Chapter 4

The Three Śādhanas
In the previous chapter the relationship between the infinite and the finite self has been discussed at length. The finite self cannot remain on its own for it is fully dependent on and supported by the infinite self and it finds its fulfilment only in communion with the infinite self. To achieve this goal the finite self requires a discipline, a sādhanā - moral, intellectual, and spiritual training and the consequent mental make up on the part of the individual. Sādhana, in the words of Pandit, is the adhikārī-nirupana in the sense that it is a detailed study of ... qualification and conditions which must be required and fulfilled by the aspirant ... until he reaches the final goal.¹ It is a planned effort towards the realisation of the destiny through an appropriate utilization of all the resources.² śādhanā, is the instrument by which siddhi or perfection is attained. It is the essential preliminary discipline that leads the finite self to the attainment of the spiritual or religious experience, which is regarded as the summum bonum of human evidence. As Ms.Underhill describes, in the essay “The essentials of Mysticism”, śādhanā or the mystical way, leads man to God or enables the finite self to experience the communion with God. In its journey towards its destiny the finite self passes through various states of experiences from physical to spiritual.
All the above mentioned experiences occur in one way or other in one place or other on the mystical way or sādhanā. It is the means by which the finite self raises from emotion especially to spiritual experience. The first stage, the emotional stage, is outward and depends upon senses and objects and makes the preparations for a higher stage of experience. The second stage offers man a deeper mental and physical living which brings him in contact with the divinity. In the third stage man surpasses the mental, psychical and physical living into a spiritual life. What is characterised by genuine religious experience may be equated with the Brahmanubhava of the Indian saints. Surprisingly, the three forms of sādhanā admitted in West as well as in the East resemble, very much, each other. Dionysius the Aeropagite says in a celebrated passage: "Threefold is the way to God. The first is the way of purification in which the mind is inclined to learn true wisdom, the second is the way of illumination, in which the mind by contemplating is kindled to the burning of Love. The third is the way of union, in which the mind by understanding reason and spirit is led up by God alone." The resembling steps in the Indian sādhanā that leads to Brahmanubhava consists in the moral discipline brought out by the performance of du-
by or *Karma Yoga*, the spiritual illumination of *Jñāna Yoga*, and the loving meditation on Brahman or *Bhakti Yoga*.

The primary sādhakā for the Viśiṣṭādvaita is *bhakti yoga*, to reach it one must climb up from *karma yoga* through *jñāna yoga*, as it is, from worldliness to divine life. On the basis of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* Ramanuja maintains that knowledge of the ātman combined with *karma yoga* leads to *jñāna yoga*. Through *jñāna yoga* one arrives at the true contemplation of the realising-ātman. This contemplation again is propaedeutic to *bhakti yoga*, through which alone one can attain *moksa*.

4.1 *Karma Yoga*

*Karma yoga* is the foundational discipline of all the Vedānta systems. There is a basic difference between practising *karma yoga* and performing *karma*. It is proclaimed in the *Gītā* that every *jīva* is characterised by *karma*. Every thought, act, or word, whether of sensory-motor or ideo-motor is an effort of *karma*. *Karma* in
association with kāma (desire) triggers a causal nexus which throws the jīva in the sea of saṃsāra. When the self is under the influence of senses, manas identifies itself with the deha. This deha- abhimāna develops into the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, i.e. ahamkāra. This ahamkāra generates kāma and gives rise to the desired action (kāmya karma); the desired action is determined by the subjective inclination of rāga and dueṣa (appetition and aversion) and the objective consideration of utility or gain or loss (lābha-alābha). The oscillation of the manas between these two, subjective as well as objective poles perpetuates the bondage. So the manas which causes the bondage by its attachments to senses must be changed into a manas which is not attached to them, for it is written: “To man, manas alone is the cause of bondage and of release; the manas attached to sense objects makes for bondage; the manas which is not attached to sense objects makes for release.”

The purification of manas and turning it from the sense objects to ātman within itself is the aim of the Karma Yoga. Karma yoga consists in transforming the kāmya karma into nīśkāma karma, by changing the viṣaya-kāmu into ātma-kāma.
4.2 Nīśkāma-karma

A clear apprehension of the nature of the self is one of the pre-requisites for the practice of nīśkāma-karma. When one acquires a proper understanding of the essential nature of the self, the sāṅkhya-buddhi develops into vyavāsyātmika-buddhi. This buddhi provides an appropriate attitude to practice nīśkāma-karma.

According to the Sāṅkhya, a life of activities results from the interplay of prakṛti and puruṣa. When the sādhaka knows the tattvās and able to distinguish between puruṣa form prakṛti, he is also able to trace the roots of all karmas and give due credit to them or assess them at its proper value. When this assessment is made possible, the buddhi develops into vyavāsyātmika-bhuddhi. It consists in non-attachment to sense-objects, in the stability of reason, and the concentration of the will. When the self knows that karma is the product of the interaction among the guṇas, it is able to detach itself from the sense organs and aim at single determination. It can restrict its wandering or the oscillation of manas and orient itself towards practicising nīśkāma karma. The vyavāsyātmika-buddhi helps the self to act according
to the following formula: '... act that you may regard all actions determined by the guṇas of prakṛti and not as determined by the ātman.' When one is acting accordingly, he is performing karma without being impelled by the hedonistic ends of pursuing sukha and avoiding dukha or the utilitarian ends of securing success or labha and avoiding the failure or alābha. This is nīskāma-karma.

The theory of nīskāma-karma does not counsel renunciation of all activity. What is recommended is not karmatīyāga (renunciation of action) but karma-phalatīyāga (renunciation of the fruit of action). Nīskāma-karma signifies freedom in action and not freedom from action. It calls for the renunciation of the doer-mentality and kāma. The essential feature of nīskāma-karma is giving up of the false notion that "I am the doer." Giving up of doer-consciousness involves, three fold renunciation. It must involve the conception that the self, engaged in action, is just an instrument of God. The action being performed must not be looked upon as the action belonging to the agent but as action pertaining or belonging to God. The fruit of action must be dedicated to God. When the self renounces action in this spirit and realises
its śesā-hood, its every action becomes an offering. When the senses are spiritualised every \textit{karma} is transformed into \textit{kainākarya}.

The transition from \textit{karma} \textit{yoga} to \textit{jñāna} \textit{yoga} is a transition from self-renouncement to self-realisation and makes a higher stage in the spiritual progression. \textit{Karma} \textit{yoga} frees the naturalistic fallacy of mistaking the \textit{atman} for the \textit{anātmanor} natural self. While \textit{karma} \textit{yoga} is concerned with what ought to be done, \textit{jñāna} \textit{yoga} is concerned with what man ought to be. When self is able to dissociate itself successfully from \textit{prakṛti} and self-determination, it is able to distinguish between \textit{deha} and \textit{ātman}, its sāṅkhya-buddhi develops into \textit{vyavāsyā ātmika-buddhi} and the \textit{sādhaka} becomes a \textit{sthita-prajñā}. One practising \textit{nīskāma-karma}, one transforms \textit{viṣaya-kāma} into \textit{ātma-kāma}.

\section*{1.3 \textit{Jñāna} \textit{Yoga}}

\textit{Jñāna} \textit{yoga} is a life of meditation on the nature of the individual self, with the view to gain an immediate and intuitive realisation of its fundamental essence.
and characteristics. Jñāna yoga shows the way upto ātmadarśana by the withdrawal of the mind (citta) from functioning on the psychic plane and concentration on the nature of the ātman by dhāraṇa, dhyāna, and samādhi as elaborated in the Yoga Sūtras and in the Gita (V chapter). The immediate goal of jñāna yoga is the realization of the pratyagātman or the inner self. Through the yogic practices the mind is able to free itself from the sense-objects. The mumukṣu is able to discriminate (viveka) through the yogic abhyāsa and finally able to dissociate itself from the sense objects (vairāgya). Vairāgya is attained through four stages of maturity: yatamāna samjña, vyatireka samjña, ekendriya samjña and vasīkara samjña.

Yatamāna samjña is the withdrawal of senses from their respective objects even as the tortoise draws its limbs within its shell. It is focussing the manas on the ātman by retiring from the world of activity by withdrawing the senses from the contact with the sense objects. In the next stage vyatireka samjña, by excercising the spirit of detachment or udāsīnatva the inner control of the mind is achieved. Udāsīnatva is cultivating the indifference to that which pleases and that which
does not please or it is freedom from elation and depression. Finally vasīkara sanjña is focussing the manas exclusively on the ātman having completely abandoned desire for other thing. In this stage the mumukṣu gets established in the blissful awareness of the self, which naturally marks the cessation of all other worldly desires. From this final stage a mumukṣu is able to have an intuition of the self.

This vairāgya or self-renunciation is followed by self-realization or ātma-avalokana, the inward perception of the self. Such a perception, according to S.S.Ragavachar, is both self-knowledge and self-becoming, for it inaugurates the life of the self in its authentic self-hood. Here again there are four ascending stages in the intuition of the self. The yogin apprehends the essential self and all individual selves as being fundamentally alike in nature. In the first stage, called sarvatra samadarśana the yogin who has intuited his ātman sees a similar self in all selves owing to the affinity and unity of their attributive spiritual consciousness. He notices the basic likeness of the individual self to the divine self, in respect of purity and holiness. Thus while apprehending the pure self is such that it carries intimations of the supreme self. This
stage is known as divine samya. The yogin visualises in a spiritual way the similarity of the pure ātman to the Lord and thus he perceives God in all jīvas and every jīvas in God. In the third stage, such similarity is perceived even when the mumukṣu is not practising introversion. This ecstatic intuition of the self and its likeness to all selves and even to God Himself from the standpoint of purity, enters the normal plane of consciousness also and transmutes it to its own likeness. The fourth stage of ātma-avalokana is its practical application to the exercise of disinterested love to all beings in their joys and sorrows. In this new mode of living transcendence of the normal values takes place. The petty joys and depression of the mundane life lose their power over the seeker and he gets established in perpetual peace.

When introversion is fully developed by the stilling of all sensations and the vanishing of vṛttis and vāsanas, the yogi attains samādhi or pure consciousness devoid of content and it is the stirless state of nirvikalpa samādhi or kaivalya. This attainment of kaivalya roughly corresponds to what Platinus calls, “the flight of the alone to the alone.” The danger of kaivalya is spiritual self-centeredness and it is not God-centered. The quite
of kaivalya often leads to quietism, subjectivism and the Godless state of sankhya kaivalya and nirvana. Viśiṣṭadvaita repudiates this subjectivistic philosophy and super solipsism, and upholds the philosophy of the absolute as the self of the universe of cit and acit and their Lord who is the ṣāriṅ. For a Viśiṣṭadvaitin kaivalya is only a stepping stone and not a stopping place. So the spiritual philosophy of the ātman, i.e. ātma-avalokana must be blossomed into the Brahma-avalokanu or God-realisation attained by bhakti.

In the Gita it is explained how jñāna yoga leads into Bhakti yogs. Jñāna yoga enables the self to have a three-fold self-perception. Firstly, the yogin realises that the fundamental nature of the self consists of knowledge. It is both jñāna-svarūpa and jñāna-guṇaka. The self knows itself by immediate self-awareness and is the centre of consciousness of all else in existence. This shows that the self is different from the non-self, i.e. body with which the self mistakenly identifies in mundane consciousness. When the self realises these two, it realises that it is virtually non-entity when it lives unto itself, but attains its proper abundance of life and intrinsic worth only when it offers itself to the Supreme. Rāmānuja says that with
this three fold self-perception, it spontaneously enters in the highway of bhakti.

4.4 Bhakti Yoga

The Viśiṣṭādvaitic Vedānta system divides bhakti into three stages of development: i) sādhanā bhakti (practice of devotional means), ii) paru-bhakti (higher devotion), and iii) parama-bhakti. Sādhanā bhakti includes the pre-requisite of bhakti yoga, namely, karma yoga and jñāna yoga. Karma yoga enables a mumukṣu to practice nīkāma karma illumined by the knowledge of the distinction between the eternal ātman and the empirical ego of prakṛti. When the mumukṣu renounces the feeling of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, the process of self-realisation or jñāna yoga begins. In jñāna yoga the self regains its own state through ātma-avalokana. Then the mumukṣu becomes a bhakta whose only aim in life is absolute devotion to Him. Historically speaking Rāmānuja fused the Brahma of the Upaniṣads and Brahma-Sūtra, the Vāsudeva of the Gitā, and the ārca of the alvārs into one. So Viśiṣṭādvaita advocates a theory of intellectual love or b-haktirūpāpanna jñāna, i.e. jñāna turned bhakti. That is Rāmānuja begins his magnum opus with the prayer:
'May my buddhi or jñāna blossom into bhakti ... seek His love.'

For Rāmānuja bhakti is synonymous with upāsana. Comparing the etymology of these two expressions, S.Bhatt observes: "In the Vedic literature we find both these words used for devotion. Bhakti, derived from the root ‘bhaj’ appears in the Vedic passage ‘mahate visnoḥ sumatim bhajamahe.’ The root ‘as ’ with the prefix ‘upa ’ is also used side by side with the root ‘bhaj ’ as we find in the Yajurveda passage ‘yasya visā upāste. Upasana is a divine command found in the scriptures especially in Upanisadic injunctions of śravaṇa or hearing, manana or reflection and nīdidhyāsana or meditation. The study of scriptures, i.e. śravaṇa, and manana give an orientation towards nīdidhyāsana. On commenting the text ‘brahmavid āpnoti param ’ (one who knows Brahman attains the highest), Rāmānuja says that ‘the term Vedana connotes dhyāna or meditation which deepens into upāsana or devotion or worship.

In the Vedārtha Sangraha, Rāmānuja declares that bhakti is essentially a specific form of cognition, which is thoroughly meditative and contemplative.
gards bhakti as a meditation on God accompanied by love. Bhakti as a loving meditation is also described by Rāmānuja as a ‘steady remembrance.’ For, he writes, ‘meditation means steady remembrance, i.e. a continuity of steady remembrance uninterrupted like a flow of oil; in agreement with the scriptural passage ‘on the attainment of remembrance all the ties are loosened.’ When this kind of upāsana deepens, the upāsaka has an immediate presentation (saksatkāra) of the beatific form of Paramātman (darśana samānākāra).

To attain this goal Rāmānuja prescribes a discipline to train the intellect, will, and the senses and it is known as sādhanā-bhakti. These are viveka, vimoka, abhyāsa, kriyā, kalyāṇa, anavasāda, and anudharṣa. Viveka is the practice of discrimination. Rāmānuja emphasises that one should discriminate in taking food, which builds up the mind and body. Kāya-śuddhi or the purification by taking sāttvika food generates sattva-śuddhi or purity of mind which is necessary for spiritual concentration. Vimoka the freeness of mind consists in resisting the impulses of passions like anger, sexuality, jealousy, etc., detachment from objects of desire and longing for God. Abhyāsa or repetition means continued practice or
the repeated concentration of the mind on God. *Kriyā* is performing the work sanctioned by the scriptures according to one’s capacity. The fivefold duties or the fivefold great sacrifices (*panicamahayagjnas*) are duty to the deities, scriptural study, duty to the forefathers or ancestors, duty to other human beings, and the duty to the brute creations. While *kriyā* is about the external performances, *kalyāṇā* is about the inner side of duty. It consists in the practice of virtues like truth (*satya*), straight-forwardness (*ārjana*), kindness (*dayā*), benevolence (*dāna*) and love of all beings (*ahimsa*). *Anavasāda* is freedom from despair due to and remembrance of disappointment, of past sorrows, and horrible imaginations. *Amudharsa* is the capacity not to yield to excitements (*atisaṅtosa*) or depressions (*asaṅtosa*). The resultant *bhakti* of this *sādhana-saptaka* has three stages and nine phases. The three stages are firm meditation (*dhruvānūmuśmṛti*), repetition (*asakrda-vṛtti*) and the orison of union or *darsana-samānākāra-tam*. The nine phases are as follows: *stuti* (glorification), *smṛti* (remembrance), *namaskṛti* (homage), *vandana* (exaltation), *gūpāśravaṇa* (listening to the attributes of the Lord), *vacana* (narrating the attributes), *dhyāna* (meditation), *arcana* (adoration), and *pranāma* (prostration).
The bhakti awakened by śastric knowledge purified by karma and sanctified by jñāna is known as para-bhakti. When this para-bhakti develops into a thirst for the direct intuition of Bhagavān, it is called para-jñāna. When the view of God, neither a perfect one nor an enduring one, the para-bhakti develops into parama-bhakti. In the stage of parama-bhakti the bhakti yearns for union and communion with the Lord. Parama-bhakti is the result of higher knowledge as distinguished by the lower knowledge described earlier as a part of karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga.