1. THE CONCEPTS IN THE INDIAN THOUGHT:

The Ultimate Reality is one; hence, the ultimate end is bound to be one. Each sadhaka is placed on different station in sadhanā, and the concept of the beatitude may differ from sadhaka to sadhaka depending on his understanding. Haridas Bhattacharya notes that of the three theistic systems the yoga taught kaivalya as freedom from pain, the Vaiśeṣikas looked on mokṣa as isolation and freedom from pain ending in a kind of insensibility; while the Nyāya regarded apavarga (deliverance) as attainment of happiness that could not be exceeded (niḥśreyas). The Mimāṃsakas also admitted the complete cessation of the qualities of the soul as sine qua non of salvation, but they admitted the existence of heaven as a pleasurable abode of the departed pious.1893 Then, there are concepts, which the schools such as Advaita, Saivism, Tantra and the numerous sects therein regard as the only true concepts of the final beatitude. Among the Vaiṣṇavas alone, including the Āḻvārs who have cast a great effect on the Bhāgavatam, there is myriad of concepts pertaining to the sumnum bonum. The concepts of liberation vary from system to system. They include the attainment of the subtle powers (Tantra and Yoga), the worship of God and attainment of God’s abode (most of the Vaiṣṇava sects such as Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, Śuddha Dvaita, Acintyabhedābheda), the cessation of mental waves – samādhi (Tantra and Yoga), and the union with the Supreme Reality (Advaita, Tantra). The Bhāgavatam accommodates all these concepts and presents a kind of hierarchy in those. This variety may, well, be considered as strength rather than a weakness of the Indian Thought in general and the Bhāgavatam in particular. We, therefore, cannot agree with Plott who, even while assuming that these varieties arose of their own accord within the

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1893 Indian Philosophical Quarterly, April, 1927 as quoted by Plott, p.481
school itself, suspects that they could also come dialectically as defenses against the other schools.1894

2. THE CONCEPTS IN THE BHĀGAVATAM:

According to the Bhāgavatam, absence of attachment to all is the goal to be attained by all sādhakas.1895 The Bhāgavatam being a comprehensive text, it deals with various concepts of the beatitude, which, if properly understood, reveal a hierarchy in those concepts with Parābhakti as the culmination of sādhana. The liberation in the ultimate sense is attained in stages.1896 In addition to the concept of the vision of God, which is considered as the culmination of the mystical experiences in most of the religions, we find in the Bhāgavatam the concept of salvation (mokṣa or mukti), which is the liberation from karmas and thereby from sarisāra-bandhana. The Bhāgavatam also calls it Nīrvāṇa.1897 The concept is often referred as Apavarga, Nīhsreya, Kaivalya, Ekāntitvam, Nairgyeya, Ātmadarśana and Ātmajñāna (the Self-knowledge), which is the realization of Pure Consciousness or the impersonal aspect of God. In addition, there is a concept of the attainment of the abode of God (Viśṇulokam, Viśṇupadam or Vai- kuṇṭha), consisting of the four-fold forms of liberation, which is the realization of the personal aspect of God. Then there is a concept of the knowledge of and identity with the Supreme Reality (Brahmajñāna, Brahmapadam, or Śāyujya).

The Bhāgavatam nicely observes the hierarchy of sādhakas:

"Living beings are countless in this world like grains of sand. Among them all, in the human species there are only a few here and there who aspire and strive for spiritual development.

"O Holy one! Even among them, still fewer are aspirant for Mukti (liberation). Moreover, among such aspirants only a very limited number succeed in abandoning hearth and home, and realizing the Ātman.

"O great soul! Among a crore of such liberated and spiritually illumined beings again,
persons who have perfect equipoise and single-hearted, ecstatic love for Narayana are extremely rare. "1898

In yet another description of one of the two eternal paths recommended for the yogi, the hierarchy of different attainments by the yogi have been narrated. The path also leads to mokṣa and culminates into the oneness with (Param) Ātman – the blissful state also called as the ‘Bhāgavatīm gatīṃ’ from where there is no return.1899

Vallabha, a philosopher with a dazzling eclectic and universal outlook distinguishes three grades of emancipation such as seva (service, which is analogous to kainkarya of the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas or the Viśiṣṭādvaita), a-laukika-martya, and sāyujya as well as bhajanopayogi, the first putting stress on inspiration, the second on a certain merging into the nature of Kṛṣṇa in the heat of devotional fervour, the third the creative expression of this fervour.1900

2. ATTAINMENT ACCORDING TO YEARNING AND APPROPRIATENESS:

God bestows His grace on a devotee according to his capacity and desire, and nature of worship.1901 Dhruva at the end of his pious life on the earth ascended to the Realm of Viṣṇu,1902 and similarly Sudāma.1903 Ajāmila, with the latter part of his life full of penance and devotion, ascended to the realm of Mahāviṣṇu after attaining to Samādhi.1904 Bhīṣma, the grand scion of the MBh merges into Kṛṣṇa, having realized that unborn God.1905 Kardama Prajāpati realized Bhagavān with devotion and attained to the state of God.1906 Devahūti, too, attained to that state also known as brahmanirvāṇa with yoga and loving devotion.1907 Prthu also merged in Brahman

1898 VI,14,3-5; also VII,15,54-55
1899 II,2,22-31
1900 Ploot, p. 495
1901 IV,13,34*
1902 IV,12,35
1903 X,81,40-44
1904 VI,2,39-40
1905 I,9,42-43
1906 III,24,45-47
1907 III,33,24-30

234
with the help of devotion and yoga.\textsuperscript{1908} Parikṣit unified his Ātman with Brahman.\textsuperscript{1909} Among āsuras, many merged into Bhagavān or Brahman, just as the worm imprisoned by the wasp is transformed into wasp because of constant contemplation of wasp due to dread.\textsuperscript{1910} For instance, Vṛtra's soul is described as having merged into the Supreme Reality;\textsuperscript{1911} whereas the souls of Aghāṣura,\textsuperscript{1912} Kaṁsa,\textsuperscript{1913} Śīṣupāla,\textsuperscript{1914} Pauḍraka,\textsuperscript{1915} Dantavakra,\textsuperscript{1916} are described as having merged into Bhagavān. With regard to the āsuras, their soul merged into Bhagavān because they had cultivated incessant contemplation on Bhagavān throughout their lives, and particularly at the time of death. For, it is the concentrated thought that determines one's future state.\textsuperscript{1917} We can notice the cases of the Crocodile,\textsuperscript{1918} Nṛga the chameleon,\textsuperscript{1919} Sudarśana the python,\textsuperscript{1920} Nala-kuṭera and Manigrīva,\textsuperscript{1921} and several others, who attained to their respective realms to which they belonged. They are emancipated from the cursed body only, because the liberation from samsāra was not their goal. They assume, once again, the bodies of their original kind perform the karmas and enjoy the outcome thereof. To those queens of Dvaraka who mistook Kṛṣṇa to be merely their husband,\textsuperscript{1922} He reciprocated only the spousal affection. To the Gopis who realized Him as the Supreme Lord, He vouchsafed His own self. "To none is he particularly dear and friendly nor is anyone the object of His enmity or cold indifference. But still He
blesses devotees appropriate to the manner in which they worship Him, just as the heavenly *Kalpaka* tree yields all their wants to those who rest under it.\(^{1923}\)

Thus, we can observe that God grants emancipation or liberation, union and supreme devotion according to the inclination and worthiness of the devotees.

3. **VISION OF GOD OR THE REVELATION:**

The *Bhāgavatam* at many places refers to the vision of God\(^{1924}\) as well as certain visions of profound philosophical meaning like the one bestowed on *Markandeya*.\(^{1925}\) God cannot be seen even through asceticism, worship according to the Vedic commandments, and yogas; He bestows His grace on a few who contemplate on Him in the heart.\(^{1926}\) Vision of God is a profound mystic concept as it refers to something that appears as contradictory since God is described as the Reality that is beyond the ken of the senses\(^{1927}\) whereas the act of vision presupposes the involvement of mind at least.

i. **Man visualizes the chosen deity:**

The instances of the divine vision as found in most of the religions indicate that man usually has a vision of his chosen deity alone. The *Bhāgavatam* is also replete with such instances like the devotees having a vision of their respective chosen deity *Nārāyaṇa or Mahāviṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa or Ananta or Devī*. This leads to the conclusion that one has a vision of the form or idea, which one intensely thinks of. The *Bhāgavatam*, in tune with the *Gītā*, says that the devotees realize the form they worship.

ii. **Heart ‘within’ is the locus of the visualized form:**

That the divine vision is not always subject to sense perception is evident from the description of heart as the locus of many divine visions\(^{1928}\) and the realization of the Supreme Reality.\(^{1929}\) Moreover, the recommended altar on which the deity is to be

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\(^{1923}\) X,30,22 transl. S.T.; X,72,4; VI,17,22
\(^{1924}\) III,8,23-32; IV,9,2; IV,20,21;
\(^{1925}\) XII, ch.-9
\(^{1926}\) IV,29,44-46
\(^{1927}\) VI,3,16
\(^{1928}\) III,8,21-22; etc.
\(^{1929}\) VIII,24,38
concentrated on is also one’s heart. The Bhāgavatam refers to Brahmā as having turned within to find the Eternal Source, etc. The esoteric truths are revealed ‘within’. The mystical experiences of the mystics belonging to the other religions of the world also bear testimony to the locus of revelation as being the heart within.

iii. All divine visions are not the summum bonum:
There are two kinds of divine visions: one that visits a person who is yet attain complete purity of mind; the visions facilitate the spiritual progress of such a devotee. The instances of the devotees like Parikṣit, Dhruva, Citraketu are testimony to this idea. Those visions may be the consequence of the intense but momentary contemplation on the Divine or a particular subject. However, they fail to metamorphose the impure mind of man because the old stubborn impressions revert his consciousness to the ignorance. Parikṣit, Dhruva, Citraketu and most of the demons who committed heinous acts even after having visions of the divine form bespeak of the limitation of such divine visions in drastically changing the consciousness of the concerned. Another kind of vision dawns in the pure mind; it is equated with the final beatitude.

iv. The visions of supreme value:
God, in His essence, comes in the range of perception and manifests only unto the one with the mind that has purified as a result of intense yoga. It is clearly said of the knowledge, which leads the soul to the final beatitude (niḥśreyas) and comes in the form of the vision of Ātman (ātmadarśana) that it dawns as a result of the severing the knot of the heart. The vision that occurs in such a mind changes the person into a divine person. In other words, only the mukta puruṣa can have the essential and lasting experience of God. Such luminaries need never suffer again. They at-

1930 VII,7,37 etc.; also see supra, P. 216
1931 VI,16,45
1932 IV,9,27-36
1933 V,1,7,6 & 10
1934 IV,9,27-36
1935 XII,9,5
1936 III,26,2
1937 VIII,3,27
1938 VII,9,53
tain to the state of no return. Since Ātman cannot be perceived through senses, this kind of vision is indicative of the mystical metamorphosis of the empirical mind into the egoless mind that is endowed with the divine nature.

4. MOKSA AND ĀTMAṆĀNA:

i. Mokṣa:

Mokṣa, the fourth Purusārtha, is emancipation from karma and its effects, and thereby from saṁsāra. The wheel of karma starts rotating since the first ever karma of Puruṣa, viz., looking at Prakṛti and establishing the sense of agency. As long as there remains I-sense – the seed of empirical self, the senses including the mind always go outward. Karma performed with I-sense always forms the chain of karmas and their effects, which is termed as the Karmabandhan or saṁsāra. Therefore, the Bhāgavatam defines bondage as dispatching of the senses and liberation as their control.

When soul through intense sādhanā consisting of abstinence and austerity, overcomes the bonds of I-sense (ahaṅkāra) then, He attains to mokṣa. Through yoga, he burns the karmas. It is not sufficient to stop accumulating karma-force; it is also necessary to exhaust the force of the past actions, which is expressed as anārabdha or prārabdha karma that forms the knot of heart. Through abstinence, the sadhaka prevents the accumulation of karma-force, whereas through penance he voluntarily exhausts the accumulated karma-force at the earliest, and attains to the Nairguṇya – the transcendence of all qualities.

This kind of final beatitude is also called as the subtle state (anvim gatim). Commentators differ with regard to the notion of this state. Vira Raghava thinks of it as the subtle path called arcir-mārga leading to Mokṣa; it is subtle as few traverse it. According to Vijayadhvaja, it is sāyujya-laksana mukti wherein the jīva has similarity in attributes with God. To Jiva Goswami and Visvanatha Cakravarty, the state is subtle, because it

\[1939\] III,26,6-7
\[1940\] XI,18,22*
\[1941\] XII,4,33
\[1942\] VIII,3,27
\[1943\] V,5,9
\[1944\] I,15,31
is beyond Prakṛti and hence difficult to grasp, and it is giving ‘attendantship’ of God. Giridhara thinks it to be the very resplendent subtle body of the residents of Vai-kuntha.  

**ii. Nirvāṇa of the Bhāgavatam vis-à-vis Nirvāṇa of the Buddhism:**

Just as a flame is extinguished at the exhaustion of the fuel, the mind that abstains through renunciation from sense enjoyments for a long time attains extinction (Nirvāṇa) of ignorance.  

Śādhaka should dissolve the categories into their respective origin and meditate on the illuminative self by which ignorance and bondage are destroyed and the bliss of Nirvāṇa is accrued.  

Thus, the state of Nirvāṇa or Mokṣa is not a condition of voidness as some of the Buddhists tend to maintain; the knowledge of Ātman as sharing the characteristics of Paramātman accrue to the enlightened one. Moreover, unlike the Buddhist view, the Bhāgavatam considers the meditation on God as a means to putting an end to the cycle of birth and death and to attain the bliss of Nirvāṇa (nirvāṇasukha).  

According to the Bhāgavatam, which freely uses any of the names of the final beatitude such as Kaivalya etc., the pursuit of Mokṣa should be accompanied by devotion for Vāsudeva as well as by the enquiry into the real nature of Ātman, because Mukti is the abandonment of the imposed form, and establishment in the Real Self. The realization dispels the darkness that envelops the intellect.  

**iii. Ātma-jñāna:**

When the subtle and the gross bodies of soul that are fabricated on Ātman by ignorance (avidyā) are sublated, it is called the realization of Brahman that Ātman verily is. Ātman is the part of Paramātman. Ātma-jñāna is the realization of the knowledge that the true nature of soul is Ātman or Brahman and that the experience of the
grossness and subtlety of the universe is due to Maya.\textsuperscript{1953} As a part of Paramātman (Brahmānīśa)\textsuperscript{1954}, Ātman inherits the nature of Nirguṇa Brahman. This is evident from the characteristics of Ātman.\textsuperscript{1955} That is how this state is often referred as Nairguṇya.\textsuperscript{1956} According to Vira Raghava, a person established in the nairguṇya is the one who meditates upon Brahman of pure sattva attribute. Jiva Goswami interprets the state of the liberated as one granted by the Supreme attributeless Hari. Vallabha considers the souls who attain nairguṇya as established in their own soul who is above the three attributes.\textsuperscript{1957}

The state is also called Ātmadarśana\textsuperscript{1958} or Brahmadarśana\textsuperscript{1959}, for, Ātman is also referred as Brahma or a part of Brahma. Vira Raghava interprets Brahma as ‘the liberated soul’ and darśana as ‘the knowledge of the nature of the ‘pure’ soul devoid of any contamination or contact with Prakṛti.\textsuperscript{1960} Vijayadhvaja unambiguously considers Brahmadarśana as the knowledge of Brahman. The Bhāgavatam, however, appears to consider Brahmadarśana as the knowledge of Ātman (Ātmānubhava)\textsuperscript{1961} consisting of the knowledge that Ātman is the permanent substratum of soul,\textsuperscript{1962} and witness of the mind.\textsuperscript{1963} This knowledge with regard to the phenomenality of anātman should be gained through ‘neti ‘neti – the process of negation of everything but Ātman.\textsuperscript{1964}

“...recognizing the Self,... by this process, as the Indestructible (Aksara)... (one) should cease functioning (viramed) even like fire that has consumed its own support.”\textsuperscript{1965} Soul, thus, liberated from mind and egoity is freed from the duality, thereby

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1953] I,5,27
\item[1954] xii,4,32
\item[1955] see ch.- II of this work
\item[1956] ii,1,7
\item[1957] AITM, FN, ii,1,7
\item[1958] iii,26,2
\item[1959] i,3,33; iii,32,23
\item[1960] AITM, FN, i,3,33
\item[1961] xii,4,34
\item[1962] xi,3,39
\item[1963] iv,28,40
\item[1964] ii,2,18; vii,7,23
\item[1965] vii,12,31 transl. Goswami
\end{footnotes}
being established in its original glory, realizing the Supreme Purusa. This state (dhāma) of Brahman is attained to by the rare of the seers who are totally composed sannyāsins with lifelong celibacy.

In the light of the Bhāgavatam view of Ātman and Paramātman, this unity signifies that the true nature of Ātman is that of Paramātman; it, however, may not be construed that Ātman, in the sense of the individual self, assumes the total nature of Paramātman in the state of Ātmajñāna. This is evident from the words of Kṛṣṇa: “Therefore ... you should see the world in Ātman and Ātman in Me.” The state, which the Kevalādvaita calls as jīvan-mukti, is also known as the companionship with the Supreme Reality (Brahmasaukhya). When one attains Ātmajñāna, he sees Ātman (in the sense of Paramātman) in all beings and all beings in Ātman. As Paramātman is all Bliss, bliss is the nature of Ātman; abstinence from everything that is anātman makes this bliss manifest. Ātmajñāni becomes āptakāma and ātmārāma, the fulfilled and partaking of the bliss of Ātman alone.

iv. Jīvan-mukti and Videha-mukti:
The mind that is purged of desires is a pure mind (viṣadama manah), which attains the supreme bliss as a result of concentration on God. Once the soul is freed from the manacles of karmas, the world in the form of saṁsāra ceases for him because of the knowledge of Ātman, and he becomes free from the effects of saṁsāra. The state is also called Akarmakarmam or Naiṣkarmya. He is the conqueror of the senses including mind; he therefore, is called jītendriya. Such a soul is called Mukta Pu-
rusa with his jīva-svabhāva dissipated,1977 even though he continues to dwell in body.1978 Such desireless soul, who is also known as Śānta Sannyāsin,1979 has no return from the state of Kaivalya,1980 or the abode of Hari. This state is compared to the fried seeds of sesame which lose forever the capacity to germinate.1981 The soul who attains to this state continues to live in the embodied form as a free soul until his prārabdha karmas do not exhaust.1982 This draws us to the concept of jīvan-mukti and videha-mukti as given by the Kevalādvaita. "When the body perishes, such desireless souls attain to Satyaloka and devote themselves to the attainment of knowledge,"1983 or they become one with Brahman.1984 They do not any more wish to have the human body for sādhanā as it is the cause of misery, grief and fear of death; they, therefore, devote themselves to the Lotus Feet of Hari.1985 Nārada is a great example of the mukta purusa.1986

However, this is not the kind of the final beatitude that is coveted by the bhāgavata.

5. VISNUPADAM:

Parallel to the state of Ātmajñāna is the attainment of Viśṇulokam, Viṣṇupadam or Vaikuntha along with the four-fold forms of liberation. God is often quoted as calling it as ‘mad dhāma’.1987 In a sense, it can be said that Ātmajñāna is the realization of the nirguna aspect of God, whereas the attainment of Viśṇulokam is the realization of the saguna aspect of God. When one attains the knowledge of Ātman, he is said to have attained the Supreme State of Viṣṇu.1988 Thus, as far as the knowledge of God is concerned, both kinds of realization are on par with each other; but the Bhāgavatam

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1977 XI,25,35-36
1978 XI,11,14; XI,26,2; XI,28,30
1979 VII,4,22
1980 III,27,29*; I,15,44
1981 VI,16,39
1982 III,28,38; XI,13,37; also VII,15,56
1983 III,32,8 transl. S.T.
1984 IV,23,13
1985 IX,13,9-10
1986 I,4,27-36
1987 IV,30,18
1988 XII,6,32-33
says that whereas there is labour (śrama) in pursuing the method of knowing Ātman (Puruṣa), the attainment of Vaikunṭha, which is characterized by Viṣṇu's service is, free from such pains. The Realm Supreme (which is the niche of the Lord's feet) is made up of pure homogenised Sattva, i.e., the Sattva unalloyed by Rajas and Tamas.

"There neither Rajas, nor Tamas, nor Sattva mixed with the other two has any place; there Time's ravage is unknown; there even Māyā, the Lord's delusive power, does not operate..." In this realm, God abides along with His votaries and paraphernalia, having assumed a form of Purest Sattva. The votaries of Mahāviṣṇu reside there having the bodies of pure Sattva, resembling Mahāviṣṇu Himself, with no trace of karma-sarīṅskāras and mental dispositions. There the subjects are endowed with the eternal bliss of association of Śrī Hari. It is neither Prākṛta nor Vaikṛta creation, since God Himself created it out of His own divinity. God, in His incarnation as Vaikunṭha in Vikunṭha by Śūbhma, created in the answer to the prayer of His consort Rama the Supreme Abode known as Vaikunṭha out of His own will.

It has been described marvellously in the Bhāgavata-purāṇa. It is the greatness of this realm that the devotees inhabiting it are completely oblivion of everything in their total absorption in singing the glories of Śrī Hari.

In another description, the highest realm of Śrī Viṣṇu, and the path that lies between that realm and the mundane one, is described. That realm is beyond the earth and ether across the region of light and darkness of this world. The realm itself, illumined by the supreme, infinite and all-pervading light, is the abode of the Śeṣa, Nārāyaṇa and Rama. This realm is attained to by those who are filled with compassion and benevolence, who are calm and collected and consider everyone with equa-
nimity, who are pure and complaisant to all, and who rejoice in the company of God’s devotees only. "To this exquisite region go the devotees of Śrī Hari (the Bhāgavatottama), who are pure and immortal ones, who have overcome the sway of Yama, who are endowed with knowledge of the Truth and devotion by the practice of dharma. Their eyes stream with tears and their bodies are covered with horripilation owing to overpowering emotions that swell up in them, as they are drowned in the conversations about the Lord’s deeds and excellences.”

**Visṇulokam or Vaikuntha** is superior to all the worlds. The superiority suggested here seems to be pertaining to the extra-ordinary character of this realm. As such, it is very much different from this phenomenal world. Therefore, from the point of view of the categories of the world, the realm of *Vaikuntha* remains mysterious and incomprehensible to the ordinary mind.

### i. Four-fold Attainments

The attainments incorporated with the achievement of *Visṇulokam* are the four-fold forms of liberation. They are:

- **Sārūpya** – having a form similar to Viṣṇu,
- **Saloṣṭya** – living in Viṣṇu’s realm,
- **Śaṁśyayya** – living in attendance to Viṣṇu, and
- **Sārṣṭi** – having Viṣṇu’s powers. **Sārṣṭi** is often considered as a sub-set of **Sāyuṣya**. Just as a caterpillar or larva is transformed into butterfly or moth, as a result of constant fearful thought of the latter, **Sārūpya mukti** is bestowed upon the one who constantly thinks of God till the last moment of life – be it out of love, reverence, hatred, animosity or fear.

God’s touch and Gajendra’s constant and ardent prayer transformed him into the form similar to God’s. On the first day in Mathura, *Kṛṣṇa* conferred **Sārūpya-mukti** on the weaver who had adorned Balarāma and *Kṛṣṇa* with ornaments.
and clothes of various colours just out of love for them.\textsuperscript{\text{2006}} Again Kaññā entered into the very form of Kṛṣṇa armed with a discus, when he was liberated by Kṛṣṇa because, with a mind full of fear he always saw the august form of Kṛṣṇa while himself drinking, speaking, walking or lying aslep and even while breathing.\textsuperscript{\text{2007}} Pañḍraka also attained to the same state of Sārṣṭi.\textsuperscript{\text{2008}} Sārṣṭi mukti is to have powers of God. While it is impossible to have all the powers of God or even a single power in its totality, by God's grace a trusted devotee is endowed with some power of God. King Ambariṣa was entrusted with God's protective power of Sudarsana.\textsuperscript{\text{2009}} By God's grace, Sudarśana, who attend exclusively to God, conferred protection on the king also. The devas and Lokapāla are endowed with the powers of God to sustain the creation. For instance, Yama and Viṣṇuduta are endowed with the powers of judgment of the souls.

6. \textit{Brahmaṁajña or Sāyuja}:

\textit{Brahmaṁajña, Brahmadarśana,}\textsuperscript{\text{2010}} Brahmapadam, Brahmasampatti,\textsuperscript{\text{2011}} Brahma-saukhyam,\textsuperscript{\text{2013}} Sāyuja, Ekāmatām,\textsuperscript{\text{2013}} Viṣṇu, \textit{Aisvarya gatim}, \textit{Yogeśvara gatim},\textsuperscript{\text{2014}} or \textit{Mad padami}, \textit{Mad gatim} or \textit{Māmeśya} as God often says, denote the realization of God in His totality, that is to say, God as saguna as well as nirguna. Atmaṁajña and Viṣṇulokam or Viṣṇupadam denote the partial knowledge about God. God is both Sagupa Brahma (Śabda Brahma) and Param Brahma.\textsuperscript{\text{2016}} In as much as the sādhaka tries to realize God in His totality, he is endowed with the greater knowledge about God. The Bhāgavatam clearly points to the total knowledge of God. It

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\textsuperscript{\text{2006}} X,41,42  
\textsuperscript{\text{2007}} X,44,39  
\textsuperscript{\text{2008}} X,66,24  
\textsuperscript{\text{2009}} IX,4,28  
\textsuperscript{\text{2010}} I,3,33-34; III,32,23  
\textsuperscript{\text{2011}} I,15,31  
\textsuperscript{\text{2012}} V,5,1  
\textsuperscript{\text{2013}} III,25,34  
\textsuperscript{\text{2014}} X,2,35  
\textsuperscript{\text{2015}} VII,10,13  
\textsuperscript{\text{2016}} VI,16,51
\end{footnotesize}
preaches to dissolve everything in \textit{Atman} and \textit{Atman in Brahman},\footnote{XI,7,9} and God calls this supreme state as 'My state' also known as \textit{Para Brahman}.\footnote{XI,20,37} The sādhaka, having attained to the transcendence of \textit{gunas}, with all his desires having been eradicated (\textit{pakvakaśāya}) through austerity and knowledge, should relentlessly identify \textit{Atman} with Brahman.\footnote{IV,28,37-38} The realization of the unity (\textit{tadātmya})\footnote{V,1,27} of \textit{Atman} and \textit{Paramātman} is the real objective of all yogas.\footnote{VI,16,63} In that state, also known as \textit{Vijñāna}, only Brahman is realized as existing in the beginning, the middle, and the end.\footnote{XI,19,15; XI,28,18} This is the state of unity of the free soul with God. Having dissolved \textit{māyā} in the realization of \textit{Atman}, the free soul further dissolves that realization in \textit{Atman – God}.\footnote{VII,13,44} This state is the \textit{Sayujya} with \textit{Para Brahma} or \textit{Mahāviśṇu}, as the Supreme Reality is variedly known.

Vira Raghava defines oneness (\textit{ekatmatām}) as the state of being similar in attributes like God; According to Visvanatha Cakravarty, it signifies the one-ness with Brahman.\footnote{AITM, FN, III,25,34} The goal of \textit{Ātmajñāna} has two realities of \textit{Atman} and \textit{Paramātman}; similarly, the goal of \textit{Viṣṇulokam} has the realities of the devotee and \textit{Mahāviśṇu} with His abode \textit{Vaikuntha}. However, \textit{Brahmapadam} or \textit{Sayujya} has two realities as its preliminary and only one reality ultimately, as \textit{Atman} along with the knowledge of \textit{Atman} is merged into \textit{Para Brahma}.\footnote{IV,28,42} The free souls merge into God just as the rivers merge in ocean losing their identity as well as distinctness.\footnote{X,87,31} It is the Supreme attainment\footnote{III,13,49} attainable by sādhaka.
Vijayadhvaja states that every higher stage is more blessed than the former. When one ultimately attains to the Supreme Self, he becomes established in perfect bliss whence there is no return.\(^{2028}\)

1. **Brahmaved Brahmaiva bhavati**:
The Śruti dictum ‘sa yo ha vai tat paramam brahmaved brahmaiva bhavati’,\(^ {2029}\) which is indicative of the ultimate non-dualism is adopted by the Bhāgavatam, too. Jāda-Bharata and many other seers\(^ {2030}\) are described as *Brahmabhūta*\(^ {2031}\) – the one who has merged in *Brahman* or *Paramātman*. Ramanuja interprets it as indicating servanthood or liegeship.\(^ {2032}\) According to Vira Raghava, to be *Brahman* is to contemplate on *Brahman*\(^ {2033}\) or to become like *Brahman* by the manifestation of some of the attributes of *Brahman*. Vijayadhvaja considers ‘*Brahmabhūta*’ as the knowledge that the knower depends on *Brahman*.\(^ {2034}\) While Vijayadhvaja also interprets it as realizing the presence of *Brahman* without any effort, Vallabha and Giridhara interpret *Brahmabhūta* as becoming one with *Brahman* through its realization.\(^ {2035}\) Arjuna is said to have attained *Brahmasampatti*. Sridhara interprets it as the knowledge of the identity of oneself with *Brahman* obtained by listening to the Vedānta. According to Vijayadhvaja, it refers to the direct (aparokṣa) apprehension of *Brahman*. Jīva Goswami interprets it as the perception of *Brahman* in human form, that is, *Kṛṣṇa*. Giridhara considers it as the realization of the identity of one’s individual self and everything else with *Brahman* (*sarvam khalvidam Brahma, aham Brahma āsmi iti Brahmātma-jñānena*).\(^ {2036}\)

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\(^{2028}\) AITM, FN, VII,15,54-55

\(^{2029}\) *Mandala Up.*, III,2,9

\(^{2030}\) V,10,6 & 8; IX,2,14-15; IX,6,54; IX,19,25

\(^{2031}\) VII,5,57; VII,9,17; V,10,6

\(^{2032}\) Plotf, p. 583

\(^{2033}\) AITM, FN, 18,26

\(^{2034}\) AITM, FN, IV,23,13

\(^{2035}\) AITM, FN, I,18,26

\(^{2036}\) AITM, FN, I,15,31

247
7. The Bhāgavatam Rises Further On:

The Bhāgavatam does not consider even Sarvajña as the final goal of sādhaka because the bliss of the service of the Lord is greater than the bliss of Brahman. Having exclusive, ceaseless and concentrated thought of God is considered as the highest blissful attainment (param padam vishpoh). Exclusive devotion to God, which is characterized as seeing Him everywhere, is alone the highest interest of man. As we know, though many free souls merge into God, some Paramahārmsas prefer to retain the identity of devotee after the attainment of the supreme knowledge of God just in order to partake of the Bliss Eternal. They do not desire any form of liberation including the union with God. This is the supreme kind of goal called Parābhakti as envisaged in the Bhāgavatam. There is no attainment higher than this.

P.N. Srinivasacarya gives an 'existential' representation of the concepts of summum bonum:

The nature of mukti is so varied in content that it cannot be exhausted by philosophic labels and formulas. Brahman is the sat without a second, but Brahmānubhava differs with different muktas and this truth brings out the uniqueness of each experience and its universality... The methods and the starting points may vary with the psychological variations of mumukṣus but the vedāntic goal is the same, namely, the intuition of Brahman, which is of the nature of supreme unsurpassable Bliss... The man of creative temperament dedicates himself to selfless service to the Lord and his devotion and prefers kīpikārya rasa to Brahmānubhava. The mystic is drawn by prema and thrilled by the touches of the alluring beauty of Brahman, which ravishes even the ascetic and dialectician, and changes the jānī or rṣis of Dandaka into the Gopīs of Vrindaban. The mumukṣu meditates on some simple quality of Brahman according
to his inclination, and even the eternal seers enjoy only one aspect of the divine nature.\footnote{PNS, pp.499ff}

7. SUMMARY:

Considering the wide spectrum of sadhakas, the Bhagavatam takes into account various notions of the final beatitude and tries to give a hierarchy of those concepts. If we take a cue from its account of the notions regarding the divine visions, liberation, Self-knowledge, the attainments with regard to the personal aspect of God, the knowledge of the Supreme Reality, and mystical union with the Supreme Reality, then, what we get is a progressive idea of the \textit{summum bonum}, which keeps updated with the changing consciousness of every sadhaka. Such an idea keeps on widening the horizons of our understanding regarding the Ultimate Reality as well as our own spiritual consciousness. The Bhagavatam often appears undecided over the nature of the final beatitude, as it is replete with the non-dualistic passages that suggest the identity of \textit{Atman} and \textit{Paramatman} as well as those eulogizing the dualistic ideal of the attainment of God’s abode. However, at several places, the Bhagavatam preaches the transcendence of both of these states.\footnote{XI,20,33-34} The concepts of the knowledge of (\textit{Atmaj\=j\=ana}) or/and identity with the Supreme Reality (\textit{Brahmaj\=j\=ana}, \textit{Brahmapadam}, or \textit{S\=ayujya}) are suggestive of the union with the Ultimate Reality – God. In the state of \textit{Brahmaj\=j\=ana} or \textit{S\=ayujya}, God is realized in His totality; in other words, He is not realized either merely as the Impersonal or as the Personal. The sadhaka loses his distinctness and identity in God.

According to the Bhagavatam, the state of union with God is not the ultimate goal. The highest order of devotees, also called the Great Swans (Paramahar\=inis), prefers to rejoice in the company of God thereby being endowed with more knowledge and devotion of God who is the repository of infinite wisdom and love. Thus, the Bhagavatam carries forward the Vedic wisdom of and love for the Absolute to the new mystical heights where the Transcendental that is beyond the ken of senses becomes the subject matter of every aspect of the devotee including the senses. The devotee would

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\textit{Ch.18: The Concepts of Liberation} \\
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indeed merge into the Supreme Reality, but prior to that, he drenches his total being into the *Rasa* of that Reality. This supreme experience is known as *Parābhakti*. 