will become dear to *Vaishnavas*, as *manmatha* (God of love) to lustful damsels (6.1.11). (52) Those who master the decade 6.2. *munitai matavarkal* will not suffer the penury of alien from God (6.2.11). (53) Kuruhur Satakopan sang a thousand verses which are the orders of the Lord. Out of them, this decade, 6.3. *nalkurvum*, will make those who master it, earn a position of honour to be ever respected by *Nithya suries* (6.3.11). (54) Those who master the holy decade, in praise of Krishna, 6.4. *kuravai ayceiyar otu*, are qualified to become faultless Krishna devotees (6.4.11). (55) The decade 6.5. *tuvailil ma mani*, will enable those, who master it, to do service at the Feet of the Lord and His Consort (6.5.11). (56) The decade 6.6. *malukku vaiya malanta* in praise of the Lord of Tiruvenkatam, will assure to any one mastering it, a certain guaranteed enjoyment with naturally beautiful *Nithya suries* in *Srivaikunta* (6.6.11). (57) The decade 6.7. *unnum coru*, in praise of Tirukkolor, will give to anyone, who master it, with a discerning identification of oneself with the content of each verse, a unique privilege that *Srivaikunta* would be according to his disciple! He can order it about (6.7.11). (58) The decade 6.9. *niray nilanay*, will make those who master it, the right type of Bhagavatar, to the One, all helpful Lord (6.9.11). (59) Those who master the decade 6.10. *ulakamunta*

peruvaya, in praise of the Lord of Tiruvenkatam will be destined to render divine service in *Vaikunta surely*. The Alwar says that those who cling to the devotees mastering this decade will secure this reward (6.10.11). (60) The decade 7.2. *kan kulum pakalum* in praise of the Lord Ranganatha is so potent that anyone who masters these will be in supreme bliss, in the company of an admiring circle of *Nithya suries* (7.2.11). (61) Those who master the decade 7.5. *karpar Ramapiranai* will get the clarity of vision as to what is the goal? what is the path? and how they have to conduct themselves (7.5.11). (62) The decade 7.7. *elaiyar avi*, will guarantee to the reciters uninterrupted bliss of the Lord's vision in the company of *Nithya suries* (7.7.11). (63) The decade 7.8. *maya vanaane* can be recited by one according to his capacity, not necessarily in full appreciation of the import, nor in musical tune. The Alwar observes that the reciter will be taken as acceptable to the Lord! He becomes a consummate achiever of his goal! (7.8.11). (64) The decade 7.9. *erraiikkum*, can be read, sung, recited with proper understanding or not, that is also immaterial, it will reward the reader with bliss in whatever manner it is recited (7.8.11). (65) The decade 7.10. *Inpam payakka*, is of special significance. It contains an essential secret, whose learning is both purificatory and enjoyable. It is so much important that it becomes the topic emphasized by *Nithya suries* (7.10.11). (66) The decade 8.1. *tevimar avar*, which directly dwells on His auspicious qualities and His enjoyability will

confer, any one, who masters it, sure redemption (8.1.11). (67) Those who master the decade 8.2. *nankal varivalai*, to recite it in good musical form will live a complete life without any want, in this or the other world (8.2.11). (68) The decade 8.3. *ankum inkum*, sung by Satakopan in excellent terminology and poetic perfection, will confer a no-birth guarantee (8.3.11). (69) The decade 8.4. *varkata aruvi*, will confer the great boon of going to *Srivaikunta*, terminating the peculiar drama of births and deaths (8.4.11). (70) The decade 8.6. *ellium kalaiyum*, is sure to secure for anyone who masters it, a sure placement in *Srivaikunta* by the Lord Himself, causing wonders (8.6.11). (71) The decade 8.7. *Iruttum viyantu*, is capable of destroying samsara by the mere look of the Supreme Lord, reclining on *Adishesha*, with eyes red in anger (8.7.11). (72) That Lord, whom *Nammalwar* addresses as lovable black gem stone (*karu manikkam*) will lovingly take to His Foot- seat and keep there with affection, anyone who masters the decade 8.8 *kankal civantu* (8.8.11). (73) Those who master the decade 8.9. *karumanikka malai*, are surely destined to be devoted servants of the great Lord. (8.9.11) (74) *Nammalwar* observes that whosoever master the decade 9.1. *konta pentir*, sings with a sure mind that there is none else except Krishna, with the fragrant *tulasi* garlands who is veritable master to him, that too from the moment of this birth (9.1.11). (75) Those who either recite or contemplate on the meanings of the decade 9.3. *orayiram*, sung in praise of the Feet of the Lord of infinite 'sowseelya' will ascend to *paramapada* (9.3.11). (76) The decade 9.4. *maiayar*

karun kanni, will to any reciter, secure the enjoyable situation of *paramapada*, that is enjoyed by *Nithya suries* (9.4.11). (77) Those who master the decade 9.6. *urukumal nencam*, will definitely see the end of the life-birth cycle and will have destroyed the mirage of worldly life (9.6.11). (78) *Nammalwar* advises the people who are devoted to the Lord, to prosper in getting salvation by worshiping that kind of obliging Kannan and reciting the decade 9.9. *mallikai kamal* (9.9.11). (79) *Nammalwar* advises the people who wish to keep all grief at a long distance, to use the decade 9.10. *malai naani*, to perform reverential worship; while doing so, to dance and sing in an enthusiastic manner, that will ensure a griefless life (9.10.11). (80) This decade 10.1. *talatamarai*, dedicated to Thirumohur, whosoever recites it will be relieved of grief. The company of the Lord, Kalamegham, in the final journey will be vouched to him (10.1.11). (81) Those who master the decade 10.2. *ketum itar*, will be destined to enjoy the embrace of the divine damsels (Five hundred *deva mathars* will welcome with garlands, scented flowers, *vastras*, fans etc). Those who master this decade will become dear to *Nithya suries* (10.2.11). (82) The reward for mastery over the decade 10.3. *veymarrutol*, is permanent co-existence and close association with the Lord, as requested by young Gopa damsels, seeking Him not to separate from them and leave off cow-grazing (13.3.11). (83) The decade 10.4. *carve tavaneri*, will secure for those who master it, the Feet of Kannan as the unparalleled goal to be reached. If Bhakti is adopted the target that is reached is the Feet of the

Lord Damodara, the name itself signifying His easy tangibility (10.4.11). (84) The Super Lord's grace flows to Satakopa, who has composed a thousand verses on the Lord. Of them, the decade 10.5. *Kannan kalalinai*, ensures for its reciters, the grace of the Lord (10.5.11). (85) The decade 10.6. *arul peruvar*, which is sweet for reading, for singing, so melodious even to hear, not necessarily that one should sing or should go deep into the meaning with the mental faculty also participating. So this decade is termed "straight forward sweet to the ear". If *Nithya suries* hear this they may not be able to express their longing for more of it, but would be so much moved as to be unable to express themselves (10.6.11). (86) Those who master the decade 10.8. *Tirumalirum ccolai*, will be acclaimed as Bhagavatas and they will rule over the highest world *paramapada* (10.8.11). (87) *Nammalwar* describes that the muktas welcomed and accepted by Devis and the Lord, joined by the Lord's fold. This decade 10.9. *culvicumbu*, will enable one to enjoy the Lord's auspicious qualities continuously (10.9.11). (88) The decade 10.10. *muniye! nammukane!*, sung in para bhakti, will guarantee to anyone who masters it, the blessings of being born as *Nithya surie's* equal (10.10.11).

The *Nammalwar's* experience of *Archiradhi marga* will be described in the next chapter.

5. Nammalwar's experience of Archiradhi marga

This chapter covers the *Tiruvaymoli*, decade 10.9. *Culvicumbu ani mukil* of Nammalwar wherein he describes his experiences in an esoteric manner, making it clear that the devotees of the Supreme Lord, Sriman Narayana, who ascended to *Srivaikunta* through the *Archiradhi marga*, got honours lavished on them, by the denizens of the upper regions showering praises on the new comers, so on and so forth. It could also be deduced that the *Alwar*, thereby intended, to infuse confidence in the Srivaishnavas, the ardent devotees of Lord Mahavishnu, that they too should surely attain the bliss, currently experienced by the *Alwar*.

The subject matter covered in the verses are shown below - (i) This opening verse describes the ecstatic manner in which even the inanimate clouds came forward to greet the devotees of Lord Sriman Narayana, during their ascent. The clouds roared the music and the waves of the deep sea danced with joy. All the seven islands wore a festive appearance and their inhabitants, one and all, held in their hands, their choicest gifts to be offered to these *Vaikunta* bound souls (10.9.1). (ii) The clouds presented ceremonial *Purnakumbha*. The oceanic waves, that danced keep on expressing their joy. The denizens of the upper world via with each other in setting up mammoth

banners and buntings for greeting the Lord's votaries, during their ascent (10.9.2). (iii) There are certain upper worlds, charged with special responsibility of guiding and conducting the released souls in their onward march. Those denizens were burning incense before them showering on them choice flowers, breaking their normal vow of silence, to welcome these *Vaikunta* - bound souls and escort them (10.9.3). (iv) The devas in the upper regions, are said to manifest their greatest joy over the devotees of Madhava, by playing music, enroute, and putting up nice halting camps in enchanting surroundings for them to alight and relax themselves (10.9.4.). (Its commentary shows that *Acharya*, Nammappillai deplotes that how these very Srivaishnavas who are given V.I.P. treatment by the denizens of the upper world, during their stay in this world are despised and neglected by men over here). (v) The celestials come out into the open to greet the devotees of the Lord Madhava. They invited them to visit their places and accept their hospitality. The Vedic scholars of the upper worlds deemed it a great privilege to bestow on these marchers, the benefits accrued by their own Vedic rites and rituals. The *Kinneras* and *Gandharvas*, famous as singers in their respective lands also sang songs to greet them. Nevertheless the demizens of the order in the upper regions, would at once deem it their great privilege and duty to entertain these distinguished men passing alone (10.9.5.). (vi) The lovely smoke from incense spread all over. Chunks

and bugles sounded lustily. The bright eyed “*Apsaras*” the sweet damsels in the upper regions, cast their cool glances on the Lord’s devotees passing alone, overcome by spontaneous joy, these ladies welcomed the distinguished travellers with the same warmth, with which the elders would greet the home-coming of an youngster who had stayed away in distant lands for quite long (10.9.6). (vii) The “*maruth ganas*” and “*Asta vasus*” went beyond their territorial limits, as far as they could, singing all the time the glory of these great souls on their upward journey (10.9.7). (viii) The *Nithya suries* decorated with crowns, now come forward in their strength to greet the devotees of the Lord Govindan, from earth. The crowns of *Nithya suries* are badges of *sesattva* (sepant-hood or dedicated service unto the Lord). The heaven wears a festive look, with festoons and banners, hung across and lovely wall decorations. Even the charming Lord and divine Mother shine with special luster at the sight of the spiritually regenerated souls, reclaimed at long last (10.9.8). (ix) The *Nithya suries* waited in front of the gates, invited the new-comers to take their places straight away. This is because the new-comers were looked upon, by them all, as their very masters, the hot-favourites, the vassals of Vaikuntanatha in deep love with Him. The denizens already there and the new-comers, thrive alike on divine service and it is this divine service that is being offered now by the former to the latter (10.9.9). (x) The *Nithya suries* received

the newcomers with honour, washed their Feet, applied vermilion powder on their foreheads, held the Lord’s foot-rest, vessels full of water (*purna kumbha*) with coconut lids and auspicious lamps. The faces of the damsels brighten up, all the more due to the sight of the newcomers like unto the jubilant mother, regaled by the home-coming of the wayward son who had stayed, for long in distant lands (10.9.10).

In subject matter of the next chapter would be *Nammalwar’s* ascent to *Srivaikunta*.

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6. Nammalwar's ascent to Srivaikunta

In this chapter *Nammalwar's* experience is described in detail. He was shocked when he opened his eyes and found that he was still seated in the same place inside the temple of Alwar Tirunagari. It now transpired to him that his ascent to *Srivaikunta* through the *Archiradhi marga*, the honours lavished on him all along the enroute and at destination, his stay in the midst of *Nithya suries* and *muktas* in the grand hall, where the Lord with His divine Consorts were holding the *darbar*, all these, expatiated on him were but the figments of his imagination, a mere mental comprehension and nothing more. The *Alwar* calls out to the Lord, voicing forth his deep yearning with utmost effort. The merciful Lord, of remarkable tenderness of heart, felt even more depressed than he himself. And so the Lord and His divine Consorts, rushed down, mounted on Garuda and led him to *Srivaikunta*. There the *Alwar* entered the gathering of the great devotees of Lord Vaikuntanatha and mingled freely with them. The supreme Lord, Sriman Narayana is the subject matter of the decade 10.10. "*muniye*" sung in "*avavil antati*" a species of prosody charged with bhakti in *antati* style.

There are three stages of bhakti, *para-bhakti*, *para-gnanam*, and *parama-bhakti*. The *Alwar* was in the stage of *para-bhakti*-Higher devotion or intellectual love of God up to the end of the eighth decade. The next stage of *para-gnanam* or greater

knowledge is denoted by devotees love unto the God overflowing its erstwhile content of more mental comprehension, with irresistible urge for eternal perception of the divine longed by the devotee. This stage was attained by the *Alwar* in the ninth decade. We see the *Alwar* in the final stage of *parama bhakti*-Highest devotion. This is that stage in which the Jivatma cannot exist even for one moment without the experience of divine bliss. *Nammalwar* was in this stage in the last decade when he just could not exist without the attainment of the glorious view of the Lord with His divine Consorts in *Srivaikunta*. In the concluding stanza of the decade, the *Alwar* gives vent to his sense of completion and fulfilment of saying that he has reached the ultimate destination, all the impediments having been eradicated root and branch.

The contents of the verses are described below.
 (i) The *Alwar* addresses the Lord as sage (*muni*) contemplating on creation and internal control of all, *antaryami* of Brahma, *antaryami* of Rudra, with red fruit like lips and Lotus like eyes, with dazzling body luster. The *Alwar* adds that the Lord came close on placing His Feet on his head and he would not let Him go off (10.10.1). (ii) The *Alwar* states that he has a right and claim. As the Lord had entered his filthy body and mingled with his soul, to such an intimate manner that the two could not be distinguished, the *Alwar* prays to take him to *paramapada* without any hesitation (10.10.2). (iii) The *Alwar* insists that he does

not know any other prop for his soul except the Lord who is the first cause of the universe, the essence of sustenance to the *Nithya suries* and to whom Brahma, Siva, Indra and other devas pay obeisance (10.10.3). (iv) The *Alwar* questions the Lord that why He did not come forward, on His own to slave him? The *Alwar* wonders that when the Lord, who is the *antaryami* to all, who does all things to safeguard and sustain all (*moola prakriti, panchabhutas, devas humans and all lives*) without their asking, why he was left out? (10.10.4). (v) The *Alwar* deplores his sad plight, that he had been despised by the Lord, despite His role as the universal protector. The *Alwar* illustrates with an example that a red hot iron dipped in water will drink the water to quench its heat; in the same manner his soul drank Him, nectar, insatiable with great vividity (10.10.5). (vi) The *Alwar* praises the Lord as his insatiable nectar. The Lord's fascination for the *Alwar* did not stop with his soul but also extended to his physical body as well. The *Alwar* urges the Lord to consume him in full (10.10.6). (vii) The *Alwar* advances a simple, yet irresistible argument in saying that the Lord took a mighty exploit in reclaiming mother earth as the blissful Boar. Again the Lord churned the ocean for getting mother Mahalaksmi. They are dear to Him and He is dear unto them. Therefore it is, the Lord is dear to him. He makes enormous efforts to get at him, sunk deep in the ocean of *samsara*. The *Alwar* asks that having got Him, would he let the chance go? (Parasara Bhattar narrated to Namjiyar that these words

of the *Alwar* spoken in his sufferings are correlated to the *Dvaya mantra* (10.10.7). (viii) The *Alwar* brings home to the Lord that He is the primary seed of the whole universe. He is the two types of Karmas (*punya and papa*), the Atma, and the fruits (pleasure and pain). He is all in all, the great redeemer and sole sustainer of all beings. The *Alwar* questions that having attained Him, as his soul's soul, will he let Him go? (10.10.8.) (ix) The *Alwar* celebrates the Lord, that He is the prime, three fold cause of the world. He is the primordial matter (*moola-prakruti*). He has none like Him. The world as it appears is the form (*prakara*) of Himself. The *Alwar* expresses his longing to join Him in *paramapada* and enjoy the form which *Nithya-suries* always see and enjoy. The *Alwar* asks when he could join Him (10.10.9). (x) The *Alwar* gratefully acknowledges the Lord's great gesture. Oh! *Antaryami* of *Moola-prakruti* which evolves into *Mahat, Ahamkara* etc, which pervades all space and infinite; Oh! *Antaryami* of *Mukta*, who encircle and extend over and larger than *prakruti* in extent, *Gnana, Ananda* and *Tejas*. Oh! The unique processor of *Sankalpa-Gnana*, which extends even beyond still further which is pure *Ananda* in nature. The *Alwar* says that his yearning to join Him was even larger than His *Sankalpa-Gnana*, in magnitude. The *Alwar* is happy that the Lord covered him up, quenched that yearning, he became a drop in His vastness of Nectar Ocean. The *Alwar's* long time ambition has been fulfilled. (10.10.10.) This is being expressed in short thus:

Prakruti < *Muktatma* << *Sankalpa-Gnana* of the Lord <<< *Alwar's* yearning.

(xi) The *Alwar* concludes that the Lord Narayana who mingles with a yearning with His devotees, who is the sole prince of all including Brahma and Rudra, was sought by him. The *Alwar* declares that this decade sung in *parama-bhakti* will guarantee, to anyone who masters it, that they will be deemed on par with the *Nithya suries*, even though they are in this land, even though the earth bound, sense-buried, will look up to them as mere fellowmen. (10.10.11)

In the next chapter *Nammalwar's* enjoyment of the Lord's exquisite form will be discussed.

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7. *Nammalwar's* enjoyment of the Lord's exquisite form

In this chapter *Nammalwar's* experiences as *Nayaki* are detailed. *Nammalwar* felt tormented by the mental vision of the Lord's limbs one after another, rousing his appetite for God's enjoyment all the more. The *Alwar* transformed as *Nayaki* aims at physical enjoyment of the Lord's exquisite form as a whole, but perceive only one limb at a time. The Lord had pacified the *Alwar* by enabling him to comprehend mentally His exquisite form limb by limb in this decade 7.7. "elaiyar avi". The beautiful experience of the *Alwar* is as follows.

(i) Out of all the limbs of the Lord, His Lotus Eyes, presented themselves before the *Alwar* first, because it was the Lord's bewitching eyes that attracted the *Alwar* unto Him. The *Alwar* states that the lovely eyes of Kannapiran, the sea-hued Lord, like Lotus flowers in full bloom, torment him. (7.7.1) (ii) Now it is the Lord's charming nose, in between the pair of Lotus Eyes that torments the *Alwar*. At first sight, it looks like a karpaka creeper or a leaf adjoining Lord's eyes. The nose instantly reminds the *Alwar* of Krishna, as a child, having eaten the stored up butter stealthily and exposed Himself by smearing the nose with the stolen butter. That nose sets steady flame in *Alwar* (7.7.2). (iii) The Lord's red lips look like a red fruit which is ever fresh and knows no growth or decay. They also look like a chip of coral. The *Nayaki* recognizes that

they are but the lips of the cloud-hued Lord of bluish tint, which she would like to enjoy the very moment, but could not do so. (7.7.3) (iv) Now it is the turn of the Lord's brows, well bent like a pair of bows, to torment the Nayaki and sap her life (7.7.4). (v) The Lord's smiles are likened to the lightening, with the difference that unlike lightening which is seen for a split of a second, the lightening smiles of the Lord stay on and reveal the radiance of His red lips on which they keep dancing. The smiles are also likened to white pearls (7.7.5). (vi) The ears of the Lord are leafy and fish-shaped. These ears bedecked with rings, studded with pearls, which finish off alike the *Asuras* and *Rakshasas*. The *Alwar* feels tormented because he could not enjoy the Lord there and then (7.7.6). (vii) The Lord's charming forehead is now visualized by the Nayaki. The Lord's four stout and fine shoulders have also been mentioned in this song to identify the forehead as that of the one whose shoulders enthralled the *Alwar* even as they attracted Hanuman, at first sight (7.7.7). (viii) The aggregate charm of the various limbs of the Lord, detailed in the earlier seven preceding songs, each one of which is a decoration by itself, is reflected in Kannan's beaming face, a veritable region of radiance galore. The eyes like self decorating Lotus, the creeper like nose, coral lips, leaf like ear-lobes, Brows well bent like bows, the radiant smiles, like a jewel, the moon like forehead, each one making themselves distinctly visible wherever the Nayaki turns (7.7.8). (ix) And now, it is the turn of the Lord's lovely

strands of hair, wafting the sweet fragrance of tulasi, cool and nice, steals away his heart says the *Alwar* (7.7.9). (x) The Lord's radiant crown is shedding its luster on all the worlds and the Nayaki's mind stands riveted to it. There is, therefore, no point in the elders blaming her as transgressing the feminine bonds of modesty and pulling her up all the time. They should take steps to hand over to the Lord (7.7.10). (xi) Those who chant these ten songs, presenting the picture of Lord Kannan, true and graphic, whom even the exalted devas like Brahma, Siva Indra and others cannot behold easily, will remain in the company of *Nithyasuries*, inseparably (7.7.11).

The next chapter will cover the *Archiradhi* of Pillai Lokacharya.

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8. Archiradhi of Pillai Lokacharya

Pillai Lokacharya has composed *Archiradhi*. This text describes the path through which the Jiva (soul) reaches the *paramapada*, and the reception accorded enroute; the beautiful description is praise-worthy. *Archiradhi gathi* means path to *paramapada*. *Pillai Lokacharya* has quoted a lot of references from the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Divya prabandham*. Out of about 210 references from the works of the Alwars, he had cited about 140 references from the *Tiruvaymoli* of Nammalwar. The work is composed in *manipravala* style, a mixture of Sanskrit and Tamil and grouped in four prakaranas or chapters.

The *first chapter* covers preparation and the start of the soul's journey in *Archiradhi gathi*. The *second chapter* describes the different worlds travelled enroute and the reception accorded to the soul. This compares to *Nammalwar's Tiruvaymoli* decade 10.9, *Soozh visumbu adi*. The third chapter elaborates the beautiful *Srivaikunta*, *Tiruman mandapa*, divine conch viz. Adishesha, Goddess Lakshmi and the Lord Vaikuntanatha. The author describes the beauty of each and every part of the Lord from *Thirumudi* (hair) to the divine Lotus Feet that provide solace and pleasure to the devotees. The final chapter describes what transpires in *Srivaikunta*, the conversation between the Lord and mukta who submerged himself in eternal, pure, perfect enjoyment of bliss of Kainkaryia.

8.1. The Lord extends His helping hand

The universe consists of *Nitya vibhuti* and *Leela vibhuti*. *Nitya vibhuti* is *Paramapada*. The rest of the world is *Leela vibhuti*. While those in *Paramapada* worship only one God, Sriman Narayana as the Supreme Lord, in sharp contrast, those living in *Leela vibhuti* sing the praises of any number of Gods. In short, people in *Leela vibhuti* suffer from “*ahamkara*” and “*mamakara*” i.e., from the illnesses of ego and attachment. *Pillai Lokacharya* says that God sees this sorry state of affairs of people living in *Leela vibhuti*. He does not leave them to their fate. His abundant grace blesses these poor souls with *Gnana* and *viveka*. They seek a good Acharya and with his help get initiated into kainkaryia (service) to the Lord. The realization makes them turn a new leaf.

All the time, God is thinking as to how He could help this devotee who is striving to attain salvation. Thus God is more keen to take this reformed soul to *Paramapada*. The thirst of God for ensuring that this soul attains salvation is more than the thirst of the individual soul to attain *moksha*. Even as the devotee wants to reach God, God also wants to help the reformed person to reach *Paramapada*.

8.2. Preparations for the soul's journey

As the time of departure draws nearer, the Lord causes some incident for the soul's departure from the body. He joins the ten external sense organs (five

sense organs and five of action) to the mind and then with the God's blessings the *bahya karanas* get merged with the *antah karanas*. The speech gets submerged with the mind, and in turn the mind becomes a part of the vital breath (*prana*), and *prana* becomes a part of *tejas*. All these are merged into the Jiva. Then takes place a process of churning of the vertebra in the gross body out of which the subtle body is extracted and joined to the Jiva. This process is the source of great suffering to the Jiva who almost becomes unconscious. The most merciful *paramatma*, keeps the Jiva by the side of Himself to give him comfort. By His nectarous touch the Jiva gets rest and relaxation and is ready to pass out of the body. The process upto this extent is same for both the man who has realized the Lord by bhakti yoga and the man who did not.

8.3. The Actual departure from the body

The *nadis* or the blood vessels are the passages through which the Jiva emerges from the body. There are 101 *nadis* of diverse colors. Among these one in the middle goes up. For the Jiva to attain salvation the soul must pass through the particular blood-vessel known as *Susumna*, *Brahma nadi* or *Murdhanya nadi*. It is not difficult for the soul of a prapanna to find it, since the Lord, who is the heart (*Hridaya*) makes its edge radiant at that time. Thus the entry to the *Brahma nadi* is lighted. The Jiva who passes through the vein breaks the top of the head (*sira*

kapala) joins the *antaryamin* and starts on its upward journey. The path through which the Lord guides this soul to *Paramapada* is the *Archiradhi* path. Enroute the soul has for food the *Dvaya mantra*. The God who is guiding him in this path is 'Azhagiya Manavalan' (The beautiful Lord Ranganatha).

8.4. Archiradhi marga-or the shining path

When the soul started on its journey the ocean is said to have danced. The churning of the waves brought mud from the depths of the ocean to the top. It was as if the ocean was dancing in excitement. The lashing of the waves provided the background music for the dance. The entire route was beautified with welcome arches. The entire *Akasha* was said to be full of clouds and gave an appearance as if *poorna kumbha* was being offered to the soul. Scented *dhoopa* filled the air. It rained flowers. The devas were vying with each other inviting this great soul to visit their residences. Divine music reverberated in the entire area. All the people residing enroute brought all their wealth to offer to this liberated soul. Some sang songs. Some performed yagas, offered the punya which accrued through those yagas to this soul. Some others offered prayers. Some others sounded the *thiru chinnam* i.e., bugle. Blowing of the *shanku* resounded all round. The seven *maruts* and eight *vasus* (they are devas) also showed the way to *Paramapada* to this soul. The people accompanying this soul were singing the *stotras*.

As the Jiva emerges through the Brahma nadi in the embrace of the Lord, he is welcomed by *Ativatikas*, who are to escort him through the journey, come to him one after another to do their duty. First comes *Ativatika-Archis* or fire. He receives the Jiva, honours, and escorts the Jiva upto the limit of his own jurisdiction. Then *Ahas* (day light), *Sukla-paksha* (the bright fortnight), *Uttarayana* (the summer solstice), and *Samvatsara* (year) subsequently receive, honor, and escort the Jiva further. As the Jiva proceeds further, Deity *Vayu* comes forward to receive him, then escorted by Sun, the Jiva goes through the region of Moon who receives him with all honours. Then the Deity *Vidyut* or lightening comes to receive and take him. Later Varuna and Indra also come, meet and honour the soul. Then the Jiva crosses the world of *Prajapathis* who are the masters of *Gandharvas*, *Yakshakas* and other *Rakshakas*.

The escorting fire, day light, Sun, Moon, *Vayu* and others are not the ordinary ones known to us in the material world. They refer to deities presiding over them. Who are these deities? Some are of the opinion that they are Gods who come to occupy the respective posts of duty as the result of their meritorious actions. Others hold the view that they are really the eternally free souls or *Nithya suries*, who have been appointed to the several posts to receive and honour the Jiva as he emerges from the body and marches along the shining path, in the warm embrace of the Lord, like a

prince in the company of a ruling monarch. Later it passes on to Brahmandam. 14 lokas constitute one anda and avarana is an area which is ten times an anda. The soul after having crossed Brahmandam crosses the 17 avaranas. These avaranas are like roofs over each *anda*. Finally he is heading towards the *Moola prakruti*, breaks through the shell that envelops the *Brahmandam* and reaches the stream of *Viraja*. The journey is long. The soul is able to relax and get over its tiredness by stopping on the banks of the river *Viraja*, or under the shade of kalpaka tree. Those who go by this shining path, *Archiradhi marga*, that leads to *Srivaikunta*, will not have rebirth in *samsara*.

In the next chapter the *Paramapada sopanam* of *Vedanta Desika* will be discussed.

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9. Paramapada sapanam of Vedanta Desika

This chapter deals with the *Paramapada sapanam*, the one, the *Rahasya granthas* that consists of nine *parvams* or chapters that leads one to reach the *paramapada*. To start with, *Vedanta Desika* speaks of the *Guruparampara*. Acharya Ramanuja initiated Kadambi Acchan on Veda-Vedanta Rahasyas and through Kadambi Aacchan, those esoteric meanings came to us. Since Kadambi Acchan performed *Madaipalli kainkaryam* (Kitchen services for Ramanuja) he came to be referred with reverence as *Madaipalli Acchan* in our Guru parampara. His *upadesas* are described as “*Madaippalli vantha Manam*”, the fragrance that originated from the *Madaipalli* of Ramanuja. *Vedanta Desika* states at the outset that these nine steps of ladder have been designed by Sarva Loka Saranya Himself for leading one to His divine Abode in a step-wise manner. Our Lord desirous of inviting His *adiyars* to His upper chambers (*Srivaikunta*), constituted entirely of *suddha satva* has constructed out of His own *sankalpa*, the nine stepped path to get His *adiyars* there. ¹They are *Viveka*, *Nirveda*, *Virakti*, *Bheeti*, *Prasadhana*, *Uthkramana*, *Archiradhi*, *Divya Desa Prapti* and *Prapti*. These steps have to be ascended one by one and there is no way to jump over them in an inconsequential manner. The order among the nine steps leading to Srivaikuntanatha is summarized in another sloka².

The first step is *Viveka*, the discriminatory knowledge that one has to attain regarding *Chith* (sentients), *Achith* (insentient) and Eshwara (the supreme Lord). The second step is *Nirveda*, one develops a sense of self-depreciation due to the awareness of having lost so much time chasing sensory pleasures and performing activities that are *swarupa viruddha* (activities at variance with the natural disposition of the Jiva). The third step is *Virakthi*, where one develops *Vairagya*. One turns away from the chasing of the sensual enjoyments. The fourth step is *Bheeti* or fear, over the thought that this experience of *samsara* may reccur again. The fifth step is *Prasadhana*, where the Jiva practices one or the other *Upayas* (Prapatti or Bhakti). The sixth step is *uthkramana*, when the Jiva exits from the body to enter into the Archiradhi marga. The seventh step is *Archiradhi marga*, where the travelling Jiva is greeted and sped on its way by the different devas lining the way to *Srivaikunta*. The eighth step is the *Divya Desa Prapti*. Here, the Jiva arrives at the end station of *Srivaikunta*, which is beyond the region of prakruti. The ninth and concluding step is *Prapti*, where the Jiva that has been transformed to *suddha satva* meets the Supreme Brahman, Sriman Narayana, converses with Him and enjoys Him.

9.1. Viveka-the first step of the ladder to moksha

Until now, we possessed the distorted meanings of the *Tatva*, we continued to engage in profoundly

sinful acts and as a result were immersed in the darkness of nescience; we got stuck in the mud of insignificant material pleasures associated with the five sensory faculties (*roopam, rasam, sparsam, gandham and sabdam*). On us, who were hopelessly lost, *Veda-Vedantas* took pity and instructed us on *Viveka* to uplift ourselves from the quagmire of *Samsara*. *Vedanta Desika* has explained the first of the nine steps of the ladder to our Lord's *Paramapada* (Supreme Abode). The key passage of this verse is: "*eiynthu nall suvai yena naadiya ohr aLavil naaLum vizhunthu azhiyA vahai AaraNa nool vazhangiya vAnn padiyAna vazhi ithuvE*"³. We thought that the experience derived from the five senses is very satisfactory and sought more and more of their taste and as a result got stuck in the mud of *samsara* deeper and deeper; we were about to be destroyed. It is at this time that the most merciful *Veda-Vedantas* came to our rescue and instructed us on the first step to *Paramapada* and lifted us out of the mire of *Samsara*.

(A) The importance of knowledge about the Lord

Vedanta Desika states that among the people of this world, some might be conversant with the knowledge about the *swarupa* of *Chith* and *Achith*, there may be others, who might know about the fine points on the 64 *kalais* and could have the competence to instruct others on them; some might be capable to practice prescribed dharma and initiate others in following such observances; some of them might be qualified to teach others about the essence of the

meanings of the Vedas. Even with all these multiple skills and achievements, what is the use, if they do not have the *Viveka* about the *Swarupa* and the *Swabhava* of *Sriman Narayana*, who alone can lift the *Jivas* out of the terrors of *Samsara*; they cannot hope to step on the ladder to *Moksha*⁴.

9.2. Nirveda-the second step of the ladder to moksha

(A) Sorrow over the wasted time chasing worldly pleasures

Our Lord adorns on His divine chest the mole known as *Srivatsam*, the Forest flower garland known as *Vaijyanthi* and *Maha Lakshmi* as His identities (*Lakshanas*). Those who violate His *sastraic* commands due to their own ignorance (*agnana*) end up in fearful hell and suffer there. *Vivekis* think deeply about these consequences of breaking the injunctions of the Lord. They feel ashamed about the time wasted that far in *samsaric* life chasing non-lasting and deceptively sweet comforts and will rush to follow the *upaya* (*Saranagati* or *Bhakthi yoga*) prescribed by the Vedas. The key passage in this verse is: "*Bhavatthil uzhanRamai KaNDU, athanAl veRutthu, veLhi, aaraNa neRiyE OhDa viravarkaL*"⁵. (Developing disgust over life spent in chasing impermanent *samsaric* pleasures until then and will now rush to practice the *upaya* prescribed by the Lord's *Sastras*).

(B) The significance and triviality of worldly comforts

Vedanta Desika states that the second step in the ladder to *moksha* is *Nirveda* or contrition over his

status as a Jiva suffering in *Samsara* and rushing to perform the chosen *Upaya* like *Saranagati*⁶. (i) The Jiva will reflect on four topics that lead him to great sorrow over the things that happened to him from time immemorial. The Jiva who had gained *Viveka* will now think about the time, when he lost his body and senses and stayed united with the deep darkness (*maha tamas*) in a formless, nameless state. (ii) The Jiva will think about the myriad births that he had taken due to his karma from time immemorial and his being tossed about in the fierce flood of *samsara* and not finding the shore to rest. (iii) The Jiva will reflect on the insignificant comforts (*alpa sukhas*) of *samsara* that he was enjoying, which were indeed like poison laced with honey to give the misleading impression of sweetness. (iv) The Jiva will sorrow over all the other pains that he was experiencing due to his karmas in this world. As a direct result of these reflections, the Jiva will now feel dejected and rush to save himself through the observance (*anushtana*) - observance of the redeeming *upaya* of *Saranagati*. This feeling of dejection (*nirveda*) is thus the second step on the ladder to *moksha*.

9.3. Virakti-the third step of the ladder to moksha

(A) Samsara Virakti (detachment and disinterest in samsara)

Vedanta Desika states that in this world, the sorrow is at the middle of the so called comforts (*Sukhams*).

We think that Brahma in his *Sathya loka* is the enjoyer of limitless bliss. The pain and anxiety that Brahma experienced from the attack of the two asuras, Madhu and Kaitabha, intent always in engaging in wars is immeasurable. When the *Vivekis* reflect on these insignificant (*alpa*) and non lasting (*asthira*) comforts (*sukhams*) tinged always with inauspiciousness, they do not develop any attachment to *Samsara* and reject it as a manifestation of their *virakti* (dispassion). The Key passage of this verse is: “*Pala kaRRa meyyadiAr ikkaDum bhavatthu padiyAr*”⁷ (True Bhagavad conversant with the *Sastras* of the Lord will not opt for the terrible *samsaric* life).

(B) Heaven becomes like hell for Vivekis

Vedanta Desika questions where are those mighty emperors (Manu, Mandhatha etc.,) surrounded by many kings who ruled the universe with their vast armies today? All of them are dead and gone. Similarly, there will be a time, when there will be no Moon, Sun, Stars, Indra, Siva, and Brahma and others. That time is known as *Maha Pralaya*. At that time, the only Abode that stays without demise is the Supreme Abode of Sriman Narayana. When knowledgable and insightful scholars analyse these facts, they will equate the comforts of *Swarga* to the sufferings in hell (Naraka) and will utterly reject *Samsara*. This feeling state is recognized as the third step in the ladder to *Paramapada (moksha)*⁸. The key message in this verse is: “*Namm ThirumAl nilai kaNDAR naaham yellAm narahu yenRu, nall padhamE nAduvArE*”⁸.

9.4. Bheeti-the fourth step of the ladder to moksha

(A) Fear about the fruits of Karma

Vedanta Desika observes that the superior dharma associated with gaining freedom from *samsaric* shackles is known as *Nivrutti* dharma. Those who adopt them will not mix with the ignoramus, who does not fear the terrors of *Samsara*. Therefore, we are mingled only with those, who desire moksha (*Mumukshus*). We gained the firmness of purpose to serve the Lord, who engages joyfully to graze the cattle even in *SriVaikunta* as *Kannan*. This was made possible through the glances (*Kataksham*) of our *Acharyas*, who pull us away from travelling in the path of sin and banish our *agnanam*. The key section of this verse is: “*MaRa vazhi mARRi yemm myyalai theertthavar mann aruLAl kaRavai uhantha PirAn kazhal soodum karutthinam*”⁹ (Our most merciful Sad *Acharyas* removed our *agnanam* and pulled us out of engaging in sinful acts by casting their auspicious glances on us. Their blessings (*anugraham*) led to our determination to perform nithya *Kainkarya* to *Gopalan* in His Supreme Abode).

(B) Upaya anushtanas driven by the fear of Karma

Vedanta Desika states that there has been no limit to the sorrows experienced by the *Samsaris*. There is also no limit to what they are going to experience in the future. This immense fire of karmas burns the *Jivas* by treating them as firewood. The *Samsaris* keep on

churning in this deep pit of *Samsara* undergoing all these sufferings. The people with sharp intellect reinforced by their *Viveka* and *Virakti* develop a fear from these *samsaric* sorrows that would hold them under their control. They follow the command of the Lord to practice *Bhakti* or *Prapatti* yoga to chase away all their karmas and place the burden of their protection at the Lord’s Sacred Feet. The key passage of this verse is: “*PandhanamAm avai anaitthum piNikkumpaaRukaikku pazha maRayin Parama neRi payiluvAr*”¹⁰ (The wise ones break the handcuffs that tie them to *Samsara* by performing the supremely auspicious act of *Prapatti* recommended in the *Vedas*). The power of the Lord to intervene and transform the embryo in the womb of *Uttarai*, which was turned into a piece of charcoal by the *apandav asthra* used by *Aswatthama*, the son of *Dhronacharya* during the mighty battle at *Kurukshethra*. Our Lord with the fragrant *Tulasi Malai* transformed that totally burnt child existing as a piece of charcoal into a handsome prince known as *Parikshit* through His matchless grace (*anugraha shakti*). *Bhagavan* is saluted as the powerful one performing mysterious deeds of grace (*anugraha*) for His dear ones (*venthathu oru kuzhaviyai naRRk-KuamranAkkum veRit-tuLava VitthahanAr*).

9.5. Prasadhan-the fifth step of the ladder to moksha

(A) Performance of Prapatti

Vedanta Desika declares that the *Bhagavatas* longing to destroy *samsaric* miseries (like stay in the

wombs and rebirths in this world) would practice Bhakti yoga; their enjoyment of the bliss of meditating on Bhagavan (*Bhagavad anubhava-rasam*) would also be enhanced. Those who are unable to undertake the arduous Bhakti yoga would choose Prapatti at the Lord's Sacred Feet. After practicing one or the other of the above two *upayas*, they will place their entire trust in the Lord's grace and protective power and will await His mercy to grant them the delectable bliss of *moksha*. Two unfailing means are suggested for those, who do not want to be born again in this *samsara* full of sorrows. One is the demanding Bhakti yoga, where the observant Bhakti for the Lord flows without cessation. For those, who do not have the capabilities to observe Bhakti yoga as the Upaya for *moksha*, the option is the performance of the rites of Saranagati at the Powerful, Protective Feet of Srīman Narayana. After practicing Bhakti or Prapatti yoga, the practitioners - the bhagavatas - will believe that the Lord will perform His avowed duties of *rakshanam*, grant them their stay at His Supreme Abode and will await His Mercy. They will have absolute faith in the infallibility of the Lord's Sacred Feet to grant them *nithya kainkarya* at *Srīvaikunta* and will cling on to them¹¹.

(B) All the karmas (sins) are eliminated because of Prapatti

Vedanta Desika assures that the karmas of the Jivas are grouped under: (i) *Sanchita* and (ii)

Prarabdha. *Sanchita* is the one, which are the huge heaps of sins that are waiting to give their fruits at a future date. *Prarabdha* karma are those karmas, which already began to yield their fruits. Bhakti yoga can eliminate only the *Sanchita karmas*. Prapatti will not only banish all the *Sanchita karmas* but will also destroy *prarabdha* karmas except those we have to experience till the end of our earthly lives. Prapatti burns the sins quickly like the fate of the ball of cotton that is thrown into the fire. The act of Prapatti also prevents the sins committed unknowingly by the Prapanna from clinging to them¹². *Prayaschithta Prapatti* destroys even those sins, which were accumulated consciously due to *kala, desa viparithams* and emergencies. The *aparadha parihara adhikara* of Adhikara Sangraha (Desika Prabhandham: verse - 64) describes the ways in which all these sins get removed from the back of the Prapanna. If the Prapanna commits sins deliberately after Prapatti and yet does not perform *Prayaschithta Prapatti*, then he receives a light punishment from the Lord during his stay on earth and that way destroys this type of sin as well.

For those Prapannas, who cannot brook the delay in ascent to *Srīvaikunta* (AartaPrapannas), the Lord responds to them and grants their wish to join Him without delay. Our Lord destroys every kind of sin of the Prapanna one way or the other and makes sure that the Prapanna never returns to this earth and instead stays close to Him at His Supreme Abode. The key

message is: “*EmperumAn yeNNam yeNNAthAr yettu iraNDum yeNNAthAr*”¹² (Those who do not comprehend the merciful mental disposition of my master do not know anything about the deep meanings of *Ashtakshara*, *Dvayam* and *Charama sloka*, the three rahasyas). The corresponding Sanskrit sloka summarizes the ways in which different kinds of sins of the Prapanna are destroyed¹³.

9.6. *Uthkramana*-the sixth step of the ladder to *moksha*

(A) The exit of the Jiva from the body

Vedanta Desika illustrates with the analogy of the sword in its sheath is given usually to the Jiva residing in its body. The sword housed inside the sheath of the body will have diminished luster and will be powerless to perform its act. Similarly, the Jiva inside the body would find its inherent Gnana shrunk and recognizes that it does not have the power to perform Bhagavad Kainkarya to the full measure (*Paripurna Bhagavad Kainkarya*). Thus the Jiva under the total influence of Karmas is granted *moksha*, when that Jiva adopts the *upaya* of Bhakti or Prapatti yoga. Our Lord stands by with this noble intention to exit that Jiva from its bodily prison and lead it to His Supreme Abode¹⁴.

(B) The way the Jiva is released from the body

Vedanta Desika explains that at the time of death, our Lord unites the sense organs (ear, speech, eyes, nose and body) as well as the organs of actions (mouth,

hands, legs, organs of excretion and procreation) of the Jiva with the Mind; thereafter, Mind with *Prana* (the cause for the stable existence of the body and senses). Next, *Prana* is united with the Jiva. This Jiva combined with *Prana* gets united with the *Pancha bhuthas*. At this stage, the most merciful Lord removes the fatigue experienced by the Jiva from all these exertions by embracing it closely. Finally, the most compassionate Lord exits the Prapanna through the primary door of *Brahma Randhra* or *Brahma Nadi* which is the first stage of travel via *Archiradhi marga* (the path of Light). The Exit from the body to enter *Archiradhi marga* is the sixth step in the ladder to *moksha*¹⁵. The Sanskrit equivalent of this verse is referred¹⁶.

Desika Prabandha verses 146 and 147 deal with the travel by the Jiva on the *Archiradhi marga*. At the end of this travel the Jiva arrives at *Srivaikunta*.

9.7. *Archiradhi* - the seventh step of ladder to *moksha*

(A) The travel of the Jiva through the *Archiradhi marga* (the path of Light)

Vedanta Desika describes the travel and reception accorded to Jiva by celestials in this verse¹⁷. He has given the hope and assurance which alone is sufficient to chase away our *samsaric* fears and make us hasten to perform *Saranagati* at the Lotus Feet of the divine couple if we have not already done so. The key message of this verse: is “*theruLAr biramapuratthu*

iRai sErnthavar, bhava naraha chuzhal aaRRin SuzharcchiyilE suruLAr"¹⁷

Commentary of Sri Srirama Desikar swamy -

The Prapannas are saluted here as "*Therulaar*", as those filled with Gnana. They have now got rid of their sorrows and are resting joyeously (*idar theernthavar thAmm*) since they are united with the Lord of the body, the *antaryami Brahman* indweller ("*biramapuratthu iRai*"). Now that they are freed from the prison of body ("*biramapurac-chiRai theerntha pinn*"), they will cross the prakruti (*immAyai kadantha pinn*) with the grace of the Lord and assisted by the Lord's *Aadhivahikas*, who come forward sequentially and welcome them to the path of light (*Archiradhi marga*) and to *Srivaikunta* ("*chiRai theerntha pinn, aruLAl, amarar yethir koNDu vanthu nadattha*").

It is the Lord's grace that makes this Jiva travel to His Supreme Abode. The Jiva will never ever get tossed about in the whirlpools of the fierce river of *Samsara* (*maayai kadantha pinn, bhava naraha suzhal AaRRin suzharcchiyilE suruLAr*). "*Amararha Aadhivahikas*" described in the of *Desika Prabandham* (*Gathi visEshAdhikAram* of *Adhikara Sangraham*, verse 67). The *Aadhivahikas* like Agni greet the mukta at the boundary of their domains and take them to the other boundary of the subsequent domain ruled by the next *Aadhivahikas*. The body is

called *Brahmapuram* since the Jiva is inside the body and the Lord (*Brahman*) is dwelling inside that Jiva as *antaryami*. In the physical body, there are three stout bones at the top of the back portion of the body. They are known as *Thristhunam*. At the time of death, our Lord churns these three bones to squeeze out the subtle essence of *Pancha bhuthas* and unites that essence with the ready-to-depart Jiva. This kind act of our Lord is known as "*Thristhon Kshopam*". The Jiva will now experience pain as the Lord churns these bones. Our merciful Lord holds the Jiva tight to overcome the pain. This churning is common to all Jivas at the time of departure from this world. After the churning, the mukta enters *Brahama nadi* with the Lord's help and leaves the body to travel in *Archiradhi marga*. The bound Jivas exit the body via other *nadis* to be born again in this *samsara*. The exit routes are thus different for the Prapannas and the baddhas bound to *Samsara*.

(B) Delight of the Jiva on the path to moksha

Vedanta Desika declares that we have been blessed to be connected with the path of light leading to *Paramapada*. We are now blessed to enjoy the pleasures of welcome offered by *Adhivahikas* in contrast to the pains that we suffered in *Samsara*. We have arrived now at the seventh step of the ladder leading to *Srivaikunta*, whose shining towers are now very much in sight¹⁸.

9.8. *Divya Desa Prapti* - the eighth step of the ladder to moksha

(A) The liberated Jiva reaches *Paramapada*

Vedanta Desika questions what indeed are the fruits that we had gained by engaging in the enjoyment of insignificant comforts (*alpasukhams*) of the world, while we travelled on improper routes during our journey on this earth? None. Even if we had gained the status of Brahma due to our good deeds, how long would that distinction have lasted? Very little time. Therefore, he advises us to aim for *moksha* through the enactment of the rites (Bhakti or Prapatti yoga) prescribed for us by the Lord to enjoy the eternal and incomparable pleasures of His *Srivaikunta*. Attaining *Srivaikunta* is the eighth step in the ladder¹⁹.

(B) The description of the Lord at *Srivaikunta*

Vedanta Desika observes that from time immemorial, we as bound Jiva have been under the influence of *punya* as well as *papa* karmas and suffered in this *samsara*. We were blessed to practice one of the *upayas* (Saranagati) and became Prapannas. We have travelled by *Archiradhi marga* and at the end of that joyous journey, we arrived at the banks of *Viraja* river and crossed it with our *sankalpa* and reached the other shore of *Srivaikunta*²⁰.

Commentary of Sri SriRamadesikachar swamy:

In this verse, the Lord is compared to the dark cloud of the rainy season in the sky of *Paramapada*

pouring out as the rain of mercy (*vaan sEr koNDal mazhai pozhiya vanthathu oppAm*). Periya Piratti (Srivaikunta Nayaki) is compared to the lightening in that rainy season cloud (*vaNdu amarum malar mAthar minnAy manna*). The Vyjayanti garland with its many coloured flowers is compared to the multi-splendoured rainbow in that cloud (*Vaisayanthi maNi villAy viLanga*). *Viraja* river marking the boundary between Prakruti and *Srivaikunta* is saluted as the cool nectarine river with clear waters (*kuLinrthu teLinthu amudhAya Virasai*). The verse ends on an exalted note: “*MeeLak-Karai kaNDOr gathi yellAm bhAkkiyatthAl kathitthittOm*”.

(We reached the other shore of *Viraja* river (viz). *Srivaikunta* from where no one returns to *samsara*. we are going to enjoy our life there serving the divine couple).

9.9. *Prapatti* - the ninth step of the ladder to moksha

(A) *Paripurna Brahmanubhava*

Vedanta Desika gladly announces that we may join with the *Nithya suries* and other muktas serving the Lord and recite the sweet music of *Samagana* and *Divya Prabhandham* of *Alwar* at *Srivaikunta* where the Lord resides always with His Consort. We may enjoy the divine couple and serve them without interruption always at *paramapada*²¹. In the state of mukta, they will be free of hunger, thirst, sins, old

age, sufferings and death. Their wishes will come true, and they will attain their ambitions whatever they are (*satya kama and satya sankalpa*)!

(B) The six comparisons for the *mukta*

Vedanta Desika illustrates with six comparisons, the infinite joy and great glory enjoyed by the *mukta* in *Srivaikunta* as a result of its transformation from that of its *baddha* (bound) status to the new *mukta* (liberated) state. In the newly gained *mukti* state, the *Jiva* experiences immense bliss of serving the Lord at *Srivaikunta* and is radiant. This is the ninth and final step in the ladder to *moksha*²². The comparisons are:

(i) It would be like the enhanced radiance of the Sun after it is swallowed by the serpent Rahu and then released. Sun is described as having higher lustre after the solar eclipse. (ii) It would be like the increased brilliance of the high class pearl after it is cleaned from its impure state and is restored to its original state of lustre. (iii) The *mukta*'s joy is like that of the travellers of a boat lost in the sea due to tempest, who finally reach the shore safely. (iv) The joy of the *mukta* would be similar to the elephant that escapes from a forest fire after the fire subsides due to divine will. (v) It would be like the joy of a *Nayaki*, who performs the ceremony of *madal orthal* to regain successfully her *Nayakan*, who spurned her. (vi) The joy of the *mukta* would be like the joy of a king, who is released from the jail after being falsely accused of misbehaviour and is reinstated as the king.

(C) The summary of all the nine steps of *moksha*

Vedanta Desika has summarized all the nine steps to *moksha* dealt so far in a single verse²³. May we enjoy the many blessings of performing the *Nithya Kainkarya* to the divine couple in *Srivaikunta* and enjoy pure, perfect, eternal enjoyment of bliss (*Paripurna Brahmanandam*) there, after climbing the following nine steps of the ladder to *moksha*! *Nammalwar* in his *Tiruvaymoli* verse (10.4.9.)²⁴ gracefully acknowledges the spontaneous grace which enabled him to behold His Lotus Feet which are not accessible even to the celestials in the upper region. The moment he saw the Lord's Lovely Feet, all his accumulated sins of ages got destroyed, true to the promise of the Lord in *Bhagavad-gita* verse (18.66). The *Alwar*, endowed by the Lord Himself with spiritual knowledge, full and complete, elucidates the full import of the Lord's promise in question. The word "*mokshayishyami*" does not mean mere emancipation from bondage of the cycle of births and deaths, but eternal service unto the Lord, as well, keeping with the subjects essential nature, as the Lord's exclusive vassal.

(1) Gaining *Viveka* in this world through the grace of Sadacharya. (2) Developing remorse over the time wasted in chasing the worldly pleasures and worthless pursuits. (3) Developing distaste for *samsaric* comforts. (4) Fearing the ensuing sufferings in hell linked to the bundles of sins accumulated. (5) Performing the *upaya* of Prapatti or Bhakti yoga to

gain *moksha*. (6) Exiting from the body with the help of the Lord via *Brahma Randhra*. (7) Travelling via *Archiradhi marga* to *Srivaikunta*. (8) Arriving at *Paramapada* the Lord after crossing the *Viraja river*. (9) Joining the Nithyas and Muktas to sing *Samagana* and *Divya Prabandham* of *Alwar*.

(D) The reason to stay in this world of karma after Prapatti

Vedanta Desika has explained the reasons why we are still in this world even after the performance of Prapatti in his verse²⁵. We have now performed the *upaya* of *Saranagati* and got rid of the ancient karmas that clung to us as a result of the power of the *upaya* adopted. We have received the blessings of the Lord to perform *nithya kainkarya* to Him and His Divine Consort at *Srivaikunta* and to sing with joy the Vedas and *Prabandham* there. In spite of these blessings, we are still here and are unable to enjoy those immense pleasures waiting in store for us. Why is it that we are not able to enjoy those divine pleasures right now? The reasons for us to prolong for our stay in this world of karma after Prapatti are: (i) The Lord's intensions (*sankalpa*) to inspire other Jivas with our prescribed conduct during the Post-Prapatti period. (ii) The conferral of opportunity (*Bhagya*) to enjoy the Lord in His *Archa* state at the *Divya desams*. (iii) The special scope (*Sukrutha visesha*) to enjoy the beauty of the compositions of the *Alwar* (*Divya Prabandham*) and *Acharya's* works (*Sri Bhashya* and other works).

These are the reasons for stay here for a while before enjoying our destiny of serving the Lord and His Divine Consort at their Supreme Abode and experiencing pure, perfect eternal bliss (*Paripurna Brahmananda*) there with Nithyas and Muktas. *Nammalwar* in his *Tiruvaymoli* verse (9.10.5)²⁶ states that the Lord has vouchsafed *Srivaikunta* at the end of the current span of life, unto those that seek refuge at His Lovely Pair of Feet. This is the sole means of salvation, which is open to one and all, unlike the discipline of Bhakti yoga. This celebrates the Lord as "Granter of moksha at one's death" (*maranam anal vaikuntam kotukkum piran*). *Vedanta Desika* has reflected the appropriate view in his verse, that we continue in this world as per the destiny as the *prarabdha karmas* has to be experienced and exhausted. (*Medhiniyil irukkinRom VithiyinAlE*)

The departure of the soul will be discussed in the next chapter.

* * *

Reference

1. *sEyam sOpAna padhavee SrimathA vihithA
svayam/
suddha sathva mayam bhruthyAn svasoudham
nEthumicchathA*
2. *vivEka nirvEdha virakthi bheethaya:
prasAdhahEthUthkramaNaarchirAdhaya:/
prakruthyathikrAntha padhAdhirOhaNam
parApthirithyathra thu parvaNAm krama://*
3. *KaLLa manatthudan kaNDu muyanra kadu-
vinayAl
naLL iruL aazhiyil iynthu nall suvai inthu yena
naadiya ohr
aLLalil nALum vizhunthu azhiyA vahai AaraNa
nool
VaLLal vazhangiya vAnn padiyAna vazhi ithuvE*
4. *aru uru aanavai anaitthum aRivArEnum
arum kalaikaL kaRRu uraikka vallArEnum
dharuma vazhi azhiyAmal kAppArEnum
tani maRayin tARRpariyam taruvArEnum
iru vinayin ozhukkatthAl yEval ohrAthu
inghE nAmm siRayiruntha yeenam theerkkum
ThirumahaLAr piriyAtha DEvan tiNNam
tERAthAr tiNN padiyil yERAthArE*
5. *maRut-taar Thiruvudan mArbhil daritthavan
vAchakatthai
maRutthAr mayakkamum maRRu athanaal
vantha maa narakum*

- niRutthAr bhavatthil nedunALL uzhanRamai
kaNDu athanAl
veRutthu aaraNa neRiyE veLhiyODa
viraivarhaLE*
6. *vaann patta mann iruLil mayankumARum
maRitthu oru kaAl yenai oozhi senRAL anRU
oonn patta udal aazhi vinai ozhukkil
oru karayum kaaNathE ozhuhumArum
tEn patta vidam pOlat-titthikkinRa
siRu payanE uRu payan yenRu arunthumARum
taann patta padi innEr taanE kaNDu
taLarnthidumEl vaLarnthiDumE takkavARE*
7. *ulahatthil uyarntavar onRum payanil uRum
thuyaRum
alahil padAtha abbhOgam kavarnthu yzezhum
ambhuyatthOn
kalahat-thozhil Madhu KaiDabarAl padum
kattam yeNNil
pala kaRRa meyyadiyAr padiyAr ikkaDum
bahavatthE*
8. *tanthirangaL aLavilarAi dhanatthAl mikka
taarvEnthar thozha vyaam aaNDAR mANDAr
chandiranum sooriyanum veeyum kaalam
tArahayin vaDamum maRRu tani vann aaLum
Indiranum yERu uyardtha Isan thAnum
yeer iraNDu muhatthAnum illaa annannAL
namm ThirumAl nilai kaNDAR naaham yellAm
narahu yenRu nall padhamE nAduvArE*

9. *thuRavaRamE thuNivAr thuNukku aRRa iLam
thuNivOr
uRavu ilar aathalinAm uyarnthArudan onRi
ninROm
maRa vazhi mARRi yemm mayyalai theertthavar
mann aruLAL
kaRavai uhantha PirAn kazhal soodum
karutthinamE*
10. *vanthana pOlvaruvanavum ananthamAhi
mALatha thyur taru valvinai neruppukku
intanamAi yeNNirantha kAlamellAm
innamum ibbhavak-kuzhikke izhiyA vaNNam
venthathu oru kuzhaviyai naRRk-
kumaraNAkkum
veRit-tuLava VittakanAr vithiyE koNDAR
pandhanamAm avai anaitthum
pARuhaikkuppazha
maRayin parama neRi payiluvArE*
11. *karumAlayil varum kattam kazhikkum
karutthudayAr
oru maal peruhum uyOgil muyanRum athu
anRiyum nam
ThirumAl adiyiNai tiNN saraN aahum yena
varitthum
taru Maal iniyivai tAnE yena t-tahavu
yeNNuvarE*
12. *munnn seytha vinait-thiraLil muLaitthathu anRi
muRRuLLa muthal arinthu muLaittha kooRRil*

- tann seyya ThiruvaruLAL isaivu pArtthu
tazhal sErnthA thoolam yenat-tAnE
theertthuppinn
seytha vinayl ninaivu onRathu onRum
pizhai poRutthu vERuLathu virahAl mARRum
yenn seyya tAmaraiKaNN PerumAn yeNNam
yeNNathAr yettu iraNdum yeNNathArE*
13. *prArabhdhEtara poorva paapam akhilam
prAmAdhikam chOttharam
nyAsEna kshpayannanabhupagatha prArabhdha
khaNDam cha na:
dheerpoorvOtthara pApmAnam ajn~athEapi
tannishkruthE:
kouDilyE sathi sikshayaApyanagayan
krODEekarOthi Prabhu:*
14. *uRayitta vALL yena oonuL uRayum uyOgiyarai
naRai mattu ozhivaRRa nall tuLavu yEnthia
Naayakan thAn
niRai mattu ilAtha nedum payan kAtta ninainthu
udalacchiRai vetti vittu vazhippadutthum vahai
seythidumE*
15. *munnn karuvi yeeraindhu manatthir-kootti
mukkiyamAm marutthil avai sErtthathella
nanku uNarum uyirinil sErtthu iym bhUthaththai
naNNuvitthu tAnRanpAl vaikkum NaaTan
onpathudan vAsal iRaNdudaiyitthAuLLE
oru kODi thuyar viLaykkum udampAi onRum
vann siRayin talai vAsal tiRanthu nammai
vAnERa vazhippaduttha manamuRRAnE*

16. *The Sanskrit equivalent of this Paasuram is:*
manasi karaNa-grAmam prANE mana: PurushE
cha tamm
jaDithi gaDayan bhthEshvEnam parE cha
tamAthmani
svavidhavidhushOrithiTam saadharaNE
saraNErmukhairnayathi
parathO nADibhEdhair-yaTOChithham Iswara:
17. *teruLAr biramapuratthu iRai sErnthu idar*
theernthavar thAmm
arulAr biramapuracchiRai theernta pinn
vanthethir koNDu
aruLAl amarar nadattha immAyayai
kadanathatharp-pinn
suruLAr bhava narahac-chuzhal aaRRin
suzharcchiyilE
18. *vizhi allAl vEl illai viNNin mAthar*
mEni allAl villillai meenavaRkku
mozhi allAl amuthilai yenRu munnAL
mutthi vazhi munintadaintha mOham
theernthOm
kazhi allAl kadal illai yenbAr pOlakkAriyamE
kAraNam yenRu uraippAr kAttum
vazhi allA vazhi yellAm kadanthOm maRRum
vAnERum vazhi kaNDom mahinzhthittOmE
19. *van paRRudan mayal pooNDu maRRu ohr*
gathiyAl ina
naaL peRRathu yenn? peRum dhAnamum
yetthanai pOthu uLathAm?

- thunpu aRRa tann thuNivAl thuyar theerkkum*
ThuzhAi Mudiyan
inpuRRa nall vazhiyAl yERRum nal padham
yeNNUvamE
20. *paNdai iru vinaiaaRil padinthu paaram*
kANathE ozhuhiya nAmm bhakkiyatthAl
vanDu amarum malar mAthar minnAy manna
vaisayanthi maNi viLLai viLanga vaann sEr
koNDal aruL mazhai pozhiya vanthathu oppAm
kuLirnthu teLinthu amudhAya virasai
aaRRaikkaNDaNuhik -
karutthAlE kadanthu meeLAKkarai
kaNDOr kathi yellAm katitthittOmE
21. *Poo vaLarum ThirumAthu puNarntha namm*
PuNNuyanAr
ThAvaLamAna Tanit-thivam sErnthu
TamarudanE
naa vaLarum peru nAnn maRai Odhiya geetham
yelAm
paa vaLarum Tamizh pallANDu isayudan
paaduvamE
22. *adal urakam uNDu umizhntha arukkan pOla*
azhukkuadaintha kazhuviya nal taraLam pOlak
kadal ozhuhik-karai sErnta kalamE
pOlakkAtthut -
theekku alanthu ozhindha kaLirE pOla
madal kavaram mayal kazhinta mAthar pOla
vann siRai pOy mannar padham peRRAr pOla

*udal mudala uyir maRaikkum mAyai neengi
uyarntha padham yEri uNarnthu onRinOm*

23. *maNNulahil mayal theernthu manam tathumbi
mannAtha payan ihanthu MaalE anRikkaNN
ilathu yenRu anji Avan KazhalE pooNDu
kadum siRai pOyk-karai yERum gathiyE senRu
ViNNulahil viyappu yellAm viLangak-kaNDu
ViNNavar tamm kuzhAngaLadun vEdam
paadip-
PaNUlahir-pdiyAtha isayAl pAdum
PallANDE PallANDum PaaduvOmE*
24. *tonte ceytu, enrum tolotu valiyoluka,
pnate paraman panitta panivakaiye
(Tiruvaymoli 10.4.9)*
25. *mALaAtha vinai anaitthum maaLa nAmm pOy
vAnERi malar mahaLAR anbhu pooNum
thOLaAtha mAmaNikkut-thoNDu pooNDu
Thozhuthu uhanthu tOthhirangaL paadi
aadikkELaAtha
pazha maRayin geethamkEttukkidayAtha
pErinbham peruhanALum
meeLAtha pEradimaikku anbu peRRom
Medhiniyil irukkinRom VithiyinAIE*
26. *Caranam akum tana tal ataintarkku ellam
maranam anal vaikuntam kotuukkum piran
(Tiruvaymoli 9.10.5)*

* * *

10. The departure of the soul

This section explains graphically and with minute details not only what process the soul undergoes 'At death' but also what happens 'After death', on the basis of *Vedanta Desika's 'Rahasya Traya Sara'*, chapter-20, *niryANAdhikAra. Vedanta Desika* in the opening verse of this chapter describes the soul's departure, that when the time comes, the Lord first joins the external organs (of five senses and five actions) to the mind, and then all the eleven merge with the vital breath (*prana*). All these are merged into the Jiva. The Paramatma quickly keeps the Jiva the side of Himself, in the form He has assumed in the heart to give comfort. The process to this extent is the same for both the man who has realized his essential nature and performed *upaya* and the man who has not. Then based on their suitability, the Lord who is in the heart (*Hridaya*) takes the Jiva through different *nadis* through *Dhumadhi* or *Archiradhi gati*¹.

(i) *Jinte stotra* observes that Oh ! Lord ! Having relinquished all *upayas*, and enjoyment of self called *kaivalya*, I have surrendered to you, who scaled the universe. (ii) *Sri Vishnu dharma* verse (3.24) states that for a person entangled with the sorrowful samsara, the rescuing hand of the Lord, resorted through *bhakti* is the companion. (iii) *Lakshmi tantra* verse (17.102) contains the statement of the Lord that one after surrendering to Him, if he continues to do sinful acts

and does not perform prayaschittha, will experience their fruits, exhausts all his sins and attains Him. (iv) *Sri Vishnu dharma* states that even if the bhaktas pray to the Lord to do them bad, He does not do that. How does a mother not save her child, caught in fire? (v) The following verse, some say in *Bhagavata*, other say in *Vishnupurana* that the Lord had declared that for whom He wants to give His grace, will take away his riches. He might suffer the death of his relatives. Even under these circumstances if he is attached to Him, He will grace him, that even devas could not attain. (vi) *Lakshmi tantra* verse (17.103) states that those who perform karma with desire will enjoy its fruits, at last develop detachment (*vairagya*) and attain the Abode of the Lord. (vii) *Tondaradippodi Alwar* in his *Tirumalai* verse (38) mentions to Lord Ranganatha that He is more pleased with lazy prapannas who do not try *karma, gnana, bhakti yogas*, but had very well realized the truth, controlled their five senses, taken up prapatti as the *upaya* suited to their capacity and live in His outdoors. (viii) *Brahma sutra* verse (4.1.13) declares that for one who had performed bhakti yoga, all sins committed earlier are eradicated. Also the sins done unknowingly after the start of bhakti yoga, do not stick to him, (Upanishads) the reason being the greatness of bhakti yoga (ix) Manu smruti verse (6.79) observes that one who attains *mukti*, leaves his properties to his sons to share, leaves his good deeds (*punya*) to his friends, sins (*papa*) to his enemies, and by bhakti yoga reaches the same

enjoyment as eternal Brahman. (x) *Nammalwar* in *Tiruvaymoli* verse (10.6.3.) states that we can reach Narayana by reciting His names which are expressions of His qualities. The Lord comes and hastens to handover *Srivaikunta-loka* itself to us, but at our will, that is, implying that we can go there when we please. (xi) *Nammalwar* in *Tiruvaymoli* verse (10.6.1.) shares his jubilation that the Lord stands, waiting with His Chakra, to grant His grace. He adds that he does not want to live or take more births in this world any longer. He advises his mind to clear off illusions it had and pay obeisance at His Feet. (xii) *Nammalwar* in *Tiruvaymoli* verse (9.10.5) declares that the Lord grants *Srivaikunta* to whomsoever who surrenders at His Feet, as and when his body falls. (xiii) *Andal* in her *Tiruppavai* verse (5) advises that if we with purity, worship offering flowers, chant His names by mouth, contemplate Him by mind, then all our sins of the past, and those awaiting to give fruits in future, will be burnt like cotton in fire and calls to chant His names. (xiv) *Sri Maha bharata* verse (Ann 220.31) states that the best period for death are, day time, shuklapaksha (bright days of the moon) and *uttarayana* (the six months from 14th January). The other timings are felt inferior. (xv) *Brahma sutra* verse (4.3.8.) states that for one who had resorted to *mokshopaya*, if he passes away in night, we can say that he attains *moksha*. This is because that the bondage of karma is valid till the existence of the body, once the body is cast off, he has to definitely get *moksha*. Upanishads speak of the

same content. (xvi) *Brahma sutra* verse (4.2.19) states that for the reasons specified in the earlier quote, those prapannas, who pass away in *Dhakshinayana* (the six months from 15th July to 13th January) will also attain *moksha*. (xvii) *Yagnavalkya smruti* verse (3;166;169) states that (a) in the heart of Jiva there are number of nadis that shine like lamps. They are of different colours, white, black, pink, blue, goldenyellow and red. (b) Among them one *nadi* that goes upwards, through which the Jiva pierces the Sun rays, reaches beyond *Brahma-loka*. (c) Jiva travelling through other *nadis*, obtain deva-body and reach *Deva-loka*. (d) Similar *nadis* travel downwards. They are dull, not so bright. Jiva travelling through them, loose themselves and to experience the fruits of karma are born again. (xviii) *Varaha Charama - sloka*: The Lord Varaha had declared that when the mind of a man is in a healthy state, when the elementary constituents (*dhatu*) of the body are in perfect equipoise, if at that time a man thinks of Him, who has the worlds as His body and who is not subjected to birth of karma, then He (the Lord) thinks of His devotee, even though he might be like a log of wood or a piece of stone in his last moments and He leads him to attain the highest state². (xix) *Periyalwar* in his *Perialwar Tirumoli* verse (4.10.1) states that “Oh! Lord reclining on Adishesha in Srirangam! A person seeks refuge in those possessed of strength in order that he might obtain the support when he is in distress. Though he is not like those devotees, he had resorted to the Lord, since He went

gracious even to the elephant. When the languor of the dying moment comes he might not be in a position to remember the Lord, therefore, he entreats Him, even now, that at that time, He should come to rescue him” (xx) *Saranagati gadya* verse (21) contains the Lord’s assurance that at the time of casting the body away, owing to His grace alone the devotee will be in full possession of his intelligence. He will have a vision of Him and the memory of all his previous experiences and desires (that the Lord alone is the one object of enjoyment) will not leave him. (xxi) Lord Varadaraja had declared through Kanchipurna to *Ramanuja* that remembering the Lord at the time of death is not mandatory (*Antima smruti varjanam*). (xxii) The Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* (8.5) declares that one who at the time of death, meditating on Him alone, goes forth, leaving the body, attains Him. There is no room for any doubt in this matter, whether he will attain Him or not. (xxiii) The Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* (8.6) continues that thinking of whatever entity at the end, by the one when he leaves his body, that alone, only that entity he thinks of, he reaches that and not any other. (xxiv) *Sri Mahabharata* verse (santi 46-139) states that Bhishma saw in front of his eyes, the Lord whom the yogis endeavour by their efforts to fix in their minds at the time of separation from the body, and casting off his body. Bhishma had attained the fruit of his yoga, is it not? (xxv) *Sri bhashya* verse (4.2.1) states that even after the speech is dead, the mind is active, as seen in the world. (xxvi) The Lord

Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* (15.15) declares that He has centered in the hearts of all, from Him came memory and perception as well as their loss. He is verily that which is known by all the Vedas. He is indeed the author of the Vedanta and the knower of the Vedas.

Vedanta Desika in the concluding verse of the chapter observes that the omniscient Lord, like a father who enters the muddy tank, to rescue his child that has fallen inside, at the time of departure, who resides in the shuttle space in the heart (*Hridaya*) at the time of death, avoiding the *nadis* that lead to *swarga* or *naraka*, escorts the Jiva through the 101st *nadi*, called *murdhanya nadi*, and set out with the support of the rays of the Sun, in the shining path, *Archiradhi* to the eternal *Srivaikunta*³.

The journey of the soul will be discussed in the next chapter.

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Reference

1. *manasi karan.agramam.pran.e manah.purus.e
ca tam.
jhat.iti ghat.ayan bhutes.venam.pare ca
tamatmaniA
svavidavidus.orittham.sadharan.e
saran.ermukhaih.
nayatiparatonad.ibhedairyathoChithami svarah.
44. (RTS, Adikara-20)*
2. *Sthite manasi susvasthe sarie satiyo narah!
dhatu samye sthite smarta vivarupanca
mamajam!!
Atatstammriyamanam tu kastha-pasana
sannibham!
aham samami mad bahaktam nayami paraman
gatim!! (Varaha Charama sloka)*
3. *daharakuhare devastis.t.han
nis.advaradirghika
nipatitanij apatyaditsavatirn.apitr. kramat A
dhamanimiha nastasmin kale sa eva satadhika.
makr.takapuraprasthanartham.pravesayati
prabhuh. 45 (RTS, Adikara-20)*

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11. The journey of the soul

This chapter describes how the soul leaves the body through the various *nadis* (veins) and how the soul of a Prapanna and that of a Non-Prapanna take different routes and different destinations on the basis of *Vedanta Desika's 'Rahasya Traya Sara'*, chapter-21, *gativiSeshAdhikAra*. *Vedanta Desika* in the first verse of this chapter, details the journey of the soul through the *Brahmananda* soaring high towards *Srivaikunta*. The guiding Gods, *Ativahikas*, who are to escort him through the journey, come to him one after another. First comes *Archis* or Fire, then successively *Ahas* or daylight, *Sukla-paksha*, *Uttarayana*, *Samvatsara*, *Vayu*, *Surya*, *Chandra*, *Lightening*, *Varuna*, *Indra*, *Prajapathy* or *Brahma* and finally the soul reaches *Viraja*. By plunging into it the *Jiva* is purified and perfected. The subtle body which was retained merely for the sake of the journey is now cast off. Then the *Jiva*, by his mere will, crosses the *Viraja* and lands in the *Nithya-vibhuti* or the world of eternal splendour. The happening thereafter is a wonder that defies all description in words.

(i) *Tirumangai Alwar* in his *Periya Tirumadal* verse (8.9.) states that the *Jiva* pierces through an axle-hole in the solar globe. (ii) *Tirumangai Alwar* in his *Seriyā Tirumadal* verse (4) states that the *Jiva* passes through the axis of the wheel of Sun's chariot and reaches *Srivaikunta*, a world of inexhaustible bliss that is permanent and will never return from there. (iii)

Tirumalisai Alwar in his *Tiruchanthaviruttam* verse (67) advises that one who is capable, like a prince, piercing the solar globe, reach *paramapada* and enjoy the bliss of service should listen to the glories of the Lord, stay away from the fruits of sinful acts and be saved. (iv) *Nammalwar* in his *Tiruvaymoli* verse (1.3.11) states that those who master the decade 1.3 *pathuvdai* will join the *Nithya suries* in *paramapada* and be released from the hard prison of birth. (v) *Sri pancharatram* describes that *Devas* with *Apsaras*, holding offerings welcome the *Jiva*. Thus the one travelling through *Archiradhi marga*, is received and greeted in different places, devoid of bondage of karma, attains *Srivaikunta*. (vi) *Nammalwar* in his *Tiruvaymoli* verse (10.9.8) describes that *Nithya suries* stand in regular rows to receive the *muktas*. They wear a crown like that of the Lord, which is an insignia of *seshatva*. They receive the *muktas* with the following words: "Welcome to the privileged *Vaishnavas* who have been *dasas* of *Govinda* for generations". The main gates at the tower of *Vaikunta* look specially decorated for great festival, flags and banners fly high. Even the Lord with His Consorts acquire a special lusture. *Nithya suries* take him inside with welcoming slogans. (vii) *Sri Mahabharata* verses (santi 312.30, 38,39) contain the statement of *Jiva* that he does not know how long he had wasted his life in this *prakruti* to obtain the superior body of the *deva*, the body of human or the lower bodies of animals he does not want to live any longer. He wants to stay away, and reach the Lord without any inch of suffering. He declares that he does

not want to be associated with *prakruti*. To join the Lord is the most suited for him. (viii) *Jitanthe stotra* verse (4.21) describes the prayer of *Jiva* when he could see the Lord of dark cloud hue, enjoying with His Consorts. (ix) *Sri Mahabharata* verses (santi 30.77) states that pure satva guna takes one to Aniruddha. The pure Aniruddha Himself escorts one to Para Vasudeva. (x) *Jayat samhita* describes another route open to the *paramekantis* who having performed *kainkarya* five times a day had obtained (*siddhi*) perfection in them. They leave here to reach *sethatdeba*, then reach the Lord who has everything as His body, then to *Tirupalkadal*, milky ocean to join the Lord Aniruddha, then Lord Pradyumna, the Eshwara of all devas, then reach the eternal Lord Sankarshana. (xi) *Sri bhashya* verse (2.2.41) states that one who worships the *swarupa* of the Lord, reaches the *Vyuharupa*, worships that and finally attains the Para Brahma Vasudeva. (xii) *Jithanthe stotra* verses (2.18,19,20) describes that *Srivaikunta* possess a luster which is natural to it and which would surpass the luminosity of thousands of Suns. The chief six qualities *gnana*, *shakti*, *bala*, *aiswarya*, *virya*, and *tejas* shine there. The place could not be attained by Non-vaishnavites. Devoid of three *gunas* (*satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*), the place is full of *Nithya suries* and *muktas* who had performed *kainkaryas* five times a day, undergone *prapatti*, attained *mukti* and are comparable to *Nithya suries*. The place is full of huge halls, spacious mansions, forests, gardens of trees and flowers, big lakes, tanks and small wells. The place has no

connection with *prakruti* and is celebrated by devas. It is *suddha satva*. When could I see that world? (xiii) *Sri Mahabharata* verses (santi 254.18,19,20) addressing the superior Brahman states that after exhaustion of *punya* and *papa*, those who start their journey to *Vishnu loka* pass through Sun¹. They obtain a subtle body of minute size, not visible to eyes with *atma-swarupa* reach Aniruddha. Then with the mind left, attain the Lord of the Jivas, Sankarshana. Those who had performed Gnana yoga also reach Sankarshana. Devoid of three *gunas*, they reach the *Antaryami paramatma* soon realizing that He is the resting place of everything, with control over sense organs, with steadfast determination, contemplating on Him alone, they attain the Vasudeva.

Vedanta Desika in the final verse of this chapter explains the path travelled by the *Jiva*. He who had in the past travelled through the *Dhumadhi gati*, passing through the *naraka* (hell) by going up and coming down got very exhausted. Now the *Jiva* travelling to *moksha*, with the subtle body, guided by *Ativahikas*,* reaches the Lord, who is like a sandal tree, under His shade, attains everlasting Bliss. (*The *Ativahikas*, are Fire, Daytime, *Sukla-paksha*, *Uttarayana*, *Varsha*, *Vayu*, *Surya*, *Chandra*, Lightning, *Varuna*, *Indra* and *Brahma*. The path travelled is called *Archiradhi gati*.)²

The full and perfect enjoyment of Bliss of Brahman will be covered in the next chapter.

Reference

1. *jalanadivasajyotsnapaks.ottarayan.avatsaran
pavanatapanapraleayam.sun kramadaciradyuti
jaladharapatim.devadhisam.prajapatimagatah
tarativirajam.dure vacastatah.paramadbhutam*
46 (RTS, Adikara-21)
2. *pitr.pathaghat.iantrarohavarohaparibhramaih.
nirayapadaviyatayatakramaisca nirantaraih.
adhigataparisanantajnadhairativahyanah.
sukhayati nijacchayaday svayam.haricandanah.*
48 (RTS, Adikara-21)

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12. The Full and Perfect Enjoyment of Bliss of Brahman

This chapter explains what happens on reaching the *Srivaikunta*, on the basis of Vedanta Desika's *Rahasya Traya Sara*, chapter-22, *paripUrNabrahmAnubhavAdhikAra*. Vedanta Desika in the opening verse of this chapter, states that the prapanna, through *Ativahikas*, attains Sriyapathy SrimanNarayana, who is possessed of various glories like *Nithya-vibhuti*, in the region beyond prakruti. Then he has his essential nature in full manifestation realizes his inseparable connection with the Lord. As a consequence he attains the eight attributes (of freedom from hunger, thirst, ageing, death) without any question of returning again to *samsara* and he attains in regard to enjoyment, perfect resemblance to the Lord. The mukta attains the Supreme Being and acquires the attributes of the Supreme Being like having four arms. He too becomes, free from imperfections, Omniscient, free from Karma, from suffering, from sorrow. He too becomes blissful, blemishless and independent in the sense that he is not subject to Karma but his own limitless free will¹.

12.1. The *Bhagavad anubhava* and all others associated are most enjoyable to *mukta*

(i) *Nammalwar* in his *Tiruvaymoli* (6.7.10) wonders that the Lord with big beautiful eyes, "*Avavinda lochana*" who processes all worlds and without seeing Him, the *Alwar* felt that even for a

second he cannot sustain his life. (ii) *Vishnu purana* verse (6.5.59) states that the *Bhagavad anubhava*, without any tint of sorrow, eternal, such a highest enjoyment that makes the desire for other enjoyments to be forgotten and the fittest medicine for the disease of samsara. (iii) *Taittiriya Upanishad* verse (ananda valli 1.2) states that the mukta, in *paramapada*, without any reason, without others intervention, without any ups and downs on contraction, with all pervading knowledge of Para Brahma, with all his auspicious qualities, enjoy together. This is similar to the father and son, together, at the same time, eating the food with milk, the Paramatma and mukta experience the auspicious qualities and enjoy. (iv) *Taittiriya Upanishad* verse (ananda valli 7.1) states that the worshipped Brahman is the embodiment of Ananda. *Upasaka* by receiving that Ananda becomes happy. Hence the Brahman becomes *prapya* and *upasya*. (v) *Chandogya Upanishad* verse (8-12-5) states that the Jiva different from the body and the senses, because of the effect of karma, leaves from the body and senses, through *manas* with superior, essential knowledge (Gnana), experience all the auspicious qualities of the *daharAkasa* Brahman and is happy. (vi) *Chandogya Upanishad* verse (7-26-2) states that the mukta sees everything, is able to obtain all the objects, at all times, created by his mere will (*sankalpa*) and enjoy them all. Thus *Gunastaka- virbhavam* is attained. (vii) *Sri bhashya* verse (1.3.7) explains that while the infinite, most superior, embodiment of bliss, Brahman is

enjoyed, the enjoyer does not see anything other than Brahman. This is because all the objects are the part and parcel of the Brahman and His greatness. Therefore aiswarya with greatness and auspicious qualities, with the most superior, comfortable Brahman, in the absence of any other thing more enjoyable does not see anything sorrowful. The one thing that becomes conducive for enjoyment becomes comfortable in this world.

12.2. The *Bhagavad anubhava* is eternal

(i) *Chandogya Upanishad* verse (8.12.3.) states that the mukta attains *paramatma* and enjoys Him in all ways He obtains ladies, relatives, play, vehicles and all comforts. At that stage he does not think of the sorrowful body he had cast off. (ii) *Chandogya Upanishad* verse (8.2.1.) states that if a mukta wants to contact his piturs of many earlier births, their assembly appears before him as per his wishes. He is celebrated in their company. There are ten similar mantras like this. (iii) The Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* (8.15) states that the great souls having attained Him, do not get birth, which is the Abode of pain and is ephemeral. They have reached the highest perfection, the most exalted state called *moksha*. Those on the other hand, which do not reach Him, are reborn. (iv) The Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* (8.16) states that all the worlds up to, that is ,and including the realm of Brahma, are subjected to returning again, are inherently productive of birth. But after attaining Him alone, there

is no rebirth. (v) *Sri Mahabharata* verse (santi 323.80) declares that the mumukshu, devoid of the connection with *prakruti*, attains the Lord, the twenty sixth *Tatva*, obtains all *siddhis*, hence is not born again. (vi) *Sri Vishnu purana* verse (1.8.40) observes that the moon and sun after the completion of their terms of authority, during the period of *Pralaya* gets destroyed and return to *samsara*. Those who had contemplated on the Lord with *Vasudeva mantra* (*dwadasakshara mantra*) and attained *paramapada* have not come back till date. (vii) *Ahirbudyantha samhita* verse (37.25.26) states that one who had worshipped the Lord, attains the *paramapada*, from where he never returns.

12.3. There is no variation in the degree of bliss attained

(i) *Vishnu dharma* verse (102.29) states that Dharmavadhar and others even though were born in lower castes, because they had practiced bhakti yoga in their earlier births, continued that in that birth and attained perfection (*siddhi*) like Sabari. (ii) *Mundakopanishad* verse (8.1.3.) observes that when the learned disciple sees Lord Vasudeva, the creator, sustainer of the entire universe, with the most auspicious form, in that very moment, gets rid of his karmas (*punya and papa*), gets disconnected from *prakruti*, attains the Supreme position of (*samya*) sameness. (iii) *Kathopanishad* verse (4.15) addressed to Sage Gautama, states that similar to the pure water poured into pure water becomes the same only, the

soul of the Sage contemplating on the *Paramatma*, with the knowledge of the *Paramatma*, becomes the same with Him. (iv) The Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* (14.2) declares that by abiding by the Supreme knowledge which is above all knowledge (having practiced the means leading to the attainment of this knowledge) having attained to sameness, neither do they come forth in evolution at the time of creation, nor are they troubled disturbed, destroyed in involution, at the time of pralaya, the time of dissolution of even Brahma. (v) *Brahma sutra* verse (4.4.21) declares that the mukta enjoys the eternal auspicious qualities of *Brahma swarupa*, similar to Him (*samya*) but do not have authorities of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe, of the Brahman.

12.4. Mukta and Sayujya

(i) *Sri Bhagavata* verse (7) describes that the few worshipers of the Lord reside in the same place (*loka*) of the Lord. This is called “*Saloka*.” Others reside very close to the Lord. That is known as “*Samipa*.” Some others obtain the similar appearance of the Lord which is called “*Sarupa*” while others attain the enjoyment, togetherness with the Lord. This is referred as “*Sayujya moksha*.” (ii) *Jinte stotra* verse (2.36) contains the prayer of the mukta to the Lord, addressing the Lord as “*Satya sankalpa*” whose wishes come true, with long hands , that he would not prefer the *Salokya*, *Sarupa moksha*, but aspire for His *Sayujya moksha* only. (iii) *Brahma sutra* verse (4.4.17) declares

that the full and eternal enjoyment of bliss of mukta is in everything other than creation and related activities. This is because that *Upanishads* have attributed those functions for the Lord without mentioning the mukta. (iv) *Sakatayanam* states that Vedantis declare the attainment of enjoyment togetherness with that of the Lord is *Sayujya*. (v) The Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* (15.17) declares that the Supreme, superlatively eminent, Purusha, called the Highest self. He is the Immutable Lord, the Omniscient ruler, called Narayana, who pervading, entering into the three worlds, by the energy of His own might that is Sentiency sustains them, maintains them by simply remaining in them in His true form as the Reality. The Lord is celebrated as “Purushottama” (the Highest Purusha) (vi) *Jakya samhita* verse (4.83) states that in a burning piece of iron, even though the piece of iron and the fire are different, but appears as one integral unit. In the same manner, even though the Lord is different from the universe, appears as one by indwelling internally as *Antaryami*. (vii) *Swetaswara Upanishad* verse (1.6) states that the Jivatma understanding that it revolves with different births in the wheel of Brahman, that creates all Jivas, and absorbs them is different from the controlling inner soul (*sariri*) which is graced by Him and attains no rebirth. (viii) *Mundakopanishad* verse (5.1.1) states that in the tree of the body, two birds (*Jivatma* and *Paramatma*) are living. One bird (*Jivatma*) eats and enjoys the fruits (outcome of karma) while the other bird (*Paramatma*) remains quiet. (ix)

Swetaswara Upanishad verse (6.13) observes that the Lord is eternal, knowledge among learned, one among several eternal, the Lord grants all our wishes, does good for us. One who understands the cause, who could be known by *sastras*, get relieved from all sins. Here even though the Lord and the Jivas both are eternal, the eternal nature and Lordship of Bhagavan are very surprisingly wonderful.

12.5. The uniqueness of *mukta* and the Lord

(i) *Sri Mahabharata* verse (santi 361-14-15) states that the *paramatma* who is the indweller of the Jivatma is eternal, devoid of satva or other gunas. He is the indweller of everything, srutis call Him as *Purusha* and He alone is to be known as Narayana. Just like water does not stick to the Lotus leaf, the effects of karma, do not stick to Him. The Jiva is inferior to the Lord; due to the effect of Karma gets the bondage of *samsara*, but the association with the Lord attains *moksha*. (ii) *Pranava samhita* verse (3.34) declares that there is none other than the Lord Purushottama who is powerful to grant the riches to one, or steer it away from him.

12.6. The *mukta* does not come back to *samsara*

(i) *Pranava samhita* verse (30.94) specifies that those who had performed and practiced bhakti yoga with great desire, and, those who had performed the superior *prapatti*, attain *Sayujya moksha*, engaged in eternal service of the Lord and they do not come back to the earth. (ii) *Brahma sutra* verse (4.4.22) declares

that those who have attained *moksha*, do not return to *samsara*. This is because of the verdict of Upanishads. (iii) *Nammalwar* in his *Tiruvaymoli* (4.8.1.) sang out of desperation, that there is no use of his golden yellow complexion which is not able to attract the Lord. The *Alwar* states that there is no use of the articles not accepted by the Lord.

Vedanta Desika in the concluding verse of this chapter, prays that *kainkaryas*, which are out of bound with the waves of hundreds of desires, to be performed without rest, different types at the same time, that lead to infinite blissful, *brahmanubhava*, sweet like the mixer of honey and milk, that shines by the combination of *sarupa*, *guna* and *vibhuti*, that is attainable by Saints and *Siddhas*, should appear in his mind².

The Upanishad's declaration that the *mukta* attains equality with Brahman only means it is in (*Gnana*) knowledge and (*Ananda*) full and complete enjoyment of bliss. *Mukta* is similar (*samya*) to the Lord. The support, creation and sustenance of everything, the master, the soul, the refuge, the controller of everything, the one known by the Vedas, the worshipped by all, the granter of *moksha*, omnipresent, embodiment of *Gnana*, *Ananda* being inseparable with Goddess are attributes pertaining to the Lord only.

The next chapter details *Moksha* described in Sri Vishnu Sahasranamam.

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Reference

1. *vitamasi pade laks.mikantam.viChithravibhutam.
sacivagamitah.sam.padyavirbhavatsahajakr. tih.
sphut.atadapr.thaksiddhih.siddhyadgun.as.t.akatatphalo
bhajati paramam.samyam.bhoge nivra.
Ttikathojjhitam 48 (RTS, Adikara-22)*
2. *avisrantasraddhasatakalahakallolakalus.ah.
mamavirbhuyasurmanasi
munisiddhadisulabhah.
madhuks.iranyayasvagun.avibhavasajanakananmah
anandabrahmanubhavaparivaha
bahuvidhah. 49 (RTS, Adikara-22)*

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13. Moksha described in Sri Vishnu Sahasranama

This chapter details the birth of Sri Vishnu Sahasra Nama, Yudhishtira's questions to Bhishma, Bhishma's reply and references of *Moksha* in Sri Vishnu Sahasranama.

13.1. The birth of Sri Vishnu Sahasranama

At the end of the epic Mahabharata war, *Bhishmacharya* was awaiting the sacred hour to depart from his physical body unto the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas, was desparately looking for the answers to matters relating to Dharma and Karma. Lord Sri Krisna, who understood Yudhishtira's uneasy mind, guided him to Bhishma to learn insight into this precious knowledge. It is relevant to mention that Bhishma was acknowledged to be one of the twelve most knowledgeable people. The other eleven being Brahma, Narada, Siva, Subramanya, Kapila, Manu, Prahlada, Janaka, Bali, Suka and Yama. As directed by the Lord, he meets Yudhishtira.

13.2. Yudhishtira's questions to Bhishma¹

During the meeting Yudhishtira presented to Bhishma six questions: (i) Who is the greatest Lord in the world? (ii) Who is the one refuge of all? (iii) By glorifying whom, can man attain peace and prosperity? (iv) By worshiping whom can man reach auspiciousness? (v) What is, in thy opinion, the greatest

Dharma? (vi) By doing Japa of what, can creature go beyond the bonds and cycle of birth and death?

13.3. Bhishma's reply²

(i) The one who, with endless devotion, chants the thousand names, of the Lord Sriman Narayana, the father of the Universe, who is limitless, who is the God of Gods, who is superior among *purushas* would get free from the bondage of *samsara* (this answers the sixth question). (ii) He who also worships and prays, daily without break, that *purusha* who is eternal, does not change, would lose without fail, all the miseries in this life (this answers the fourth question) (iii) He who praises the Vishnu, who does not have end or begin, that God who is the Lord of all worlds, who presides over the universe, will be free from all sorrows. He is favourable to Brahma, Brahmana and Vedas, who knows all dharmas, who increases the fame of those living in this world, who is the master of the universe, who is the *Para-Brahma*, who is the truth among all those who have life and who decides the life of all living beings (this answers the third question) (iv) Bhishma states that it is his firm conviction, performing *archana* with devotion to the Lotus Eyed Sriman Narayana is superior among all dharmas (this answers the fifth question). (v) The Lord that is the Dharma that is great, that which is the greatest light, that which is the greatest penance, that which is the greatest Brahman, that is the greatest shelter, is the

only God worthy of surrender (this answers the second question). (vi) The thousand holy Namas of the Jagannatha Vishnu which wash away all sins, and fear, of Him who is purest of the pure, that which is holiest of holies, of Him who is God among Gods, of that father who lives without death, among all that lives in this world, of Him whom all the souls, were born at the start of the world of Him in whom, all that lives will disappear at the end of the world, and of that the Chief of all this world, who bears the burden of this world. Bhishma continues to state that he would recite those Lord's *namas* of auspicious qualities, that are famous and often recited by the sages and saints, to attain all the four *purusharthas* (this answers the first question).

Bhishma further responded by reciting the one thousand *Namas*, now hailed as the Vishnu Shasranama, and reminded him that either by meditating on these names or by invoking the *Namas* through *archana* (Offering), our minds can be lifted to higher consciousness. Indeed, such a long recital of *Namas* glorifying the Lord and His splendour is rare in the world. The thousand Namas are storehouses of proven spiritual content that can easily uplift our minds. The utterance (*vak*) and meaning (*artha*) together infuse a subtle energy positively. The auspicious qualities of the Lord that bear direct relation to *mukta*, the path of *mukti*, the control of *Jivas*, grant of *moksha*, the *Archiradhi marga* and *Srivaikunta* have been selected

and shown below. The serial number of the Nama, description and the meaning are given. The meanings translated are based on the commentary of Parasara Bhattar, compiled by Sri Srinivasachariyar and Vellukkudi Sri Krishnan swami .

13.4. References of Moksha in Sri Vishnu Shasranama

(a) The Abode of muktas

(1) 11. *Paramatma*: He who is the Supreme Soul. (2) 12. *Muktanam parama gatih*: He who is the ultimate resort of muktas. (3) 13. *Avyayah*: He is one whom the resorted do not leave. (those who attain *Srivaikunta* do not come back). (4) 14. *Purushah*: He who gives Himself and His auspicious qualities for the enjoyment of muktas. (5) 15. *Sakshi*: He seeing the happiness of muktas also feels happy. (6) 16. *Kshetragnah*: He is aware of *Vaikunta*, the place of bliss of *muktas*. (7) 17. *Akshara*: His auspicious qualities are eternal, everlasting, never diminishes over time inspite of being enjoyed by *muktas* constantly. (8) 18. *Yogah*: He is the means to *mukti*, one attainable through Yoga. (9) 19. *Yogavidam neta*: The master of those who established Bhakti Yoga. (10) 20. *Pradhana-purusheshvarah*: The master of *Mula Prakruti*, and *Purusha* or *Jiva*.

(b) The controller of Jivas

(11) 849. *Parakvamsah*: He is the supporter of *Nithya suries*. They are established in His memory. (12) 850. *Vamsavardhanah*: He makes the clan of

Nithya suries grow. (13) 851. *Prabrudh*: He is responsible for *Jivas* till they reach Him.

(c) Grant of moksha

(14) 871. *Satvavan*: He who has qualities of *suddha satva*. (15) 872. *Satvikah*: He one who grants the fruits of *Satva guna*. (16) 873. *Satyah*: He who is established in *Satya*. (17) 874. *Satya-dharma-parayanah*: He one who kindly accepts the truth fullness and righteousness in good people. (18) 875. *Apriyarah*: He one who is sought after by those who seek the ultimate values of life (*Purushartha*). (19) 876. *Priyarah*: He who graces the dear ones. (20) 877. *Arhah*: He who deserves to be worshipped with all the ingredients and rites of worship by gnanis (21) 878. *Priyakrt*: One who makes all love and worship Him. (22) 879. *Pritivardhanah*: One who enhances the bhakti of devotees. (23) 880. *Vihayasa-gatih*: One who serves as the means for the devotees to attain *paramapada*.

(d) The Archiradhi marga

(24) 881. *Jyotih*: One who is the Light, the first step in *Archiradhi marga*. (25) 882. *Suruchih*: One who is the Day time, brightened by Sun's light, the second step. (26) 883. *Hutabhuk*: One is Moon, the third step, who consumes whatever had been offered in all sacrifices, that ultimately turns out as nectar. (27) 884. *Ravih*: One who is the Sun's *Uttarayana*, the

fourth step. (28) 885. *Virochanah*: One who is *Samvatsara*, the year, the fifth step. (29) 886. *Suryah*: One who is the Wind (*vayuloka*), the sixth step. (30) 887. *Savita*: One who brings rain and the Sun that helps the plants grow, the seventh step. (31) 888. *Ravilochanah*: One who has the Sun as His eyes, who illuminates, the Moon, Lightning and Varuna, the eighth, ninth and tenth steps. (32) 889. *Ananta - Hutabhuk - Bhokta*: One who is eternal, all-pervading and indeterminable, One who consumes what is offered in fire Sacrifices, as Indra, One who protects all *Jivas* as Brahma, the tenth and eleventh steps. (33) 890. *Sukhadah*: One who bestows the bliss to the *Jivas*, who by the touch of *amanavas*, will get rid of *samsara*. (34) 891. *Naikajah*: One who makes many *apsaras* decorate the mukta and bring him before Him.

(e) Srivaikunta - The land of eternal bliss

(35) 892. *Agrajah*: One who manifests in front of mukta for his enjoyment. (36) 893. *Anirvinnah*: He who is relieved of worry after having liberated a *Jiva* who becomes a mukta, He who is not depressed because He has nothing to wish for and He who is not tired of fulfilling the wishes of His devotees. (37) 894. *Sadamarsi*: He who accepts the services of muktas. (38) 895. *Lokadhishtanam*: He who is the support of all worlds. (39) 896. *Adbhutah*: He who is extremely wonderful, who makes appearances occasionally among us. (40) 897. *Sanat*: One who is the object of

enjoyment of muktas. (41) 898. *Sanatanatamah*: Being the cause of all, He is more ancient than Brahma who are generally considered eternal. (42) 899. *Kapilah*: One who appears as a dark cloud amidst the lightening. Mahalakshmi is lightening and the Bhagavan is the cloud. (43) 900. *Kapir avyayah*: One who enjoys the never diminishing bliss. (44) 901. *Svastidah*: One who grants the auspiciousness. (45) 902. *Svastikrut*: One who is the doer of good to the devotees. (46) 903. *Svasti*: He who is Auspiciousness. (47) 904. *Svastibhuk*: The Protector of all that is auspicious, the Enjoyer of Bliss, and He who enables His devotees enjoy bliss. (48) 905. *Svastidakshinah*: He who gives the divine body and powers to the muktas who are in His service. (49) 906. *Araudrah*: He who is peaceful with all auspicious qualities. (50) 907. *Kundali*: He who is decorated with beautiful ear-rings. (51) 908. *Chakri*: He who has the discus in His arm. (52) 909. *Vikrami*: He who has the powers to perform mighty deeds (like in Trivikrama avatara) (53) 910. *Urijita-shashanah*: He whose commands could not be violated by Brahma, Indra and other Gods. (54) 911. *Shabdatigah*: He whose greatness is beyond words, could not be spoken in full by the thousand tongued Adishesha.

In the next chapter we shall discuss *Srivaikunta* - the ultimate destination

* * *

Reference

1. *Sri yudhisthira uvaca*
kimekam daivatam loke kim vapyekam
parayanam |
stuvamtah kam kamarcamtah
prapnuyurmanavah subham || 8 ||
ko dharmah sarvadharmam bhavatah
paramomatah |
kim japanmucyate
jamturjanmasamsarabamdhanat || 9 ||
2. *Sri bhisma uvaca*
jagatprabhum devadevamanamtam
purusottamam |
stuvannamasahasrena Purushah satatotthitah
|| 10 ||
tameva carcayannityam bhaktya
purusamavyayam |
dhyayan stuvannamasyamsca yajamanastameva
ca || 11 ||
anadi nidhanam Vishnum
sarvalokamahesvaram |
lokadhyaksam stuvannityam sarvadhukhatigo
bhavet || 12 ||
brahmanyam sarvadharmajnam lokanam
kirtivardhanam |
lokanatham mahadbhutam
sarvabhutabhavodhbhavam || 13 ||

*esa me sarvadharmam dharmodhikatamo
matah
yadbhaktya pumdarikaksam stavairarcennarah
sada // 14 //*

*paramam yo mahattejah paramam yo
mahattapah |
paramam yo mahadbrahma paramam yah
parayanam // 15 //*

*pavitrnam pavitram yo mangalanam ca
mangalam |
daivatam devatanam ca bhutanam yovyayah
pita // 16 //*

*yatah sarvani bhutani bhavamtyadiyugagame |
yasmimsca pralayam yanti punareva yugaksaye
// 17 //*

*tasya lokapradhanasya jagannathasya bhupate/
tasya lokapradhanasya jagannathasya bhupate/
visnornamasahasram me srunu
papabhayapaham // 18 //*

*yani namani gaunani vikhyatani mahatmanah |
rsibhih parigitani tani vaksyami bhutaye // 19 //*

* * *

14. Srivaikunta - the ultimate destination

This chapter describes the Srivaikunta which is celebrated as the ultimate destination in Srivaishnavam. Starting with the different names it is called, the beauty that is beyond words, the Lord and the Bliss. *Srivaikunta* as described in *Srimad Bhagavata*, in *Vishnu purana*, in *Mahabharata*, in *Vaikunta Gadya*, in *Srivaikunta stava* are shown; also includes *Mangalasanam* of Alwars, the description by Vatsya Varada Guru, and the prayer by Vedanta Desika.

Srivaikunta is the universe of *suddha satva*. It is also known by different names such as *Ananda maya*, *Paramapada*, *Sadgunaya maya*, *Panchopanishadmaya*, *Panchashakti maya*, *Para Brahma*, *Nithya Vibhuti*, *Vaishnava padam* and *Paramakasa*. It is *ananda maya*, because of its essentially pleasing nature. It is called as *paramapada*, because it is the supreme goal for attainment for the souls. It is known as *sadgunaya maya* as it is helpful in realizing the six fold divine qualities of the *Paramatma* viz, knowledge (*gnana*), lordship (*aiswarya*), strength (*bala*), valour (*virya*), energy (*shakti*) and splendour (*tejas*). It is named *panchopanishadmaya*, as the five *panchopanishad* mantra indicate this universe. It is *panchashakti maya*, because the constituent elements are the five spiritual elements known as *panchashakti*. It is *Para Brahma*, because it is the place for enjoyment of Brahman. It is *Nithya Vibhuti* as all the objects are eternal and glorious

(eternal spiritual universe). It is beyond the region of *tamas* and *rajas*.

The *Upanishads* speak that in the spiritual universe of *Srivaikunta* is a Chithy known as *Ayodhya* (unassailable) and *Aparajita* (invincible) which abounds in mansions, towers and pavilions, all charming and luminous. There is a mansion 'Ananda' by name in which is a gem set hall of great proportions and excellence supported by innumerable pillars. In this hall is Ananta, the great serpent of infinite knowledge and strength with his thousand expanded hoods.

14.1. The Lord in *Srivaikunta*

The Lord, the supreme ruler of the universe, Sriman Narayana, with His three Consorts, Sri, Bhumi and Nila, is seated in the divine conch of Adishesha. The *divya - mangala - vighraha* or the divine form of the Lord is said to be superior even to the essential nature of the Lord which is blemishless and blissful. The more we enjoy it, the greater is the novelty of the enjoyment that creates an eagerness to enjoy it more and more. It is His will that this form of His should be eternal wonder that Muktas and Nithyas may enjoy it forever and ever. Though the *suddha-satva* form is invisible to the eyes of the ordinary man, the Lord remains for our upliftment and redemption. The perfected souls do realize and enjoy them as is evidenced by their experiences and compositions of Alwars and Acharyas.

14.2. Bliss in *Srivaikunta*

On Liberation the soul reaches the highest realm called *Srivaikunta*. The boundless bliss they enjoy consists of four types of experiences, all simultaneous.

They are (i) *salokya* - being in the same world as the Supreme Being, (ii) *sarupa* - having the same appearance as Him, (iii) *samipa* - being near Him and (iv) *sayujya* - enjoying the same bliss as Him. They have the power to go anywhere and their attributive knowledge (*dhrama bhuta gnana*) is total and complete like that of the Lord. Muktas enjoy eternal and complete bliss and never return to *samsara* at all.

14.3. *Srivaikunta* as described in *Srimad Bhagavata*

In *Srimad Bhagavata*, 15th chapter (*triteyaskanda*) Maitreya maharshi gives a brief description of *SriVaikunta* to Vidura. It is said that this rishi had heard from the Lord Brahma who had earlier revealed it to devas. The devotees residing there spent all their time singing the praise of the multifaced auspicious qualities of the Lord. Vaikunta is full of gold and other precious stones. The place is made more beautiful by the Goddess Mahalakshmi holding a Lotus in Her hands. The Lord, is adorned with His favourite garland of basel and of flowers like Champaka, Parijatha, Tulasi etc. The Lord makes the Goddess more beautiful by His benign glance. This is what is reflected in the words

used by the Alwar “*avan tieuvukcum tiruvagiya selvan.*”

14.4. Srivaikunta as described in Vishnu purana.

Vishnu purana has the following lines to describe the *Srivaikunta - Vaikuntaethu pare lokae Sriyah Sardham Jagathpathihi Asthae Vishnuhu Ahinthayathma Bhakthaiyre Bhagagavathi Saha* - meaning that in *Vaikunta* also known as *Paramapada*, *Jagath pithah* (the father of the universe Vishnu) who is beyond one’s comprehension and *Jaganmatha* (the mother Mahalakshmi) stay along with devotees and sages.

14.5. Srivaikunta as described in Mahabharata

Mahabharata (verses 217-37, 38, 39) describes that paramapada is above the Abode of Brahma, pure and self illuminant. It is a place for enjoyment of Brahman, hence called as *Para Brahman*. Those without knowledge, with attachment to worldly matters, with ego, craze, anger, illusion, bent on destroyal do not reach there. The sages (sadhus) without ego, pride, treating both pleasure and pain alike, with control of mind, engaged in contemplation of the Lord with pleasing will attain paramapada.

14.6. Srivaikunta as described in Vaikunta Gadya

Ramanuja in his *Vaikunta gadya* describes in detail the essential nature of Jivas, Lord’s innumerable auspicious qualities, serving His two Lotus Feet as

the goal and the means of surrender to His Lotus Feet (Prapatti), description of *Vaikunta - loka*, its beauty, the *divya mantapa*, Lord’s Consorts, the beautiful form of the Lord, His attendants and advices of what should be the attitude of a seeker of *moksha*.

The *Vaikunta gadya* comprises of a total of six *churnikas*. Their contents are shown below.

(a) Churnikai - 1

(*svAdheena-trividha-----sarvabhAvEna SaraNam anuvrajEt*)

Three types of Jivas (bhaddha, nithya and mukta) and three types of Achith (Prakruti, Time and eternal world), and their essential nature of being (existence) and their conduct under Him (as subordinate), but having no trace of pain/suffering or any blemish whatsoever, being an ocean of hosts of innumerable auspicious attributes, which are natural with nothing above or exceeding them - they are of knowledge, power, opulence, valour, strength, brilliance; that Super Person the God Sriman Narayana. *Ramanuja* had accepted Him as his Swami, friend, *Acharya* and desired to familiarize him with the highest and definitely required Kainkaryam to/at His two Lotus Feet (without expecting anything in return).

Lord’s innumerable auspicious qualities (*Kalyana Gunas*) are there from beginningless time. They form His innate nature and are unique only to Him - the Veda declares “*YatO VaachO nivartantE aprApya*

manasa saha” and similarly *Nammalwar* says in *Tiruvaymoli* (1.1.1) “*Uyarvara uyarnalam udayavan*”, meaning that the uniqueness of His qualities has no limit, neither has anyone been able to know them fully. These *gunas* are like streams and they flow into one great sea, viz., the Lord. He is the *Parama Purusha* and there is none above Him. He is God *Sriman Narayana*.

(b) Churnikai - 2

(*Tatascca pratyahamAtmOjjeevanAya yEvam anusmarEt*)

In order to achieve the *kainkarya* at His two Lotus Feet, being aware that even in thousands of cycles of creation/destruction of the Universe he would not have any other means - the clause starting with “*TathpadhAmbhuja*” - upto “*ManvAna:*” is said to be *upaya nishkarsha* - rational determination of the means/instrument for achieving the end (service). The above text talks about the *upayanushtana* (Process of operating the means): Here the goal as also means are one and the same; however, serving His two Lotus Feet is the goal and the means of surrender to His Lotus Feet (*Prapatti*). The Lord is the reservoir of ocean of kindness towards all creatures (without any discrimination of high or low). He has the extraordinary character of not noticing or paying heed to bad qualities of those who have taken refuge and is congenial to all.

Vedanta Desika in his *Sri Paramartha Stuti* (Sloka-8) states, that the Supreme in the war, *Sri Rama*,

has vowed to protect those who surrender to Him and such a one will not give me up. His statement: “bring whoever he is, *Vibhishana* or *Ravana*, the fact that I have accorded protection from fear” is known to all the people of this world. He has *Sri Maha Lakshmi* as the Prime Consort (*Srimata*) who is ever helpful to those, who have taken refuge in Him. She is the mediator between the Lord and ourselves, the role of “*Purushakara*”. Fully understanding that we have no refuge other than His Two Lotus Feet for progress of the self, they alone are the elixir and protection, we should, with full determination, surrender at His Lotus Feet. (*SaraNagata rakshaNa vratee mAm na vihAtum RaNapungavaarhasi tvam, Vidhitam bhuvanE VibheeshaNO vaa yadhi vaa RaavaNa ityudheeritam tE*)

(c) Churnikai - 3

(*ChaturdaSa bhuvanAtmakam aNDam---iti
yAchamAna:
praNamya AtmAnam BhagavatE nivEdhayEt*)

There are 14 worlds in an egg shaped structure. Surrounding that egg there are, each seven times the size of the egg, seven enclosures with surrounding walls. Once these action/cause groups are crossed, there is the divine world “*Srivaikunta*”, which is also known as *Parama yoma*. This is beyond the speech and mind of *Brahma* and such Gods. *Vishnu Purana* (2.7) speaks about the size of the worlds, top seven and seven under-worlds. One should understand that

although Prapatti is a onetime observance, one should keep remembering it day-in and day-out-keep remembering the Lord Vasudeva for atleast a short period every day, although one should do it throughout the day- this is essential for progress of the soul.

(d) Description of *Vaikunta-loka*

In such *Vaikunta loka*, there is a huge divine mansion, wherein abound eternal beings, their nature, wealth etc. are not within the comprehension of even Sanaka, Brahma, Siva and the like. It also has a larger number of great beings and mahatmas. To them matters pertaining to God alone are of interest. Neither these external beings nor great persons are capable of knowing the size/extent and wealth of that divine mansion. Surrounding that mansion are a hundred thousand enclosures. They are adorned with Karpaka, wish-yielding trees. The enclosures are surrounded by hundred thousand crores of divine gardens.

There is in that mansion amazingly beautifully gem-studded, audience hall. It is brilliantly shining with hundred thousand crores of gem studded pillars; there are places adorned with precious stones; it is studded with decorations; there are flower gardens with beautiful flowers, those falling, and fallen on plants. This hall is surrounded by a hundred thousand smaller gardens all around. In these gardens are present on one side wish-yielding divine trees all together. On the other side where these are not together, in the middle of the trees are found flowers, precious stones all forming

beautifully a hundred thousand heavenly looking amusement halls; these, on enjoying over and over again do not cease to produce amazement. There are a hundred-thousand spring mounds some of them, which are Sriman Narayana's divine sports areas, are extraordinary; similarly those which are Sri Maha Lakshmi's divine sports areas are also extra-gorgeous. On a simpler note are the melodious chirpings of parrots, peacocks and cuckoos. All around the mansion are a hundred thousand gardens. There, one finds a hundred thousand ponds oozing sweet fragrance, whose long array of sitting facilities are studded with gemstones, pearls and corals; the water therein is spotlessly clear, clean and tastes like ambrosia. The divinely beautiful birds are adding beauty with their exquisitely melodious and sweet chirpings. Amidst those are the divinely beautiful sports grounds studded with pearls. There are flocks of King swans ruling the scene. This divine mansion oozes out only the aesthetic pleasure; it is permanent too. Hence it delights those who enter it; it is decorated with arrays of celestial flowers and appears very beautiful; it is overflowing with music emanating from the humming sound of the bees, which are intoxicated with the nectar sucked from the flowers. The mild wind blowing over the sandal trees, camphor and beautiful flowers carries their fragrance. Right at the center of this mansion is located the Yoga conch, the serpent Ananatha, glittering with the wealth of Vaikunta and rendering the entire universe happy and content, orderly Adhishesha,

Vishvaksena and the entire entourage who are serving the Lord in accordance with His state, and with Sri Devi, who is matching Him in virtues, divine look, qualities, sports etc.,

(e) The Sriman Narayana's beautiful form

He is comfortably seated. His two eyes resemble the just-then blossomed Lotus flowers. He Himself is like crystal-clear blue cloud and He is wearing the splendid yellow robe. He is illuminating the entire universe with His genius like the super-clean, extremely cool, extraordinary tender, crystal-clear gem-stone's glitter. He is unimaginably divinely beautiful, of wondrous, eternal youthfulness, nature and grace because of exceedingly youthful quality. His forehead is a wee-bit covered with sweat, which is rendered beautiful with His curly hair all around. His bewitching eyes are charming like the just-blossomed Lotus flowers. With His creeper-like eye brows, shining lips, sweet smile, tender cheeks, prominent nose, curly hair adorning His upright shoulders, which are also touching His lovelocks, conch-like neck, He appears supremely beautiful. He with His beloved garland, Lotus - like ear decorations, and the hair which defied the knot (i.e., got loosened, free), all touching His four hands, which reach up to His knees, is looking extremely beautiful. His palms punctuated by tender lines are somewhat reddish; He is shining with rings on His fingers; the array of His finger nails is shining bright; His fingers, which are somewhat blood shot are adding to His beauty; His two Feet resemble just-then

blossomed Lotus flowers; with extremely pleasant contact, divine fragrance of accoutrements like crown, headgear, head jewellery, fish-shaped ear rings, neck jewellery, necklace of pearls, upper arm jewellery, bangles, jewellery of chest (where Sri Devi resides), diamond jewellery of the chest, pearl string, jewellery adorning the tummy part, the golden yellow attire, waist band, leg jewellery etc., He is appearing gorgeous. He is looking brilliant with Vijayanthi garland made of never-fading wild flowers. He is well served by the conch, discus, the mace, the sword, the bow etc. He has deposited as it were the wealth of the Universe's creation, sustenance and dissolution at the safe hands of the celebrated Vishvaksena, who came into being through Lord's great will. Garuda and such nithya suries have by their innate nature precluded their worldly bonds. Service to their Lord is the reason for their existence. The Lord, Sriman Narayanan is being served depending on situations by such *Nithya Suries*. The Lord is delighting the entire universe with His divine, unsullied, tender glance. His charming speaking style emanating from His slightly opened mouth is adding extra beauty to His face as a whole. The qualities of bewitching glance, generosity, beauty, sweetness etc., are extra adornments; His face is rich with beautiful emotions; He is filling everyone's inner hearts with the ambrosia of His charming speech.

(f) Ramanuja's prayer

Having seen Sriman Narayana through the Yogic Vision thus-further, right then, studying Lord's eternal

proximity (*nithya samyam*) and eternal service-hood (*nithya dasyam*) just as it is, *Acharya Ramanuja* prays as follows:

When at all will he could see with his own eyes the Lord, Sriman Narayana (who is) his clan's deity, his clan's treasure, his enjoyable thing, his mother, his father, his everything?

When he would rest his head at Lord's two holy Lotus Feet?

When he would at all, after foreseeing all other enjoyable desires, all forms of samsaric character, touch His two holy Lotus Feet?

When he would at all, for doing service to His two holy Lotus Feet, become fit and with that service as his sole enjoyable goal, do service to His holy Feet?

When will the Lord with His cool glance look at him, speak to him congenially, with a deep good sense and order him about for His service?

Thus in such God's service, developing growing interest, with His own kindness/blessedness supplementing that very desire, he approaches slowly the Lord reclining on Adhishesha with Sri Devi also seated and being served by Garuda and others, and addresses the Lord Sriman Narayana, who is present with the entourage, his obeisance, so saying and prostrating, repeatedly getting up and prostrating, filled with extraordinary fear and humility, he remains in bending stance.

(g) Churnikai 4

(*Tatha: BhagavatA svayamEva-upAseeta*)

At this juncture, the Lord by Himself being our soul's elixir without any restriction or limit in blending with even the loveliest, beholding with utmost love, accept you all for all manner of service at all places, at all times and in all situations. Then obtaining His consent, with extraordinary fear and humility in bending stance, being ready to do anything, go near the Lord with folded hands.

(h) Churnikai 5

(*tatascca anubhUyamAna bhAva viSEsha*)

Afterwards enjoying the exquisiteness of that emotion with extraordinary love, unable/incapable of doing or thinking anything else, yet again entreating, keep looking at the Lord with cascading look.

(i) Churnikai 6

(*TatO BhagavatA svayamEva---sarvAyavAya sukham Aseeta*)

Therefore, the kinkara is "crowned" to observe the happy kinkaryam which he had longed (having realized that it is the goal, thanks to Lord's mercy) during the present birth. Can he ever think of separating from the Lord? The Lord's sweet smile is enough to draw him back; if ever that thought arose with the Lord's Lotus Feet covering his head, he will be immersed in the ocean of ecstasy (*amruta saagaram*). The journey of the "*Sadhaka*" from the present world

ends happily, when he arrives at the domain of Srivaikuntanatha and becomes a part of that eternal world amidst *Nithya suries*. With this thought, all of us should rest happily.

14.7. Ramanuja's advise to the devotees

Ramanuja says that the vision of *Srivaikunta* and the Lord should be remembered every day at least once so as to sustain oneself. That is why he says, “*tatascha pratyaham atmo jjeevanya evamanusmarathe*”. He adds that the devotees should be eager to realize this bliss and should be itching to be taken into His service. SimanNarayana should be the only goal. Ramanuja describes that the Lord is the only master (*mama natham*), our master for generations (*mama kula deivam*), the most enjoyable (*mama bhogyam*), the support and sustenance like mother (*mama matharam*), the father (*mama pitharam*). Ramanuja states that one should show desire to call him and use him for doing eternal services, of all types, at all places, at all times to Him (*Sarva desa, Sarvakala, Sarvavastha Chitha atyanta seshabhavaya*). God should accept and place His divine Lotus Feet on the supplicant devotee's head (*sirasikrutam*). This contact with His Feet makes one experience a bliss as if one has a dip in the ocean of nectar and every inch of his body experiences the joy and bliss.

14.8. Srivaikunta as described in Srivaikunta stava

Kurattalvan has composed the ‘Srivaikunta Stava’ consisting of 100 slokas in Sanskrit, describing the

Lord Vaikuntanatha, His auspicious qualities and the beauty of *Srivaikunta*. Let us see a few examples. (Sloka-41) describes that *Srivaikunta* has different names like *Nithya vibhuti*, *Vaishnava padam*, *Paramapada* and *ParamAkasa*. The place is full of people excelling in *suddha satva guna* who have shed *rajo* and *thamo gunas*. It is dazzling bright full of *Tejas*. It is a world which cannot be destroyed. (Sloka-42) states that *paramapada* is a place where Brahma, the creator of the worlds, Rudra, the destroyer, Indra, the master of the three worlds, other Devas, Sanaka or Sanandana cannot enter. (Sloka-43) observes that the various parts that constitute the *paramapada* are beyond description. Even if one were to compare *paramapada* with other objects it would amount to a faulty futile exercise as it is incomparable. (Sloka-44) illustrates that changes are not seen in *paramapada*. Here in this world all objects are subjected to six qualities (*shatgunas*) viz, existence (*asti*), create (*jayathe*), grow (*parinamate*), flourish (*edhadate*), get wasted away (*apchiyate*) and get destroyed completely (*paranashyati*). Such changes are not seen, development and destruction are unknown. Things can be enjoyed permanently. Those who go to *paramapada* never return to this world. (Sloka-45) describes the qualities of persons who could reach the *paramapada*. Those who are not affected by either punya or papa, who have got out of the cycle of birth, death and re-birth, who have attained *parabhakti*, *para gnana*, and *paramabhakti*, who have fully understood

prapatti dharma and the *mumukshu* are alone capable of attaining *paramapada*. The others cannot even visualize through their mind the glory of *paramapada*, the eternal Abode of the Lord.

14.9. Mangalasanam of the Alwars

According to *Srivaishnava sampradaya* there are 108 *Divya desams* (sacred places). Out of them 105 are located in India and one in Nepal. The remaining two *Srivaikunta* and *Ksherabdhi* are not in this world. To attain the *Srivaikunta* and perform eternal service to the Lord is the ultimate aim of every prapanna, the seeker of Liberation. *Periyalwar*, *Andal*, *Tirumangai Alwar* and *Nammalwar* have sung in praise of (*Mangalasanam* to) the Lord and *Srivaikunta*. All the 36 verses have been composed by all the *Alwars*. The most significant among them, twenty verses, have been contributed by *Nammalwar*. In his *Tiruvaymoli* decade 10.9 “*soozh visumbu*”, *Nammalwar* describes the path he was guided and the reception given enroute and the eternal, full and perfect enjoyment of bliss he experienced in *Srivaikunta*. This is shown separately in *Nammalwar’s* experiences of *Archiradhi marga*. In the decade 10.10 “*muniye*” the *Alwar* discloses his experiences in *Srivaikunta*. This is shown separately, in *Nammalwar’s* experiences of *Archiradhi marga*. *Periyalwar* in his *Periyalwar Tirumoli* verse (4.9.3.) states that the Lord Ranganatha graces us the *upaya*, ladder for the Jiva to pierce the sun rays and once he reaches the *paramapada*, withdraws the ladder. Here

the Lord is described as *upaya* to reach *paramapada*, and then He becomes the *upeya*, the goal. There is no question of *mukta* returning to *samsara*; so, the Lord is said to withdraw the ladder. *Tirumangai Alwar* in his *Periya Tirumadal* verse (8.9.) states that the Jiva pierces through an axial-hole in the solar globe. *Tirumangai Alwar* in his *Seriya Tirumadal* verse (4) states that the Jiva passes through the axis of the wheel of Sun’s chariot and reaches *Srivaikunta*, a world of inexhaustible bliss that is permanent and will never return from there.

14.10. The Lord described by Vastya Varada Guru

Vastya Varada Guru, popularly known as Nadadur Ammal, in his *paratradi panchakstuti*, describes the Lord in *Nithya-vibhuti* as follows: In the beautiful *Vaikunta* as bright as thousands of suns, resides *Sri Paravasudeva*, the incarnation of pure knowledge, one without impurity, full of *Suddha satva*, with six gunas- *Gnana*, *bala*, *aiswarya*, *virya*, *shakti* and *tejas*. The Lord of *Nithya suries* is holding conch and disc, shining with beautiful apparel and ornaments, served by *Sri devi*, *Bhu devi* and *Nila devi*, resting happily on *Ananta* (*Adishesha*). He prayed to Him.

14.11. Vedanta Desika’s prayer

Vedanta Desika has beautifully depicted the *Sri Paravasudeva* with four arms, holding conch, disc, mace and Lotus. He is accompanied by His Consorts *Sri*, *Bhumi* and *Nila* and surrenders to Him¹. *Vedanta*

Desika in his *Rahasya Traya Saram, paripurna brahmanubhava adhikara*, describes that the mukta led by His guide to the Consort of Lakshmi who is possessed of various glories in the region beyond *prakruti* attains Him. Then he has his essential nature in full manifestation and realizes his inseparable connection with the Lord. As a consequence he acquires the eight attributes (free from hunger, thirst, pain, suffering, ageing and death). Being endowed with all desired objects and an unhindered will (*sathya kama, satya sankalpa*) without any question of returning again to samsara, he attains in regard to enjoyment, perfect resemblance to the Lord.

The next chapter is dedicated to Nithya-Vibhuti-the world of Eternal Splendour.

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Reference

1. *Kurmadin divya lokam tadanu manimayam
mantapam tatrasesam
tasmin dharmadipetam tadupari kamalam
camaragrahinisca
Vishnum devih vibhusayudha ganamuragam
paduke vinateyam
senesam dvarapalan kumudamukhaganan
Vishnu bhaktan prapadye*

* * *

15. Nithya - Vibhuti - The world of Eternal Splendour

The Jiva, by his mere will, crosses the Vaitarini river. The Vishnu dutas, who look like Lord Vishnu with four hands and bright faces called *Amanavas* meet him and greet him. They hold him and guide him to *paramapada*. By the touch of the *Amanava* the Jiva gets transformed with all auspicious qualities. He is known as *Mukta* or freed soul. He is able to see the glorious *paramapada* at a distance. Those in *paramapada* will have only *satva guna*. They have clear Gnana. *Paramapada* has an *aiswarya* and wealth which cannot ever be measured. He bows down and offers his namaskarams. When he attains that world where the Lord reigns supreme, he attains the status of having *saloka* the privilege of being in the same world as the Lord. His body is very much like that of the God, therefore he is said to possess the blessing *sarupa* to the Lord having a body similar to that of the Lord.

(a) Welcome accorded to *mukta*

Amanavas, *Nithyas* and *Muktas* welcome the *mukta*. The place is filled with sound of conch *tiruchinnam* and *bheri*. Five hundred *Apsaras* who have been deputed by the Lord welcome him. They come from the immortal City of *Aparajita* (invincible) which is the capital and head-quarters of the Lord. They come in five groups of hundred each

accompanied by the sweet music of bugles and conch. They are holding in their hands garlands, fragrant flowers, raiments and other articles of decoration. Garuda brings the *divya vimana*. A number of damsels from *paramapada* are seated in the *vimana*. *Stotras* are sung. The *vimana* starts on its journey to *paramapada*, enroute he passes through two high oceans of nectar named *Aram* and *Nyam*, as well as gardens, mountains, rivers and lakes. Then *mukta* moves across the lake of nectar *Airammadiyam* which looks like filled with the flood of happiness. Then he goes near Somasavana as *Asvata* tree. The *vimana* finally nears the entrance of *paramapada*. The guards at the entrance welcome him. Having reached there the *mukta* utters “*Srivaikuntaya Namaha*” and offers obsequence to the *vaikunta* vassal i.e., the gate way. Thus the soul reaches the *paramapada*, also known as *Ayodhya* and *Aparajitha*.

15.1. *Prajapati sabha* - the assembly hall

The *mukta* arrives at the grand tower with portals. Passing through the gate he steps into the broad streets of the City of God. As he proceeds, lovely damsels receive him, carrying in their hands glowing lamps. They sprinkle on him scented powder. Some bring the *paduka* of the Lord. The welcome with the *padukas* is the greatest honour that can be shown to a *mukta*. Then he moves and comes to the divine *mandapa*. Thereafter he reaches the assembly hall called *Prajapati sabha*. The hall is vast and never

crowded in spite of the presence of multitudes of *Nithya suries* and *muktas*. There are four entrances and with two *dwarapalakas* for each of them. Chanda and Prachanda are in the front, Bhadra and Subhadra are in the right, Jaya and Vijaya are in the back and Dhata and Vidhata are in the left. There are eight commanding officers in the eight corners of the pavilion, each of them mounted, well armed and waited upon by a posse attachments guarding it. They are *Kumuda*, *KumudAkasa*, *Pundarika*, *Vamana*, *Sankukarana*, *Sarvanetra*, *Sumukha* and *Supratishtha*. As the *mukta* goes towards them, they with love and respect receive and admit him. Vishvaksena, the Lord's commander-in-chief, now takes charge of the *mukta* and his arrival is announced. Several officers on duty come to wait upon him. The *mukta* is over whelmed with joy, bows down and raises at every step. As he comes near and mounts the step, Garuda is seen with folded hands; the *mukta* prostrates before Garuda and with his permission gets into the beautiful assembly hall. There is a beautiful dias, *Simhasana*, on which the Lord with His Consorts is seated. On one side of it are seated the earlier Acharyas who are occupying a place of honour. They are immensely pleased to see the *mukta*. The *mukta* with gratitude and reverence falls at their Feet and says that he cannot find any recompense for the help they had given and prays that they should place their Feet on his head and bless him. There are infinite number of *Nithya suries* and *muktas* who are standing in rows

lost in full and perfect enjoyment of bliss of the Lord and His qualities. Some of them engage themselves in the service of the Lord, others in the service of those who serve the Lord and some others pray for the welfare of the Lord, by singing '*Pallandu*' and '*Jitante*'. Now the *mukta* is in the immediate presence of the Lord and is before the throne of divinity.

15.2. *Divya - yoga paryanka - the divine throne*

The *pancharatra samhitas* declare some details of the components of the divine throne. The *paryanka vidya* of *Upanishads* describes that legs, planks and other parts of this throne are composed of realities (*tatvas*) the past and the future (*bhuta and bhavisyat*) virtue, knowledge, non-attachment and rulership (*dharma, gnana, vairagya and aiswarya*) form the four Feet. The four Vedas (*Rig, Yajur, Sama and Athar Vedas*) are the four cross bars that support the planks. The four *yugas* (*krta, treta, dwapara and kali*) also serve the same purpose. Three qualities (*satva, rajas and tamas*) are three fold blanks in the centre. All of them are *Nithya suries* who preside over the various things that form the limbs of the divine throne. The *mukta* is filled with joy and wonder at a direct vision of these things about which he had only heard from the *Acharyas*. On the divine throne is a divine Lotus which has radiance similar to the dazzling luster of billions of suns raised simultaneously. It has eight petals spread into eight directions; on each one of them is a divine damsel, of white complexion, like spotless full

moon, doing service to the Lord by waving 'chamara'. The names of these damsels are, *Vimala, Utkarshini, Gnana, kriya, Yoga, Prahvi, Satya and Ishana*. The ninth damsel by name *Anugraha* is standing in front. In the centre of divine Lotus is the divine pericarp which is dazzling with brightness. Over all this is *Adishesha*, the divine serpent of thousand hoods, also known as *Ananta*, meaning infinite since his greatness is such that he keeps the Lord who is beyond limitations of space, time and object. He is eternally pure, his immense body is the form of coil and looks like a collection of milky oceans. *Adishesha* has infinite might and knowledge, because of which he is able to carry on his body the Lord keeping Him comfortable. He is known as *Sesha* as he serves the Lord in different ways assuming appropriate forms. To the Lord, he is the Abode, bed, throne, foot stool, raiment, pillow and also umbrella. The body of the *Adishesha* has divine fragrance. The body is soft and gentle. The divine couple, *Divya dampati*, who together are the Supreme God head are seated majestically on *Adishesha*. As the *mukta* draws nearer, he becomes the cynosure of the two thousand eyes of *Adishesha*. He has full *darshan* of the Lord of sapphire-hue on the white *Adishesha*. The *mukta* has attained the utmost proximity of the Lord.

15.3. Mukta stands before the Lord

The Lord, the Supreme ruler of the universe, with His Consorts, Sri, Bhumi and Nila Devis are seated on the divine conch *Adishesha*. On the right side is Sri

Mahalaksmi. By Her glances she confers on all every kind of wealth and prosperity. She is the Supreme ruler of all, the object of all, and recipient of the services of all. On the left side is Bhumi Devi along with Nila Devi as if to indicate to the devotees the proper place for them to stand and serve.

The *divya - mangala vigraha* or the divine form of the Lord which the *mukta* enjoys is said to be superior even to the essential nature of the Lord which is blemishless and blissful. The divine body with the limbs in perfect proportions and with ornaments in faultless decoration is a perennial source of infinite bliss to *Nithya suries*. The *mukta* becomes lost in its enjoyment and in the manner of the seekers after release, sings, praises and dances. All his gestures are pleasings to the Lord. The *mukta* bursts out in the eulogy of the Lord.

15.4. Mukta's praise of the Lord

The Vedas particularly the *Upanishads* portion are the only source from which we can acquire a knowledge of Paramatma, the Lord, His *Nithya-vibhuti* and *Srivaikunta*. The Alvars have been blessed by the Lord with a direct vision, the beautiful form, enjoyed the auspicious qualities, briefly revealed by the *Upanishads* and brought them out in their songs. What the *mukta* enjoys and sings there in *Srivaikunta* is very much akin to the experiences of the Alvars and Acharyas. Now the *mukta* is in the divine presence of the Lord on *Adishesha* and has full and direct vision

of the Lord. He is lost with sudden flow of bliss and slowly collects himself. He observes slowly the various beautiful limbs of the Lord from head to foot, one after another and begins to adore and praise each one of them as best as he can.

Nammalwar in his *Tiruvaymoli* decade 7.7. “*elaiyar avi,*” enjoys His exquisite form, limb by limb. *Ramanuja* in his *Vaikunta gadya* describes the beautiful form of the Lord and prays to Him. *Pillai Lokacharya* in his *Archiradhi* experiences the divine form of the Lord, limb by limb and also as a whole. *Vedanta Desika* in his *paramapada sopanam* has shown the longing desires as a *mumukshu* and enjoyments as a *mukta*. These have been shown separately.

15.5. Mukta’s ascent on the divine conch

Having seen the Lord *Vaikuntanatha* seated on the *simhasana*, the *mukta* bows down; by joining his hands says (“*Samastha parivaraya Srimathe Narayana Namaha*”) that he offers his *namaskara* to *Sriman Narayana*, *Garuda*, *Vishwaksena* and others staying with Him. In all humility he prays to the Lord of *Srivaikunta* who is possessed of unexcelled bliss, should be pleased to place His Feet on him, His slave and bless. Now the *mukta* places his Feet on the steps to the *simhasana* and climbs on it. The Lord is equally happy on seeing the *Jiva* who had been away long time from Him while living in this world. He seats the *Jiva* on His lap, as *Rama* welcomed *Bharata* in *Chithrakuta*. As *Krishna* embraced *Akrura*, the

paramatma embraces the *mukta*, holds him close with love. The Lord wants to increase His joy by hearing the *mukta* himself speak about his redemption and so lovingly puts the question to him. “Who are you?”.

15.6. Mukta’s prayer

The response of the *mukta* to the loving question of the Lord follows. The *mukta* is not able to find any recompense to the Lord for the great help He had given him. So with all humility he submits to the Lord the thoughts that surge in his mind in the following words:

“I am Thy slave, my Lord, but from beginningless time I was sunk in the ocean of *samsara*, cycle of births and deaths. Now that I have realized the truth that Thou art the inner soul of all the worlds and my essential nature is dependent on thy essential nature. The letter M in the *pranava* (AUM) reveals that I am the slave (*dasa*) of Thyself and so *dasa* is the name for me. I am experiencing Thee and am having thoughts of singing Thy sublime glory which is beyond the ken of even the Vedas. My earnest prayer to Thee is that Thou shall be pleased to take me as Thy servant and accept perpetual service at my hands.”

Paramatma hears this humble prayer of the *mukta*, pleased, looks at the face of *Lakshmi*, the universal mother. Both the Lord and His Consort are of identical opinion in blessing the *mukta*, who therefore, is the recipient at once of the grace of the Lotus born

Lakshmi and the universal master. In this manner the released soul, *mukta*, has the bliss of the experience of *paramatma* which is full, continuous, eternal, clear and having no other end in view. The *mukta* finds his sole joy in fulfilling all the purposes of Bhagavan in all states, all situations without any exception owing to the infinite and unequalled delight arising from such an experience. Such is the nature of the highest goal *parama-purushartha* of the individual soul-the enjoyment of Bhagavan which finds its fruition and development in His service, which has a beginning and no end.

15. 7. *Mukta's state of release*

The *mukta* has attained the highest goal (*parama-purushartha*) which consist of enjoyment of Bhagavan with His attributes - form, qualities, *Nithya-vibhuti* and *Lila-vibhuti*. The enjoyment finds its fulfilment in service to Bhagavan. The word "*Paramapada*" used here signifies three things. (i) *Swarupa* or the essential nature of the Bhagavan, (ii) *Srivaikunta* of the Highest Abode, and (iii) *Jiva-swarupa* or the essential nature of Jiva-since the feature of being the object of attainment and enjoyment is common to all the three of them. The *swarupa* of Bhagavan is called *Paramapada*, because it is the ultimate and supreme object of enjoyment, being of unsurpassed agreeableness. The perfect enjoyment of *Bhagavad-swarupa* occurs only after reaching the most delightful region far superior to all others. Therefore that region

Srivaikunta is also known as *Paramapada*. The *swarupa* or the essential nature of Jiva, which has for its attributes knowledge and happiness is referred by the term *Paramapada* since it is the recipient of this joy resulting from the attainment of Bhagavan and since it is also among the *Vibhutis* or the glorious possessions of the Supreme Lord. In short, Bhagavan and His two *vibhutis-Nithya* and *Lila*-are the objects of enjoyment for the *mukta* in the state of release.

One can understand that *Nithya-vibhuti* which is the Abode of *suddha satva*, which is self-luminous and blissful are objects of delight to *mukta*. But the objects of *Lila-vibhuti*, the world of us, which sastras also lay down that they should be given up. Would they be agreeable to *mukta*? The answer is: they appeared as disagreeable to the Jiva when he was in *samsara* because of Karma which was sticking to him from time immemorial. Now that he has been freed from Karma and has become a *mukta*, he looks upon those objects as the glorious possessions of the Lord, and therefore they are agreeable to him. This can be substantiated by two illustrations: (i) Milk which is normally sweet is bitter to the taste to a person who is suffering with excessive bile: but it tastes sweet to the same man when he is cured of the disease. (ii) When a prince is in the prison undergoing punishment for some offence committed by him, the prison is disagreeable to him. But when the King is pleased to let him free, appoint him as crown - prince and allows him to enjoy

all the pleasures similar to his own, the same prison that has not undergone any change is agreeable to the prince, since it is now a symbol of his father's glory. When he becomes a *mukta* and enjoys without intermission the Bliss of Bhagavan, the same objects are agreeable as they are the glorious possessions of the Lord. Therefore there is nothing inappropriate in this.

There is no return of the *mukta* to *samsara*. Therefore the ultimate goal of attainment known as *mukti* is eternal for him and it will last as long as his soul exists. This *mukti* is *Paripurna Brahmanubhava* and is of the nature of perfect and full enjoyment of Paramatma and all that pertains to Him-His essential nature (*swarupa*), delightful form (*vigraha*), auspicious qualities (*kalyana guna*) and glorious processions (*Nithya and Lila vibhuti*). This enjoyment does not stop there, but overflows into service to *Paramatma* - service of all kinds, at all times and under all situations, for which there is an end - in a region from which there is no return. (*Sarvadesa-sarvakala-sarvavasthoachitha-sarvavidha-kainkarya*). The Lord restores to *mukta* the essential nature with the eight qualities viz, being free from Sin, Old age, Death, Sorrow, Hunger, and Thirst, being endowed with all desired objects and an unhindered will (*Satya-kama and Satya-sankalpa*).

The Upanishad statement that the *mukta* is one with Paramatma refers only to the equal enjoyment of

the wisdom and bliss of the Brahman - (*Samyam*) Equality.

These are the features peculiar to Him and are with his distinctive characteristics.

One who is the cause of the world

One who confers *moksha* on the Jivas

One who is the support of the world

One who is the controller of the world

One for whom all non-sentient things and sentient beings exist

One who has everything as his body

One who is denoted by all words

One who can be understood by the Vedas

One who is the refuge of all the worlds

One who should be adored by all those who desire *moksha*

One who grants the fruits of all actions

One whose essential nature is Omnipresence, Omniscience and Omnipotence

One who is the spouse of Sri Mahalakshmi.

* * *

16. Conclusion

The aims of human life called as *Purushartha* are *Dhrama*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. Out of them *Moksha* is *Parama Purushartha*, the Highest goal of life. *Moksha* (*Sanskrit moksha*), also called *vimoksha*, *vimukti* and *mukti*, means emancipation, Liberation or release. In eschatological sense, it connotes freedom from *samsara*, the cycle of death and rebirth. In epistemological and psychological sense, *Moksha* connotes freedom, self-realization and self-knowledge.

The six major orthodox schools of Hinduism offer the following views on *Moksha*, with their own reasons: (i) the Nyaya, Vaiseshika and Mimamsa schools of Hinduism consider *Moksha* as possible only after death. (ii) Sankhya and Yoga schools consider *Moksha* as possible in this life. (iii) the Advaita school concludes *Moksha* is possible in this life, (iv) while the Dvaita and Visishtadvaita schools believe that *Moksha* is a continuous event, one assisted by loving devotion to God, that extends from this life to post-mortem. Beyond these six orthodox schools, the heterodox schools of Hindu tradition, such as Charvaka, deny there is a soul or after life or *Moksha*. The concept of *Moksha* in Advaita, Dvaita and Visishtadvaita schools are compared.

The objective of the work is to present the concept of *Moksha*, the eligibility of persons for its attainment, the departure of the soul, the journey to and the full and perfect enjoyment of bliss of Brahman in

Srivaikunta, the nature of Srivaikunta, Nithya-vibhuti, Mukta's experiences and state of release as elucidated in Visishtadvaita Philosophy.

In the following pages an attempt is made to review the summary of the chapters.

The Upanishads, the *Chandogya - Upanishad*, the *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad* and the *Kaushitaki-Brahmana-Upanishad* describes in brief regarding *moksha*, *archiradhi-marga*, and the *dhuma-marga*. Each of them prescribes a specific *vidya* or practice to attain *moksha*. The study and practice of Upanishads is well beyond the knowledge and capacity of the normal men. The *Bhagavad-gita* gives more details of the bright and dark paths, the effect of three Gunas on man at death and specifies on what sort of persons reach *paramapada*. The Lord Krishna declares in *Bhagavad-gita* (18.66) that relinquishing all dharmas, take refuge in Him alone; He will liberate you from all sins and grant *moksha*; grieve not. This verse is called as *Charama sloka* and the Lord's assurance has a lot of significance in *Srivaishnava sampradaya*. The Alwars and *Acharyas* have brought *moksha* to the reach of one and all, removing the barriers of *varna ashrama*, gender, and caste.

Nammalwar (A.D. 600) in his composition of *Tiruvaymoli* has brought out the secret meanings of Vedas in Tamil, for the benefit of those who are denied the access to study Vedas and for women. He had propagated bhakti and prapatti, devotion and surrender.

In his *Tiruvaymoli* verse (7.5.10) *Nammalwar* states that if we have to free ourselves from *samsara* where birth, disease, old age inability and death all these overtake us in a chain of events, we should remember the Lord's words. When the Lord cuts these bonds, and takes us to His Feet, He considers what good He can render, He ponders over it. We should get the clear idea to whom we should become devoted servant for all the time. *Nammalwar* in his *Tiruvaymoli* verse (9.10.5) celebrates the Lord as "granter of *moksha* at one's death" (*maranamanaal vaikuntam kodukkum piran*) states that the Lord has vouched *Srivaikunta* at the end of current span of life, unto those that seek refuge in His lovely Feet. This is the sole means of salvation, which is open to all, unlike the discipline of *Bhakti yoga*. *Nammalwar* in his *Tiruvaymoli* decade 10.9. *Cul vicumbu ani mukil* voices forth his experiences in an aesthetic manner, and infuse confidence that the devotee of the Supreme Lord *Sriman Narayana* who ascend to *Srivaikunta* through the *Archiradhi marga*, will also surely attain the bliss currently experienced by him. *Nammalwar* in his decade 10.10. *muniye* explains how the merciful Lord of remarkable tenderness of heart, with His divine Consort, rushed down mounted on *Garuda* and led him to *Srivaikunta*. A humble attempt was made to study and consolidate the fruit of recitation (*phala sruti*) of each of the decades in *Tiruvaymoli*. We could notice that in 88 decades consisting of 980 verses, in the concluding verse of each decade, *Nammalwar*

speaks of attainment of *moksha*, as the benefit of recitation. The recitation is our action, and the God's grace will be the automatic reaction.

Ramanuja (AD 1017-1317) in his *Vaikunta Gadya*, having seen *Sriman Narayana* through yogic vision, studying the Lord's eternal proximity and eternal servicehood, he prayed to the Lord. Then he describes in detail the essential nature of the *Jivas*, Lord's innumerable auspicious qualities, description of *Vaikunta-loka*, its beauty, the *divya mantapa*, Lord's Consorts, the beautiful form of the Lord, His attendants, serving His two Lotus Feet as the goal and means, and advices that what should be the attitude of a seeker of *moksha*. *Ramanuja* advices the devotees that the vision of *Srivaikunta* and the Lord should be remembered every day at least once so as to sustain oneself. That is why he says, "*tatascha pratyaham atmo jjeevanya evamanusmarathe*". He adds that the devotees should be eager to realize this bliss and should be itching to be taken into His service. *Sriman Narayana* should be the only goal. *Ramanuja* describes that the Lord is the only master (*mama natham*), our master for generations (*mama kula deivam*), the most enjoyable (*mama bhogyam*), the support and sustenance like mother (*mama matharam*), the father (*mama pitharam*). *Ramanuja* states that one should show desire to call him and use him for doing eternal services, of all types, at all places, at all times to Him (*Sarva desa, Sarvakala, Sarvavastha Chitha atyanta seshabhavaya*) God should accept and place His

divine Lotus Feet on the supplicant devotee's head (*sirasikrutam*). This contact with His Feet makes one experience a bliss as if one has a dip in the ocean of nectar and every inch of his body experiences the joy and bliss.

Kurattalwar (AD 1010-1106) contemporary and the celebrated disciple of *Ramanuja*, has composed the *Srivaikunta stava* consisting of 100 slokas in Sanskrit, describing the Lord Vaikuntanatha, His auspicious qualities and the beauty of *SriVaikunta*. The place is full of people excelling in *suddha satva* guna who have shed *rajo* and *thamo gunas* reside. It is dazzling bright full of *Tejas*. It is a world which cannot be destroyed.

Vastya Varada Guru, (AD 1165-1275) popularly known as *Nadadur Ammal*, in his *paratradi panchakstuti*, prays to the Lord in *Nithya-vibhuti* as follows: In the beautiful *Vaikunta* as bright as thousand suns, resides Sri Paravasudeva, incarnation of pure knowledge, one without impurity, full of *Suddha satva*, with six gunas-*Gnana, bala, aiswarya, virya, shakti* and *tejas*. The Lord of *Nithya suries* is holding conch and disc, shining with beautiful apparel and ornaments, served by Sri devi, Bhu devi and Nila devi, resting happily on Ananta (Adishesha).

Pillai Lokacharya (A.D. 1213-1330) has composed *Archiradhi*. This text describes the path through which the Jiva (soul) reaches the *paramapada*, the reception accorded enroute, the beautiful description of Archiradhi, the praise - worthy; *gathi*, the path to

paramapada. The *first chapter* covers preparation and the start of the soul's journey in *Archiradhi gathi*. The *second chapter* describes the different worlds travelled enroute and the reception accorded to the soul. This compares to *Nammalwar's, Tiruvaymoli* decade 10.9, *Cul vicumbu ani mukil*. The *third chapter* elaborates the beautiful *Srivaikunta, Tiruman mandapa*, divine conch viz. Adishesha, Goddess and the Lord *Vaikuntanatha*. The final chapter describes what transpires in *Srivaikunta*, the conversation between the Lord and mukta who submerged himself in eternal, pure, perfect enjoyment of bliss of Kainkarya. *Pillai Lokacharya* has quoted 210 references from the works of the *Alwars*, out of which 140 references are from the *Tiruvaymoli* of *Nammalwar*.

Vedanta Desika (A.D. 1268-1369) has composed the *Paramapada sopanam*, one of the *Rahasya granthas* that consists of nine *parvams* or chapters that lead one to reach the *paramapada*. These steps are *Viveka, Nirveda, Virakti, Bheeti, Prasadhana, Utkramana, Archiradhi, Divya Desa Prapti and Prapti*. These steps have to be ascended one by one and there is no way to jump over them in an inconsequential manner. The order among the nine steps leading to SriVaikuntanatha is summarized as follows. The first step *Viveka* is the discriminatory knowledge that one has to attain regarding *Chith* (sentients), *Achith* (insentients) and *Eshwara* (the supreme Lord). The second step is *Nirveda*, one

develops a sense of self-depreciation due to the awareness of having lost so much time chasing sensory pleasures and performing activities that are *swarupa Viruddha* (activities at variance with the natural disposition of the Jiva). The third step is *Virakti*, where one develops *Vairagya*. One turns away from the chasing of the sensual enjoyments. The fourth step is *Bheeti* or fear, over the thought that this experience of *samsara* may reccur again. The fifth step is *Prasadhana*, where the Jiva practices one or the other *Upayas* (Prapatti or Bhakti). The Sixth step is *Utkramana*, when the *Jiva* exits from the body to enter into *Archiradhi margha*. The seventh step is *Archiradhi margha*, where the travelling *Jiva* is greeted and sped on its way by the different devas lining the way to *Srivaikunta*; The Eighth step is the *Divya Desa Prapti*. Here, the *Jiva* arrives at the end station of *Srivaikunta*, which is beyond the region of *prakruti*. The ninth and concluding step is *Prapti*, where the *Jiva* that has been transformed to *suddha satva* meets the Supreme Brahman, Sriman Narayana, converses with Him and enjoys Him.

Vedanta Desika in his master piece *Rahasya Traya Sara*, chapter - 20, *niryANAdhikAra* describes the departure of the soul graphically and with minute details not only what processes the soul undergoes 'At death' and what happens 'After death'. To make his concept authoritative he has quoted from various sources like *Upanishads*, *Vishnu purana*, *Varaha*

purna, *Laksmi tantra*, *Brahma sutra*, *SriBhashya*, *Manu smruti*, *Bhagavad-gita*, *Saranagati Gadya* and *Divya prabandhams* of *Alwars*. A total of 36 such references have been listed in this chapter. In the concluding verse of the chapter he observes that the omniscient Lord, who resides in the shuttle space in the heart. (*Hridya*) of the soul, like a father who enters the muddy tank, to rescue his child that has fallen inside, at the time of death and departure, avoiding the *nadis* that lead to *swarga* or *naraka*, escorts the *Jiva* through the 101st *nadi*, called *murdhanya nadi*, and set him out with the support of the rays of the Sun, in the shining path, *Archiradhi* to the eternal *Srivaikunta*.

Vedanta Desika in his *Rahasya Traya Sara*, chapter - 21, *gativiSeshAdhikAra* describes how the soul leaves the body through the various *nadis* (veins) and how the soul of a Prapanna and that of a Non-Prapanna take different routes and different destinations. He has quoted 13 references to support his views. In the final verse of this chapter, he explains the path travelled by the *Jiva*. He who had in the past travelled through the *Dhumadhi gati*, passing through the *naraka* (hell) by going up and coming down got very exhausted. Now the *Jiva* travelling to *moksha*, with the subtle body, guided by *Ativahikas*,* reaches the Lord, who is like a sandal tree, and under His shade, attains everlasting bliss. (*The *Ativahikas*, are Fire, Daytime, *Sukla-paksha*, *Uttarayana*, *Varsha*, *Vayu*, *Surya*, *Chandra*, *Lightening*, *Varuna*, *Indra*

and Brahma. The path travelled is called Archiradhi gati.)

Vedanta Desika in his *Rahasya Traya Sara*, chapter-22, *paripUrNabrahmAnubhavAdhikAra* explains the eternal Bhagavad anubhava, the full and perfect enjoyment of Brahman experienced by the Jiva on reaching the Srivaikunta. He explains that there is no variation in the degree of bliss attained by the mukta and Sayujya; the mukta does not come back to samsara and the uniqueness of the Mukta and the Lord; He has quoted 32 references in support of his writings. To conclude he states that the Upanishad's declaration that the mukta attains equality with Brahman only means in knowledge (*Gnana*) and full and complete enjoyment of bliss (*Ananda*). Mukta is similar (*samya*) to the Lord. The support, creation and sustenance of everything, the master, the soul, the refuge, the controller of everything, the one known by the *Vedas*, the worshipped by all, the granter of *moksha*, omnipresent, embodiment of *Gnana*, *Ananda* being inseparable with Goddess are attributes pertaining to the Lord only.

Bhishmacharya was awaiting the sacred hour to depart from his physical body unto the Lotus Feet of the Lord. In reply to Yudhishtira, Bhishma responded by reciting the one thousand Namas, now hailed as the *Vishnu Sahasranama*, and reminded him that either by meditating on these names or by invoking the *Namas* through *archana* (Offering), our minds can be lifted

to higher consciousness. The auspicious qualities of the Lord that bear direct relation to *mukta*, the path of *mukti*, the control of *Jivas*, grant of *moksha*, the *Archiradhi marga* and *Srivaikunta* find a place in *Vishnu Sahasranama*. Fifty three such *namas* have been referred.

Srivaikunta the ultimate destination of the Jiva, the Lord, the Bliss are described in *Srimad Bhagavata*, in *Vishnu purana*, in *Mahabharata*, in *Vaikunta Gadya* of Ramanuja, in *Vaikunta stava* of *Kurattalwar*.

Nithya Vibhuti - The world of Eternal Splendour - details the welcome accorded to *mukta-Divya-yoga paryanka* - the divine throne, *Mukta* standing before the Lord, his praise of the Lord, his ascent on the divine conch his prayer to the Lord, and his state of release.

After reaching *Srivaikunta* the Jiva is transformed to *suddha satva* called *mukta*. The *mukta*, the released soul, has the bliss of the experience of *paramatma* which is full, continuous, eternal, clear and having no other end in view. The *mukta* finds his sole joy in fulfilling all the purposes of Bhagavan in all states, all situations without any exception owing to the infinite and unequalled delight arising from such an experience. Such is the nature of the highest goal *parama-purushartha* of the individual soul - the enjoyment of Bhagavan which finds its fruition and development in His service, which has a beginning and no end. This

enjoyment does not stop there, but overflows into service to *Paramatma* - service of all kinds, at all times and under all situations, for which there is an end - in a region from which there is no return. (*Sarvadesa-sarvakala-sarvavasthoachitha-sarvavidha-kainkarya*). The Lord restores to *mukta* essential nature with the eight qualities viz, being free from Sin, Old age, Death, Sorrow, Hunger and Thirst, being endowed with all desired objects and an unhindered will. The Upanishad statement that the *mukta* is one with *Paramatma* refers only to the equal enjoyment of the wisdom and bliss of the Brahman (*Sanyam*) Equality.

Even by a quick glance, one could come to an understanding that all scriptures uniformly speak, in one voice, the concept of the departure of the soul, the Journey of the soul and the full and perfect enjoyment of bliss of Brahman, in different styles. Quite a number of references have been Cited because the subject matter discussed is unique, contains the secret of cosmic inter-connectedness and involution of factors which are unknown to the senses and unthinkable to the ordinary mind.

To conclude, we may state that the repeated cycle of birth, death and rebirth of the *Jiva* entrapped in *samsara* comes to end by the intervention of an *Acharya* reaching *Srivaikunta* with the enjoyment of eternal bliss of service to the Lord and *Jiva* does not come back. The *Srivaishnava Acharyas* have brought

moksha to the sure reach of the common, upto the period of Ramanuja. Each *Acharya* used to initiate and nominate his successive disciple. Ramanuja (A.D. 1017-1317) had the compassion to serve the vast community, elevate both men and women who have the desire, so he centralized the set-up. He designated Seventy-four *Simhasenadhipatis* to administer the *darshan*. Thus he brought the Acharyas close to the common man. Vedanta Desika (A.D. 1268-1369) established the Parakala mutt, that even today serves the community. Others who follow *Vedanta Desika* are Sri Ahobila Mutt, Sri Srirangam Andavan Ashramam and Sri Pundarikapuram Andavan Ashramam. *Manavala Mamunigal* (A.D. 1370-1443) established the Sri Vanavamalai Mutt. In addition to these mutts, there are several mutts headed by the sishya *parampara* of *Simhasenadhipatis* and number of individual *Acharyas* called as *Svayamaryas*. They also serve the community. *Pillai Lokacharya* in his *Srivachanabhushanam* (verse 96) observes that among the soul's qualities the most important are tranquility (*samam*) and self-restraint (*tamam*). He declares in (verse 97) that by the above two qualities, the *Acharya* comes within one's reach; having reached the *Acharya* the holy mantra comes within one's reach; having reached the holy mantra. The Lord comes within one's reach; having reached the Lord, the land of attainment comes within one's reach (*Vaikunta manakar marratukaiyatuve*) and have in their hand the great City Vaikunta. All one has to do is to seek

out, surrender to an *Acharya*, remain steadfast with absolute faith, that he alone is the saviour, who out of infinite compassion will take care of one's spiritual journey. The *Acharya* accepts the disciple with compassion not rejecting him due to his defects, gender or *varna ashrama* considerations. The *Acharya* performs the *panchasanskara*, which are necessary for the purification of the body and mind of the disciple. He initiates the three important mantras - *Tirumantra*, *Dwaya mantra* and *Charama sloka*. One who is, initiated by the *Acharya*, from any walk of life, becomes a *Srivaishnava*.

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ANNEXURE - I

The soul's journey towards Moksha

With an intension to present a complete transformation of Jiva's attainment of *moksha*, a brief description of the nature of *Jivas*, their classifications, the soul's journey towards *moksha* and the inevitable helping hand of *Acharya* according to the *Srivaishnava sampradaya* are given below.

The nature of Jivas

The souls who are also called as *Chith*, *Jiva*, *Atma*, and *Jivatma* are countless. The *Jiva* is not only different from the body but also from the various sense organs and mind which vary from body to body. The body and sense organs will perish, but the soul (*Jiva*) is indestructible, (*avinashah*) is not born and die (*najayate mriyate va*) and is eternal (*nityam*). The soul is not apparently visible, is incomprehensible and unchangeable. *Vishnu purana* verse (2.13.98) states that the *Jiva* is not a celestial, human, animal or plant; the differences in the bodies the *Jiva* occupies are due to the results of his past actions. The soul's relationship: *seshattva*: A *sesha* is one who exists for another person, totally dependent on him and whose services are intended for the benefit of that person. The soul exists for *Eshwara*. The soul is supported by *Eshwara* (soul is *dharya* and *Eshwara* is *dharaka*), controlled by Him (he is *niyanya* and the Lord is *niyanta*) and dependent on Him (he is *paratantra* and the Lord is

swatantra). There is a loving relationship between the soul and *Eshwara*. The Lord considers each soul as very dear to Him (*hridaya nigamah*), treats each *jiva* as His son and disciple. This diverse relationship is a cordial feature of the *Visishtadvaita* philosophy and is the unique feature.

The Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad-gita* verses (2.18 to 25) describes the nature of *Jiva*. The soul is monadic (*anu*) made of knowledge and bliss. He is self-illuminous. The knowledge which constitutes his form is called *dharma Gnana* helps to be aware of him all the times. There is another attributive knowledge (*dharma-bhuta-Gnana*) which helps him to know his body and all the persons and objects beyond his body. This second type of knowledge diminishes when the soul is embodied (associated with a physical body). It is like a lamp which is giving out light but does not know that it is doing so. It gets contracted with a body which is made of inert matter. It does not reach its full potential, till it becomes liberated as a *mukta* in *Srivaikunta*.

The classification of Jivas

The *Jivas* as explained in simple lucid and beautiful manner in *Avatara VIII Yatindramatadipika* by Srinivasadasa are shown below: The *Jivas* which are innumerable belong to three classes. (i) *Nithyas*, (ii) *Muktas* and (iii) *Baddhas*. (i) *Nithyas* or *Nithya suries* (eternal) are those who have never been caught in *samsara*, and who have from eternity remained in

Srivaikunta. Examples are Ananta, Garuda and Vishwaksena. The will of the Lord Eshwara is their will also. (ii) *Muktas* are those who have been liberated from this world. They will never again be born, and will eternally reside in *Srivaikunta*, in the presence of the Supreme Lord and enjoy the bliss. They have the same experience of *Nithyas*. (iii) *Baddhas* (bound) are those who live in this world and continue to be entangled in worldly life. Due to continued attachment to the worldly objects they are repeatedly born in a variety of bodies as a result of their past karmas. *Baddhas* are divided into groups as the humans, the devas and the ambulants. Again they are divided into womb-born, egg born, sprout born and sweat born. The womb born are devas and humans beings. The animals are born of wombs, eggs and sweat. The sprouts born are the non-ambulants, trees, thickets, creepers, bushes, grass etc. Again they are divided into two kinds, the scripture controlled and scripture free. The bound selves, whose knowledge depends upon the sense organs, are controlled by scripture. This knowledge does not exist in animals and non-ambulants, hence they are scripture free. The scripture controlled are of two kinds: *Bubhukshus* (pleasure - seekers) and *Mumukshus* (Liberation-seekers) *Bubhukshus* are of two kinds: Those engrossed in *Artha* and *Kama* and those solely devoted to *Dharma*. The devotees of *dharma* are those who are intent on sacrifice, charity, austerity, pilgrimage etc. as indicated in *dharma*, which is the means for happiness not relating to this world. (*Purvamimamsa sutras* 1, 2

defines *dharma* as that which is indicated by the Vedic injunction as means to welfare.) The devotees of *dharma* are again of two kinds as the devotees of other deities and the devotees of Bhagavan. The devotees of other deities are those who worship Brahma, Rudra, Agni, Indra etc. The devotees of Bhagavan are those who pray to the Supreme Being alone for achieving their goals. They are called *Bhagavat paras*. As indicated in *Bhagavad-gita* (7.16) there are *Artis* (distressed), those who have lost their wealth, prosperity etc., and seek to regain them; *Arthartis* (the seeker of enjoyment) those who aspire for wealth etc., afresh, having not possessed them before; *Jignasas* (the seeker of knowledge) those who seek knowledge about their own souls reach a state called *Kaivalya* which is totally different from Liberation (*moksha*) and is inferior to it. In the state of *Kaivalya*, all that the soul gets is experiencing his soul only and being released from the bondage of physical body. They will remain in that state alone and have no hope of Liberation according to the Southern school (*tankalai sampradaya*). The followers of Northern school (*vadagalai sampradaya*) believe that those who had reached the state of *Kaivalya* can also perform bhakti or prapatti and attain Liberation. *Mumukshus* (Liberation-seekers) are those who aspire for *moksha* only. They are always longing to be liberated and seek the grace of the Supreme Being to achieve their goals. They are *Bhagavat paras* since the Supreme Being alone can grant Liberation. They are

sub-divided into two kinds. Bhaktas (devotees of God) and Prapannas (those who have completely resigned themselves to God). The Bhaktas are of two types - *Sadhana bhaktas* are those who adopt the path of devotion as a means to Liberation, (ex. Sage Vyasa) and *Sadhya bhaktas* are those who adopt the path of devotion as an end in itself. (ex. *Nammalwar*). Prapannas are of two kinds. *Drapta prapannas* are those who seek Liberation at the end of the present life. *Arta prapannas* are those who seek Liberation immediately because they are utterly disillusioned with the world and want immediate relief. *Ekantins* are those who seek all the four goals (viz) *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* from the Supreme Being. *Parama-ekantin* are those very rare who are devoted to worship the Eshwara alone and do not even pray for Liberation, but get immense happiness in serving the Lord.

The journey towards *moksha*

The liberated is one who, at the moment of giving up the body, together with the Antaryamin abiding within the heart, reaches through the *Archiradhi marga* the *Srivaikunta*. By the touch of the *amanava* (a divine person) assumes non-material, divine figure with four arms and is adorned with Brahmic decorations. By the grace of God he has been transformed as a Mukta. The eight fold qualities become manifest as quoted in *Chandogya Upanishad* VIII, I, 5).. Free from sin, ageless, deathless, griefless, free from hunger, free from thirst, whose wishes are true and whose purposes are true. *Mukta* attains equality with *Brahman* means that

he has equality with *Brahman* in the enjoyment of bliss only. *Moksha* is essentially the nature of *sayujya* (communion). It has been declared in the *Vedanta sutras* that the power of the released self is devoid of cosmic functions. He can assume manifold forms and wander all over the worlds.

The inevitable helping hand of Acharya

The Lord *Krishna* commanded *Arjuna*, “Therefore acquire that knowledge from the *Acharyas*, by prostrating before them, by detailed questioning and by rendering service to them. They will teach you that knowledge; they who are men of great learning and who have realized the Truth. (*Tad-viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya, Upadeksyanti te gnanam jnaninas-tatva-darsinah, Bhagavad gita 4.34*). The Lord is of the opinion that only the knowledge imparted by those who have realized the perfect Truth is capable of bringing about results, and nothing else will. *Acharya*, is necessary for aspirants. *Vedanta Desika* in the *Nyasa Tilakam*, verse 21 explains with examples how the *Acharya* helps. A blind man is assisted by one who has good eye sight and is thus able to move about. A lame person placed in a boat is taken to the other shore by a boatman. The children and the other members of the royal servant, enjoy the gifts and comforts brought by him, even though they do not know the king directly. Likewise the compassionate *Acharya* will help where the disciple has neither *Gnana* nor *shakti* and make him enjoy the fruits of both.

All one has to do is to seek out, surrender to an *Acharya*, remain steadfast with absolute faith, that he alone is the savior, who out of infinite compassion will take care of one’s spiritual journey. The *Acharya* accepts the disciple with compassion not rejecting him due to his defects. The *Acharya* performs the *panchasamskara*, which are necessary for the purification of the body and mind of the disciple. He is the one who teaches us the three important mantras- *Tirumantra*, *Dwaya mantra* and *Charama sloka*. One who is initiated by the *Acharya* becomes a *Srivaishnava*. It is not achieved by one’s birth in a particular family. That is why one can see men and women from all communities, from all walks of life as *Srivaishnavas*. Devotees become a member of a congregation which in turn is, related to an *Acharya* who is an example and a forerunner. Indirectly or directly through the Guru, one worships the Lord. The congregation as a whole ripens together towards salvation. *Pillai Lokacharya* observes that devotees benefit non-devotees. “Just as one field standing full of water oozes into the neighboring field, so from the association of persons with virtues, others will get benefitted.” *Ramanuja* in his final message said: “Seek out a holy man, move with him, uprooting all your egoism, abide by his words, this itself is a means for your salvation”.

ANNEXURE - II

Results of scientific research on the subject confirming the various findings of Hindu scriptures on death and after death

Prelude:

How the soul escapes at the time of death has been engaging the attention of researchers all over the world. They experiment with persons with 'paranormal' and 'Near-death-experiences' (NDE). Even recently, in the USA, a person terminally ill with a prognosis of imminent death was enclosed in a glass domed cubicle. When he actually died, the scientists wondered how the breath could have escaped through the air tight, hermetically sealed cubicle. They noticed a minuscule - less than hairline fracture in the glass that was not there earlier when the dome was examined with sophisticated instruments before the experiment. The experiment conclusively proved that the soul must have pierced through the glass dome. A certain amount of experimental evidences have been gathered from those who have come very close to death through some accident and then been restored to life; the trend of this evidence is to support the idea that at the moment death was nearest, they passed in review the events of their whole life.

Death bed visions (DBV-1)

Between 1959 and 1973, Karlis Osis under the auspices of first Parapsychology foundation and then

the American Society of Physical Research collected data on tens of thousands of DBV and NDE in the USA and in a joint effort with Erlandur Heraldson in India.

Death bed Visions share common characteristics not influenced by racial, cultural, religious, educational, age and socio-economic lines such as radiant lights, scenes of great beauty, beings of light and feelings of great peace. These figures are called 'Take away apparitions' because their apparent purpose is to summon or escort the dieing to the after-world. Their appearance usually elicits a response of joy, peace, happiness and cessation of pain though a small number of individuals react with fear or denial. Total visions in which the dying behold (or are transported out of body to see) a preview of the after-world, occur in about 1/3rd of DBVs. Such visions usually are of endless and exquisitely beautiful gardens. Other visions are of great architectural structures and symbols of transition such as gates, bridges, rivers and boats. These after-world scenes may be populated with angels or spirits of the dead and in a small number of cases, may be permeated with celestial music. Typically, colours are vivid and the dieing one feels uplifted. Seldom do after-world visions confirm to the religious expectations of the dieing. Osis and Heraldson found DBVs are most likely to occur to patients who are fully conscious. DBVs are significant to thanatology, the scientific study of death, for they show death not as

extinction but as a wondrous transition, a rite of passage that should be undergone consciously and with dignity.

Near death Experiences (NDE)

Term coined in the 1970s by the American physician Raymond Moody to describe the mystical-like phenomena experienced by individuals who appear to die and then return to life or who come close to death. In an NDE, people generally experience one or more of the following: a sense of being dead; or an OBE in which they feel themselves floating above their bodies, looking down; cessation of pain and a feeling of bliss or peacefulness; travelling down a dark tunnel toward a light at the end; meeting non-physical beings who glow, many of whom are dead friends and relatives; coming in contact with a guide or supreme being who takes them on a life review during which their entire lives are put into perspective without rendering any negative judgements about past acts and finally, a reluctant return to life..

The NDE is not limited to religious or good people. Many who have NDEs become more spiritual or develop a belief in some type of God after their return from death. Most say they lose their fear of death and begin believing in after-life. Almost all discover a new and positive purpose for their lives, finding meaning that previously lacked. In some cases, the NDE leaves individuals with heightened intuitive or psychic abilities, including precognition, clairvoyance and telepathy.

“*On Coming back to life*” (1988) author P.M.H. Atwater found that NDE survivors identified these as the most common negative reactions: Anger, because they had to return to life; Guilt, for not being sorry about leaving; Disappointment, because once again they were back in their bodies; Dumbfoundedness and inability to talk about their experiences (or fear of talking about it); and Depression at the realization that they had to resume their lives.

On the positive side, survivors offered these reactions : Ecstasy, the wonder of their experience; Thrill, because of what they were able to experience; Gratitude, for what had happened to them; Awe and lack of words to describe what happened; Evangelism in wanting to tell others why they should not fear death; And Humility at the overwhelming nature of their experience.

Ring philosopher, Michael Grosso and others have theorized that NDE may be a form of enlightenment or Gateway to a higher consciousness and could have a transformative effect on the entire planet, if enough people have similar experiences. Modern NDE stories, like their medieval counterparts, provide a way for individuals to incorporate a ‘religious’ sense to the cosmos into their scientific/secular understanding. Zaleski holds that NDE is “one way in which religious imagination mediates the search for the ultimate truth.”

OUT OF BODY EXPERIENCES (OBEs) - 3

A phenomenon in which a person feels separated from his/her physical body and seems to travel to and

perceive distant locations on earth or in non-worldly realms. OBEs are also called Astral Projection Astral travel and Exteriorization. While accounts of OBEs vary, there are common characteristics. Most often reported is the existence of a second subtle body that becomes the vehicle for travel. The subtle body is described as a ghostly semi-transparent double of the physical body that is naked, clothed in duplicate clothing or clothed in other apparel. They pass through walls and solid objects with the speed of thought.

The NDE usually involves some form of OBE. Some people who have clinically died or come close to death report the separation of their consciousness from their bodies.

The OBE is often preceded by a perception of strong and high frequency vibrations. Individuals report leaving through their head or solar plexus or simply rising up and bloating away. Re-entry is accomplished by returning through the head or solar plexus or by melting back into the body. It is believed that if the silver cord is severed while one is out of body, physical death occurs, because the body has been cut off from its soul. The cord also is said to snap when the body dies and the consciousness or soul is released.

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 2. ibid (p. 399 - 400)
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Rahasya Traya Sram-A Trsnlation, ramkrish42)

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ANNEXURE - III

The Journey of the Prapanna to Srivaikunta.

1. The *Stula Sharira* (Gross body of Prapanna)
2. *Sukshma Sharira* of Jiva (escapes through *Brahmanadi*)
3. *Archis* (Fire God)
4. *Ahas* (Presiding deity of the Day)
5. *Shukla Paksha* (Presiding deity of the Bright fortnight of the Moon)
6. *Uttarayana* (Presiding deity of the half year of the Sun's Northern movement)
7. *Samvatsara* (Presiding deity of the Year)
8. *Vayu* (Wind God)
9. *Surya* (Sun God)
10. *Chandra* (Moon God) who questions the Soul on its eligibility to reach *Paramapada*.
11. *Varuna* (the master of the universe)
12. *Indra* (the master of Devas)
13. *Prajapathi* (the creator) escorts the *Sukshma Sharira* of the Jiva permitted by *Chandra*.
14. *Amanava Purusha* accompanied by *Prajapathi*.
15. *Viraja* river, crossing that bestows agelessness.
16. *Aprakruta Sharira* (divine body)

17. *Airammediyam* (a great lake)
18. *SomasaVana* (Forest of Aswatta trees) where 500 Apsaras adorn the Jiva.
19. *Aparajita* - in the Chithy of Paramapada (*saloka*)
20. *Vibhupramitham* or *Prabhuvimitham* - (Tower)
21. *Vichakshana Peta* (divine seat) - (Samepa)
22. *Brahma Yasas* & *Brahma Pragna* (Divine fame, form cognition) - (Swarupa)
23. *Amitoujas* - *Paryanka* (divine conch) - (*Sayujya*)
24. Bhagavan Sriman Narayanan in *Paramapada*
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