Chapter 5

The Brahmānubhava
In the *Upanisads Gītā* and *Brahma Sūtra* mokṣa is defined as the attainment of Brahman or the integration of the individual with the supreme spirit. The spiritual destiny of the *mumukṣu* is his attainment of *paramapada* or the supreme abode of the self. To reach there the self has to withdraw itself from *avidyā-kāma-karma* complex of ignorance, desire and the sphere of space and time. The main cause of bondage is the formation of *ahamkāra*, the outcome of the aforesaid complex. *Ahamkāra*, the empirical ego, drives the self to believe itself as a mode of matter. This misconception perpetuates the *samsāra*, the apparently endless cycle of births and deaths. Liberating or escaping from this miserable worldly existence is *mukti*. The *avidyā* which obscures the true nature of the self is cleared as a mirror stained by dust shines brilliantly when it has been cleansed. This cleansing means freedom from *karma* and the consequent imperfection. When the self is liberated from the *samsāra*, it does not get depressed or annihilated as the Buddhist says, nor it is merged with the absolute as the Advaitin says. In opposing these views Viśiṣṭādvaitein asks that who does in the state of *mukti* survive or if he does not survive then, who is there to receive the release. In *Śrī Bhāṣya* Rāmānuja counter-argues against the an-
nihilation or merger of the self saying that, “since the individual self by its very nature a distinct individual, it must persist as a self-conscious being in the state of release” also. Moreover, Rāmānuja explains the important distinction between the self and ego or ahamkāra which is a product of avidyā-kāma-karma complex and how in liberation only the ahamkāra is destroyed. In distinguishing I from the ahamkāra Rāmānuja writes: “As in all passages we reply, which gives information about the true nature of the self, it is spoken of as the I we conclude that the I continues the essential nature of the inward self. Where, on the other hand, the holy one declares the ahamkāra as a special effect of the universe of the unevolved to be comprised with the sphere of the objective, he means that principle which is called ahamkāra because it causes the assumption of egoity on the part of the body which belongs to the not self such egointy constitutes the ahamkāra also designated as pride or arrogance which causes men to slight persons superior to themselves, and is referred to by scripture in many places as something evil.” And he contends that in the state of release, not the self, but the ahamkāra only gets annihilated. In the state of mukti the individual as individual is not obliterated but recovers and fulfils his authentic
3.1 Mukti

When the jīva is liberated from its bondage it has a sight of God's glory and goodness. It acquires the eight qualities of Brahman like purity, eternity, blissfulness etc. The self is freed from the limitations of name and form and the ethical imperfections caused by them, and thus attains absolute oneness with Brahman as His mode. In the Brahmanised state the self becomes one with Him in place, form, position and experience (sālokya, sārūpya, sāmīpya, and sāyuja). First, the mukta attains sālokya, i.e. the same place of abode as the Lord. Then he enjoys the bliss in the service of the Lord (kāmikārya). Further, he reaches the presence of God (sānnidhya) and becomes like Him (sārūpya) and finally enjoys fellowship with Him (sāyuja). Rāmanuja understands by mukti the integral experience of Brahman. The concept avibhāga is all-comprehensive and it is used in the Brahma-Sūtra to reconcile the texts of bheda and abheda. This integral experience does not mean swarūpa-aikya or absolute identity but vিिषिष्ट-ारूप-’aiक्या in which the self is realised as the एष्ठाक-सिद्धा-विशेषाया or inseparable mode. Though
there is difference in denotation between jīva and Brahman, there is identity in connotation as every concept connoting the prakāra also connotes the prakārin. This avinābhāva or inseparability abolishes the sense of exclusiveness and externality that belongs to the bodily self of ahamkāra or egoism, but it does not annul the aham or ego consciousness of the ātman. Avibhāga or non-division thus connotes existential difference between Brahman and the mukta and experienced unity due to the joy of sāyuja or intimate communion, and it is not the same as the loss of personality. In the mystic sense, the self-feeling is swallowed up in the supra-personal experience of avibhāga or the unitive experience of the bliss of Brahman. This brings out the nature of brahmaraśa more than co-existence (sālokya), similarity (sārūpya), and intimacy (sāmipya).

5.2 Brahmānubhava

In the Brahmānubhava of the self, though there is union or integration, there is also an apparent unavoidable dualism: the individual subject experiencing the absolute subject as an object. These are two circumstances that
mitigates the dualism. The soul contemplating Brahman achieves likeness to its object in respect of purity, knowledge, and bliss. This likeness is not total in the sense that the cosmic powers of God or His power of grace to save souls are not attained by the individual even in the state of self-perfection. There is kinship without total self-perfection. In other words there is total likeness which does not take away the metaphysical eminence of Paramātman. The individual has an inclusive perceptual cognition of God resplendent in all His attributes and glories. In that unified vision he sees himself also as integral constituent in the glory of God. In his awareness of himself he finds himself as an inseparable part or body of God. So the subject discovers himself as lodged in the totality of God-head. There is no bifurcation of subject and object, though the individuality of the percipient and the eminence of the perceived are fully maintained. The unique unification is achieved through the inclusion of the individual in the expanse of the being of God.\(^4\)

5.3 The Self in the Released State

The released self differs from Brahman in two important respects. First, it is atomic and strictly finite, while
Brahman is universal and all pervading. Secondly, it does not have creative and ruling power over the world which belongs exclusively to Brahman. The term ‘union’ is not denoting absorption like that of salt in the water; is not annihilation like that of moth in the flame; is not like the honey in the lotus that draws the bees and drowns it; it is not the abyss of negation leading to acosmism. The term ‘union’ is very flexible as it may mean participation in the divine nature and life, similarity or sārūpya, absorption or inseparable union or avibhāga as in sāyujya.

5.4 The Communion

The communion with the Lord can be understood in terms of intelligence, feeling and will. The intelligence of the mukta freed from limitations of empiricism acquires the all pervasive character. In that exalted state there is identity of connotation between the jīva and Brahman, though there is difference in denotation and the released soul views everything through the eye of God who is his self. As jīva is the self of its embodied and empirically functioning body Brahman is the self of the jīva. On the cosmic feelings of Prahlada, who said, “I am all things: all beings are in me who am eternal...,” P.N.Srinivasachari
comments that it 'can be consistently explained in terms of *visiṣṭa-aikya* inseparability and not *sva-rūpa-aikya* (identity). They are instances of *avibhāga* or inseparability and not of complete identity or *aikya*.”

Though emotionally and intellectually the *jīva* is one with Brahman, the volitional side shows a dualistic tendency. As the eternal *sesa* of *Īśvara*, the soul depends absolutely on His will and delights in His service and satisfaction. Really speaking, God Himself is the means and the end. The will of the individual self and its existence have no value of their own. The ideal of *kaiṁkarya* or loving service is entirely different from the idea of cooperating with God and of blind submission to His will. It is a case of at-one-ment by self-effacement.⁶ *Kaiṁkarya*, as Rāmānuja calls, is the active manifestation of love in service. The reality of love is measured not in terms of the appropriation of the object by the subject. This self-submission to God is the essential nature of the experience of his love. It is not a passive state of satisfaction but a dynamic and restless eagerness to do the work of God. This active manifestation of love is service is what is called by Rāmānuja as *seva* or *sesa-bhāva*. This is a further dimension of this experience. Rāmānuja defines
this ācārya or subsidiary character as 'being of value only by virtue of concentration to the principle entity.' In mukti this character comes to fruition.

Towards the end of Śrī Bhāṣya Ramanuja discusses the problematic question how can this state of perfect life attained in time be eternal? What happens in time must be subject to eventual termination. What has been attained may be lost, if the subject ceases to be interested in it and moves out into another value. Such a contingency is impossible in the present situation, for, a soul awakened into the fulness of its understanding, and freed from all binding factors, cannot but cling to mokṣa. Such being the nature of that supremely blissful state. Ignoring and deviation from the highest good can take place only in a spiritually darkened soul. As for God whose grace is the ultimate means of release, whose compassion and love are eternal to Him, whose love for devotees is beyond all measures and to whom the liberated soul is precious beyond words and of infinite value, cannot abandon him who has reached Him. Such a self-stultification is impossible for the Divinity.

The next question going to be considered here will
be whether it is possible to achieve *mukti*, here itself in this mundane world or after this life? The possibility of achieving *moksha* here itself is accepted by the school of Advaita Vedanta. For them *moksha* is *Brahma-sakshatkara*, the realisation of the identity of the individual self with the absolute. It is possible for one to realise the identity, the oneness of the *jiva* and Brahman, by constantly meditating on the scriptural texts such as 'tattvamasi'. The one who realizes this identity is considered a *mukta*, eventhough he is in the state of embodiment because *avidya* or ignorance about Brahman is removed by Brahman-realisation. Though *avidya* is removed, the traces of it still persists, and as a result of it, even after the realisation of Brahman the body persists. Such a state of *mukti* is technically known as *jivanmukti*.

5.5 *Jivanmukti* or *Videhamukti*

Rāmānuja clearly denies the possibility of *jivanmukti*. He argues against *jivanmukti* that "release which consists in the cessation of plurality cannot take place as long as a man lives." He further continues that if *jivanmukti* is understood in the sense that a person, while being embodied, is conscious of the unreality of that appear-
ance, then there remains no difference whatsoever between release in this life and release after death. And Viśiṣṭādvaita advocates that when a self is liberated it is not actually lost in identity with God but he enjoys a bliss of communion with Him. This is possible only after death. To Rāmānuja, there is no erroneous identity, i.e. adytāsikatādāmya, between body and self. The two are related inseparably as two distinct objects (apṛthak-siddhi-sambandha). Though body and self are really distinct, they are treated as identical in ordinary everyday life because of their inseparable association. Since the body-soul relation is real and not erroneous, it can not disappear in the living state. Since the relation of the self with the body is real, as long as the self remains embodied, it can never have the feeling of bodilessness. For a Viśiṣṭādvaitin mukti is always videhamukti. Rāmānuja contends that vākyārtha jñāna cannot help the self to attain liberation. Had scriptural knowledge resulted in liberation, then so many scriptural texts such as tattva-masi can give only an indirect knowledge of the state of liberation and it can not destroy avidyā. Further, the Chandogya Upanisad declares: “A soul desires of release and endowed with immediate knowledge of itself and God, has to wait till the body dies.” So for Rāmānuja
mukti is not freedom in embodiment but freedom from embodiment.