Chapter-VI
Removal of Nescience- Avidyānivṛti

Mokṣa is said to be the message of ancient Indian culture towards the modern age. Today we are basically outward-turned individuals, hankering after worldly pleasure and happiness are accustomed to some hedonistic outlook. Mokṣa, according to the generally accepted view of Indian thought, is not an after death experience to be achieved in another world. It is supreme felicity which is the eternal nature of the self. One need not go anywhere else in search for perfection or happiness. It is within us and can be discovered within if we turn ourselves towards that direction i.e. towards inwardness. Thus it is our inner self that is the universal self. In the Katha upaniṣad, asked by Nāciketā, Yama (the lord of death) explained thus, “the self is not to be sought through the senses, the self, caused pierced the openings (of the senses) outward, therefore one looks outward, and not within oneself. Some wise man however, seeking life eternal, with his eyes turned inward, saw the self.”

Thus spiritual search has always an inward movement leading to the revelation of the Divine in the inmost self. In the Svetāsvatara upaniṣad also it is said that the inner self ever dwell in the heart of man."

Now, what is meant by liberation? What is the nature of that state? In order to have a clear idea of liberation we are to understand its implication as used in the various philosophical thinking of India. So let us first discuss about the concept of mokṣa in Indian philosophy.
I) The Concept of Mokṣa :

Generally mokṣa or liberation implies spiritual freedom which may be characterised as emancipation, salvation, Nirvāṇa, Kaivalya, mukti, mokṣa, self-knowledge and so on. From the various discussions we may briefly summarise the idea of mokṣa as that - 'man was originally perfect, due to some reasons, man came to a state of imperfection (due to avidyā) and he will have to go back to his original pure and perfect state'. Every religion more or less, in the same manner accept this position and says that the attainment of mokṣa is the goal of human life. As has already been discussed in our previous content, the world appearance is a necessary background or platform through which man can attain that stage by his own effort. Till man attain that pure state, man's life on earth is a stage of imperfection which is known as Bandhāna i.e. bondage. To get rid of this bondage is the state of freedom i.e. mokṣa. Every religion therefore, consider this life on earth a degradation, an imperfect state of existence, a samsāra, where man come and go (rebirth). It is a fall from its original pure state of perfection. So liberation is not a new achievement, it is the realisation of the soul in its own state. Now let us give a brief survey of the various systems of Indian philosophical thought regarding their concept of mokṣa.

In the Vedas, we find two kinds of activity - one for the observation of various rituals and sacrifices for the benefit of worldly pleasure and happiness and the others are the various ethical norms for the spiritual development, with a deep metaphysical insight and inclination. The first one is related with the purpose of fulfilling some worldly desire for which man try to propitiate the
dieties. The goal to be attained here is generally conceived of as the attainment of heaven (svarga-prāpti) - an ideal that is accepted to some form even by the Upaniṣads and the Gitā. In the latter case, "ethical excellence is accepted as conducive to immortality, bliss, felicity and happiness as also the fulfilment of all desires." And in consistent with the vedic thought, in Upaniṣads also we find two line of thinking, namely, the absolutistic - the goal of attaining the oneness with Brahman and the theistic - aiming at attaining a living communion with God.

Corresponding to these two ways of God realisation, we find two main springs of ethical activity - self purification (citta-suddhi) and the undertaking of activity as a means of the fulfilment of the will and command of God (Īśvarārtha). As a result we find one absolutistic path and the other religious or theistic path of which the goal of the first is conceived of as self realisation (Brahma Nirvāṇa) and the second one as attainment a living communion with God (Īśvara-prāpti). In the Gitā also this stage is beautifully explained. Thus in the Gitā we find both the absolutistic and theistic standpoint which is completely in accordance with upaniṣadic idealism. Each of its colophons, we can find, is a clear acknowledgement of the Upaniṣadic debt. Though we find a combined path of self realisation (Jñāna-karma-bhakti samuccaya) i.e. knowledge, devotion and action, yet at the end Lord Kiṣṇa declared that "the ultimate is neither one nor the other, and has to be attained by transcending all the paths." And therefore Lord Kiṣṇa says, "Abandoning all duties, come to Me, alone for shelter. Be not grieved, for I will release thee from all evils." Here of course 'Dharma' may be interpreted by some as ‘duty’ or ‘righteous deeds’ or even as ‘religion’ which may misled the true significance of Gitā’s teaching. The true sense, we may
think, is that the various duties including ritualistic and ethical etc are not sufficient for self realisation, unless one absolutely surrender oneself to the divine and this is the theistic outlook of Bhagavadgita.

According to the Jainas, there are infinite jivas in the world. In their intrinsic nature, the jivas are pure and perfect, their felt imperfections being due to their contact with karmic matter, which is due to ignorance or avidyā. It is only knowledge, that can remove ignorance. The Jainas therefore stress the necessity of right knowledge (samyag-jñāna) or the knowledge of reality. Right knowledge can be obtained only by studying carefully the teaching of the omniscient Tirthaṅkaras or teachers who have already attained liberation. For the Jainas, the aim of human life is to get freedom from karma. "As heat can unite with iron and water with milk, so karma unites with the soul and the soul so united with karma is called a soul in bondage". And if through proper self discipline all karmas are worked out and there arises, "the full blaze of omniscience, in the jiva, it becomes free". Thus for the Jaina, liberation is said to be eternal upward movement. And in this upward movement we find five kinds of Siddha souls — (i) the Tirthaṅkaras or the liberated who preached Jainism in the embodied condition (2) the Arhats or the perfect souls who awaits the attainment of Nirvāṇa after shedding the Karmanaśarīra (3) the Ācārya or heads of ascetic groups (4) the Upādhyāyas or teaching saints and (5) Sādhus, a class which includes the rest. Thus in the highest movement of self realisation Arhat and Tirthaṅkaras corresponds to the hindu ideal of Jivanamukta and the Buddhistic one of Nirvāṇa.
According to Nyāya-vaiśeṣika the self in its pure nature is devoid of consciousness and bliss, a state which is completely different from Advaita Vedānta. Knowledge, happiness, sorrows etc are qualities arising in the self due to sense-object contact. Mind or manasa plays the most decisive part in creating consciousness. Then what is the nature of mokṣa or Apavarga according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika?

Mokṣa, generally for this school, consists of a complete cessation of the specific quality of the Ātman. It also implies the complete separation of the Ātman from the psycho-physical organism. We may quote here from A. G. Krishna Warrier that "Nyāya-Bhāṣya on 1.1.22. declares apavarga to be absolute freedom from the twenty one varieties of pain- tādantavimokṣopavargaḥ. It is an endless state; 'aparyanta', fearless, unageing and above death - tād abhayaṁ ajaram amṛtyupādaṁ brahmaśkekapraṭīḥ. Thus the state of Apavarga is a positive state of truth devoid of all modification. According to Vātsyāṇa also there is no bliss in Mokṣa as the Advaitin advocate, for there is no proof in support of such a contention. Thus, for the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, in the state of liberation, the self exists in its own state, devoid of all consciousness and bliss.

Thus the philosophical position of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is lower than that of Vedānta. For when we consider the self as devoid of consciousness, it implies that the state of liberation is just like the statue position which nobody deserves to attain. If the soul is devoid of consciousness then it will be indistinguishable from a material object. But our direct experience reveals that the soul is essentially conscious and not a statue without any quality of consciousness.
According to the Śāṁkhya-Yoga the soul is not a substance with the accidental attribute of consciousness, as maintained by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, rather, consciousness is the very essence of the self. On the metaphysical plane, the Śāṁkhya speaks of Puruṣa and Prakṛti as the two ultimate reality having as their respective essence pure consciousness and matter (jāta) and one therefore diametrically opposed to the other. On the human plane it conceives of both as bound together in a subject-object relationship. And this is the state of bondage where Prakṛti overpowers the Puruṣa to such an extent that its pure consciousness comes to be suppressed and comes under the domain of Prakṛti consequently the various product of Prakṛti buddhi, manasa and sense organs etc are left free to function in accordance with the power of the three guṇas sattva, raja tama. As a result Puruṣa is deluded by the influence of Prakṛti and forgetting its own nature thinks that he is an agent and is free to determine in its own way. It is thus due to avidyā that the individual believes himself to be the agent of activity (kartā), enjoyer (bhoktā) of its fruits etc. But in its real nature Puruṣa is none of these. It is spiritual (suddha, buddha, mukta, nitya caitya svarupa). And liberation therefore consists in when the Puruṣa secures its complete isolation from Prakṛti. This is the state called Apavarga. It is a state where Puruṣa comes in its own state and hence neither a new attainment nor gain in liberation.

The Yoga philosophers believes that Puruṣa's freedom from the fetters of Prakṛti has been regarded as Kaivalya. According to this school, Kaivalya can be obtained only through a staunch yogic discipline i.e. the astāṅgikamarga.
Though Sāṁkhya yoga agree with Vedānta that self realisation is possible only through knowledge, yet for the Advaita self realisation means self is not different from Brahman, whereas for the Sāṁkhya yoga, it implies that the self is totally different from Prakṛti. In the Advaita vedānta the world appearance is not real, whereas for the Sāṁkhya as a product of Prakṛti, the world is also real. Another discriminating feature is that the state of release, according to Vedānta it is blissful, while according to Sāṁkhya, it is not blissful, it is merely conscious state. Bliss is a product of sattva guṇa and hence bliss can not be attributed to Puruṣa in the state of release which means complete isolation of Puruṣa from Prakṛti and hence her evolutes.

The Sāṁkhya conception of the state of release as a state of consciousness devoid of bliss can not be accepted. For bliss do not imply empirical happiness that may arise out of sattva guṇa. It is a transcendental bliss which can be realised only in the state of mokṣa.

The Mīmāṁsā conception of mokṣa bears a striking resemblance to that of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. It helds that apavarga or escape as the goal of life- to escape from all the ills of life. Some Mīmāṁsakas, however hold that state of freedom is not merely absence of all sorrow and suflering, which is rather negative in approach; but it is also one of positive bliss, something positive in content.

In common with several theistic schools Mīmāṁsā too, conceived of heaven as the goal of life. But this, however was gradually superseded or replaced by the idea of mokṣa, which to use the Mīmāṁsā language, is the restoration of the self of its intrinsic condition. This is mokṣa according to the Mīmāṁsā.
As regards the means for the attainment of mokṣa as heaven, both the Prabhākara, and the Bhattas are of the opinion that both jñāna and karma are necessary for mokṣa. A man of true knowledge, when becomes disgusted with the worldly pleasure and pain must abstain from prohibited action (nīṣkramaṇa karma) and engaged himself with the prescribed karma as directed by the Vedas. Thus regular performance of nitya and naimittika karmas as enjoined by the Vedas with a mode of selfless interest paves the way to liberation. Again as ‘bondage consists in the relation of the self to the body, liberation implies the absence of this relation i.e. the destruction of the present body and the non-production of th future ones’. So there is no Jivaṛṣamukti in Mīmāṁsā.

For the Buddhist, liberation is described as a state of Nirvāṇa which means cessation of misery. Though ‘Nirvāṇa’ literally means extinction of existence here Nirvāṇa is not used in this literal sense, The true sense of Nirvāṇa is that “it is negatively a guarantee that rebirth whose conditions are once destroyed will never occur again and positively means that one who has attained it, will enjoy perfect peace even in this life so long as he lives after enlightenment.”

Buddha in his famous ‘Four Noble Truth’ clearly establishes that suffering is a fact which is due to avidyā and by the thorough knowledge of Four Noble Truth, the aspirant practises the Sila, Prajñā and Samādhi through the eight fold path (Aṣṭāṅga marga) reach the goal of Nirvāṇa.

For the Mādhyamikas, the state of nirvāṇa is indescribable. It cannot be described as either cessation of something (aniruddhaṁ) or as the production of something (anut pannam). It cannot be characterised even as positive state or as a negative state. It must at best be characterised as one which ‘transcends all forms of human presentation, standpoint or characterisation’.

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A distinction is usually made between Upādhiśeṣa and Nirupādhiśeṣa or Nirvāṇa and Parinirvāṇa. The former is the total cessation of ignorance and of the passions, though the body and the mind continue to function but without any attachment. This state corresponds to the Jivanamukta of the Vedānta and Śāṅkhyā. Buddhas's life himself is an example of this state. Parinirvāṇa is the state of final release when even the skāṇḍhas (physical body) of such a Jivanmukta have totally ceased. The Mādhyamikas adds one more variety of Apratisthita Nirvāṇa, the state of the Boddhisattva, who shuns retiring into Final Release, although fully entitled to it, and who by his free choice devote himself to the service of all being.

A Bodhisattva having enlightened himself, is born in this world to save others from suffering. He is always concerned with the welfare of all creatures and endeavour to spread joy and happiness all around by means of disinterested action. As says by Balbir Singh “He is the embodiment of great compassion (mahā karuṇa) and is in a sense God incarnate.” Such conception of Bodhisattva resembles to theistic conception of God’s incarnation. In Gitā also Lord Krishna declares about His divine incarnation which also resembles to Bodhisattva “Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O Bharata (Arjuna), Then I send forth (create incarnate) Myself.”

The Mādhyamika conception of Nirvāṇa comes very close to the Advaita notion of mukti as Brahmāprāpti. In both the cases, the state of mokṣa is indescribable (anirvacaniya). Of course, one important point is that in the Mādhyamika Nirvāṇa, is not identical with consciousness or bliss. For the Vedānta, Mukti is not merely absolute existence free from suffering, but
consciousness and bliss as well - cit and ananda. It is for this reason T R V Murti rightly remarks that "the Mādhyamikas seems to stop with the that or the bare assertion of the Absolute as the implicate of phenomena, the Vedānta proceeds further to define the what or the nature (svarupa) of Brahman as consciousness and Bliss".\textsuperscript{23}

In the Smṛtis and the Purānas five types of liberation, have been mentioned Viz, Sālokya (being in the same land with God), Sāsti (possessing power similar to God), Sāmipyā (living in proximity with God), Sārupya (attaining the form of God) and Sājüiya (being identical with God).\textsuperscript{24} The theistic school of Vedānta conceive of mokṣa in these Purānc type in their own way, depending upon the philosophical position they uphold with regard to the relation between jiva and paramatman. In the state of release, the soul or jiva is not only freed from the cycle of birth and death but also enjoys supreme bliss in the presence of God in a different sphere. There again, the soul is said to attain different grades of existence. Some hold that the soul, in the state of mokṣa, attain the form of God, though it remains separate from Him and enjoys the bliss of His presence. This is Sārupya, attaining the same form. Others again hold that the soul gets only to the proximity of God, having been purged of all impurities and freed from the possibility of returning to this earth, and there it remains distinct from God, enjoying the bliss and grace of His presence. This is called Sāmipyā coming close to God. There are yet another who hold that the soul attains what is called Sālokya, going to the same Loka or world as that of God. After attaining that state, the soul remains there for ever, and will not be subject to birth and death any more.
In all these conceptions, the common feature is that the soul, after its release, goes to God and remain distinct from Him, whether it attains proximity the same Loka or sphere, or even the same form as that of God. All these points are fundamental to all the theistic school of Vedānta, where Brahman is regarded as Saguna and Sākāra i.e. Brahman having qualities and forms. How can such a liberation be accepted by the Advaita vedānta who accepts the Nirguṇa Brahman? In reply to this it may be said that from the transcendental point of Sājñāya etc are not real form of liberation where question of union of jiva and Brahman persists and for which Upāsanā etc are necessary and not the path of knowledge. But from the vyavahārika standpoint, these theistic form of Sājñāyamukti is applicable in the Advaita philosophy also. For the Advaita vedāntists mukti is the intuition of one’s inherent spiritual perfection. And all these theistic Sādhanā and Upāsanā are necessary to actualize the metaphysical truth of perfection inherent in man. The fact that ‘Sādhanā is as unreal as the rest of empirical life is valid only from the metaphysical point of view of the Advaitic reality’. But to get the truth, such theistic approach are indispensable.

II) Nature of Bondage in Advaita Philosophy :–

In the opening of our previous chapter we have seen that the nature of self (jiva) is beautifully expressed as ‘jivo Brahmavāna parah’ i.e. the individual soul is non-different from Brahman, the absolute. This state is otherwise equivalent with the stage of Brahman. Now, if this is the position of the self, then why the question of mokṣa arises to the Indian thinkers? Mokṣa which is a Sanskrit equivalent of the English word liberation literally means freedom. The
term freedom in its true significance is a relative term related to the concept of bondage. So to know what freedom is one has first to know that bondage is

Bondage in Advaita Vedanta means encirclement of the self by the not-self. It is due to avidya that "individual soul identifies itself with its adjuncts (upadhis) viz the body, senses, etc. which are only superimposed on it". Thus not-self is superimposed (i.e. adhyasa) on the self. This covering of self by not-self consists of five layers. The technical term used for these layers according to Advaita Vedanta are known as 'Kosas'. There are five kosas, known as Annamaya (physical), Pranamaya (vital), Manomaya (mental), Vijnanamaya (intellectual) and Anandamaya (beatific) kosas. The confusion of self (Atman) with not-self (anatman), consisting of five sheaths, results in the superimposition of the qualities of the latter on the former and consequently self appears on the subject to all kinds of suffering which do not actually pertain to it. They are called sheath because, like sheaths, they conceal Atman. They are figuratively described as one inside the other, the physical sheath being the outermost and the sheath of bliss the innermost. The real meaning is that one sheath is finer than another. Thus when it is said that the sheath of the vital force is inside the gross physical sheath, it really means that the former is finer than the latter, and therefore permeates it. The self or Atman is the finest substance. It is detached from the sheaths and permeates them all. The effulgence of Atman shines through them all, though varying degree, according to their destiny.

It is due to ignorance, that a man identifies Atman with one or more of the kosas or sheaths. It is very difficult for the self to overcome this false knowledge.
and to dissociate himself from these kośas. Only when one somehow cultivates total detachment towards them through discrimination, will ultimately attain the true nature of the Atman. So let us give an idea of the kośas in a brief manner.

i) Annamayakośa or Physical body ::-

Annamayakośa is the first layer of the covering of self by not-self. This sheath, which constitutes the gross physical body, is produced by the culmination of the gross elements and is sustained by food (i.e. anna). In the Taittiriya upaniṣad, man is described as 'consists of the essence of food'. The materialist philosopher like Cārvāka identifies the self with the physical body. It is therefore that the materialist philosopher support the gross hedonistic ideal. When self is confused with Annamayakośa i.e. the physical body, the physical pleasure (i.e. Kāma) becomes the highest end of human life, and the other higher Puruṣārtha like Dharma (virtue) and Mokṣa (liberation) are ignored. Thus the order of higher value as Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa are entirely distorted and men are engaged themselves to the lower level of an animal.

The Advaita vedāntist Śaṅkara is quite aware of this happenings of life which are the inevitable consequence of the superimposition (i.e. adhyāsa) of the physical body and its qualities on the self. For Śaṅkara this is the very root cause of all evils and believes that the purport of all the vedāntic text is to remove this adhyāsa and to lead to the realisation of the absolute oneness of the self. The self and the physical body are diametrically opposed to each other in their nature like light and darkness. So long as a man does not give up the false identification with the body, he can not experience the bliss of Freedom. The physical body may be a help for the self-realisation, just like a
house is a help to its indweller, or a horse to its rider, but it is not the ultimate goal.

In the Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, a small but significant masterpiece of Śaṅkara, the mistaking of the physical body for the self is considered to be the real cause of all suffering. "Identification with the body alone is the root that produces the misery of birth etc. of people who are attached to the unreal, therefore destroy thou this with the utmost care. When this identification caused by the mind is given up, there is no more chance for rebirth". And for the removal of this false identification the self should be clearly distinguished from the physical body. Thus it is said "This body of ours is the product of food and comprises the material sheath, it lives on food and dies without it, it is a mass of skin, flesh, blood, bones and filth and can never be the eternally pure, self existent" So it is clear that the 'Annamayakośa' can not be the self. In the Vivekacūḍāmaṇi therefore men are classified into three classes among whom superior knowledge is given the highest place. "The stupid man thinks he is the body, the book learned, man indentified himsef with the mixture of body and soul, while the sage possessed of realisation due to discrimination looks upon the eternal Ātman as his self and thinks "I am Brahman".

ii) Prānmayakośa or Sheath of Prāṇa, the Vital Force :-

It is the next layer in the encirclement of self by not-self. The five vital air (the prāṇas) along with the organs of action (i.e. karmendriyas) constitutes the vital sheath. Śaṅkara rightly contents that prāṇa, connot be the self. Prāṇa is merely a modification of air. It goes inwards and outwards like air. It is determined. It is incapable of knowing anything, desirable or undesirable, if self
or the other. So prāṇa which is itself an object of knowledge cannot be the self which is the subject of knowledge.

iii) Manomaya-kośa or Mental Sheath:

It is the third layer in the encirclement of self by not-self. The self identifies with the mind, feels the diversity of 'I' and 'you' and also experiences the differences of the names and forms in the outer world. Mind together with the organs of sense forms the mental sheath. In Vivekacūḍāmani Śaṅkara has clearly explained the function of mental sheath in the formation of woric appearance. The phenomenal world has no existence outside the mind. The mind agitated by desires becomes aware of sense object, gross and fine, enjoys them and also becomes attached to them. Just like "clouds are brought in by the wind and again driven away by the same agency, similarly man's bondage is caused by its mind and liberation too is caused, by that alone." So it is the mental sheath that is responsible for the bondage and also the liberation of the soul. The purification of the mind, through the practice of discrimination and dispassion is the goal of spiritual discipline. In the opinion of the Vedāntic sheē there, therefore, the mental sheath can not be identical with the self or Ātman, because it is endowed with a beginning and an end, is subject to change and is characterized by pain and pleasure and is an object.

The Vivekacūḍāmani ably performs the noble task of removing the superimposition of the mental sheath and its qualities on the self. The mind cannot be the self, because it is ever changing and is the object of knowledge. The self, on the other hand is beginningless and endless, eternal not qualified by suffering and is the subject of knowledge. Hence there should be no confusion.
between the subject (drasta i.e. self) and the object (drśva i.e. mind) of knowledge. As mind is ignorance incarnate, it is the root cause of man's bondage and his worldly sufferings and therefore the removal of the superimposition of the mental sheath and its qualities on the self is essential for the attainment of liberation.40

iv) Vijñānamayakoṣa or Buddhi, the Sheath of Intelligence

The next layer in the encirclement of self by the not-self is Vijñānamayakoṣa. The intellect together with the sense organs, forms the intellectual sheath. This sheath consists of the intellectual function with the power of discriminative knowledge as subject and object.

In the Vivekacudāmani Śaṅkara makes a thorough going analysis of Vijñānamayakoṣa and justify his opinion that there is no logical ground for identifying self with this koṣa. Like mind, this sheath is the product of prakṛti (i.e. māyā) or matter. Though insentient by nature, it appears intelligent and conscious because it reflects cit or pure Intelligence. This reflection of pure consciousness in buddhi is called the jiva or individual soul, whose chief characteristic is 'I-consciousness' with the feelings like 'I am knower', and 'I am doer' etc. Subject to the law of karma, it assumes different forms or bodies, determined by the impressions in previous births, and performs good and evil actions. Ātman identifying itself with the sheath of intelligence, experience misery and happiness in the waking, dream and other states.41 The self in itself is neither a doer (kartā) nor an enjoyer (bhoktā), but it appears to be so only on account of the adjunct of internal organ. But this state of determinateness of the self (i.e. jivātvā) is not real; i.e. vanishes as soon as the adjunct is removed.
by the realisation of the true nature of the self. According to Śaṅkara it is through ignorance that the upādhi of jivahood is superimposed on Ātman, the pure self, and that is why Ātman appears to be a doer or enjoyer in the relative world.\(^{42}\)

It may be contended that owing to the superimposition, the supreme self assumes the quality of jivahood, through delusion or otherwise, and this superimposition is inborn or Naisargika,\(^{43}\) which is beginningless and hence can not have an end. Therefore the individuality of the soul, also must have no end.\(^{44}\) It must go forever. In such a situation, naturally the question arises as to how can there be liberation for the soul? In reply to this the Vedāntic philosopher says that the jivahood or individualisation of Ātman is not real, but is conjured up by ignorance. And it can be destroyed only by the true knowledge of the self. “The rope is supposed to be the snake only so long as the mistake lasts, and there is no more a snake when the illusion has vanished”,\(^{45}\) Similarly, Avidyā or nescience, are beginningless, for those who are subject to it. But when ignorance is destroyed by right knowledge all such notions as the jivahood of Ātman and its birth and death cease to exist, just as the dream ego functioning in sleep vanishes when the dreamer awakes.\(^{46}\)

Vijñānamayakośa should not be confused with self. The jivahood, which is imagined to be the Ātman is due to the delusion or false knowledge. This false knowledge or superimposition can be directly destroyed only through the knowledge of Brahman and not by any other means such as ritualistic worship, study of scripture or philontropic activities.\(^{47}\) The perfect knowledge according to Vedāntins consists in the realisation of perfect discrimination between the self and not-self, or the discrimination between jiva and the eternal
self. So the Vijnānamayakosa cannot be the supreme self, as it is subject to
change, is insentient, is a limited thing, an object of the senses and is not
constantly present i.e. unreal which cannot be taken for the real Ātman.

v) Ānandamayakośa or the Blissful Sheath:

The last layer in the encirclement of self by not-self is the Ānandamayakośa
i.e. the beatific sheath or the sheath of bliss. In the Taittiriya upaniṣad it is
called as spiritual.

In the Vivekacūḍāmani, we find a more detailed description of Ānandamayakośa. This sheath reflects the pure bliss of Ātman or self. This state can be experienced by the righteous man in a small measure in his virtuous deeds. But the fullest manifestation of it is experienced in deep sleep when after waking from deep sleep a man remarks that he has slept happily. A partial manifestation is known in the waking state when the sense come in contact with agreeable object.

According to the Advaitin, the view of self as identical with Ānandamayakośa arises from the ignorance of the real nature of the soul. It is said in the Vivekacūḍāmani that Ānandamayakośa is a finite modification of prakṛti, it is an effect of good deeds; it is dependent on the gross physical body and therefore, it can not be identified with the supreme self.

Thus from the above discussion it is clear that according to the Advaita
vedānta bondage is the confusion of self with not-self and liberation is the freedom of self from not-self. It is the superimposition of not-self on self (i.e. adhyātman) and the liberation is brought about by the removal of this superimposition (i.e. apavāda). As by removing the husk, grain is acquired, in the same way...
removing the five sheaths, the real nature of self is realised. There is no way other than self realisation which can lead a man to salvation.53

Though all the systems of Indian philosophy, except Čārvāka, subscribe to the common principle that liberation is attainable only through the knowledge of self which distinguishes the self from not-self, yet they give different solution to the nature of the self. All of them, except Advaita vedānta try to apprehend the nature of self through this or that category of intellect. The Jains wrongly consider self as extended, and the Naiyāyikas as a substance devoid of consciousness. The Sāmīkhya confuses self with empirical selves, when they superimpose the qualities of the latter on the former and on that basis try to prove the plurality of selves. Thus these schools actually fail to distinguish self from not-self. It is only the Advaita vedānta of Śaṅkara who have successfully fulfilled the noble task of removing all the superimpositions of not-self on self; it is only by discriminating in thought (viveka) between the five different Kośas that we can find our true self beyond the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and beatific sheaths.54 It may be contended that after the negation of these five sheaths the mind and the ego etc, what entity then remains with which the illuminate soul may realise its identity? According to Śaṅkara it is the 'contentless consciousness'55 in which both subject and object merge and disappear. After the realisation of this all pervading consciousness, a man discover this true self, just as after entering the ocean, a river merge into it discarding name and form. And the aim of mokṣa in Vedānta philosophy is to realise this self effulgent Ātman which is distinct from the five sheaths, the witness of the three states: the real, the changeless, the unattained, the ever lasting Bliss.56
From our above discussion it is evident that it is the Avidyā or ignorance which is comparable to a veil, covers the true nature of the self, for which one fails to apprehend reality "as it is" or the true nature of the self. Therefore an ignorant person thinks himself to be different from Brahman, and as he thinks so, Brahmānubhava means for him the attainment of the Brahman for which some effort is required for its attainment.

Now, there are various possible means of attaining release or mokṣa. They are action (karma), devotion (bhakti), meditation (dhyāna or upāsanā), grace of the teacher (guru prasāda), prayer and renunciation. After a careful and thorough consideration of these various means, Śaṅkara is of the opinion that mokṣa cannot be attained by any one of these means. Only knowledge (Jñāna) alone is effective in destroying ignorance, since it is only knowledge that is contradictory to ignorance (ajñāna). Thus Vedānta Paribhāsa expresses "Liberation is achieved only through knowledge". As "it is the rule that the cessation of ignorance takes place only through knowledge". Accordingly the ignorance of an object is destroyed by the immediate knowledge of the locus i.e. in the case of the nacre silver the illusory silver vanishes as soon as the nacre in its real nature is perceived. In the same way, the immediate knowledge of Brahmān, destroys ajñāna about the true nature of Brahmān, in consequence of which the jīva attains liberation. In support of this contention the Advaita vedāntins refer to the following Srutis- "Only by knowing Him does one cross over death. There is no other path for going there". Again "the knower of the self cross over sorrow." "The knower of Brahmān reaches the supreme..."
etc. Thus all these Sruti passages declare that the direct or immediate cause of liberation is only knowledge.

In order to establish knowledge as the only way to self-realisation, the Advaita vedántins refute the instrumentality of vedic actions like nitya-naimittika etc in the attainment of liberation. According to them, karma or action can not be the means of liberation for the following reasons.

Human action in any form, is not effective in destroying ignorance. "Action proves useful in attaining (prāpti) an object, or in producing (utpatti) a thing out of something, or in reaching a place, or in bringing about change or modification (vikāra) in a thing, or in purifying (saṁskāra) a thing, and people resort to action when they want to achieve any one of these." But the self is not something that can be produced, attained, reached, modified or purified. By its nature, the self is self-existent and also attained, immutable and ever pure.

Action presuppose a difference amongst agent, action and the rest. But there is no place of difference in liberation. For liberation according to Advaitins consists in the non difference between jiva and Brahma. Again, liberation consists in the destruction of nescience, while karman itself is a product of ignorance or nescience. Being a product of nescience, Karman cannot destroy nescience, just as darkness can not remove darkness. The removal of ajñāna is possible by knowledge alone and not by action just as darkness can be removed only by light alone.

Action and their results are confined to the empirical level of existence. But to realise Brahman is to transcend the realm of
difference. So action which is effective within the realm of difference, cannot make one transcend it and realise the undifferentiated reality. Thus action of any sort is useless for one who seeks Brahmanubhava. “Following the path of action by one whose goal is Brahmanubhava, the highest and all comprehensive end of life, would be like digging a well when there is a flood of water close by”. Hence karma can not be the means of liberation. According to Vedāntins therefore, “all the Vedānta texts deal with an independent topic, which is Brahman, and these texts are the only proof of this Brahman as it is not possible to know it through any other source”. So Brahman is in a way connected with action.

Devotion and meditation are also not effective in destroying ignorance. Śaṅkara regarded both of them as functions of the mind. We may quote here from A. Ramamurti about Śaṅkara's attitude towards devotion. "According to Śaṅkara devotion (bhakti) is that which no object other than Him is experienced. Because of it one come to realise that all that one sees, hears and touches is nothing but the Lord. Like the rivers which naturally flow towards the sea, like the iron fillings which are spontaneously attracted by a magnet and like a creeper which twins around a tree for itself, devotion is a state of mind in which it is attracted by the Lord and remain always fixed in Him".

The Bhāgavadgītā describes four types of devotee, as the man of distressed (ārta), the seeker of knowledge (jñāsu), the man desiring wealth (arthārthi) and the wise (jñāni). Of these three are, phalākāmaḥ or those desirous of rewards while the fourth are the single minded devotee. However, all the types of devotion presupposes the duality of one who is devoted and the
object of devotion. As liberation, according to Advaita vedānta is the unification of self and Brahman, so devotion can not be a real path of Brahmaprāpti. Devotion of Īśvara is based on ignorance and hence it can not save one from ignorance. Of course, the fourth type of devotion (jñāna) is the superior one, which is not motivated by any desire of the devotee. It is based on or an expression of pure love (pritti or snehapurvaka) for the Lord. Yet this type of devotion bring close to the Lord only.

According to Śaṅkara, meditation (upāsanā) also cannot destroy ignorance. For devotion and meditation do not essentially differ from action as all of them are capable of producing results while action is more physical and outward, meditation and devotion are mental and inward. In both the cases one motivated to attain something, which is other than self-realisation. Hence meditation and devotion are not sufficient to Brahmaprāpti or Brahmanubhava.

Śaṅkara has been often misunderstood by the opponent concerning his path of self-realisation. It is due to the metaphysical structure of his Advaita philosophy which is largely concerned with the problem of ultimate reality i.e. Nirguṇa Brahman. And from this subtle transcendental level (pāramārthika) only jñānamārga is the absolute basis of self-realisation. But we can not ignore the fact that Śaṅkara accepts the vyavahārika level, which Śaṅkara gives a high status for self-realisation. Thus for him, the world appearance is very much meaningful for self-realisation, where action, devotion, meditation etc are effective in destroying ignorance and thus are useful in preparing the path of self-realisation.
As we know, action is of two types **Sakāma** and **Niskāma** i.e. action done with the desire for a result which is of a lower type, and action done without any selfish interest, which is of a higher type, done for the benefit of humanity. As actions are natural to man, man becomes attached to action and their results and this attachment leads to suffering and bondage. But if they are done without attachment, without selfish interest or done for the sake of the Lord, they turn into means for the purification of mind, which is a pre-requisite for the attainment of the knowledge of Brahman. Similarly devotion and meditation etc are done with a spirit of detachment, instead of causing bondage, they fulfil the preliminary requirement of spiritual discipline which ultimately leads one to self-realisation. All these spiritual disciplines makes one fit (samartha) to receive the knowledge of Brahman. Thus, though they can not directly destroy ignorance, they indirectly do so which pave the way for the knowledge of the self.

IV) **Brahman and the Individual Soul** :-

Every school of Vedānta is of the opinion that the individual soul is different from the supreme soul or Paramātman. The nature of the jīvātman and its relation to the Paramātman are expounded differently in the different schools. According to Śaṅkara jīvātman is essentially non-different from the Paramātman or Brahman, The mahāvākyā (jivo Brahmaiva na paraḥ) states this identity. He refutes the rival theories in order to establish his opinion. The jiva can not be a part of the Brahman as Ramanuja holds, because Brahman is without parts and beyond space and time. The soul can not be different from Brahman as Madhva thinks, for there is nothing different from Brahman which
is one without a second.\textsuperscript{71} It can not be the modification of the Brahman as Vallabha expresses, since the Brahman, is changeless. So the individual is neither a part of, nor different from, nor the modification of the absolute Brahman.\textsuperscript{72} It is Brahman itself.

**Dehātma Buddhi**

Individual self or jiva is generally accepted in Indian thought as the Ātman having a body. Ordinarily, a man identifies himself (i.e. his self) with his body. He confuses the one with the other and the qualities of the one with the qualities of the other. This is spoken of as dehātma buddhi. To say, 'I am a brāhma or a kṣatriya' or 'I am stout or lean', 'I am well or sick', all such statements implies the attribution of the Ātman designated by 'I', to the qualities of caste, size and health etc. which belong to the body. Similarly to attribute the idea that one will live for ever will be to attribute the quality of immortality of the Ātman to the body. And such type of confusion between the body and the ātman and the attribution of the qualities of the one to the other is quite natural as we have already explained in our previous chapter. Such 'dehātma buddhi' is due to the superimposition of subject on object which is quite natural on the part of man.\textsuperscript{73}

As we have seen the ātman is the inner most essence of a man with the boundary of the bodily sheaths known as the annamaya, prānāmaya, manomaya, vijnānāmaya and ānādāmāyā kośa, being respectively the material, the vital, the mental, the congnitive and the blissful sheaths. All these are the upādhis or physical limitation that constricted the unlimited ātman and is to identified with those limitations. In fact it is due to ignorance that bounds the
unlimited ātman within the upādhis and that leads to the impression of distinction of one person from another. In metaphysical fact, no person is different from any other in his character as the ātman. The differences pertain to the upādhis or limiting adjuncts encasing the ātman. This can be compared to the various electric bulbs of different watts. The electric current flowing into the bulbs is the same. It is of the same voltage. But the luminosity of the current is varied due to the upādhis of the several bulbs, their internal media and these are responsible for differences in illuminating effect. So too is the ātman identical in all persons but they appear different and are spoken of as being different due to differences in the constraining upādhis. 74 Thus according to Śaṅkara the individual ātman in each jiva is the same as the supreme Ātman as Paramātman or Brahma having the character of sat, cit and ānanda.

Theories of Jīvatmān :-

According to Advaita vedānta, the individual soul in the several jivas is of the same essence as the supreme Ātman or Paramātman or Brahma. In order to explain the relation between Brahman and the jiva, a number of similes are given by the Advaita vedāntins. Now we may discuss them briefly as follows:

(i) Avaccheda vāda :-

This theory of limitation or avaccheda has been used by Śaṅkara at many places. 75 He uses the simile of one cosmic space and individual space in order to bring out the relation between jīvatman and Brahman. The first one is called mahākāśa and the second is called ghatākāśa. When a jar is broken the space inside the jar (ghatākāśa) is merged in the greater outer space (mahākāśa). Likewise, when the limitations of space, time and causality are
removed, the jiva becomes one with Brahman. As the space of one jar is not affected by the dusty space of the other jar, so while one jiva is affected by pain or pleasure, the other jiva is not affected by it. And when one gets rid of the upādhi-consciousness, one realises one's non-difference from the supreme Being. The ghaṭākāśa is walled off by the pot from the mahākāsa outside it. When the separating walls are broken, there is no inside or outside, all are merged in the mahākāśa. This is the avacchedavāda or limitation view of jiva.

(ii) **Pratibimba vāda** :-

The theory of reflection (bimaba-pratibimba vāda) is suggested by Śaṅkara in the commentary on the Brhadāranyaka upaniṣad. As the reflection of the sun or the moon in water is mere appearance and nothing real, or as the appearance of redness in a white crystal is mere reflection of the red flower even so the individuals are reflections of one reality in avidyā. On the removal of avidyā the reflection vanishes and only the real remains. This is known as the Bimba-pratibimbavāda or the theory of the original and its reflection. Brahman is the bimba reflected in the upādhis of the body and this gives rise to the jiva which is its reflection in the upādhis. These examples show how the one identical Brahman appears as many jivas even as the same sun reflected in many vessels of water appears as many suns and as the same man reflected in many mirrors appears as many men.

The important point in all these examples is the fact of non-difference. As ghaṭākāśa is non-different from mahākāśa as reflection is from its original even so the jivātman is non-different from the Paramātman. Thus ātman (jivātman) is really the Paramātman, and this truth is declared by the mahāvākya
'tattvam asi', meaning "That Thou Art". Here 'That' or Tat refers to the Paramātman or Īśvara, Thou or Tvaṁ to the jīvātman and 'art', asi points to the essential non-difference abheda between the two. Now Īśvara by nature is infinite, omnipotent, all pervading, all knowing of superior intelligence, whereas the jīvātman is finite, apparently confined to a limited place and time. Its power of comprehension and action are limited. The one being infinite intelligence is all knowing (sarvajña), and the other is of limited intelligence knows only in parts (kincijña). So the question may arise how can Īśvara and the jīva of such contradictory nature be said to be non-different from each other? In answer to this the Advaitins are of the opinion that the jīvātman is identical with the paramātman not in the literal sense, but as identity in essence. Though there may be difference between jīvātman and paramātman, yet they are identical in essence, for which it is said that the jīva is non-different from the Brahman which is to be realised through Brahmanjñāna. And the Mahāvākyā 'Tattvamasi' has a two fold significance. Firstly, it points to the non-difference between the jīva and Brahman "jivobrahmaiva napaḥ". The jīva is Brahman only and not different from it and secondly that there is essentially no difference between one jīva and another jīva. Thus it is not only 'jiva-brahma abheda' but also 'jīva-īva abheda', that is the central teaching of Advaita vedānta.

It should not however be understood that the Advaita vedāntins support the plurality of jivas. What is intended to mean is that the plurality is only phenomenal (Vyavahārika). It is the plurality of the limiting adjuncts of consciousness (upādhi) that is responsible for the plurality of the jivas. If we consider with an unbiassed mind, we will find that there is an underlying unity.
among the various jivātman as all the individual souls are nothing but the same supreme consciousness. Hence it is said that the individual soul is self-effulgent. It is only due to the beginningless ignorance (māya) that we have come to suffer manifold troubles. We are all the sons of our Heavenly father. "I and my father are one" is the universal statement of all seekers after Truth in all countries and in all times, and the most remarkable point is that that the Indian seers were the first to realise the Truth and to propagate it before the afflicted world and to tie the human race with a bond of universal brotherhood along with the feelings of "Bāsudhaiba Kutumbakām" i.e. the 'the whole world is my family'.

V) The Validity of Scripture for Self-realisation:

All the Advaita Vedántins agree on the view that liberation consists in the knowledge of jiva as non-different from the Brahman. But they differ in their views regarding the karana or the instrument giving rise to the immediate intuitive knowledge of the identity between the jiva and Brahman. According to some it is only mind or antahkarana which is the final means of self-realisation, while others Śrutis is the final means of self realisation.

According to Mandana and Vācaspati Misra, Śrutis or Sabda being a mediate knowledge can not give rise to immediate knowledge of Brahman. According to these thinkers, mediacy or immediacy of a knowledge depends on the means of knowledge. As Sabda or verbal knowledge is a mediate means of knowledge, it can yield only mediate knowledge. Hence knowledge generated by mahāvākyas can not destroy ignorance and its effect i.e. Brahman which are immediate. According to these thinkers the mind is the instrument (karana) of liberation. Thus, mind purified by the various disciplines like śravana, manana,
nididhāsana is the instrument of liberation. The upholder of this view refers the following Sruties in support of their view: "Through the mind alone Brahman is to be realised". "That subtle self is to be known by the intellect". "It is seen by one pointed intellect".

Śaṅkara gives utmost validity to Śruti. According to Śaṅkara, scriptural knowledge is intrinsically valid, the scriptures are self-authoritative with regard to what they say. "Brahman knowledge, which the scripturers communicate, is got through a continuous tradition, (पारमपार्यायक्रमण समप्राप्त) and handed down by the great seers (paramārs) beginning from Brahman who have directly seen (सक्षीत्तद्वांतो) or realised (वागता वांतो) Brahman."

According to Śaṅkara all other pramāṇas depend for their authority on scripture. Even reasoning is given a subordinate place to scripture, for cognition based on reasoning contradict one another.

Though Śaṅkara gives a very high status to scripture, yet he by no means follow it blindly. The validity of the scriptures consisting of both the karmakāṇḍa and the jñānakāṇḍa can be reconciled with the falsity of the world. The scriptures are regarded as real so long as the knowledge of Brahman is not attained. From the ultimate standpoint, however, the scriptures also have no value. The karmakāṇḍa of the Vedas which consists of the injunctions and prohibitions involving the difference of the agent, action, etc. is regarded as real from the empirical standpoint only. Vedānta or the jñānakāṇḍa of the Vedas, which imports knowledge of identity between the disciple and the preceptor, etc. are as such can not be ultimately real. Thus according to the Advaita vedānta the scriptural texts are valid from the empirical
(vyavahārika) standpoint only. The ultimate validity of scriptural knowledge lies in its capacity to invoke the self-evident knowledge of Brahman. It is a help towards self-realisation. It speaks of one's identity with Brahman, and if one realise that identity, the validity of scriptural knowledge becomes established. Scriptural knowledge is indirect and mediate to an individual. That is to say, with the help of scripture, Brahman is known indirectly or mediatel y and this knowledge ultimately leads to Brahmanubhava or self-realisation. Thus, the ultimate validity of scriptural knowledge which is indirect (parokṣa) lies in its capacity to produce direct experience (aparokṣānubhuti). In short, its validity lies in Brahmanubhava. However, after attaining Brahmanubhava one's interest in the validity of scriptural knowledge ceases, for then there remains nothing different from Brahman or the self. Then all the differences cease to exist and the scriptures becomes no scriptures (aveda) or cease to be of no use of value.

From our above discussion it is clear that Brahman is ānānasvarūpa or viññānaghana. Though it is pure subject, due to māyā, it is associated with the body and its organs. This association of the subject and the object is quite natural (Naisaragika lokavyavahāra) on the part of man. Thus bondage is positive, but not real or substantial. Bondage is on the mental plane only. And as bondage is mental, liberation also cannot be extra-mental. So it is the mind which causes bondage and liberation. According to Śaṅkara there are three things which are rare and valuable, which are the gift of God. These are a human birth, the longing for liberation and the protecting care of a perfected sage. So it is the duty of a human being to strive for liberation or self-realisation. Śaṅkara is vehemently opposed to the performance of rituals in order to attain
the knowledge of Brahman. Brahman is not in remote future to be attained by performing any act. It is already existent. It is neither to be attained nor to be removed. It is already our very being. What we have to do is to unveil the covering of ignorance in order to know, or realise Brahman. It is for the removal of this veil of ignorance, for the attainment of the knowledge of self that the study of the Vedānta is commenced. It is for this reason Śaṅkara has condemned those ignorant masses "a great fool" who are not conscious about his own destiny i.e. liberation. If he does not strive now for his liberation, he is an ātmahā, one who commits 'suicide of the soul'. And such mokṣa which can be attained only by self-realisation leads to immortality (amṛṭatva). We may quote here with a beautiful verse of Śaṅkara.

" Badantu Sastrani jajantu devān
Kurbantu karmāni bhajantu devatāḥ
Ātmaikyabodhen bināpi mukti
na sidhyati brahmaśatantarehapi"

"Let people quote the scriptures and sacrifice to the gods, let them perform rituals and worship the deities, but there is no liberation without the realisation of one's identity with the Ātman, no not even in the life time of a hundred Brahmas put together."

VI) Jivanamukti and Videhamukti:

Advaita vedānta speaks of two types of liberation - Jivanamukti or liberation while now alive and Videhamukti or disembodied liberation. All other schools of vedānta affirms that mokṣa can be attained only after the end of the present life. That is known as Videhamukti or mukti after separation of the soul
from the present body. But the Advaita vedāntins affirms the possibility of mukt even in this life. This is necessary corollary of the Advaitic theory of liberation which implies liberation from the sway of ajñāna and the attainment of ātmajñāna and such a state is to be attained here in this very life.

(i) Jīvanamukti:

Though mokṣa or liberation is regarded as the summum bonum of human life by all the schools of Indian thought except the Čārvāka materialist, it is looked upon as a postumous state and as not realisable within the span of the present life, by most of the systems like Nyāya-Vaiśesika, Mīmāṁsāka, even other groups of vedāntins like Rāmānuja and others. Advaita vedānta is an exception in this respect as it is the wrong indentification of subject and object, which is solely due to avidyā that is the cause of bondage, so it be removed by the advent of right knowledge. And such knowledge may come at any moment in our life provided the necessary efforts are made.

A distinction is to be made between salvation and liberation. Salvation is a theistic concept, as explained by P. Sankaranārāyan. It is related to the saving the soul from domination, to salvaging it from the slough of despond, it acts as a saviour of sinner “Thus salvation is wrought by human penitence on the one hand, and by divine grace on the other, and it can be brought about only after the present life is over”. Such a view can be trace out in the religion like christianity etc. For in the Christian religion man is regarded as a sinner and God is the saviour. But in Advaita vedanta men are regarded as ‘amṛtasya putra’, but due to ignorance, man forget his nature and liberation consists in the self-realisation. It is ‘mṛtu mā amritaṁ gamaya’. Thus liberation is a metaphysical
concept. It is freedom of the 'ajñāna-ridden' individual towards immortality. And for this purpose one need not wait for fall of the body as 'avidyaniyṛtī' is possible here and now.

Jivanamukti is not a mere possibility. It is a fact. The spiritual history of man kind bears the evidence of Jivanamuktas who have attained such a mystical experience in their own lives. The great Śaṅkara himself is an outstanding instance of a Jivanamukta. Bhagawān Buddha, Mahāvīra, Suka-Vāmadeva, Prahlāda, Janaka etc are also such Jivanamuktas. In the present time we may recall the name of Śri Rāmakṛṣṇa, Swami Vivekananda, Bhagawān Ramana, Jagadguru Sri Chandra Sekher Bhārati of Sringeripith etc.

That Jivanamukti is a fact can be supported by the several passages of the Upaniṣads. The Kena upaniṣad says "man's life on earth becomes purposeful only if he realise the Atman. If he fails to make full use of the opportunities that are open to him he incurs a heavy loss." In the Brhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad there are various texts which unmistakably refer to the possibility of Jivanamukti. "When all the desires that dwell in the heart (mind) are gone then he having been mortal, becomes immortal and attains Brahman in this very body. Of him who is without desires, says another text, 'who is free from desires, the object of whose desire have been attained and to whom all objects of desires are but the self, the organs do not depart, Being but Brahman he is merged in Brahman'.

Mokṣa or freedom is not a state to be newly attained. It is the very nature of the soul. To become aware of this intrinsic nature of the soul is mokṣa. That is the reason why mokṣa in Advaita vedānta is designated as self
realisation or Atmajñāna. We may mention here three analogies which are usually given as illustration of the self realisation. One is viṣmrtā kāntābharaṇa, the second is Vyādhāvarmdhita rājakumara and the third refers to dasamastvamasi.

A woman forgetting her necklace which is around her neck, goes on searching it here and there. At last, another man tells her 'it is there around your neck'. Then the lady exclaims, 'Thank God, I have got my necklace back'. In reality, she never lost it to get it back. It was her ignorancy about the necklace and when she got it back is only getting the knowledge or realisation that it was already round her neck. So, too there is no attainment of Brahman and mokṣa, it is only the getting back of the knowledge of Brahman which was made dark due to ignorancy.

The second analogy is about a prince who was picked up by a hunter and grew in his hut. As he grew up, he was thinking that he was only a hunter till some year later, the ministers of his royal father discovered him in the hunter's house and identified him as the lost prince. Here the realisation of the prince about his own identity is not a new attainment, it adds only to his own knowledge.

In Mahābhārata, Kunti, the mother of the Pāndavas going to Karna and telling him that he is not Rādheya but a Pāndava, her own son, is a similar example.

The third analogy is of ten rustics who crossed a river and after reaching the other shore, began to count their number. Each one of them counted the rest except himself and found there were only nine and thought that one of them had lost while crossing the river. Then arrived a stranger who came to know about their problem. Then the stranger made all of them stand in a row...
and counted them ‘1, 2, 3, ...... 9’ and pointing to the last man in the row, said thou are the tenth (dasamastvamasi). At once the rustics jumped with joy that the tenth man had been restored to them. Here the tenth man did not get lost, it is their ignorancy that they wrongly imagined that they had lost the tenth man. And when told by the stranger, they only realised that the tenth man was with them and it was not a new attainment.

Thus too mokṣa is the realisation of ever-existing Ātman. It is not a new attainment. At the disappearance of ajñāna and the dawn of true wisdom or samyakṣaṁjña about ones ātman man realise its identity with Brahman. This is the state of jivanamukta which is possible when still living on earth.

The concept of Jivanamukti of Advaita vedānta, has been seriously attacked by the opponents, specially the Dvaita vedāntins. In the view of the Dvaita vedāntins, the concept of Jivanamukti is self contradictory. They argue that the body is said to be the effect of karmas. While liberation is the knowledge of Brahman and knowledge and karman being mutually contradictory like light and darkness can not remain in the same person. Śaṅkara himself states that the contradiction of knowledge and action is unshakable like a mountain. The Śruti and Śrutī also repeatedly declare that true knowledge destroys all karman. Hence the result of karman should fall at the moment of the rise of knowledge. Thus, it is self-contradictory to say that one attains liberation or knowledge of the self even though his body persists.

In reply to this, the Advaita vedāntins maintain that though knowledge destroys karman, it can not destroy the prārabdha karman. Karmas are of two types, namely, prārabdha karma or action that has began producing the fruits
(pravṛtti phala) and sañcita karman or actions that has not began producing its fruits (apravṛtti phala). The present body and all that are associated with it are the effects of prarabdha karma for once they begin to operate, they must continue to do so till their fruits are over. It is just like the wheel of the potter that continues to revolve, even after the completion of the pot until the force given to it is exhausted, or just as a released arrow moves on until the force with which it is shot is exhausted. Thus the prarabdha karmas are not destroyed by the rise of right knowledge. So long as the momentum of these works lasts, the knower of Brahman has to be in the body. And when they are exhausted the body fall off, and he attains perfection. Of course the sañcita karman which have not yet started bearing its fruits, are destroyed by knowledge. Upon the dawn of atmajñāna, these seeds are turned into ashes and so can not bear fruit. They are simply negated. They become inoperative.

Again the opponent argues that as the Jivanamukta sees diversity in the world while living, so also even after death, he will continue to see diversity. Thus they deny that knower of Brahman attains oneness with Brahman at death. The Advaita vedāntins refutes this and says that the prarabdha karmas are destroyed through fruition and though he remains in the relative world as a Jivanamukta, yet when these are exhausted by having worked out, he attains oneness with Brahman at death.

How does the Jivanamukta go through his life for the remaining part of his life? He is a Brahmajñāni i.e. one who has experiential consciousness of Brahmanhood. This state of Brahmanhood is beautifully explained as a state of sthitaprajña in the Bhāgavadgītā. R. D. Ranade has beautifully explained
the state of sthitaprajña under four heads as- psychological, ethical, social and mystical. And for a clear understanding of the state of Jivanamukta we cannot help without referring these points in brief.

1) Psychological- The psychological characteristics of a sthitaprajña consists in withdrawing the mind from the object of senses. Man's mind is tossed to and fro the sea of sensual enjoyment like a boat, helpless and helpless. One who is to conquer his sense is compared to a kurma or a tortoise which can withdraw its organs within itself at will and such is the psychological state of a sthitaprajña.

2) Moral - The moral character is beautifully expressed in the Bhāgavadgītā. Thus the hundreds of rivers flow into the ocean, but the ocean is not over flooded by the inflow of these waters. Similarly the senses have no influence on the poised mind of a true jñāni. He is on the evened mind. This is the moral character of a sthitaprajña. He is able to bid good-bye to the ferocious out-slaughter of kāma, krodha, lova, moha, mada, māthcharya (i.e. the six Ripus).

3) Social- As regards the social characteristic the Bhāgavadgītā explains that such a person, there is equality of vision everywhere. Whether it is cow or a bullock, a bird or a buffalo, a dog or a dog-eater, a Candāla or a Bhāhmin, there is the equal vision in all cases. Without any attachment towards anybody he will continue his duty for the benefit of society. His work will be guided by the sense of “Bahujana hitāya, bahujana sukhāya”

4) Mystical- The man of sthitaprajña possessed of an equinimous state of mind. The purely mystical characteristic is however expressed in the
like "abhito Brahmanirvāna vartate viditatmanam". In such a state there is the experience of Brahman everywhere. "If he looks ahead of himself he sees God, if he looks behind he sees God". This is the feelings of the Jivanamukta puruṣa with which he works. And when one see God in such a manner then only one may be entitled to the name of a sthitaprajña.

ii) Videhamukti: -

Videhamukti or disembodied liberation can be attained directly with the rise of Brahman-knowledge or through the stage of Jivanamukti. If the knowledge of Brahman coincides by chance, with the exhaustion of the prārabdha karmans, the self directly attains Videhamukti, without undergoing the state of Jivanamukti. But if the prārabdha karmas remains even after the acquisition of Brahman-knowledge, the self will have to pass through the stage of Jivanamukti till the exhaustion of the prārabdha karmans. And when the prarābdha karmans are totally exhausted through enjoyment, the self attains Videhanmukti. This is the complete liberation of the self from the sphere of nescience. In this state even the traces of nescience does not remain in the self, as a result of which the self is freed from all the three types of bodies - gross, subtle and causal. No worldly activity or knowledge is conceivable in Videhamukti. Even the knowledge in the form of 'I am Brahman (Atman: Brahmanasmi) does not pertain to this state. Thus "Brāhmīsthiti is the experience, transcendental, not of the worldly type; it does not permit of expression it is being, not speaking. The upaniṣadic teaching explained it by silence (Naur-a'-vyakhyanam)".
As regards the attainment of the Videhamukti, we can find two views. These are **sadvomukti** or immediate liberation and **kramamukti** or gradual liberation. If the self attains oneness with Brahman immediately after the fall of the gross body, he has attained sadvomukti. But if it is not attained immediately but a gradual process or stages are undergone towards its attainment, such mukti is called kramamukti. It is also called **Omkārapasana**. A householder involving in secular affairs like marriage, raising a progeny, acquiring wealth etc cannot attain the path of kramamukti. This qualification is open only to a sannyāsi who can withdraw his mind from outward to inward. "This Omkāradhyāna or prescribed links takes a person in his subtle body to Brahmaloka. Hiranyagarbha is the lord of Brahmaloka. He is the controller of all subtle bodies (samasta sukṣmā bhīmāni cetanāḥ). He is known as the **aparabrahma** or the kāryabrahma. The world over which the kāryabrahma presides is called Brahmaloka. But if one reaches the Brahmaloka, one meditates on the kāryabrahman, one becomes inclined to the enjoyments of that region, the mukti that one attains is known as **Sājujuamukti** or union with kāryabrahman.

And at the time of the periodic deluge (pralayakāla), when the Hiranyagarbhāloka also comes to an end Ātmajñāni gradually obtains Videhamukti. "

Śaṅkara argues that the theory of gradual liberation is to be admitted since in the Śruti itself both the movement of the jiva and its non return to this world are taught. Thus the Śruti describes the movement of the self through the path of Gods in such passages as "He then goes upwards by these rays. "They attains fire etc". "He comes to the world of agni through the path of..."
devayāna". "Those who are free from impurities depart through the path of the sun to where dwells the immortal imperishable person". Again the Śruti passages like "Those who travel by it do not return to the cycle of humanity".

"For them who live in the world of Brahma, there is no return", and such other passages show that the self who travels through the celestial path of Gods, does not return to this world. Hence in order to make these Śruti passages sensible the Advaita vedāntins presume the path of gradual liberation (kramamukti).

The celestial path by which such an Upāsaka is led after his death is beautifully explained in the Upaniṣads, as a journey to Hiranyagarbha after the fall of the body. This path is called as Uttarayānamārga or Devayānamārga or Arciradimārga. Thus the journey of the departed soul towards the path of Devaloka is explained in the Śruti as follows- "First, the mumukṣu attains archi or agni (fire), then he follows successively, the path of ahuh (day), Suklapakṣa (white fort-night), Uttarayana (the six months of the Sun's northward movement), Samvatsara (year), Devaloka (the world of the gods), Vāyu-loka (the world of air), Ādityaloka (the world of the Sun), Candraloka (the world of the moon), Vidyutloka (the world of lightning), Varuṇaloka (The world of varuṇa), Indraloka (the world of Indra), Prajāpatiloka (the world of prajāpati) and after that he reach Brahma-loka". And after attaining that state he is not born in this world and for him the cycle of Samsāra has ceased to revoke.

It must be admitted that either kind of mukti - Jivanamukti or kramamukti what ever form it might be, rigorous physical and mental disciplines are needed towards its attainment. For this an absolute faith in Śāstra which
alone can invoke the knowledge of Brahman is a fundamental requirement. Along with it instruction by a Guru who is himself a Brahmajñāni who can provide the upāsaka to a competent pupil is also an utmost necessity. And more over a strenuous moral and spiritual discipline cultured by the pupil is also required which ultimately pave the way to mokṣa. So it is very much essential to discuss about the way which is ethico-spiritual indeed, which leads to self realisation.

VII) The Advaitic Scheme of Disciplines :-

The Advaita vedāntin advocates two stages of discipline in conformity with his two views of reality-vyavahārika and pāramārthika. As has already been pointed out that this beautiful world is not at all false or meaningless as the opponent often misunderstood. It is quite meaningful, a necessary platform for self-realisation. T.P. Ramachandran therefore rightly says, “The non-real is the gateway to the Real”\(^ {127} \). In the Advaita vedānta we can find two types of discipline- one is preparatory stage and the other is final stage. Generally, in the preparatory stage, man through strenuous effort becomes eligible for mokṣa who is designated as Adhikārin.

An Adhikārin is explained in the Vedāntasāra as “the qualified person”, the possessor of right knowledge, that is, one who by reading the Vedas and Vedāṅgas according to rule, either in this life or in a former ones, has attained a general idea of the meaning of the whole - who by performing the constant and occasional rites, the penances and devotional exercises, and abstaining from things, done with desire of reward and from those forbidden, has got rid of all sin and so thoroughly cleansed his mind, and who has acquired the four means”\(^ {128} \). From this we can infer the eligibility of Brahmavicāra as- (i) a general
knowledge of vedantic truth (ii) purity of mind (citta suddhi) and (iii) the four characteristic features (sādhanā catustaya). Of these the first two are general requirement for the knowledge of Brahman which all the other systems of Vedānta also have prescribed. But the third one which is based on strictly ethical and spiritual discipline is special contribution of Śaṅkara. Thus the Advaita vedāntins are of the opinion that the study of the Vedānta for the attainment of right knowledge of Brahman is an utmost necessity. But such study will fail to produce the desired result in an impure mind. For philosophy is not a mere academic affair to be confined in a lecture hall and learned assemblies but an intenselly practical discipline which must give the right direction to our thinking and activity. Hence some ethical disciplines are necessary to convert the intellectual convictions into a felt experience. This is specially applicable in case of Advaita vedānta, where some ethical disciplines have been undergone for the cultivation of an attitude of detachment towards the worldly objects. So seeker of self-knowledge are invited to practice four disciplines known as "Sādhanā - catustaya" or four instruments of spiritual knowledge. They are as follows -

1. **Viveka** or discrimination between the Real and the unreal. It is a 'firm conviction of the mind to the effect that Brahman is real and the universe is unreal, i.e. designated as discrimination (viveka) between the real and the 'unreal'.

2. **Vairāgya** or renunciation i.e. the desire to give up all transitory enjoyment (ranging) from those of an (animate) body to those of Brahmahood, from observation, instruction and so forth. This is the utter disregard to all objects of enjoyment here and elsewhere.131
3. Śatsampatti or the six treasures - These form the ethical foundation of spiritual life. Their practice prepares the inner faculties for the cultivation of higher knowledge. They are as follows -

a) Sama or calmness - a student of Vedānta, like all true philosophers, must cultivate inner calmness. He must have firm conviction and should never be swayed by passion.

b) Dama or self control - restraining both the organ of senses and action under control. Endowed with this virtue, the aspirant engages himself only in hearing about Brahman reasoning about it and meditating upon it.

c) Uparati or self-settledness - a function of the mind which prevents the sense organs, restrained by sama and dama, from drifting back to their respective objects. This virtue, according to some vedāntists, means the relinquishment of worldly duties and the acceptance of sannyāsa or monastic life.

d) Titakṣā or forbearance - A man practising this discipline does not care to relieve his physical suffering, nor does he show any anxiety or grief on its score. By means of this discipline the aspirant remains unagitated by heat and cold, pleasure and pain, love and hate, and the other pairs of contrast.

e) Samādhāna or complete concentration - concentration of the mind after the mind has been disciplined by the practice of other virtues, on Brahman as taught by the scriptures and by a competent teacher.

f) Śraddhā or faith - a function of the mind which enables the aspirant to accept as true the words of Vedānta as taught by a competent teacher. Endowed with this teaching the aspirant intuitively believes in the existence of ultimate
Reality and in the eternity of the soul. Further, he has the firm conviction that he is capable of making any sacrifice for the realisation of Truth. In the Katha upaniṣad, Nāciketā, endowed with śrādhā, approached to Yama (the king of death), to seek the knowledge of the here-after. Without such firm attitude of the mind, no success is possible in life.\(^{132}\)

4. Mumuksatvam or longing for liberation- A person fulfilling the three conditions mentioned above naturally desires for the attainment of liberation. This is mumuksatvam. According to Śaṅkara, mumukṣa or yearning for Freedom can be fruitful only by means of vairāgya (renunciation). Thus the person "whose renunciation and yearning for Freedom are intense, calmness (sama) and other practices have (really) their meaning and bear fruit".\(^{134}\) That means, the fourth i.e. mumuksatvam must come in and through the other eligibilities. Otherwise there can not be any desire for mokṣa. For without burning renunciation and desire for Freedom, the other practices may be swept off by a strong impulse of infatuation or some strong blind attachment.\(^{135}\) So the last eligibility is always related with the other conditions.

It is to be noted that the fourth i.e. the Mumuksatvam marks the real eligibility for Brahma-Vicāra. For only that person is eligible for liberation or the real adhikārin for Brahma-Vicāra, who feel an ardent need for attaining mokṣa. Other conditions like discrimination etc. Simply prepare the ground for the rise of the desire for mokṣa.

Commenting on the very first sloka of Vedānta Sutra, Śaṅkara shows how Brahman enquiry depends upon the ‘Sādhana-catustaya’ and not on a knowledge of ritual.\(^{136}\) The result as well as the object of enquiry into religious
duties are directly opposed to those of enquiry into Brahman and so the knowledge of ritual can not in any way be connected with enquiry into Brahman.

Ultimate freedom consists in realising oneness with Brahman. Hence, it depends on the removal of one's ignorance or imperfection rather than on the performance of any external act. External act will be useful only in so far as they are conductive to the development of eligibility of self-realisation (Adhikarana). For it is psychologically impossible for any one to proceed towards mokṣa with out being qualified in the above manner. Therefore, the first stage of discipline are intended to prepare the Adhikārin. It is a long and arduous course of training done by the aspirant here in this very world.

From the definition of Sadānanda as mentioned earlier, another essential point is to be traced out i.e. Svādhyāya and the performance of the nitya and the naimittika actions. But these are also preparatory conditions only for the Adhikārin and not the final one. Svādhyāya or the regular study of scripture is a common condition for Dharma-Vicāra, Mīmāṃsā Darśana and Brahma-Vicāra contained in Vedānta. The Svādhyāya helps the aspirant for the purification of mind. One who perform the nitya and naimittika karmas in this very birth may help in purifying the mind. Even those who have done these actions sincerely in their previous birth, may help in this very life, for self-realisation. Vidura of Mahābhārata is a beautiful example of such an aspirant who by virtue of his actions done in the previous birth, spent his life as a man of pure mind and honesty.

In the Viveka-cūḍāmani Śaṅkara emphasises on the cultivation of bhakti or devotion as supremely necessity to the attainment of liberation. But
Bhakti according to Śaṅkara is 'the seeking after one's real nature'.\textsuperscript{138} It is the 'single-minded zeal and un_answering passion for the realisation of Truth. Without this emotional urge, the aspirant often become lost in the wilderness of dry intellectualism or finds comfort in the ivory tower of a speculative philosophy. He fails to reach the Goal'.\textsuperscript{138} It should be noted here that the Advaitic Bhakti is different from the Bhakti defined by Nārada, for whom Bhakti is of the nature of extreme love to some being (sā kasmācīt paramapremarupa) and it is also different from the Bhakti admitted by the Vaiṣṇavites where there is extreme attachment to Ṭṣvara (sa parānuraktiṁsvere).\textsuperscript{140} Thus Bhakti in Advaita philosophy is only "Svātmatattvānusandhāna" i.e. the enquiry into the truth of one's own self.\textsuperscript{141}

A person with such purity of mind and unbroken preoccupation with the supreme Soul is now qualified to be a worthy student of Vedānta. With such an attitude in heart, he will approach a Guru or spiritual guide and study Vedānta under his guidance. In the Mundaka upaniṣad, it is said: "For the sake of this knowledge (Brahman) led him approach, with sacrificial fuel in hand, a teacher (Guru) who is learned in the scriptures and established in Brahman".\textsuperscript{142}

Here a question may arise- as Brahman knowledge can be attained from the Vedānta itself and a competent person can acquire this knowledge by his own effort, then why should a competent person approach a Guru? In reply to this we may say that the Hindu tradition always emphasises that the spiritual knowledge to be effective, must be transmitted from one living soul to another living. Even the great Incarnations, such as Lord Kṛiṣṇa, Buddha, Rāmakriṣṇa, Rāmānuja, Śaṅkara himself accepted human teachers to guide them in their
spiritual practices. In Mahābhārata, Akalavya though worshipped the statue of Dronaśārya as his Guru, yet Ācarya himself claimed for remuneration (Daksinā) from Akalavya on that ground.

The importance of Guru in relation to a student (sisya) is beautifully explained in the “Gurbāstakām” (Eight stanzas in praise of the Guru – Ātmabodha - a small but gem-like masterpiece of Śāṅkara. That without the help of a Guru, none can acquire the ultimate knowledge. Books may give us information, but not inspiration. It is for this reason that the ancient spiritual wisdom of India has gone down to the present time through an unbroken succession of teacher.

**Final stage** :-

So far, we have discussed about the preparatory stage which is an urgent requirement for an Adhikārin. Now as a result of preliminary discipline undergone in the preparatory stage, when the student is ripened enough for the higher knowledge, under the guidance of an appropriate Guru, he undertakes the final discipline for realising the Absolute. In this final stage also the usefulness of this world can not be denied. The final stage is the attainment of the Jñāna-yoga as contrast with karmayoga and bhaktyoga. As we know, the traditional Hindu thought has recognised three stages of sādhanā-karmayoga, bhaktiyoga and jñānayoga. In consistent with his Advaitic thought, Śaṅkara has approved Jñāna-yoga as the sole path which directly leads to mokṣa. But he does not at all dismiss bhakti and karma yoga. For both are important in preparing the ground for Jñāna-yoga. Karma and bhakti, if practised with an end or desire (sakāma) may lead to independent result no doubt. But if they are practised in
a spirit of renunciation (niskāma), they can be invaluable aids to jñāna. For disinterested service cleanses the mind of all selfish inclinations. Devotion to God quietens the mind and makes it one pointed. It also secures a feeling of kinship with the whole world.\textsuperscript{144}

Now, by acquiring the eligibility through ‘Sādhanā-Castustaya’ the aspirant proceeds to the positive path of self-affirmation which is the final discipline indeed, where there are three ethical disciplines as- śravana, manana and nididhāsana. The implication of śravana is two fold. Firstly it signifies that the ultimate spiritual truth is to be learnt through the study of the Vedānta or revealed texts and secondly, it should be learnt under the guidance of a Guru.

But śravana is not enough for self-realisation. It should be supplemented by manana which implies continued reflection upon the truth learnt through śravana until all doubts are removed and intellectual conviction is established. Thus the aim of manana is to remove any confusion or doubt that may arise (asamībhāvāna) with regard to the Vedāntic truths. The recognition of manana leads the disciple towards mystic experience. But manana can not cope with the obstacles caused by the unconscious reassertion of old habits of thought which are incompatible with the truths of Vedānta (viparīta bhāvana). For this the third discipline is Nididhāsana or continued meditation on truth i.e. the identity between the individual self and Brahman is meant to overcome such obstacles. Nididhāsana is thus meant to overcome the obstacles towards the self-realisation and it should be continued till the desired intuitive knowledge dawns and that identity becomes immediate (aparokṣa) which leads one to become a Jīvamukta.\textsuperscript{145} And this three process of ethical discipline are beautifully explained by Śaṅkara in his Vivekacūḍāmāṇi.\textsuperscript{146}
As to the question whether it is necessary for a man to undergo all the three spiritual disciplines, it is replied by Śaṅkara that there are certain exceptional cases where by mere hearing the scriptural knowledge, one may attain self-realisation. The sage Vāmadeva who had realised Brahman while he was in his mother’s womb on hearing the perfect knowledge of great scriptural statements without following any spiritual discipline. This, according to Śaṅkara, is possible, because moral perfection conductive to the rise and maturity of Brahman knowledge had been attained in the previous birth. In such cases, moral perfection essential for Brahman-knowledge may be conductive to the present state from previous life. And that rare few need not undergo all the spiritual disciplines, rather perfect knowledge may arise to them as soon as the scriptural statement are heard.

Another problem in this connection is- whether all people belonging to any caste have eligibility to Brahma-vicāra? All the Advaita Vedantins normally are of the opinion that the three Varnas (caste) have eligibility to Brahma-vicāra except the Sudras. Bādarāyana in his Brahma-Sutra argues against the eligibility of the Sudras to acquire Brahman-knowledge. Bādarāyana says that Brahman knowledge is attainable only through the study of the Vedas, but the Sudras being prohibited from studying the Vedas can not attain the knowledge of Brahman. Śaṅkara in his commentary echoes the same view and all the followers of Śaṅkara also share the view of Śaṅkara and Bādarāyana.

From a careful study of the upanisadic texts, it appears to us that the Upaniṣads express rather a liberal view in this connection. In the Chānaogva upanisads, Satvākāma, Janasruti and others belonging to lower grades of
society who studied the Brahman-knowledge are the suitable examples in support of this view. In the Maññabhārata also, it is found that Vidura, who was a Sudra by birth, attained Brahman-knowledge. In such cases, the reply of Śaṅkara lies in the fact that the Sudras who have studied Vedas in their previous births may be eligible for attaining Brahman-knowledge. It is on this ground that he has admitted the eligibility of the Sudras like Vidura and others for the realisation of Brahman.

From the above point, the critics often underestimate Śaṅkara as narrow-minded. But this misunderstanding is due to the lack of historical knowledge. The Sudra or low-born are not be understood in the sense of present time class distinction. In that time Sudras were those who lack spiritual competency to receive the knowledge of the self. “The low-born, as they lack spiritual competency, are not fit to receive the knowledge of Brahman directly from the scripture, though the desire for it may be found in them”. And we should not ignore the fact that the desire alone constitute a sufficient reason for attaining a worldly matter. But the capacity with which one achieve success in case of worldly affairs, is quite different from spiritual capacity or spiritual maturity or Adhikārin, which is absent in Sudras. Thus according to Śaṅkara, “the mere temporal or empirical (laukika) capability, does not constitute a reason for qualification, spiritual capability being required in spiritual matter. And spiritual capability is (in the case of Sudras) excluded by their being excluded from the study of the scripture (Veda). This however does not mean that the Sudras are not eligible for knowing the Self and realising It, which can not be denied to anyone without denying the reality of the Self.”
VIII) **Āsrama System and their Bearing in the Pursuit of Mokṣa**

One vital question related to the place of Āsramas or station of life is whether the people of all the Āsramas have equal eligibility for Brahman knowledge? The point at issue is whether among the four Āsramas of the Hindu social system i.e. the Brahmacarya or the station of the celibate student, Gārhasthāya or the station of the householder, Vānaprastha or the station of the recluser, and Sannyāsa or the station of the mendicant is fit to secure the state of salvation. Of these, Śaṅkara is of the opinion that only a Sannyāsī is eligible for Brahman-realisation. According to him, a Brahma-saṃstha is a person residing in Brahman is one who renounces all actions in the form of vedic rites. This is not possible for any person of the other three āsramas as the other three āsramas men have to perform action enjoined on the Vedas.

A Sannyāsi, on the other hand has to renounce all such actions including māyā and naimittika karman which are obstruction to Brahman-knowledge accordingly acquire the eligibility to realise Brahman. However from the viewpoint of the theory of karmavoga the Niskāmakarman or the actions done without selfish desire which are not opposed to Brahman-knowledge. And in this sense we may say that persons of the other three āsramas are also eligible for mokṣa. Along with it another important point we may add here that it is not necessary to follow all the three āsramas serially and then to become a Sannyāsin. Sannyāsa is not necessarily the fourth step. One may become a Sannyāsin at any stage of life. The great Śaṅkara himself, Swami Vivekānanda are such Sannyāsins. King Janaka becomes liberated while he was a Gṛhastha.
The Āsrama system has its bearing in the social life of Hindu society. For the natural and systematic progress of man and society, to lead the life according to the four Āsramas is very much meaningful. The Indian concept of the developed social life of man which is strictly moral and spiritual is made disciplined through the Āsrama system. Thus man can learn the scriptures and various other types of knowledge in the state of Brahmacarya and can cooperate and contribute to his family members and society and can do public good or Lokasaṅcraha in the Gārhaṭhāsrama. And after the fulfilment of the fruitful family life, man marches forward towards the best quest of human being, the Godly and spiritual life in the third Āsrama which ends ultimately with its attainment in Sannyāsa.

Actually leading a life according to the Āsrama system, helps to stop the disorder and corruption in society, which is prevailing today so frequently. We find today in the society that there is disorder, disharmony and a state of restlessness prevailing everywhere, for which man forgetting his own station and duty behaves in a reverse manner. Thus a man of Brahmacarya is jumping towards the activity of Grhaṣṭha and so the man of the age of V añaprastha towards the state of Gṛhaṣṭha etc. This disorder is due to the fact that modern man today has entirely forgotten the ethical and spiritual goal of life and is interested in achieving all types of worldly pleasures by any means. So it is to be argued that the Āsrama system of life can successfully make the social life in an ordered and harmonized manner.

Another important point is that each division of Āsrama system is internally connected with one another so as to make a developed spiritual life.
We make explain it with the help of a diagram.

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**THE HINDU VIEW OF LIFE**

As given in the diagram, the first Āsrama is the Brahmacary āśrama. It crosses the second circle i.e. Gārhashta. This shows two important meanings. Firstly, the life of a student or a celibate is a life of strict discipline enriched with moral and spiritual norms and secondly as it crosses the Gārhashta circle it implied that the rule of Brahmacarya is not ended in the first circle only. After one enters the gārhashta āśrama one can not say good-bye to Brahmacarya. Thus the second circle which intersect both the circle i.e. Brahmacarya and Vānaprastha is very significant. It implies that the life of a householder is not a life of a restless enjoyment of sex without any self control, rather he should observe the virtue of Brahmacarya even for a life of enjoyment. As the Gārhashtaya āśrama shown in the diagram crosses the circle of Vānaprastha it implies that the Grihastra has to develop the virtues of detachment, sacrifice, social service and finally leaving all his material gains to the succeeding generation. Again the Vānaprastha is not a mere preparation to Sannyāsa It
has its own charms. It is on the one hand connected with Grihastha as the wife accompanies the husband in this Āsrama and on the other hand it is connected with Sannyāsa as one has to prepare for the final renunciation. Now Sannyāsa is the final Āsrama and its circle generally includes only a small part of Vānaprasthāsrama. It means a Sannyāsa state normally evolves from the state of Vānaprastha, which is also a life of renunciation.  

Thus the Āsrama system of ancient India considered human life as a continuous gradual evolution to more and more detachment on renunciation. Our life is not a life of enjoyment. It is a life of self-realisation and self-purification. The Hindu view of life is thus spiritual whose end is the attainment of mokṣa or liberation. Material enjoyment which are necessary and legitimate at certain period of life, should be regulated with the ideal of morality and spirituality for the attainment of the Highest end. Thus the Indian system of life aims at to gradually transform and regulate the human instinct, senses, will and mind so that they may help in the attainment of mokṣa.

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