MOKSHA IN VISISHTADVAITA PHILOSOPHY

By

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

Published by
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati.
2016
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 Alwars 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.
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 Madhuvidyā 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 nadi 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-saryakala-sarvasvasthoachita-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 (phalasruti) 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 Sriman 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 Srivaishnavas, 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 Simhasadhipatis 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 sopanam 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 (phalasruties) fruits of recitation of 88 decadees 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 relay 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 excited 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 evamanumarathe*”. He adds that the devotees should be eager to realize this bliss and should be itching to be taken into His service. *Srivan 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, Bhumy 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.

My gratitude to (Dr) Sri. U.Ve V. N. Vedanta Desikan Swamy for clarifying the intricacies of *Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya*.

I would like to express my sense of gratitude to my worthy spouse Smt. Devaki Sarathy, who has always been a source of encouragement and support in all my activities.

My affectionate blessings and thanks to my sons Sri. Kaushik Sarathy and Sri. Gautam Sarathy. The immense support and encouragement extended by them is unforgettable.

I extend my greatful thanks to the Chief Editor, Sub - Editor and the other staff of T.T.D Publication division for bringing out this book in a very good manner.

* * *
Contents

Chapter - 1  Page Nos.

Introduction  - 1

1.1. Moksha in Hindu traditions
1.2. Etymology
1.3. Definition and meanings
1.4. Moksha in epistemological and psychological sense
1.5. Concept of Moksha in the six major orthodox schools of Hinduism
1.6. Moksha according to different schools of Vedanta
1.7. Moksha referred in Upanishads
1.8. Different routes to Moksha

Chapter - 2

The Soul's journey described in Upanishads  - 11

2.1. The Chandogya - Upanishad
2.2. The Brihadaranyaka - Upanishad
2.3. The Kaushitaki-Brahmana - Upanishad

Chapter - 3

The soul's journey elucidated in Bhagavad-gita  - 29

3.1. The bright and dark paths
3.2. The attainment of Yogins
3.3. The fate of those who are ignorant
3.4. The men of right knowledge
3.5. The effect of three Gunas on man at death.
3.6. What sort of persons reach paramapada

Chapter - 4

Nammalwar’s prescription for moksha - 36

4.1. The greatness of Tiruvaymoli
4.2. Tiruvaymoli and Temple worship
4.3. Tiruvaymoli Social functions
4.4. The Nammalwar’s prescription for moksha

Chapter - 5

Nammalwar’s experience of Archiradhi marga - 50

Chapter - 6

Nammalwar’s ascent to Srivaikunta - 54

Chapter - 7

Nammalwar’s enjoyment of the Lord’s exquisite form - 59

Chapter - 8

Archiradhi of Pillai Lokacharya - 62

8.1. The Lord extends His helping hand
8.2. Preparations for the soul’s journey
8.3. The Actual departure from the body
8.4. Archiradhi marga - on the shining path

Chapter - 9

Paramapada sopianam of Vedanta Desika - 68

9.1. Viveka - the first step of the ladder to moksha
9.2. Nirveda - the second step

Chapter - 10

The departure of the soul - 95

Chapter - 11

The journey of the soul - 102

Chapter - 12

The Full and Perfect Enjoyment of Bliss of Brahman - 107

12.1. The Bhagavad anubhava and all others associated are most enjoyable to mukta
12.2. The Bhagavad anubhava is eternal
12.3. There is no variation in the degree of bliss attained
12.4. Mukta and Sayujya
12.5. The uniqueness of mukta and the Lord
12.6. The mukta does not come back

Chapter - 13

Moksha described in SriVishnu Sahasranama - 116

13.1. The birth of Sri Vishnu Sahasranama
13.2. Yudhishtira’s questions to Bhishma
Chapter - 14

Sri vaikuntha - the ultimate destination - 125

14.1. The Lord in Sri vaikuntha
14.2. Bliss in Sri vaikuntha
14.3. Sri vaikuntha described in Srimad Bhagavata
14.4. Sri vaikuntha described in Vishnu purana
14.5. Sri vaikuntha described in Mahabharata
14.6. Sri vaikuntha described in Vaikuntha Gadya
14.7. Ramanuja’s advise to the devotees
14.8. Sri vaikuntha as described in Sri vaikuntha Stava
14.9. Mangalasasanam of Alwars
14.10. The Lord described by Vastya Varada Guru
14.11. Vedanta Desika’s prayer

Chapter - 15

Nithya -Vibhuti : The world of Eternal splendour - 144

15.1. Prajapati sabha - the assembly hall
15.2. Divya - yoga paryanka - the divine throne
15.3. Mukta stands before the Lord
15.4. Mukta’s praise of the Lord
15.5. Mukta’s ascent on the divine conch
15.6. Mukta’s prayer
15.7. Mukta’s state of release
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, (avinasika) is not born and die (nayayate 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 Gana 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
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

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 Madhuvidyā 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 Parvasudeva (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.
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 sopanam*, 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.

* * *

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 superhuman being 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 Brahmaghanis (who have done Prapatti) reach only this bright and shiny path and are led by a superhuman 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 sesame 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?

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 ascent. 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 lightening 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 all.3 In the Chandogya-Upnishad 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?²⁴

(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 (Hiranyakarbh). In that world there is the lake Ara, the moments called Yeshtiha, the age-less river (Vigara), the tree (Iya), 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).

(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-1, Adhyaya-1).

(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 offspiring?’ ‘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.
2. The soul’s journey as elucidated in \textit{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 \textit{gunas} on man at death and the nature of persons who attain \textit{paramapada}, based on the verses of \textit{Bhagavad-gita}.

3.1. The bright and dark paths

(i) The Lord Krishna in \textit{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 rebirth\(^1\). (ii) The Lord continues in Gita (8.24) that the knowers of Brahman departing in fire, light, day-time, the bright fort-night, the six months of the northern passage of Sun go to Brahman\(^2\) (\textit{Chandogya Upanishad} (4/15/5, 5/10/1.2) and \textit{Brihadaranyaka Upanishad} (6/2/16)). (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 returns\(^3\). (\textit{Chandogya Upanishad} (5/10/4) and \textit{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

\begin{itemize}
\item Atha yatnaitad-asmaccharirad-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.
\end{itemize}  
- \textit{Chandogya Upanishad} (VI.6)

\begin{itemize}
\item Ta va evameat vidurye chami aranye shaddham satyamupasate..............parah paravatovasanti tesham na pannara viitiah.
\end{itemize}  
- \textit{Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad} (VI.2.15)

\begin{itemize}
\item Atha ye yagnena danena tapasa lokanjayanti te dhuma mabhismbhavanti ........... Ati ya etau panthanau na viduuste kitah patanga yadidam damashukam
\end{itemize}  
- \textit{Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad} (VI.2.16)
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

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, Aswaphathy 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), worshiping 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 (aprakrut)¹¹. (ii) The Lord Krishna in Gita (9.21) continues that these men having enjoyed the vast

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.
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 way\textsuperscript{12}.

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 possession\textsuperscript{13}. 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 moksha\textsuperscript{14}. (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 like\textsuperscript{15}.

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 eternal\textsuperscript{16}.

The Nammalwar’s prescription for moksha will be discussed in the next chapter.
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

Reference

1. Yatra kale ivaavrttim.......vakshyami Bharatarsabha. (Bhagavad-gita 8.23)


3. Dhumo ratis-tathakesnah....prapya nivatate.. (Bhagavad-gita 8.25)

4. Sukla-krishe gati..........(a) vartate punah.. (Bhagavad-gita 8.26)

5. Naite sruti partha..........yoga yukto bhavajuna. (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 buddhi .....kuru-nandana. (Bhagavad-gita 6.43)

9. Purvabhyasena tenaiva......brahmativartate. (Bhagavad-gita 6.44)

10. Prayatnad-yatamanastu ....paraam-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)


15. Rajasi pralayam gatva.......mudha-yonisu jayante. (Bhagavad-gita 14.15)

16. Nirmana-moha ............padam-avyayam tat. (Bhagavad-gita 15.5)

*  *  *

Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy
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 Taittariya 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 suktam 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 apahantii” 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, Nammapiillai, the
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 Srivaishnava 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. ‘ivaiyum - 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. emmavittu, 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. oliuvil kalam, will be vouchsafed a life, to go close to the Lord of Tiruvanantapuram, 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. moym man 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. cannam 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 (seshata) 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 manmai 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. halkurum, 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. tuvalil 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 Tirukkolur, 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. erraikkum, 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 varivalaị, 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 Adisesha, 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. maiyar
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 (10.3.11). (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 peruvam, 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, Nammachembu intended, to infuse confidence in the 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 denizens 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. Chanks
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 (seplant-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 vermillion 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.

* * *

Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy 53
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 greatfully acknowledges the Lord’s great gesture. Oh! Antaryami of Moola-prakruti which evolves into Mahat, Ahankara etc, which pervades all space and infinite; Oh! Antaryami of Mukta, who encircle and extend over and larger than prakruti in extent, Gnan, 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:
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 Nithya
suries, inseparably (7.7.11).

The next chapter will cover the Archiradhi of Pillai
Lokacharya.

* * *
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 praiseworthy. 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. Adisesha, 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 Kainkarya.

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 kainkarya (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 Dwaya 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 dhooopa 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 to 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 Rakshaks.

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 Srivaiikunta, will not have rebirth in samsara.

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

*  *  *

Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy
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.  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 order among the nine steps leading to Srivaikuntanatha is summarized in another sloka.

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 marg. 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
sins 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”.

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.

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 Vaijayanthi 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 viraivarkaL”.

(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. (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 (anushthana) - 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 (Sukham).

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”” (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). The key message in this verse is: “Namm ThirumAl nilai kaNDAr naaham yellAm narahu yenRu, nall padhamE nAduvArE”.
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 theerthhavar mann aruLAI kaRavai uhantha PirAn kazhal soodum karuththinam”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 Kaiyakarya to Gopalan in His Supreme Abode).

(B) Upaya anushthanas 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 astha used by Aswathama, 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 Sriman Narayana. After practicing Bhakti or Prapatti yoga, the practioners - 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 Srivaikunta and will cling on to them.

(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 them. Prayascchitha Prapatti destroys even those sins, which were accumulated consciously due to kala, desa viparitthams 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 Prayascchitha 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 Srivaikunta (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 iraNĐum 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 moksha15. 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
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 joyously (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 suzharcchiyiE 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 Thrishunam. 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 “Thrishon 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 Brahma 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 Aadhivahikas 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 sight.
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 ladder.

(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 joyeous journey, we arrived at the banks of Viraja river and crossed it with our sankalpa and reached the other shore of Srivaikunta.

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 kathitttOm”.

(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. In the state of mukta, they will be free of hunger, thirst, sins, old
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

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. 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 verse. 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.) 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 verse\(^2\). 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)\(^2\) 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. (*Medhiniyl irukkin Rom VithiyinAIE*)

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

\(* \ast \ast \ast \*)
Reference

1. sEyam sOpAna padhavee SrimathA vihithA svayam|
   sudda sathva mayam bhruthyAn svasoudham nEthumicchathA

2. vivEka nirvEdha virakthi bheethaya:
   prasAdhahEthUthkramaNaarchirAdhaya:|
   prakruthyathikrAntha padhAdhirOhaNam parApthirithathra thu parvaNAM krama:||

3. KaLLa manatthudan kaNDu muyanra kadu- vinayAl
   naLL iruL aazhiyil iynthu nall suvai inthu yena
   naadiya ohr aLLalil nALum vizhunthu azhiyA vhai AaraNa nool
   VaLLal vazhangiya vAnn padiyAna vazhi ithuvE

4. aru uru aanayai anaitthum aRivArEnum
   arum kalaikaL kaRRu uralikkka 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 darithhavan
   vAchakatthai
   maRuthAr mayakkamum maRRu athanaal
   vantha maa narakum

Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

niRuthAr bhavatthil nedunALL uzhanRamai kaNDu athanAl
veRuthu aaraNa neRiyE veLhiyODa
viraivarhaLE

6. vaann patta mann iruLil mayankumARum
   maRitthu oru kAl yenai oozhi senRAI anRU
   oonn patta udal aazhi vinai ozhukkil
   oru karayum kaaNAtlhe ozhuhumArum
   tEn patta vidam pOlat-titthikkinRa
   siRu payanE uRu payan yenRu arunthumArum
   taann patta padi innEr taanE kaNDu
   taLarnthidumEl vaLarnthiDumE takkavARE

7. ulahathhil uyarnthavar onRum payanil uRum
   thuyaRum
   alahil padAtha abbhOgam kavarnthu yzezhum
   ambhuyathOn
   kalahat-thozhil Madhu KaiDabarAI padum
   kattam yeNNil
   pala kaRRa meyyadiyAr padiyAr ikkaDum
   bahavatthE

8. tanthirangaL aLavilarAI dhanathAI mikka
taaryEnthar thozha vyaam aaNDAr mANDAr
   chandiranum sooriyanum veeyum kaalam
   tArahayin vaDamuM maRRu tani vann aaLum
   Indiranum yERu uyarttha Isan thAnum
   yer iraNDu muthathAnum illaa annannAL
   namm ThirumAI nilai kaNDAr naaham yellAm
   narahu yenRu nall padhamE nAduvArE
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

9. thuRavaRamE thuNivAr thuNukku aRRa iLam thuNivOr
   uRavu ilar aathalinAm uyarthArudan onRi ninROm
   maRa vazhi mARRi yemm mayyalai theerthavar
   mann aruLAi kaRavai uhantha PirAn kazhal soodum
   karuththinamE

10. vanthana pOlvaruvanavum ananthamAhi
    mALatha thyur taru valvinai neruppukku
    intanamAi yeNNirantha kAlamellAm
    innnamum ibbhavak-kuzhikkE izhiyA vaNNam
    ventathu oru kuzhaviyai naRRk-
        kumaraNAkkum
    veRit-tuLava VittakanAr viithiE koNDAR
    pandhanamAm avai anaitthum
       pARuhaikkuppazha
    maRayin parama neRi payiluvArE

11. karumAlayil varum kattam kazhikkum
    karuththadayAr
    oru maal peruhum uyOgil mUYanRum athu
    anRiyum nam
    ThirumAL adiyiNai tiNN saraN aahum yena
    variththum
    taru Maal iniyivai tAnE yena t-tahavu
    yeNNuvarE

12. munn seyya vinay-thiraLil muLaiiththu anRi
    muRRuLLa muthal arinthu muLaiitha kooRRil

13. prArabdhEtara poorva paapam akhilam
    prAmAdhikam chOttharam
    nyAsEna kshpayannanabhupagatha prArabdha
    khaNDam cha na:
    dheeRpoorytHara pApmAnam ajn-athEapi
    tannishkruTHE:
    kOUdiLE sathi sikkshayAapyanagayan
    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 vazhippaduthum vahai
    seythidumE

15. munn karuvi yeeraindu manatthir-kootti
    mukkIyAm marutthil avai sErthathellA
    nanku uNarum uyirinil sErthu iym bhUthaththai
    naNNuViththu tAnRanpAI vaikkkum NaaTAn
    onpathudan vAsal iRaNDu udaiythAuLLE
    oru kODi thuyar viLaikkum udampAI onRum
    vann siRAYin talai vAsal tiRanthu nammai
    vAnERa vazhippadutha manamuRRAnE
16. The Sanskrit equivalent of this Paasuram is:
manasi karaNa-grAmam prANE mana: PurushE cha tamm
jaDithi gaDayan bhthEshvEnam parE cha
tamAthmani
svavidhavidhushOritthiTam saadharaNE
saraNErmukhairnayathi
parathO nADibhEdhair-yaTOChithham Iswara:
17. teruLAr biramapuratthu iRai sErnthu idar
theernthavar thAmm
aruLAr biramapuracchiRai theerntha 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 mahinzthittOmE
19. van paRRudan mayal pooNDu maRRu ohr
gathiyaAl ina
naaL peRRathu yenn? peRum dhAnamum
yetthanai pOthu uLathAm?
20. paNDai iru vinaiaaRil padinthu paaram
kANAthE ozhuhiya nAnn bhakkiyatthAl
vanDu amarum malar mAthr minnAy manna
vaisayanthi maNi viLLai viLanga vaann sEr
koNdal aruL mazhai pozhiya vanthathu oppAm
kuLirnthu teLinthu amudhAya virasai
aaRRaikkaNDaNuhik -
karuththAILE kadanthu meeLakkarai
kaNDOr kathi yellAm katiithittOmE
21. Poo vaLarum ThirumAthu puNArntha namm
PuNNuyanAr
ThAvA LamAna 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 ozhuhiik-karai sErnthA kalamE
pOlakkAtthut -
theekku alanthu ozhindha kaLirE pOla
madal kavarum mayal kazhintha mAThr pOla
vann siRai pOy mannar padham peRRAR pOla
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 gati1.

(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 prayaschithta, 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. (x iii) *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
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

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 state\(^2\). (xix) *Periyalwar* in his *Perialwar Tirumoli* verse (4.10.1) states that “Oh! Lord reclining on Adisesha 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 Kanchipurma 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 *nadi* 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 journey of the soul will be discussed in the next chapter.

* * *

---

**Reference**

1. *manasi karan.agramam.pran.e manah.purus.e ca tam. jhat.iti ghat.ayan bhutes.venam.pare ca tamatumaniA svaavidavidus.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 dhamanimihasta min kale sa eva satadhika. makr.takapuraprasthanartham.pravesayati prabhu. 45 (RTS, Adikara-20)*

* * *
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 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. (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 Vyaha rupa, 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 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 Sun. 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 Gana 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, Lightening, Varuna, Indra and Brahma. The path travelled is called Archiradhi gati.)*

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

*  *  *
1. jalanadivasa jyotsnapaks.ottarayan.avatsaran.pavanatapanapraleyam.sun kramadaciradyuti jaladharapatim.devadhisam.prajapatimagatah tarativirajam.dure vacastatah.paramadbhutam
   46 (RTS, Adikara-21)

2. pitr.pathaghat.iyantrarohavarohaparibhramaih.nirayapadaviyatayatakramaisca nirantaraih.adhigataparirispriyatjanadhahairativahyanah.sukhayati nijacchayaday svayam.haricandanah.
   48 (RTS, Adikara-21)

***

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, paripUrNabrahmAnubhavaAdhikAra. 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 Vedantists 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 Sentience 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 Sayuja 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 mind.

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.

* * *

Reference

1. vitamasi pade laks.mikantam.viChithravibhutikam.
sacivagamitah.sam.padyavirbhavatsahajakr. tih.
sphut.atadapr.thaksiddhiih.siddhyadgun.as.takatatphalo
bhajati paramam.samya.bhoge nivr.
Trikathojjhitam 48 (RTS, Adikara-22)

2. avisrantasraddhasatakalahakallolakalus.ah.
mamavirbhuyasurmanasi
munisiddhadisulabhah.
madhuks.iranyaysvagun.avibhavasanjanakananmah
anandabrahmanubhavaparivaha
bahuvidhah. 49 (RTS, Adikara-22)

* * *
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 desperately 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 Bhishma**

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 reply**

(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 purushartha (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 resort 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. _Apriyarhah_: He one who is sought after by those who seek the ultimate values of life (_Purushartha_). (19) 876. _Priyarhah_: 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. _Prityardhanah_: 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, Lightening and Varuna, the eighth, nineth 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. _Sadamarshi_: He who accepts the services of muktas. (38) 895. _Lokadhishthanam_: He who is the support of all worlds. (39) 896. _Abhutah_: 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 avayayah: 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. Ujjita-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 Adisesha.

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

* * *

Reference

1. Sri yudhisthira uvaca
kimeka daivatam loke kim vapyekam
parayanam |
stuvamtah kam kamarcantah
prapnyurmanavah subham \(||8||\)
ko dharmah sarvadharmanah bhavatah
paramomatah |
kim japamucyate
jamturjanmasamsarabamdhana \(||9||\)

2. Sri bhisma uvaca
jagatprabhum devadevanamantam
purusottamam |
stuvannamasahasrena Purushah satatotthita\(h\)
\(||10||\)
tameva carcayannyam bhaktya
purusamavyayam |
dhyayan stuvannamasyamsca yajamanastameva
ca \(||11||\)
anadi nidhanam Vishnum
sarvalokamahesvaram |
lokadhyaksam stuvannyayam sarvaduhkhatigo
bhavet \(||12||\)
brahmanyam sarvadharmanam lokanam
kirtivardhanam |
lokanatham mahadbhumam
sarvabhitahsavodbhavam \(||13||\)
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 Mangalasasananam 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.
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

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 Adisesha. The divya - mangala - vigraha 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 tieuvukkum tiruvagiya selvan.”

14.4. **Sri vaikunta as described in Vishnu purana.**

Vishnu purana has the following lines to describe the Sri vaikunta - Vaikuntaethu pare lokae Sriyah Sardham Jagathpathihi Asthae Vishnuhu Ahinthyatham 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. **Sri vaikunta 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. **Sri vaikunta 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

(Tatasccha 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---itti 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 “Sri vaikunta”, 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 Adhisesa,
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 splendorous 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 Vaijayanthi 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, sustentation 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, Sríman 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 Adhisheṣha with Sri Devi also seated and being served by Garuda and others, and addresses the Lord Sríman 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

(tatasccha anubhUyamAna bhAva viSEsha)

Afterwards enjoying the exquisiteness of that emotion with extraordinary love, unable/incapable of doing or thinking anything else, yet again entreat, 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 kainkaryam 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).
ends happily, when he arrives at the domain of Srivaikunthana 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 Srivaikuntha 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. Srivaikuntha as described in Srivaikuntha stava

Kurattalvan has composed the ‘Srivaikuntha Stava’ consisting of 100 slokas in Sanskrit, describing the Lord Vaikunthana, His auspicious qualities and the beauty of Srivaikuntha. Let us see a few examples. (Sloka-41) describes that Srivaikuntha 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 paramabharti, 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. Mangalasasanam 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 Ksherabdi 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 (Mangalasasanam 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 Perialwar 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 (Adisesha). 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 surrenderers to Him. 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, papa, 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.

* * *

**Reference**

1. *Kurmadin divya lokam tadanu manimayam mantapam tatrasesam
tasmin dharmadipetam tadupari kamalam
camaragrabinisca
Vishnum devih vibhusayudha ganamuragam
paduke vainateyam
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 aiswaarya 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 obesicence 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, Yamana, Sankukarana, Sarvanetra, Sumukha and Supratishtha. As the mutka 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
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

148

Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

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 Adisesha, 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. Adisesha 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 Sesa 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 Adisesha 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 Adisesha. As the mukta draws nearer, he becomes the cynosure of the two thousand eyes of Adisesha. He has full darshan of the Lord of sapphire-hue on the white Adisesha. 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 Adisesha. 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 dealings 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 Nithyavibhuti and Srivaikunta. The Alwars 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 Alwars and Acharyas. Now the mukta is in the divine presence of the Lord on Adisesha 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 unequaled 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 de
sire 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 Alvars 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 ponds 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” (*maranamanal 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 10.9. *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 advises 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 jjevanya 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 (Adisesha).

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. Adisesha, 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-deprecation 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 recur 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 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.

*Vedanta Desika* in his master piece *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* *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 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 master piece *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* *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 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
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

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 unequaled delight arising from such an experience. Such is the nature of the highest goal paramapurushartha 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 Ahobilamutt, 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 impotant are tranquility (samam) and self-restraint (tamam). He declares in (verse 97) that by the above two qualities, the Acharya comes with in one’s reach; having reached the Acharya the holy mantra comes within one’s reach; having reached the holy mantra. The Lord comes with in one’s reach; having reached the Lord, the land of attainment comes within one’s reach (Vaikunta manakar manarattukaiyatuve) 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.

* * *

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 Srivaisnava 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 exits 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
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

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) *Nityyas*, (ii) *Muktas* and (iii) *Baddhas*. (i) *Nityyas* or *Nityya 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 *Nityyas*. (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 injection as means to welfare.) The devotees of *dhrama* 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) *dhrama*, *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,1, 5)..<ref>.. 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</ref>
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-viddh pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya, Upadekyanti 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 dying 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 dying one feels uplifted. Seldom do after-world visions confirm to the religious expectations of the dying. 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
Moksha in Visishtadvaita Philosophy

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 floating 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.

* * *
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. *Airammadiyam* (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*)

* * *
Bibliography

BOOKS

Adidevananda Swami, Yatindra Matadipika, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1996.


Websites

http://www.acharya.org
http://www.ahobilavalli.org
http://www.Alwars.Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
http://www.chetanam.com
http://www.hayagrivan.org
www.hindudharmaforums.com
http://www.swami-krishnananda.org
http://www.prapatti.com
http://www.sadagopan.org
http://www.saranagati.org
http://www.srivaishna.org
http://www.vedis.net/magazine

* * *