ADVAITA-SAADHANAA

(Kanchi Maha-Swamigal's Discourses)

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ADVAITA-SAADHANAA

1. Essence of the philosophical schools

"There is a Supreme Entity as the Cause for all this universe. For us also there is the same Cause. That is what created us. We are only a finite *JIvAtmA*. But that is *ParamAtmA*, the infinite Supreme. This *JIvAtmA* has to go back to join that *ParamAtmA*. Only then this *samsAra*, the repetitive cycle of birth and death, the tortures to which this karma subjects us, and the unending turbulence in the mind will all end and we may reach the state of eternal happiness. It is that state which is called 'Release' or 'moksha'. Once we have reached it then there is no more death and there is an eternal peace".

So says Religion and it also shows us the way to reach that *ParamAtmA*. Each religious or philosophical school gives a name to that *ParamAtmA*. One school says it is 'Shiva'. Another says it is 'Vishnu'. Still another says it is 'Shakti'. Do this and this, then you can go to Kailasa where Shiva resides and that is the world of moksha, says one school. Another says that world of moksha is only Vaikuntha, the residence of Lord Vishnu. In the same way the Shakti school says moksha-world is the world of Amba, called Shri-puram. 'Moksha is the Ananda-Bhuvana where Ganesha lives' says another. 'No, it is Skanda-giri, where Subrahmanya resides'; 'Even Rama and Lakshmana did not go to Vaikuntha after they left this world, they have their own separate loka called 'Saketa'; 'Krishna has his own world of bliss, called 'Goloka' – thus the different schools of thought wax eloquent. Each one gives a methodology of worship and also mentions that the goal of all that Upasana is to reach that world of Infinite Bliss, to which they give separate names.

What would be the relationship between *JIvAtmA* and *ParamAtmA*? This is an important question raised and answered by each of the schools in its own distinct way. One school says that the *JIvAtmA* will always be distinct from the *ParamAtmA*; and in that state of moksha, the *JIvAtmA* would enjoy infinite bliss by worshipping the *ParamAtmA* with Bhakti – that is the Dvaita conclusion. Another says: Even though the *JIvAtmA* will be a separate soul doing Bhakti towards *ParamAtmA*, it will have the feeling of the *ParamAtmA* immanent in it as its soul; this is Vishishtadvaita. Still another says: When the Sun rises the stars do not lose their existence; they just disappear from view, because of the luminosity of the Sun; so also in moksha, the *JIvAtmA*, though it does not lose its existence, will have its own little consciousness submerged in the Absolute Consciousness of the *ParamAtmA* – this is the doctrine of Shaiva-siddhanta. There are still other schools of thought.

2. Advaita is different from all these.

The school of philosophy propagated by Adi Shankara Bhagavat-pada is called Advaita. It says something totally different from all the above. It discards all that talk about the *JIvAtmA* escaping from this world, from this samsara, about the *JIvAtmA* going and joining with the *ParamAtmA* and all the consequent underlying assumptions about this world and the so-called world of moksha and the relationship between the two. There is no such thing as 'this world'; it is only *mAyA*. Moksha is not a place or a world. When the Atma is released from the bondage of the mind, that is moksha. It may be right here and now. One can be 'released' even when alive, not necessarily only after death. He whom we call a *JnAni* may appear to be living in 'this world' but in reality he is in Moksha.

There is no such thing as the union of *JIvAtmA* and *ParamAtmA*. A union occurs only when there is more than one. Only when there are two any question of relationship between the two arises. In truth the *JIvAtmA* and *ParamAtmA* are not two distinct entities. Atma is one and one only. It is itself by itself; other than itself there is nothing. The Self being the Self as such is what it is. That is called by the name '*nirguna-brahman'*. However, with that Brahman as the support and at the same time hiding that very support, there appears a 'mayic' show, as if it is a magic show, in the form of this universe. The movie appears on the support of the white screen. There is no show without the screen. Still that very show hides the screen itself which is its support. The screen has in no way been affected; it is still the screen and it remains as the screen. In the case of Brahman there is an additional mystery. On one side Brahman remains as Brahman; but on the other hand, by its own *MAyA* shakti, it has become several individual *JIva*s each with a distinct inner organ

(antaH-karanam). By a proper *SAdhanA* if we can dispose of this antaH-karana, the *JIva* itself turns out to be Brahman. In other words there is no 'union' of two things called *JIvAtmA* and *ParamAtmA*. The one knows himself as the other. The same entity that does not know its own real nature thinks of itself as a *JIva*, and knows of itself as Brahman when the real nature is known. There are no two entities. It is Brahman that has the name *JIva* when there is the bondage with the mind and when the bondage is thrown off, it remains by itself as itself; thus no one gets united with some one. There is no question of relationship here. Where is the question of 'relation' of ourselves with ourselves? It is the release from this bondage that is called moksha; so there is no place for calling it a different 'world' or 'place' of moksha. This is the bottomline of advaita.

One may wonder: 'Dispose off the mind – we are ourselves Brahman. That is moksha'. This statement of advaita seems to make it all easy for us. All along, the other schools are saying that there is something higher than us, above our world, that is called a world of moksha; there is a *ParamAtmA* above us, we are only *JIvAtmA*, far below Him and we have to strive to reach His world. But advaita says there is no high, no low; we are ourselves that *ParamAtmA* and in order to reach this moksha we don't have to 'go' anywhere; right here we can have that. One may think that this should then be very easy.

3. Appears to be easy – but really, difficult

Because that is a big 'if'! 'If only, we can dispose off the mind, ..', then there is the advaita-siddhi. The difficulty is exactly there – to dispose off the mind. When our shirt loosely fits us we can take it off easily. But if the shirt is tight, the taking off might have to be made with some effort. And when we are required to take off our very outer skin, imagine how difficult it could be. Just as the skin is sticking to our body, our mind is sticking to us, but in deeper proximity! A dirty stinking sticky cloth becomes pure when the dirt, stink and stickiness are off the cloth. It is not necessary to look for another cloth. The same cloth, when the dirt, etc. are off, becomes the pure cloth. So also for our *JIva* we don't have to look for a new entity called Brahman; if we can remove the present dirt and stink of the mind, that should be enough. The same person will emerge as the pure Brahman. But that is exactly the formidable task – to remove the dirt and stink that is so deeply adhering to mind!

Mind refuses to be disposed off. What exactly is this mind? It is the instrument which creates thoughts. If the creation of thoughts stops, mind will also not be there. But we are not able to stop the creation of thoughts. All the time it is galloping to go somewhere. We go through lots

of experiences and enjoyments. We also keep seeing them; those of this birth that we know, and many more in the other births that we do not know. Each of them has left an impression in our mind. They keep running in our mind and sprout numberless thoughts. It is like the smell that persists in the bottle in which we kept spicy asafoetida. So also even after we have gone through experiences and enjoyments, their smell persists in our mind. This is what is called *VAsanA*, or *JanmAntara VAsanA* (*VAsanA* that comes from other births), or *SamskAra VAsanA*. What does it do? It keeps surfacing thoughts about that enjoyment and becomes the cause for further thoughts about how to have that experience again. These thoughts are the plans which the mind makes. This 'smell' of the past has to subside. That is what is called '*VAsanA-kshhayam'* (Death of the *VAsanA*). And that is the 'disposal of the mind'!

'Disposal' implies the 'end'. What keeps running all the time has an end when it stops running. When a large flow of water is dammed, the flow stops. In the same way when the flow of the mind is stopped, it means that is the end of the mind.

When I say mind is stilled or stopped I do not mean the staying or resting of the mind on one object. That is something different. Here when I say the mind is stopped or stilled, I mean something else. When the mind stays on some one object, it means the mind is fully occupied with that object. No other object can have then a place in the mind. Even to keep the mind still like that is certainly a difficult process. This is actually the penultimate step to 'dispose off' the mind. When a wild animal is jumping and running all around, how do you shoot it? It is difficult. But when it is made to stay at one place, we can easily shoot it. Similarly the mind that is running in all directions should be made to stay at one place in one thought. It does not mean the mind has disappeared then. No, the mind is still there. Only instead of dwelling on various things it is now full of one and only one thought. This is the prerequisite to what I call the 'disposal' of the mind. After this the mind has to be vanquished totally. That is when Realisation takes place -- Realisation of the Atman. In other words the being as a *JIva* goes and the being as Brahman sprouts.

This process of stopping the mind at one single thought and then vanquishing even that thought in order to dispose off the mind along with its roots is a Himalayan achievement. Our scriptures very often refer to "*anAdyavidyA-vAsanayA*", meaning "because of *vAsanA*s of ignorance going back to beginningless antiquity". This is the reason for the dirt of the mind being so thick and dense. Removal of that dirt is no doubt a most difficult job.

4. Moksha is by Grace of God

However, if we persist with our efforts, by the Grace of God, if not in this life, maybe in a later life, that noble of goal of Brahman-realisation, that is, the realisation that we ourselves are Brahman and being–in-Brahman happens.

Who is this God (*Ishvara*) that is bestowing this Grace on us? *JIva*s and the universe are just a show of *mAyA*, but even in that 'show' there is a lot of regularity. It is not a haphazard mad show; it is a well-enacted play. The mind, which is a part of this 'play' may be weird in its ways of dancing hither and thither, but the entire universe of the Sun and stars down to the smallest paramAnu's vibration within the atom, are all happening with a fantastic regularity. Even this mind has been stilled to silence by our great men and they have chalked out ways for us in terms of what they called Dharma , to follow their footsteps and still our minds. Further, there are thousand other things which happen according to the rules of cause and effect that our ancestors have discovered and left as a heritage for us. The affairs of this universe are happening in spite of us according to some schedule chalked out for them so that we may live in peace. If we observe all this carefully, maybe from the absolute point of view everything is a *MAyA* but in the mundane world of daily parlance, there is an admirable order that must have been initiated or chalked out by a very powerful force, far more powerful than all the powers that we know. That power is what is called *Ishvara* (God).

It is Brahman that, in association with *MAyA* – even the words 'in association with' are wrong; for Brahman does no work and so does not 'associate' itself with anything; so we should more precisely say 'appearing to be in association with' – is the *Ishvara* that monitors and manages both the universe and the *JIva*s. It is in His control all this world of *JIva*s rolls about. When that is so, for us to transcend this curtain of *MAyA*, and to get out also of His control so that we may realise the Brahman that is the core of Him as well as us, is not possible without the sanction of that power, namely *Ishvara*. In other words only by the Grace of *Ishvara* can our mind be overcome and Brahman-realisation can happen.

In this mAyic world, the dispenser of the fruits for all our actions is this *Ishvara*. What fruits go with what actions – is all decided by *Ishvara*. Every single action of ours has a consequence and the dispenser of this consequence is the same *Ishvara*. It is this cycle of actions and the cycle of the fruits of our actions that result in our revolving recurrence of new and newer lives. Only when karma stops may we ever hope to become the karma-less brahman. What prompts the *JIva* to be involved in karma

is the mind. It is by the prompting and urging of the mind that we do action. So action will stop only if the mind stops . But the mind refuses to stop. How can a thing destroy itself by itself? Can a gun shoot itself out of existence? So what the mind can do is only this: In the total agony of anticipation of its own death, it has to keep thinking all the time about the *JIva*-Brahma-Aikyam that would happen after its (mind's) death. This is what '*nidhidhyAsana*' means. It has to be done with great persistence. The essence of advaita-*SAdhanA* is this kind of persistent thinking. Of course this is also 'action'. Walking is the action of the legs. Eating is the action of the mouth. Thinking is action of the mind.

I just now said that all actions are carefully watched by *Ishvara* and it is He who dispenses the fruits of actions. He also watches this 'thinking action', namely the *nidhidhyAsana*. When we do this persistently and sincerely, He decides at some point that this person has done the *nidhidhyAsana* sufficiently enough to destroy his balance of karma and dispenses His Grace that will kill the mind that has been always struggling to establish our individuality that shows this *JIva* to be distinct from Brahman.

This is the meaning of the statement that by God's Grace one gets Realisation of Brahman. That does not mean however that God waits and calculates whether we have done enough *SAdhanA* to get our karma from all our past lives exhausted. If He does so then that should not be called 'His Grace'! A mechanical calculation like a trader to balance the positive and negative side of our work does not deserve the name of Grace. Love, sympathy, compassion, forgiving and allowing for marginal errors – only these will constitute what is termed as Grace, or '*anugraha*'.

The word '*anugraha*' may also be interpreted as follows. The prefix 'anu' stands for concordance or conformity; also continuance. The word 'graha' connotes a catching up. When we try to catch up with the Lord by following or conforming with His attributeless nature, by the same principle of conformity He comes and catches us up. That is '*anugraha*'. The mind of us, instead of being steadfast in its work of 'catching up' with the Lord, may also run away from Him. Even then the Lord's Grace follows us and makes us 'catch up'. That is '*anugraha*'. Here catching up with the Lord includes both the *MAyA*-associated Almighty and also the attributeless Brahman which is not associated with any *MAyA*. We may be subject to the whims and fancies of *MAyA* but He is in total control of it. So even when He 'does' so many activities under the guise of *MAyA*, He is always the actionless Brahman . Thus even if we aim at the *MAyA*-associated almighty, he absorbs us into the Brahman that has no trace of *MAyA*.

It is actually a running race between *Ishvara* and the *JIva*. The *JIva* tries to catch up with *Ishvara*. But *Ishvara* thinks it unfair to grant the Realisation of Brahman to this *JIva* 'who has so much balance of karma'. And the *JIva* having failed to catch up gives up the attempt and allows itself to be carried away by all worldly distractions. That is the time when *Ishvara* follows him with compassion and makes the 'catching-up' possible. But this compassionate easing up is done in a subtle way. It turns the mind towards spiritual matters; that is what it means for *Ishvara* to 'catch up'. At the same time it is done so gradually that the full 'catching up' of the *JIva* with *Ishvara* does not happen before the time for it is due. To that extent *Ishvara* 'slips' away. But that itself makes the *JIva* fall headlong into the bottomless pit of sin and again the compassionate grip of *Ishvara* tightens. This tightening and loosening goes on and on until the *JIva* fills up its mind fully with *Ishvara* and nothing else. And that is the time for the consummation of the '*anugraha*'.

The Lord is called '*karma-phala-dAtA*' – the dispenser of the fruits of actions. Like the decision of a judge He has every right to be very strict in His dispensation of justice. When He does so, we have no right to fault Him for His strictness. But He does not do it that way. He very often condones our failings with His supreme compassion. He is neither too strict nor too lenient in His dispensation of justice. When the supreme-most status is granted to us it is not fair to expect Him to grant it without any concern whether the grantee deserves it well enough. Justice may be tempered by mercy but it cannot go to the extent of denial of justice. In all these, it does not stop with just doling out the punishment for the karma done. It is in fact supplemented by the process of destruction of all pending karma, end of the mind and finally the benefit of Brahman-realisation. With such a prospect, the condoning or forgiving nature of *Ishvara* cannot be expected to go too far!

5. Takes time but effort has to be started.

There are two categories: '*JnAnavAn*' and '*JnAni*'. Both are above the level of any ordinary human being. A *JnAnavAn*, by learning and hearing, has convinced himself that the Atma that is called JivAtmA is nothing but Brahman itself, and is trying hard to bring that knowledge into one's own experience. A *JnAni* on the other hand has gone to that peak of realisation of that knowledge as own experience. The *JnAnavan* who is making efforts to have that Brahman-realisation 'reaches Me', says the Lord, 'only at the end of several births' (**bahUnAM janmanAm ante jnAnavAn mAM prapadyate**) (B.G. VII – 19). Here 'reaches Me' means he attains the consummation of the realisation that Atman is Brahman). At

another place (B.G. VI – 45) He says: **aneka-janma-samsiddhis-tato yAti parAm gatiM** -- meaning, slowly graduates to perfection only by several births. Even this attainment of Realisation after several births happens only by His Graceful Hand that lifts us up. Otherwise the '*bahu*' of (VII – 19) and the '*aneka*' of (VI – 45) will be several times larger!

The reason is: The goal is great and grand. 'To become Brahman' is something really great. But the one who wants to win that high prize is so small! Naturally it has to take several several life-times. Just to conquer another kingdom like his own a king has to make elaborate preparations for war. When that is so, for a small man to win over the kingdom of brahman-realisation, he has to take enormous efforts. It is the kingdom of the Atman that the *JIva* is set out to conquer!

From one point of view the whole matter appears simple. We are not aiming for the kingdom of heaven in Vaikuntha or Kailasa which are far away from us. What we are aiming at is to know ourself, to know what is within us. Just to be what we are is the goal. There should not be any difficulty here; because we are being asked to be what we are and nothing more. When it is said that way it looks simple. But when we attempt it we come to know there is nothing more difficult than this *SAdhanA*. It is like walking on razor's edge, says the Katha Upanishad. But don't lose heart, adds the Upanishad. Wake up, there are excellent teachers to guide you. Even if it be razor's edge you can walk on it and come out successful! Thus the Upanishads speak of the difficulties of the path but also give you the path. The Guru's Guru of our Acharya has also talked of these in very formidable terms. "Advaita is the only fearless state. Even great yogis fear to tread that path. It requires that fantastic effort of emptying the waters of the ocean by using blades of grass, soaking them in the water and shaking the water off from the ocean. Only by such unceasing effort can the mind empty itself of all its thoughts and be in the Atman."

Note: This is from Mandukya Karika: III-39, 41

At the same time what we learn from this is that to be the real Self instead of the false Self it is so difficult. The false self is the mind, a creation of *MAyA*. The real Self is the Truth that is Brahman.

It may take many life-times; it may be very difficult and long. But the effort has to start right now. The more you postpone it, the life-cycle will get more extended. Suppose we don't start this ascent of the spiritual ladder now. What do you think will happen? We will be continuing to commit further sinful activities and these will accumulate more and more dirt and trash in the mind. More life-times have to be spent. That is why

I said the effort has to start rightaway, in order to escape from this life-cycle.

I said just now 'escape from this life-cycle'; I also said 'efforts have to be done'. These two together constitute the definition of *SAdhanA*. Instead of doing certain things in a haphazard fashion as and when the mood or the occasion arises, those great ancestors of ours who have reached the goal have prescribed for us specific methodologies for us. To walk that path is what is called *SAdhanA*.

6. ***SAdhana-set-of-four : The path chalked out by Acharya***

With great compassion our Acharya Shankara Bhagavat-pAda has mapped out a *SAdhanA*-kramaM (the methodology of *SAdhanA*) towards the goal of advaita. Whatever he has done is only according to the Shruti (the Vedas). The body of the Vedas has a head and that is the Upanishads. They are called 'shruti-shiras', meaning 'the head for the body of Upanishads'. The lofty edifice of *SAdhanA* that the Acharya has built for us has these Upanishads as its base.

What he has chalked out is a *SAdhanA* program, called '*SAdhana-chatushTayaM*' (the four-part *SAdhanA*). In his monumental work of Brahma Sutra Bhashya right in the beginning, in his commentary on the first sutra where he explains 'After what shall we embark on the enquiry of Brahman?', he starts with 'nitya-anitya-vastu-vivekaH' and mentions the four parts of this *chatushTayaM*.

Just as his Sutra-Bhashya is at the top of all his scriptural commentaries, so is the Viveka-Chudamani at the top of all his expository works called prakaranas. And there he has given very good definitions of the four parts of *Saadhana-chatushhTayaM*.

sAAdhanAny-atra chatvAri kathitAni manIshhibhiH /
yeshhu satsveva sannishhTA yad-abhAve na siddhyati // (Verse 18)

This is how he begins. 'To hold firm to the Real absolute is impossible without these four means' – so says he emphatically. Only when these four are accomplished, there will happen a hold on the Real absolute. (*yeshhu satsu eva sannishhTA*). If these four are observed, there is success; otherwise not. These have been enunciated by *manIshis*.

Who are these *manIshis*? Ordinarily we are all manushyas, that is, persons. Among us, those who are learned in the *shAstras*, and who can distinguish between right and wrong and who observe all ethical, moral

and religious standards are manIshis. "*SAdhana-chatushTayaM*" is what has been chalked out by them. This is how the Acharya introduces the subject in his Viveka-chudamani.

There is another prakarana of the Acharya called "*aparokshAnubhUti*". '*aparokshha*' means 'direct'. In place of somebody else telling you that the Self is Brahman, or instead of learning it from books, if it is a fact of one's own experience, that is '*aparokshAnubhUti*'. That prakarana book also talks of these four means. There is another elementary first book called 'Bala-bodha-sangrahaM'. Even there he talks about this *Saadhana-chatushhTayaM*.

In the Tanjore Mahal Library there is a book called '*Saadhana-chatushhTaya-sampatti*', whose author is not known. '*sampatti*' means a treasure, wealth. This *SAdhanA* is itself a great treasure for us.

The word '*chatushhTayaM*' means an integrated four-fold formation. Though there are four, the third part of these, namely '*samAdhi-shhatka-sampatti*' has itself six parts in it; just as the one part called 'head' has within itself several parts called ear, eyes, nose, mouth, etc. Thus the four-fold formation has, included within itself, six parts in one of its parts, and so we have actually nine steps in our *SAdhanA* regimen. I have gathered you all here to tell you about these nine steps.

But note. These nine steps are not steps of a staircase where you go from step 1 to step 2 and from step 2 to step 3 and so on. The analogy should not be carried that way. It is like our studying Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry in the lower class and then when we go to a higher class we study all of them once again but now more intensively and extensively. And when you go to college, you concentrate in one of them as your 'main' subject and study the others as an auxiliary subject. In our *SAdhanA* regimen also we learn the basics of all of them in the beginning and then in due time give each a special attention as we go along. Another analogy is what a housewife does in the kitchen. She is cooking several things, she makes the preparatory work for almost all of them, has more than one thing on her several stoves, and gives the necessary attention to each one of them at the right time almost simultaneously. Even in our eating, we drink something, we chew something, we swallow something, we have something to go with something else, and each one of us has a different order in which we consume different types of food. So also in the *SAdhanA* regimen, what is a side instrument at one time becomes the main instrument on another occasion and for another purpose. Thus the different parts of the *SAdhanA* come in mixed fashion and at different stages come singly also.

After all that I must add the fact that there is, globally, some sequence of the different parts. The rock bottom beginning is to learn about *Atma-vidyA*. Even that has to be learnt properly from a guru. It is the guru's grace and blessings that prompts one to go the right path. Secondly the teaching of the guru must be firmly established in one's mind. And lastly, what has been retained by the mind should now be brought into one's nature and experience.

7. *Preliminary to JnAna: Karma and Bhakti*.

There is another set of three: karma, bhakti and *jnAna*. The advaita *SAdhanA* that the Acharya has taught us is the path of *jnAna*. But the person who wants to go in this path must have purified his mind to such an extent that he should have the capability of one-pointedness (**ekAgratA**); only then he can traverse the path of *jnAna*. If the mind is full of dirt it cannot go the path of *JnAna-SAdhanA*. For *jnAna*-yoga the mind has to become one-pointed; a vacillating and vibrating mind cannot hold on to anything.

It is for these twin tasks of purification of mind and of making it one-pointed that the Acharya has prescribed karma and bhakti as preliminary to *jnAna* yoga. The prerequisite to starting *jnAna* yoga are karma yoga and bhakti yoga.

The barren land of the mind has to be tilled through karma yoga and then watered through bhakti yoga. Without this tilling and watering, nothing can be made to grow in that barren land of the mind.

When one keeps on doing his *svadharma*, meticulously and according to the *shAstras*, the impurities of the mind slowly disappear.

When our mind becomes one-pointed in its devotion to the Lord, this training in one-pointedness towards one form leads it to do the one-pointed enquiry into the formless Atman.

Thus when the mind is purified by karmayoga and gets the habit of one-pointedness by bhakti yoga, it can easily ascend the steps of *jnAna* yoga.

Of course I have said it easily; purification of mind by karma and one-pointedness by bhakti. But none of these things would seem to happen if one does not know what the right karma is and what the right bhakti is.

8. ShraddhA (Faith) Necessary

Therefore let me warn you rightaway. All this is going to be a slow process. It will take a long time to see progress. So let no one despair. The feeling that 'nothing is happening' may always be there. 'Maybe I am not capable of achieving anything on the spiritual effort' – is the frequent thought that may appear. Don't despair or give up.

Where there is a will there is a way. Efforts will not go waste. Keep going with all your efforts, persistently. Don't worry about the time it takes. In due time, you will see the signs of progress and will also reach the destination. Faith is the fundamental requisite. That is what they mean by '*shraddhA*. 'The Lord will never forsake us. The path shown by the *shAstras* and the Guru will never go unproductive'. It is that strong conviction that goes by the name of *shraddhA*.

Whenever we say that someone has done this with *shraddhA*, we mean it has been done with the whole heart, most sincerely. In fact the sincerity has come from that faith which is implied in the *shraddhA*.

Whenever we have a direct proof, there is no question of 'faith' coming in. But many of the things which religious books talk about do not have this kind of 'direct proof'. Indeed some of them may be the exact opposite. 'Punya (Meritorious action) results in good and sin results in bad' is a statement that every religion adheres to. However, what we see right before us in the world is the sight of the suffering of people who do good and that of the happy living of those who do evil actions. To this our Hindu *shAstras* say: 'You should not expect the results of good and bad actions in this one life itself. The consequences will be had only in the course of several lives of the individual. If a sinner is happy today and if a good man suffers today, it only means that the sinner has done something good in his previous lives and similarly that good man must have done something evil in his previous lives'. There is no way to 'prove' this. This is where 'faith', that is, '*shraddhA* becomes necessary. In the same way several other things have to be agreed to only by our *shraddhA*.

In ordinary parlance we talk of believers and disbelievers (*aastikas* and *naastikas*). An *aastika* does not mean simply that he agrees that God exists. Just by accepting that there is an ultimate power which is the source for everything, one does not go very far. 'Believing' (*aastikyaM*) is far more than that. That Ultimate Power is watching all our thoughts and actions and is meting out results accordingly; in His compassion He is constantly directing us, through the various scriptures, to do good; and, to boot, He is often sending His messiahs (Acharyas) to show us the

right path; and therefore we have to follow these Acharyas and the Shastras that they communicate to us; only then we can reach the Absolute. A faith in all this constitutes *aastikyaM* or Believing. So *ShraddhA* is what makes you a believer. In Chandogya Upanishad (vii.19) it is said that only he who has *shraddhA* will do the enquiry into Atman; and our Acharya in commenting on this, says '*ShraddhA* is nothing but *aastikya buddhi*'. In other words, *ShraddhA* is the faith in all the above.

Let me dare say here that the westerners have gone one step ahead of us in this matter. The word for religion in our language is 'matam'. It means 'what is obtained by the intellect'. When the intellect researches on a maxim and convinces itself by elaborate inquiry, it arrives at a 'matam'. Also when we cannot 'prove' something, but great men and *shAstras* have accepted that something and therefore it must be right – Such a faith is also 'matam'. But the real meaning of 'matam' is that conviction which arises from the intellect that is convinced by reason – not by another's word. The latter means of conviction is what *ShraddhA* means. On the other hand the English people call 'religion' itself as 'faith'. They have given that much importance to faith, in matters of religion. In later times of course, they started giving importance to 'reason' in matters of religion also – and also pulled us into the same pattern of thinking. But in earlier times they thought of faith in the scriptures as religion, 'matam' and must have used the word 'Faith' for 'religion' in that manner.

ShraddhA is most important. We shall come back to this topic much later. In the peak stages of advaita *SAdhanA*, there will come a stage when *shraddhA* will have to be talked about more formally. What we are now talking is only a simple plant which will grow into a grand tree of Shraddha with deeper roots, in that peak stage of discussion. But remember. It is this plant that has to grow into that big tree. When we learn to dive into the depths of the ocean, first we have to stay near the shore and learn to hold our breath under water just for a short time. But in due time we learn to dive into deeper waters and also collect gems from the bottom of the sea. The *shraddhA* that we are talking now is like learning to swim in shallow waters near the shore. The *ShraddhA* that will come later is like diving deep to gather pearls and gems.

I note a coincidence of language here. The word 'pearl' ('muttu' in Tamil) is of significance. The Sanskrit word 'mukta' means 'the released one'. The Tamil equivalent is 'muttar'. And that is very near to 'muttu'. The concept of 'release' is there in both the Sanskrit 'mukta' and Tamil 'muttu'. Muttu is what is released by by being pryed out of the shell of a pearl oyster; and a 'mukta' is the one who gets his release from the cycle of births and deaths. Well, that was a digression.

Just as the collection of a pearl from the deep sea is a goal, the goal of *mukti* has '*ShraddhA*' as one of the important requisites in the last stages of the ascent to *mukti*. But the *ShraddhA* we are talking about now is what is required in the very beginning of the ascent.

So let us begin the ascent with *ShraddhA*. Let the start be made with *ShraddhA*. The Vedas and Upanishads have recommended it; Lord Krishna has confirmed it in the Gita and our own Acharya has elaborated it with all accessories. Following all these we shall surely aim to reach that stage of Brahma-anubhava, the being-in-brahman.

The start has to be with karma and bhakti; then only *jnAna*. Our mind is like a mirror, covered by lot of dirt and at the same time it is not steady, it is vibrating. So in this kind of mind, nothing of spiritual value reflects. The dirt has to be washed off by repeated performances of rightful karma. The vibration has to be stopped by continuous observance of bhakti. Only then will the mind be both steady and pure and that is the mind wherein things of spiritual wisdom will reflect. [And the Swami says smiling]:Then we will also be equipped to 'reflect' on them!

9. Eligibility for Aatma-SAdhanA

Let us not forget one thing. The regimen for Atma-*SAdhanA* is to be undertaken only after the dirt in the mind and its vacillation have been removed. This is what our Acharya has prescribed. It is to eradicate this dirt and shakiness of the mind that karma and bhakti have been prescribed. He says so clearly that *SAdhana*-chatushTayam is only for him who has crossed this barrier of dirty and vacillatory mind.

**sva-varNAshrama-dharmeNa tapasA hari-toshhaNAt /*
*SAdhanAM prabhavet pumsAM vairAgyAdi chatushhTayaM //**
(Aproksha-anubhUti: 3)

It is 'sva-varNAshrama-dharmaM' (the dharma of one's own varNa and own Ashrama) that is the karma-yoga of the individual. 'Hari-toshhaNaM' is the satisfaction of Hari, the Lord. In fact all our actions (karmas) are to be done for the satisfaction of the Lord (**Ishvara*-prItyarthaM*). It is not necessary to do a separate pUjA (worship, propitiation). According to the Gita, to dedicate one's *svadharma*-karma is itself bhakti. In Acharya's 'Sopana-panchakam' (also known as Upadesha-panchakam) (first shloka) he says "Do your *svadharma*-karma well and consider that as the puja done to *Ishvara*". However, to do it that way, that is, to have the attitude that all our actions are actually a propitiation to the Lord, is not such an easy task; and so bhakti has also been prescribed as a

distinct loving worship of *Ishvara*. Karma is for purification of the mind and bhakti is for obtaining the one-pointedness of mind towards God. It is bhakti that is called 'hari-toshhaNaM' here. 'Hari' does not just mean Vishnu only. Every time when we say 'HariH OM' the 'Hari' means saguNa-brahman that denotes all possible deities.

That is what it means here also. The word 'toshhaNaM' means 'to give satisfaction' or 'to generate contentment'. If we show bhakti towards Bhagavan, He gets satisfaction and contentment that 'this child of mine is coming back to good ways'. So 'Hari-toshhaNaM' means 'bhakti-yoga'. The above quotation adds a 'tapasA' to '*svadharma*' and 'hari-toshhaNaM'. 'tapas' need not be a third. The '*svadharma*' and 'hari-toshhaNaM' have both to be done as a penance (tapas), with the whole heart, regardless of any physical discomfort. Only for such of those who do this will *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*' be possible and be acceptable. That is what "*SAdhanA*M chatushTayaM prabhavet" means. Only after graduating from school you go to college. So also, he says: 'First you purify your mind; make your mind capable of one-pointedness. Graduate from this and then come to me for admission to my college. Then you can step into the process of Enquiry into the Atman. Further up the ladder you can do the Enquiry more deeply. And still further on the question of its becoming an experience will arise. It is as if one finishes college, then goes to the master's level and then on to the doctorate. In other words it is actually only after one gets Sannyasa".

This should not be taken to mean that one should not go anywhere near Atma-vidya unless he has completely purified his mind and obtained one-pointedness. If that stage has really been reached, there would be no more necessity to have any elaborate Atma-*SAdhanA* or regimen. The mind will then be ready to firmly establish itself in the teaching of the Guru and Realisation will be almost automatic. The Acharya has not taken all the pains to elaborate the methodlogy of the *SAdhanA* ChatushhTayaM to such a highly evolved person. If we understand him right, it is only this: A pure mind and the capability to be one-pointed are surely basic to a certain extent; with that basic equipment, one should read the *shAstra*s and enter the kingly path of the *SAdhanA*. Only then he can make real progress. Otherwise he will only be touching the fringes and have a false feeling that he knows everything.

The Buddhists said that they have opened the gates to all; but what happened thereafter was seen by the Acharya. That is why he prescribed that only those with preliminary qualifications can make real progress in Atma-*SAdhanA*a.

There are people who say: "Every one is fit to carry on advaita-*SAdhanA*. No prerequisites are necessary. After all it is about learning about the truth of oneself by oneself. Why are qualifications necessary to become ourselves? It is enough to have the urge to know oneself. By the tempo of that urge, once we discard our mind then that is all that is needed to have Realisation. Self-Realisation is every one's birthright. No qualifications need to be prescribed". Maybe some of these people who proclaim this are really true *JnAni*s who know. And some who follow them even if they be young, be a householder, be in business-like professions, be a westerner, could have done the Atma Vichara with real fervour and single-minded dedication and could have obtained clarity of *jnAna*. But even among these who speak of such things and who listen to such things there may be possibly one or two percent who have really attained the Realisation. They read a lot of Vedanta topics, they are smart, and they have thought for long about Atman and the Vedantic knowledge; and they can construct beautiful arguments for what they say, present papers, submit theses and so on. When one looks at all these one is amazed and one feels that they are really Enlightened *JnAni*s. But in truth, among such talkers and claimers there may be one in thousand who have really SEEN what they claim to have seen! The real ones who have SEEN it usually don't talk about it, like Dakshinamurti. For the welfare of the world (*lokAnugrahArthaM*) the Lord Isvara Himself prompts a few like our Acharya to talk and write about Atma Vidya.

Certainly there may be rare ones who may have directly obtained Realisation, without really renouncing in due manner, due manner meaning, proper observance of *svadharma* and then of bhakti yoga, and then embarking upon the deep study of Atma-VidyA. But they cannot say that others also can do what they have done. What they have obtained is by their prior samskara and that has given them the necessary spiritual qualification in their previous lives itself and in this life they have the Grace of God in full. Such people are not the ordinary run of people. Maybe the Acharya himself would give them only very special treatment for spiritual uplift. But when the Acharya writes or talks to all humanity for their general good, he writes only keeping in mind the ordinary run of people and therefore he talks about karma yoga and bhakti yoga as prerequisites to Atma *SAdhanA*.

Accordingly he has chalked out the four-fold regimen of *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*. First with a purified and one pointed mind study the Shastras, find out what is eternal and what is ephemeral, use discretion to accept and reject, and go on until the state of 'mumukshutA' being the only breath. This itself is not the end of it. The final end of all this

graduation through bachelor's and master's degrees ends when the PhD of 'MumukshutA' leads him on to the final Realisation.

10. Apex of Saadhanaa is only for the sannyAsi !

MumukshhutvaM -- the yearning for moksha – is the end of the second stage. The first stage is that of eradicating the mind's dirt and vacillation by karma and bhakti. *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM* is the second stage. The *SAdhanA*s remove mostly all the defective vAsanAs and perturbations adhering in the mind; if at all there are any that may be only five or ten percent.

It is in such a circumstance that the moksha-seeker (mumukshhu) feels he has only one work to do, namely to get the Release. So he renounces his home and possessions, takes Sannyasa and goes to the third stage. In other words, the Acharya's conclusion is, in that last stage, it is the Sannyasi that has the right qualifications for Atma-*SAdhanA*. Having renounced all attachments, bondage and worldly obligations, Atma-vichara (Enquiry into the Atman) becomes his whole-time job. It is only for such a seeker that the most blissful gift of Realisation of Brahman happens. That is the maxim of the Acharya, as also confirmed by the Upanishads.

Thus, in that third stage, he takes Sannyasa under a proper Guru, gets his upadesha of the mantra which tells him about the identity of *JIva* and Brahman, constantly rolls it in his mind, and in due time even that thought process stops and he comes to be in union with his own aim, namely the Great Experience of Brahma-anubhava. This is the prescription of the Acharya.

Some do ask: "The Acharya himself has said that the teaching of the maha-vakyas that proclaim the identity of *JIva* and Brahman is only for the Sannyasi. On the other hand how come the Sama Veda maha-vakya was taught to the Brahmachari Svetaketu by his father?"

The Vedas, in each of its branches (ShAkhAs) has one Upanishad in which there is a *mahAvAkya* that proclaims the identity of *JIva*-Brahman. From 1008 branches that were there originally, we have come down to only seven ShAkhAs that are still extant, glowing like little torches. Though every shAkhA has a *mahAvAkya*, traditionally we resort to four mahavakyas corresponding to the four vedas, for purposes of giving initiation to new Sannyasis. Accordingly in Rigveda the *mahAvAkya* occurring in Aitareya Upanishad does not mention who taught it to whom. But it occurs at the end of the Upanishad revealed by

a Rishi called Mahidasa Aitareya. Just from what has been said in the penultimate mantras and from the previous chapter where it is said that even as he was in the womb the Rishi Vamadeva had obtained Brahma-*jnAna*, we can infer that this *mahAvAkya* has been sparked from his intuition to Vamadeva by God's Grace. In other words it has been taught to a Brahma-*JnAni* by *Ishvara* Himself. Therefore it appears fair to conclude that it is to be taught only to a Sannyasi, namely one of the fourth Ashrama.

The *mahAvAkya* of the Yajurveda occurs in the first chapter of Brihad-Aranyaka-Upanishad in what is called Purusha-vidha-brAhmaNaM. It says: "whatever Rishis or Devas saw it in their experience as declared in this *mahAvAkya*, they all became Brahman" and then gives one name, namely, Vamadeva. Therefore again one may conclude that this *mahAvAkya* also was sparked into the intuition of the Guru Vamadeva, who was a *JnAni*, and therefore those eligible to receive this teaching are only Sannyasis.

The *mahAvAkya* of the atharva-veda occurs in MANDUkya-Upanishad. In the Upanishad called Muktikopanishad, Shri Rama teaches Hanuman that this one Upanishad (MANDUkya-Upanishad) is enough for a seeker of Moksha to obtain Moksha. Thus this *mahAvAkya* also is to be taught only to Sannyasis.

The question now is only about the *mahAvAkya* occurring in Sama-Veda. The objectionists are raising only this. Of the four mahavakyas this is the only one which is directly taught to a disciple by a Guru. Naturally it gets a special status. And that disciple is a youth, a Brahmachari. Not a sannyasi. Hence the objection: "How come a teaching that was offered to a 24-year old Brahmachari, is being recommended to be taught only to Sannyasis?"

The point is not about 'young' or 'old'. The point is about the attainment of spiritual maturity. Generally that maturity comes only to one who has gone through the ups and downs of life and who has observed faultless karma yoga all through. That is why the Acharya prescribed, as a general rule, that the teaching of the *mahAvAkya* is to be done at the time one is initiated into Sannyasa. In worldly parlance, they set a minimum age, like fourteen or fifteen, for graduation from school; but however, there are some 'prodigies' who are considered brighter than even a B.A. or M.A. even when they are seven or eight. On this account does it mean that the general rule is wrong? Every rule has its exception. Even the general rule of minimum age for high school graduation is exempted for very bright students. So also the rule that only a Sannyasi is eligible for Brahma-Vidya has been exempted for that Samaveda boy,

Shvetaketu. First he studied under his own father, then went over for twelve years of study under other gurus and then came back with his collar high up! When such proud individuals get the shock of a setback of their pride they go to the other extreme of total modesty and are prepared to do the full *SharaNAgati*! Nothing can beat the circumstance of a good and scholarly man when he reaches a stage of defeat where he realises that all his intelligence and scholarship are of no value in the face of real experience. And that is when he dedicates himself totally. That is what happened to that Samaveda boy before his father who put to nought his high opinion of his scholarship and sparked him to spiritual heights of intuition. That is when he was given the upadesha of the *mahAvAkya*. This should not be shown as a precedent for the claim that the upadesha of the *mahAvAkya* should apply to all.

The Brahmasutra (III – 4 – 17) gives a rule for the study of Atma-VidyA: Eligibility is only for *'Urdva-retasis'*. Who are they? They are the ones who have not wasted their energy in sensual-experience but have conserved all of it for the uplift of their spirituality. The one who has thus destroyed his lust will become a Sannyasi. Even as a boy one may be as pure as fire to such an extent that later the thought of kAma never arises in him; such a person can be given Sannyasa-Diksha and the knowledge of non-difference between *JIva* and Brahman may certainly be formally given to him. Our Acharya himself belonged to this category. And that tradition of giving Sannyasa to young Brahmacharis has also been established by him for some of his mutts.

At a town called Shribali, a father brought to him a boy who was totally inert to everything and prayed that the Acharya should relieve him of his 'disease'of inertness. But the Acharya was able to see the maturity behind that inert silence of the 'patient'!. He gave Sannyasa to the boy and kept him with himself. This is the famous Hastamalaka, one of his four prime disciples. Again, younger and much smarter than our Sama Veda child, there was a seven-year old who dared argue with the Acharya himself. How can some one win our Acharya in argument? But the point is not about who won or who lost. The fact was the newcomer was so full of modesty after the event and actually surrendered to the Acharya. The Acharya gladly accepted him as disciple, gave him the Sannyasa-Diksha, and also gave the name 'SarvajnAtman'. I am saying all this in order to point out that the Acharya who was very regulatory did loosen his regulations in the case of extraordinary individuals. The Sama Veda boy we were talking about, though he was just twenty-four and full of youth, did have the maturity to deserve the teaching of the *mahAvAkya* and that was why the Rishi gave the Upadesha to him.

Citing cases of exceptions and asking for withdrawal of regulations in all cases is not right. Vidhura, of the Mahabharata, when looked at from the way he was born, would not be eligible to receive jnAnopadesha; but he was a *JnAni*. Dharma-vyAdha was running a butcher shop; still he had *jnAna* alright. The Acharya himself cites these cases in his Sutra-bhashya (I – 3 – 38) and says these are cases that happened because of the Samskara in earlier lives. In the previous lives one gets good spiritual maturiy, but is born again because of some tiny fault; however the maturity of the previous life sticks on to him and very soon he reaches an advanced stage in the spiritual ladder. Such persons are very rare. They cannot form our model for making the general rule.

The general run of people whose Samskara is rather dubious are to do Karma yoga only. This is the rule. Even to carry on the karma yoga properly they will find it difficult. To burden them with an impossible sense-control, and control of the mind that are needed for *jnAna* yoga is of no use.

That is why the third stage

[Note by VK: The *SAdhana-chatushTayaM* is the second stage].

in the Advaita-*SAdhanA* is prescribed only for those of the fourth Ashrama (Sannyasa) who has already thrown off all his obligations of karma and has totally dedicated himself to the enquiry of *jnAna*. Only if one throws off the burdens that make one run around for the family establishment, the responsibility of feeding oneself or the household and also the bondage of relatives as well as of money and position and sit whole time as a Sannyasi for the purpose of Atma-Vichara, -- only then can one eradicate the inner burden of thoughts and also wash off the long-lasting dirt and moss of the mind. Upto a certain stage the composites of right action, *svadharma* and obligatory duties do help to wash off this old dirt; but after a stage they themselves become a potential for further dirt and moss of the mind. They stick to one's mind and prevent the mind from losing itself in eternal peace. When we wash sticky and dirty vessels don't we apply tamarind and earth on them and even allow them to stay there for some time? But even they are ultimately rinsed off and only then the vessels become bright and pure. In the same way, the karma that helps to purify should themselves be eradicated in full in order for the inner organ (*antahkaraNaM*) to become pure and crystal clear. That is exactly what Sannyasa means. After one becomes a Sannyasi, the inner activities have also to stop and give relief. Activity means peacelessness. Total peace is an ocean of bliss; one should dissolve in it and be Brahman. That is immutable peace. If it is possible to reach that state from our present state of perturbation and

restlessness, then is it not our duty to put in the maximum possible effort for it? If we don't, then we are only duds, whatever position or status we hold in whichever field it may be.

11. Why then tell others,what is suitable only for Sannyaasis?

I might have named you a dud, but you may raise the question: "How is it right to call us a dud without understanding reality? Talking without any concern for actual state of today's world – how is it proper?" One may also think "Eternal Peace is of course very tempting. But to attempt it in the third stage if one is required to don the ochre robe of Sannyasa, it is not practical. We are not ready for it, nor do we have the maturity for it. To obtain Peace one is asked to run away from all relationships, household and profession. But there is always the lurking fear about what will happen if one runs away from all this; that fear itself will take away all the peace that one is after. In the context of our bondages of desires and attachment how can we do justice to the Ashrama of a Sannyasi? Will it not end up in a mess? And being in that Ashrama, every fault will be a major sacrilege. By taking up Sannyasa now itself and attempting to live by it is only equivalent to cheating ourselves by ourselves. And the Swami who recommends all this to us is not such a dud as to think that we can live a Sannyasi's life and do Atma vichara all the time. Then why does he insist on our sitting here and keep listening to his lectures?" In other words, you are asking why I am telling all and sundry what is only applicable to Sannyasis and to those mature ones who are capable of Sannyasa and are willing to take it up.

12. Two different paths for two different aspirants

Your question is legitimate. *JnAna* teachings may be done in abundance, conferences on advaita may be held in plenty, books on the subject may be published in cheap editions as well as for free distribution – all these paraphernalia may draw large crowds certainly, and the books may be in high demand, but finally those who actually carry the teachings in practice will be few and far between. "One in a thousand makes the attempt; and even among them a rare one persists and succeeds" says Bhagavan Himself. That is His play of *MAyA*! Except for those rare ones whose good samskara from previous lives is really strong all others are just unable to think

seriously of getting themselves out of the rut of worldly activities and of the pulls and pushes of the mind.

Therefore the Lord distinguishes two categories of people in the Gita and calls one of them eligible to do only karma and demarcates the other to be eligible to go the *jnAna* path. Not only that. He says clearly it is not He who has now made this distinction, but it has been there ever since ancient times, by the use of the words "*purA proktA*".This word '*purA*' is what occurs in the derivation of the word '*purANa*'. The very first ShAstra, the Vedas, have themselves made this distinction. "*proktA*" means 'well-declared'. It is *Ishvara* who has given this message through the Vedas and so He says "This has been taught by me in ancient times". And what are the two paths?: "*jnAna yogena sAnkhyAnAM karma-yogena yoginAM*". They are *jnAna* yoga and Karma yoga.

It is *jnAna* yoga that is our topic of advaita-*SAdhanA*. It is only for them who have very noble samskaras. They are called sAnkhyas by the Lord. Several kinds of meanings are usually given to this. I am thinking of one in a lighter vein. '*sankhyA*' means counting. Population is called '*jana-sankhyA*'. Therefore why can't we take that '*sAnkhyas*' means those who can be counted easily! It is for them and for them only that *jnAna*-yoga or advaita-*SAdhanA* is meant. Karma yoga is meant for the others.

Karma is talked of as *pravRRitti* (involvement in the world) and *jnAna* is talked of as *nivRRitti* (renunciation from the world) The two have been clearly distinguished by Manu himself -- who gave us the most important ShAstra -- **pravRRittaM nivRRittaM ca dvi-vidhaM karma vaidikaM** (Manu-dharma-*shAstra* XII – 88). Two different types of people who have different mental make-up, maturity and samskAra have been given two different paths. The same thing has been said in Brahma-sutra III – 4 – 11. Just as we partition one hundred rupees into two parts and give fifty rupees each to two different people, the paths towards Atman have been divided as karma and *jnAna* and have been given to two differently qualified people – this is what that Sutra says. This Sutra actually occurs three-fourths way in the text of the Brahma-Sutra. But right in the beginning itself, the same matter has been built into the very first Sutra **athAto brahma-jijnAsA** which says "Thereafter, hence forward, deliberation on Brahman". This 'thereafter' has been explained by the Acharya in his Bhashya. Having attained perfection in the first stage, namely the path of karma, then having done all the *SAdhanA*s in the second stage (which we are about to see), -- after all these, getting the Sannyasa through the Guru and also the Upadesha (formal teaching) of the Mahavakyas

and after this, one is ready and eligible to devote whole time in a dedicated fashion to pursue the deliberations on Brahman: this is what the Acharya says in his explanation of the first Sutra.

Those who are gathered here -- maybe there are one or two exceptions; but the others – are only eligible for karma yoga. Certainly they cannot cast off their karma. "Do your karma, persistently. But don't look for the fruits, don't keep them as your sole desire; do your karma because it is *svadharma*, it is your duty. Leave the fruits as the responsibility of the dispenser of fruits" . This teaching is karma yoga.

Only after the mind has been purified by such desireless karma does one become eligible for *JnAna*-yoga. In his Gita Bhashya the Acharya has made this crystal clear. Though in modern times several persons – Tilak, Gandhi and others – say that the gita teaching is that karma yoga is a direct path to salvation, the Acharya has shown that it is not so. We are not directly concerned with that topic now, but I have touched on that unknowingly; so let me 'clear' some cobwebs.

svakarmaNA tam-abhyarchya siddhiM vindati mAnavaH -- A person by doing his *svadharma* as a dedication to God, attains the goal – so says the Gita in its last chapter. Those who say that karma yoga is a direct *SAdhanA* for moksha, interpret the word 'siddhi' here as 'mokshaM'. But the Acharya explains: "The siddhi that is spoken of here is only the eligibility for *jnAna*-yoga; the end-goal (siddhi) of karma-yoga is the transition from the stage of renunciation of the fruits of action to the stage of renunciation of karma itself so that one can enter the stage of *jnAna* yoga and pursue the enquiry of the Atman all the time". Reading his impeccable logic with all its pros and cons one is sure that this is the correct understanding. Wherever the Gita extols karma yoga to the skies, it should be taken as '*artha-vAda*', says the Acharya. To cheer us up and encourage us to go by a certain path is what '*artha-vAda*' means. It is like telling the child to learn its alphabet in order that 'the child may become king of the country'! This cheering up is nothing but '*artha-vAda*'. In other words, it is an exaggeration done in the best interests and well-meant. When we wail in desperation :"Only *jnAna* is the path to moksha; but I am not able to go the *jnAna* path; I think I have to only sweat it out with this karma" – the Lord, in order to cheer us up in the path which is suitable to us, says: "Don't under-estimate karma yoga like that, my dear; this karma yoga can do this, can do that, in fact it will give you such and such merits". However when he talks about the *JnAni*, 'The *JnAni* is nothing but myself' (**jnAnIt-vAtmaiva me mataM**), 'The *JnAni*s are those who have reached my bhAva' (**mad-bhAvam-AgatAH**) – so says He in right earnest.

The Lord has thus in His own words demarcated *JnAna* yoga for sAnkhyas and karmayoga for yogis.

Bhagavan uses the word 'yogI' for those who are eligible for karma-yoga. We think that a yogi is some great one who sits with breath control and has controlled his mind. But then why does he say that such a one does not have yet the maturity for *JnAna*, but is only on some right path along karma yoga? For this also I have a novel explanation. 'Yoga' implies uniting. 'Union' is the direct meaning. A union requires two entities, at least. There may be three, four, or anything higher. Only then can we talk of a union and 'yoga' can occur. When there is only one thing, there is no question of that 'union'. That remains as Itself. There is nothing outside to unite with it. When we see it this way, a 'yogi' is always a dualist, 'related' to something else; in other words, he is still revolving in the *MAyA* world. He is not someone who can stand alone as an advaitin. [The Swami says smiling]: I am saying this in a lighter vein. Let not scholars and pundits mistake me!

Most of us are attached to karma ('karma-sangis). The utmost that we can do is to do the karma without attachment to the fruits. That itself is difficult. All our labouring is for some kind of result. When that is so, to do the karma without any thought for the fruit of it is certainly most difficult. And to be asked to go a step higher – why one step, in fact several several steps – to renounce the karma itself and be only doing the dhyana all the time, is to do the impossible! It is to 'karma-sangis' the Bhagavan says: "You don't have to do anything in the matter of the Atman. Just keep doing your karma as a yoga. Let the purification of the kind happen in its own course. After that you can enter the Jnana domain". It is the same Bhagavan who says "That path is for the Sankhyas but this one is for you" and has thus demarcated the paths. We are going in a certain path, and we actually are only struggling to keep in our own path; what is the use of our knowing about another path which is supposed to be inaccessible for us. [And the Swami says smiling]: In short, why this headache of this sermon to us?

I shall tell you now.

13. Reason for telling every one

What we are supposed to be doing is to renounce the desire for the fruits of karma; to try to do so. That itself is formidable. Without a

thought for the fruit of the action, to keep on doing the present *svadharma* just to exhaust our previous karma balance and thereby attain a purification of the mind is an uphill task. Just to do this – not as a means to be able to do the *nidhidhyAsana* of the Jnana path; but just to reduce the attachment to the fruits in the karma path itself – we have to clarify our minds by learning several abstract concepts and meanings and practising several regimens of exercise. But as a matter of fact, ultimately, all these are the same steps that are prescribed in advaita-*SAdhanA*. To take *sannyAsa* and do shravana, manana and *nidhidhyAsana*, there are *SAdhanA* steps prescribed; the same steps are also necessary for progress in the right way of doing karma yoga. But one need not have to swim in such deep waters; it is enough to keep oneself in shallow waters – the necessity is only that much.

A History (of India) book for the fourth grader also starts from Mohenjo Dharo civilisation, Vedic period, Buddha's times, Age of the Mauryas, Gupta period, Age of the Turks, and Period of English rule, thus covering the entire spectrum. And the same sequence of lessons is also there for a student at the Master's level. Certainly there is a large difference between the two levels, but what is taught at the elementary level is also needed here at the higher level. In the same way, on the path of *JnAna* also the subject-matter that occurs at the higher level are also to be taught to the school students of the karma yoga level, though in a smaller dose.

Going to Switzerland, playing ice skating there, and having a pleasant sight of the lofty mountains there -- one may think that these are inaccessible and get a little satisfaction by seeing them only in colour photographs. But this very preliminary satisfaction sparks a desire to look forward to an actual experience of these things and makes one put in an effort for the same. Finally one may or may not go to Switzerland. By going there one may not obtain permanent happiness. But there is a spiritual world which gives permanent happiness. This desire for this permanent happiness is a must for everybody. Let the actual attainment of this be far away. But that attainment is our birthright and it is our only goal of life and we must create a longing for ourselves in that direction. It is to generate that longing, that this permanent happiness is projected here as if in a photograph.

There is another reason also. Every one may not be ready for the advaita *SAdhanA* right now. But that does not mean that every one is at the bottom rung of the (spiritual) ladder. There may be different types of people: those with a little purified mind and a little of discrimination and dispassion; and those with a reasonably good

purity of the three 'karanas' (trikarana-shuddhi) and of discrimination and dispassion. For them to know the *SAdhana*-regimen is to provoke their interest in an eager thought : "Let me make a little more effort, correct myself so that I may go in that direction". Just because it has been said that "here is a path", they may start first of all just to know what it is and then later to actually make efforts to go along that path. Thus it all ends up turning different types of people in the right direction. A mantra or a Kundalini method, which might be disastrous if even slightly wrongly done, must be protected as a secret without being made available to all and sundry. Jnana-yoga is not like that. By revealing it to all there is nothing wrong.

One point has to be emphasized here. Though the Acharya has prescribed Sannyasa-Ashrama only for those who take Jnana yoga itself as their *SAdhanA*; he has declared that those who are not so qualified (though they should not do it as a *SAdhanA* exercise), should know about Atman and should be at least aware of the thoughts of the Atman.

He has written a small expository work called "Bala-bodha-sangrahaM". 'sangraham' means a summary. The very name 'bala-bodham' indicates that it is intended for children. In those days an eight-year old child would have his upanayanam. And then when the child goes for gurukula-vasam, for the first few years, he still is a child. It is for such children the teaching of Bala-bodham is intended. It is designed by the Acharya as if a child is asking questions and the guru is answering. The teaching is actually an advaita vedanta education. The basic points of advaita are all given there in a nutshell. He has also mentioned the different angas (parts) of advaita *SAdhanA*. Is it not clear from this that the Acharya never intended the contents of advaita vedanta only for those who paractise jnana yoga after acquiring all the preliminary qualifications? Shouldn't we understand from this that he thought that nobody should be ignorant of the permanent truths of advaita philosophy? A direct practice of it may happen at any time; but the methodology of the regimen, the path of *SAdhanA*, should be in the knowledge of every one – that must have been the Acharya's contention.

We usually think that the moment we speak of the Acharya, it is only about advaita. His greatness however is in the fact that he did not insist on it for every one. Just because he has structured the philosophy of advaita so strongly and beautifully he did not keep it as a regimen of practice for all. He understood human nature very well. So with great compassion and sympathy he allotted to certain people only the karma path and kept advaita for the rest.

14. The matter of Bhakti Yoga

An important point. Why did the Acharya, as well as Lord Krishna Himself, demarcate only two classes of people: those who qualify for karma yoga and those who qualify for *jnAna* yoga?

[Note by VK: cf. B. G. III – 3]

Why did they not make one more classification, namely, those who qualify for bhakti? This is because, both the karma yogi and the *jnAna* yogi need to have bhakti. In both the classes, bhakti is an important part and both have to do it. That is why it was not separated into a class by itself. The karma pathfinder has to show bhakti at a certain level while the *jnAna* pathfinder has to do the same at a different level. Already I told you about two levels of *shraddhA*. Just as we use the word bhakti-*shraddhA*, in bhakti also there are two such levels! – as we have two levels of courses in Shorthand and Typewriting!. The lower level – karma pathfinder does bhakti in order to recognise the thought that there is an *Ishvara* above us who watches us and gives punishment. He should then progress in the same level and continue to do bhakti now to focus the mind through Love. A further progress – still in the same 'lower' level, not 'higher' – would make him carry on bhakti with the attitude of surrender of all fruits of action. And now at the higher level, the jnana pathfinder does his bhakti with the thought: 'The Brahman or the Atman for which I am doing my *SAdhanA*, it is the same brahman that, in its saguna, is the *Ishvara*; it is that *Ishvara* who has granted me the taste in this path and it is only by His Grace that I should obtain siddhi (success).

Above this -- above or below, higher or lower, none of which is applicable now – is the bhakti of those 'siddhas' who have reached that experiential stage (of Brahman Realisation). For them there is no reason why they do bhakti, says Sukacharya , one such realised soul. (Shrimad Bhagavatam I – 7 – 10).

Thus, at all levels, there is bhakti in both karma and *jnAna*; that is why bhakti is not separately mentioned.

15. Knowledge of advaita basic requirement for every one

Thus the entire society was conceived of by the Acharya as two classes – karma pathfinder and jnana pathfinder – and he kept advaita *SAdhanA* only for the jnana pathfinder. But though it was

kept like that, the general knowledge about that shastra should be there for all, including the karma pathfinder – so did he feel.

I happen to hold his name. So I have the duty to tell every one about the advaita siddhanta that he propagated so meticulously. That is why I began to talk on this topic. Usually I don't talk on this. Because there is too much talk about advaita from every quarter and mostly it all ends up in talk and nothing in execution; and in the process, every one has a false feeling that they have become advaitins by just talking!. And I did not want to add to this talk and add to the Illusion of the general run of people. But recently ,

[Note by Ra. Ganapati: He is referring to the Shankara Jayanti celebrations at Tandiarpet, Chennai in 1965. This talk of his and a substantial part of the other portions were delivered to a select group of devotees, just a few days after that celebration]

there was a jayanthi celebration here and also a vidvat-sadas (symposium by scholars). Some persons came to me and requested: " Why can't we be taught some advaita?". So I thought, in the name of the position I hold as an advaita-guru, I ought at least to tell people about what the requirements are for advaita *SAdhanA* and what the restrictions are therein. Those who so requested me are also here; so without further postponement, I am now beginning ….

I was telling you how from his elementary treatise entitled 'Bala-bodham', we can easily conclude that the Acharya holds the view that every one should have the thought about the Atman and should know about the basics of advaita *shAstra*.

Another of his prakaranams for the general public is called "*Prashnottara-ratna-mAlikA".* This is also written for the average householder. It is in the form of Questions and answers. 'Prashna' means question and 'Uttara' means reply. The two are combined in a raga-malika fashion and called prashna-uttara-malika.

'Who is dead even while living?' is one such question. *ko hatah*. The reply is: *kriyA brashhTaH*, that is, the one who avoids doing the karma that is his due. The same Acharya, who has said in works of Jnana like Viveka Chudamani that "Only he who renounces all his karma regimen, takes Sannyasa and enquires into the Atman does justice to this human birth, all others have killed their Atman; in other words they are dead even though living" – the same Acharya now says that man has to do only his bounden karma, otherwise he is 'dead even while living'. This shows that this work has been aimed at an audience of average people. Again, to the question 'By what is a

man free from unhappiness?', the reply is given: 'By an obedient wife' (Verse 31); 'Who is the friend?' – 'Wife' (Verse 49); again to the question 'Who is a true friend? The reply goes 'certainly the wife'. All these show that he keeps as his audience the householders who are living in the grahasthashrama. But even in such works the Acharya does not avoid things that pertain to the Atman. And he has done it very artistically. What I mean is, whenever he talks about the situation of the *JnAni* and his state of mind, he subtly indicates "This is not for you. You need not be right away like this. This applies to only those who have fully taken up the Atma-*SAdhanA*", though he is actually describing the lakshana (characteristic) that pertains wholly to a jnani. When he talks about generalities applicable to all, he just carries on his teaching without delineating any characteristic behaviour. An example will help the understanding.

(For instance) Right in the beginning he talks formally about the Guru – of course, in the style of question and answer. Then (verse 3) the first question itself is **tvaritaM kiM kartavyaM vidushhAM**. It means 'What should the knowing ones do immediately?' Mark the word 'knowing ones' here. 'VidvAn' means a scholar, a person who knows. The plural of this is 'vidvAmsaH'. The genitive case of this is 'vidushhAM'. The question raised is: 'What is the immediate work of the knowing ones?'. The question is not about the common man. It is only about the higher level 'knowing ones'. What is it that they should do with a sense of urgency? This is the question. The reply comes: **santatic-chedaH** -- 'to cut asunder the chain of *samsAra*'. In other words, it means to obtain the release from the repetitive deaths (and births). Thus the path to moksha should be recalled even right at the beginning to the common man – this view of the Acharya is implicit here. However the urgency about it is not for the common man, it is for the 'knowing ones'.

Later one meets with the question: **kasmAt udvegaH syAt?** (Shloka 19) -- Of what should one tremble? The word 'udvega' means trembling or fearing. That is the direct meaning. Nowadays many use 'udvegam' to denote an excessive haste or a speed of action sparked by a motive or urge. That is wrong. 'udvegam' means just 'trembling' or 'fearing'. The question is: "What deserves to be feared?". The reply comes: **samsAra araNyataH sudhiyaH** -- he says it is the forest of samsara that has to be feared. And when saying this he characterises it by adding the word 'sudhiyaH'. This means 'those with higher knowledge'. In other words what is implied is that only the people who are qualified for the higher knowledge think of samsara as a thing to be feared as a dangerous forest and so they should get out of it and obtain *sannyAsa*. The common man should just know that this will be

the response of the man with higher knowledge and that is why this question and this answer.

The 'knower' scholar should break off from the samsara; the man with higher intelligence (sudhIH) should fear the forest of samsara – an average man like us should be aware of such things. Not only that. The Acharya has said one more thing that all of us should do; and that he says in an interesting manner.

kiM samsAre sAraM (Verse 5) is the question: What is the essence of samsara?

The answer is given: **bahusho'pi vicintyamAnaM idaM eva** -- "to keep thinking of this again and again".

"Of what?'

"Just now you asked: 'What stuff is there in samsara?' –that is what you have to ask again and again and keep thinking of. The objective of this birth is to ask oneself repeatedly whether there is any fruit for this birth and keep enquiring about it. That is what he means by **idam eva bahusho'pi vicintyamAnaM**"

If one keeps asking himself like this and analysing it by one's intellect, one will get to know there is nothing of essence (*sAra*) in this *samsAra*. And there will come an urge to know the Atman that is the real essence. That is when we realise it is only by pursuing the question '*kiM samsAre sAraM*' relentlessly we have come to this stage of longing for this most noble quest (of the Atman). It is only this question that opens our eyes from our being a samsAri (involved in *samsAra*) and thinking that that is all there is to our life. And so if there is anything worthwhile in *samsAra*, it is this question; a relentless pursuit of the question.

In other words the shloka means that we should be constantly engaged in the thought of the Atman. Note that he does not add the words of qualification like '*vidvAn*' or '*sudhIH*'. So this is a teaching for all people. The Acharya thinks that even the common man who was spoken of as 'dead even when living' if he leaves off his karma, has always to keep thinking of the release from the *samsAra*.

Here he has said that the question 'What is worthwhile in *samsAra*?' should be repeatedly asked of oneself. A little later, he raises another question (Shloka 16) "What is it that should be thought about, day and night?" : **kA ahar-nishaM anuchintyA?**.

And he gives the reply: **samsAra-asAratA** -- namely, "the *samsAra* has no worth in it".

The Acharya has blessed us with a work called '*SopAna-panchakaM'*. When his devotees come to know that he was winding up his mortal journey and was ready to reach Brahma-nirvANaM, they requested of him: "You are leaving us all. You have given volumes of advice and teaching to us in writing. But we may not be abole to read all of that. So before you are done with this incarnation can you please condescend to summarise them all and give us an upadesha?". In reply to this he delivers what is called '*upadesha-panchakaM'* also known as 'sopAna-panchakaM'. 'SopAnaM' means staircase. In this work he gives a step-by-step procedure for us ordinary people to start from the rock bottom starting point and go all the way to that peak stage of Brahman-illumination.The beginning is

vedo nityam adhIyatAm tad-uditaM karma svanushhTIyatAM

"Daily practise the recitation of the vedas and perform the karmas prescribed therein". So obviously all this is for those who are to proceed by the karma path. But in the very same teaching it says: "Nurture the taste for the Atman! Get out from the household! Get the mahavakya upadesha from the Guru!" and then finally "Settle yourself in the Absolute Brahman". Naturally the Acharya means that even those who are at present qualified only for karma should be aware of subjects connected with *jnAna*-yoga.

If we continue our scrutiny like this it is confirmed that though the Acharya has distinguished between those who are qualified for *jnAna* and those who are qualified for karma just like the Lord distinguished very clearly between sankhyas and yogis, he did feel that the majority who were qualified for karma only should also have a basic knowledge of jnana. Bhagavan (Krishna) also thought in the same way. He classifed Arjuna only as suited for Karma. All of us know the familiar '*karmany-eva adhikAras-te*' teaching. He brought back to the battle that Arjuna who was ready to run away from the battlefield saying he would not fight. But even in that very Gita which constituted that advice, he has not stopped with karma yoga but has elaborated about *jnAna* yoga in detail. Right in the beginning it begins only with Sankhya yoga in all its abstractness.

[And the Swamigal adds with a smile] : All this is 'justification' for me (and my talk)!

Experts in music pursue a lot of study about the svaras and the ragas, their elaborations and nuances and the nyasas and the vinyasas associated with them before they decide on a particular mode of delivery. The child beginning to have music lessons also has the same sa-ri-ga-ma-pa-da-ni for his practice. He may not be taught all the elaborations and the nuances of the svaras, but the sharp and abrupt voicings of the svaras are supposed to be enough at that stage. In the early stages it is the coordination of the shruti and the rough fixation of the svara-sthanas that are considered to be enough. Starting from these elementary and rough beginnings, one is taken up to all the different nuances and gymnastics about the nyasas and vinyasas in the higher stages of practice. So also *sannyAsa* comes at the end of life. What subtle realities and techniques of practice one gets to know at that end stage, the same realities and techniques have to be learnt by all in an elementary way like a child learns sa-ri-ga-ma-pa-da-ni.

16. Nitya-anitya-vastu-vivekam:

(Discrimination between the permanent and the ephemeral)

The first one, like the 'sa' of music, in *SAdhanA*, that is, in *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*, is NityAnitya-vastu-vivekaM.

Doing our karmas sincerely and systematically as per the ShAstras, dedicating all of them to *Ishvara*, doing bhakti towards that *Ishvara*, by means of these attaining a certain purification in the mind, as well as obtaining a capability to keep the mind steady on one thing – all these constitute the first stage. First stage, not in *jnAna* yoga, but in the spiritual dimensional journey of the jIva. This belongs to karma yoga only. The second stage begins after this and that is the first stage in *jnAna* yoga. And in that, the first subject of mention is '*nityAnitya-vastu-vivekaM'*. So now let us asume that we have all reached that maturity resulting from the observance of karma and bhakti. [The Swamigal adds with a smile]: Let us build castles in the air, or cheat ourselves so and start to learn the ways of *jnAna* yoga. We certainly do a lot of castle-building and self-cheating; let us now do it for some good purpose!

If one wants to get involved in matters of the Atman, what should lie at the base of all that? It is the knowledge that the Atman is the only permanent entity all other things being only ephemeral. If this knowledge is not there, man will always remain a samsAri and continue to suffer as he does now. The basic conviction that 'everything that gives

us pleasure in this world, that gives status and honour, all of that is impermanent; nothing will ever give us permanent happiness; what gives permanent happiness is only the Atman, the only permanent entity' – this faith is the most important thing. Now and then the mind may be distracted and drawn towards several other things. At every such time one should beware and keep the mind steady. "Should I go into this just because it gives me pleasure? Is this an unmixed happiness? Even if it be unmixed happiness, will it be permanent? Once the mind enters into it will not the taste of it entice it to make efforts to go into it again and again? Would that not be a bondage of the mind? If something will not help the mind to become pure and restful, should I enter into it?" Such analysis has to be done by the intellect. It should keep weighing the pros and cons about what is permanent and what is impermanent. Only then can we hope to go the spiritual path.

This balancing analysis by the intellect is called '*vivekaM*'. The analysis of balancing between what is permanent and what is ephemeral is called **nitya-anitya-vastu-vivekaM**. This is the very first step of Atma-*SAdhanA*.

About impermanent things we certainly know well. In fact whatever we know well are all impermanent things! Though what is permanent transcends the mind and speech, the *shAstras* do tell us about it. It is from them that we learn the fundamental information about the eternal Atman. Dwelling in thoughts of That which can give permanent peace and permanent happiness, we should be able to throw off the the impermanent things which can give only impermanent peace and happiness.

It is not necessary to throw them off right in this beginning stage. Though they are not the permanent entity, Atman, there are several things among the impermanent ones that can help us go towards that permanent one. The *shAstras* about the Atman, the teachings of great men about it, the holy pilgrimage centres that produce a pure state of mind, puranas and stotras and several similar ones, are all there. Of course none of these is the Atman. Only when even these are nullified, the Realisation of the Atman takes place. The experience of Permanence is that of being the Atman alone, without any thought or action. The only Absolute Truthful experience is that and nothing else. Even if God Himself stands before us and gives darshan, even if we are in the lap of Mother goddess (AmbaaL herself) and She pets us – even that is not the experience of the Permanent Reality of the Atman. However, all these can lead us to a close proximity to that. Thus there are things of happiness – what we then consider to be happiness – that range all the way from those which takes us to that Permanent experience to those

which takes us away very far. At the beginning stage we should choose, by our discretion, the good ones among these and use them to take us on the right path. Recall what the God of Death (Yama) told Nachiketas: 'By means of impermanent entities we should reach the Permanent One' (Kathopanishad: II – 10).

The true Sadhaka on the *JnAna* path would have already escaped from the sensual pleasures that are nothing but obstacles to spiritual growth and from those others which are far away from the Atman, like the pleasures of gossip, and of being an idler doing nothing. But ordinary people like us who have to start from these beginnings, have to use our discretion (vivekaM) that can distinguish between the Permanent and the impermanent. Movies, gluttony, addiction to coffee or cricket commentary, reading senseless fiction, excited gossip about politics – thus there are many more that attract us very forcefully. We have to be alert and keep thinking: 'Would these things contribute even an iota to my spiritual growth? Should I give them so much importance?' What can lead us to That Permanent One and what cannot? – a mercilessly strict balancing analysis is what nityAnityavastu-vivekaM means. I said 'mercilessly strict' because our mind always tries to rationalize doing what it likes to do; it will find all sorts of justifications. Use the discriminatory power that does not give in to that kind of imagination and that judges this analysis very strictly, to assess ourself. See that it does not allow itself to 'pass' what deserves a 'fail'.

What I have just said is for the majority of us who are the average. Those who have done the Atma-*SAdhanA* exclusively and attained a certain maturity must have probably released themselves from the fascination for coffee, cricket, etc.. But even they would have some small weaknesses connected with the satisfaction of the senses. Such things may even be good for us at our level and might help us go up the spiritual ladder but these might not be necessary for them. So they should carefully search for these and release themselves of these things also. Atman-Realisation is the only thing to be looked for; in the absence of it one should feel like a fish out of water. It is with that kind of anguish one should stay out of , say, even social service which may prove to be right for the average karma yogi, even pilgrimages, and even the upAsanA method of bhakti. Remember I told you about lying on the lap of AmbaaL – even that! All these are impermanent; he should have the discretion to be able to avoid all this and resort only to those that can take him deep into the Atman. "Atman is the only thing desired; everything else is anAtma and all of them should be discarded" -- this should be the fervent conviction.

nityAnitya-vastu-vivekaM is also known as *AtmAnAtma-vastu vivechanaM*. 'vivechanaM' and 'vivekaM' are the same. It means the capability to sort out what is good and what is bad. The only discretion

that advaita *shAstra* recommends is this capability to sort out what is AtmA and what is anAtmA. The work "Viveka-chUDAmaNi" is also called "AtmAnAtma-viveka-chUDAmaNi". As soon as the mangalAcharaNaM shloka – that is, the verse of benediction in the beginning of a work – is over, the text begins with the topic of *SAdhanA* path. There he talks about the performance of routine as per vaidika dharma, then scholarship in the vedas -- these two being common to all paths – and then he mentions just one thing, namely "AtmAnAtma-vivechanaM" which is the route for the *JnAna* pathfinder and then goes to talk about svAnubhUti (Personal experience) and Mukti (moksha). Later in the book the Acharya defines, at the highest level, the concept of 'viveka' (discrimination) that decides between the permanent and the impermanent.

**brahma satyaM jagan-mithyety-evaM rUpo vinishcayaH /*
*so'yaM nityAnitya-vastu-vivekaH samudAhRRitaH //**

It means: Brahman is the only Reality. The Universe is mithyA, that is, it may appear real but will become unreal; such a firm conviction is what has been well declared as nitya-anitya-vastu vivekaM." Who has made the declaration? The Vedas. The authority to declare such Truths is that of the Vedas only. The Acharya follows that tradition and so even if he does not say "in the Vedas" he knows people will understand it that way.

The Upanishads constitute the 'anta', the finishing portion of the Vedas. Therefore we find this matter in abundance there. Is not the very purpose of the Upanishads to take us jIvas who are stuck in this worldly impermanence out to the Permanent One ? Starting from the small boy Nachiketas all the way up to Indra himself several have been known to have understood the impermanent as impermanent and comprehended the Principle of Nitya – such stories have come down to us in Kathopanishad, Chandogyopanishad, etc. The Lord of Death himself offered several rare gifts to child Nachiketas, but the latter turned all of them down, saying "All these are ephemeral; one day or other won't they all come back to you?". And, he insisted on having the tattva-upadesha from the God of death himself and finally got it! Among all the impermanent things, there is only one thing that is ever permanent – said Yama-dharma-raja *nityo'nityAnAM*. "Whoever finds it, to him there will be eternal peace; not for anybody else". All that we call wealth is anitya; nothing that belongs to anitya will ever lead to the nitya-vastu, that is the Atman. In the Chandogya story, Virochana the King of Asuras , as well as Indra the King of the Gods, both of them pursue the question : "What is the Atman?". The asura comes to the conclusion that the body is the Atman. It is 'Asura-Vedanta'! On the other hand, Indra

does an analysis of experiences in the waking state, dream state and the sleeping state, discards them one by one as unreal and finally comes to the Reality that is the Atman. This kind of discarding is nothing but 'nityA-nitya-vastu vivechanam' – the discrimination between anitya and nitya. In the Taittiriya Upanishad Brighu Maharishi begins from the anna-maya kosha, and goes through all the koshas, first thinking that it is Brahman and then after enquiry discarding it and finally comes to the right conclusion that Brahman is what remains as the substratum of even the Ananda-maya-kosha. Another way of looking at it is to say that by proper discrimination he discarded the five koshas as impermanent and finally got to know that the Atman is the only Permanent entity.

neti neti -- "Brahman is not this, is not that; it is nothing that can be circumscribed by anything; it is not related to another; it is not limited to anything; it is not that which suffers; it is not that which is destroyed" so says the Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad. Whatever has been said here not to be Brahman, they are all matters for the mundane world. In other words, what is circumscribed, what is related, what is limited, what is destroyed, all these are material entities. So the "neti, neti" analysis means to pick out the impermanent entitites of the world, discard them as such, and hold on to the Permanent entity, Atman. "anyat ArtaM" – "all others are having an end" . In other words, except the Atman, everything else without exception meet their end. This idea coming again and again in BrihadAranyaka Upanishad mantras is to distinguish the Nitya-vastu (Permanent One) from the anityas (the impermanents).

Right in the beginning of His Gitopadesha, Bhagavan makes it clear: Atman is the only Permanent entity. The body from the killing of which Arjuna retreats, is nothing but ephemeral (anitya). All experiences of the body come and go: *AgamApAyinaH anityAH*. That which is permanent, immeasurable is only the Atman : *nityasyoktAH sharIriNaH anAshinaH aprameyasya*, thus runs his elaboration. Later *anityam asukhaM lokaM imaM prApya bhajasva mAM* (IX – 33) -- you have obtained a life in this impermanent miserable world; in order to get out of this, worship Me, says He. What does He mean by 'Me'? He is the Atman, He is the Brahman. *ahamAtma guDHAkeshaH sarva-bhUtAshayaH sthitaH* (X – 20) [I am established as the indweller in the hearts of all beings]: this is His own statement. So worshipping Him means only the meditation on the Self. The sum and substance of what He says is: "In this world everything is impermanent; hold on to the Atman". The thirteenth chapter of the Gita is called 'kshhetra-kshhetrajn~a vibhAga-yogaM'. It is the yoga that distinguishes the body that is the 'kshhetra' and the conscious Atman inside that is known as 'kshetrajn~a'. This kshetra-kshetrajn~a yoga is nothing but the discrimination between the permanent and the ephemeral. When the Lord defines (XIII – 5, 6)

'kshhetra' as made up of the five elements, senses, the objects that senses run after, desire (icchA), hate (dveshhaM), happiness and misery, etc., he is actually dissecting all those that are impermanent. In the same way, he shows the Permanent One as the kshhetrajn~a. It is clear from his further statements: "It exists in all the universes enveloping them all; without and within all beings, moving and unmoving, near and far away is that". (XIII – 13,, 15). Then as He goes along distinguishing kshhetra and kshhetrajn~a, Bhagavan says: "He who knows the distinction between prakRRiti and purusha does not have another birth" (XIII – 23). In other words, such a person attains moksha, says He. Suddenly he seems to switch over to two other categories; no, kshhetraM is prakRRiti and purushha is kshetrajn~a, as is clear from the context.

This is where he gives in a crystallised essence the matter we have been discussing – namely nitya-anitya-vastu vivekaM. What is known in sAnkhya *shAstra* as purushha is the Absolute Reality of advaita *shAstra* known as Atman and Brahman. What is called prakRRiti there (in sAnkhya) is *MAyA* here. Of course there is a slight difference; but the fact that prakRRiti and purushha is the *MAyA* and the Atman, respectively, is 99 percent. true. It is well known that the Atman is the eternal Truth (nitya). So what is meant by nitya-anitya-vastu-vivekaM is nothing but the comprehension of the Atman as separate from the effects of *MAyA*. In the word 'AtmA-anAtma-vivacanaM', the anAtmA is nothing but *MAyA*. So, to know the distinction between prakRRiti and purushha is to distinguish between anAtmA and AtmA.

For an Atma-*JnAni* there is nothing like anAtma. But being an Atma-*JnAni* is in the future. There is a work called "prouDhAnubhUti" by the Acharya, a wonderful rendering in a majestic manner of the status of a *JnAni*, written in such a 'madness' full of advaita-Ananda, that could be even mistaken by unknowing people as a kind of pride. In fact, [the Mahaswamigal adds smiling] the 'pride' justifies the name 'prouDhAnubhUti'. In this the Acharya says very emphatically: "It is absurd to talk about Atma-anAtma – vivechanaM. Is there a thing like anAtma? If there is one such then how can it be negated out of existence?". But remember, this is the statement of one who has had the anubhUti (the Experience). But, for those who have yet to reach that stage, the question that looms large is : "Is there something like the Atman? It is only anAtmA that seems to be everywhere"! For all those who have not yet reached that apex of *jnAna*, it is necessary, during their efforts on the journey, to be alert and to keep sorting out with discrimination, which is the one that is really eternal, which is the one that is the impermanent anAtmA, and what those are that, though impermanent, would be able to help us go to the Eternal Permanent

entity, and what those are that, being impermanent, would drag us deep into further impermanence. The Acharya, in the last but one shloka of his Bhaja Govindam, has recommended us to do this sorting between Atman and anAtmA very carefully: **prANAyAmaM pratyAhAraM nityAnitya-viveka-vichAraM**. The shloka after this in Bhaja GovindaM is a phala-shruti.

The Acharya has his own doubts whether we can do this sorting in an intelligent way; so he gives in his prakaraNa work "*anAtma-shrI-vigarhaNam*" a long list of anAtma items. In each shloka therein, the first three lines end with **tataH kim*?*. It means, " So what? What is the use?" Status, wealth, dress and decoration, physical beauty, fine health – there are many of this kind that we hold to be highly esteemable and in each line one of them is mentioned, followed by a "*tataH kiM*". Three such lines in every shloka are followed by the fourth line **yena svAtmA naiva sAkshhAt-kRRito'bhUt** (if one has not realised the Self). This is repeated in every shloka. The meaning of this refrain is to say: If one has not realised the Self, what is the use of his status? Of his wealth? Of his decorative show? Of his beauty? Of his health?. One does not know the truth of oneself; and without knowing that, what is the value of adding one's status, wealth and health? – this is the substance of the shlokas. Will it not look absurd if "we don't know somebody; but still we are going to honour that somebody with a presentation of a purse of money"? That is the situation here, says the Acharya. Atman is the truth of oneself; if this truth is not known what else is going to be of value? On the other hand if one knows the Self, to him also all these are of trivial value. In fact only if one discards all these as trivial, one can know his own Self. Thus in any case, status, wealth, decoration, beauty, health and whatever other things we hold to be great – all of them are undesirable. The discarding of all of them as *anAtmA* (non-self) is "*anAtma-shrI vigarhaNaM*". The meanings of the word 'shrI' known to everybody are: Lakshmi, auspiciousness, wealth. But there is another meaning also: 'poison'! Lord Shiva is keeping the poison in his throat and that is why he is also called 'ShrI-kanTha'. The pleasures that we consider to be of value from wealth and auspiciousness, should be devalued as poison – this is '*anAtma-shrI-vigarhaNaM*'. And this is nothing but another name for *AtmA-anAtma-vivekaM*, that is, *nitya-anitya-vastu-vivekaM*.

17. Vairaagya (Dispassion)

One has to distinguish between *nitya* (permanent) and *anitya* (impermanent), discard what ought not to be and take what ought to be. In fact the discarding of what ought not to be is more important. In life

itself, between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, it may not matter if you don't do what ought to be done; but by doing what ought not to be done one invites great trouble. Take the common cold,, for instance. They say: 'You should have rice mixed in mustard powder, but no icecream.' One may not eat rice with mustard powder. But by having icecream the cold intensifies and one ends up in fever. Thus by eating prohibited food one experiences bad consequences immediately; on the other hand by eating the prescribed things do they immediately help? Not necessarily; they may or may not. Again bathing in the river Cauvery, if you do it near the shore, it is good both physically and mentally. Those who don't know swimming should not go into deep waters; if they do they will be drawn into the vortex of the flow. A bath in the Cauvery may even be missed; even if it is not missed, though the mind gets refreshed a little, one does not observe any great improvement in health or spiritual merit. But if one goes into deeper waters the danger of the vortex swallowing you up is great. Thus it always happens that in this play of *MAyA* in the world, the negative forces have usually more power.

It therefore follows that once we have made an analysis of what is good for the spiritual ascent and what is bad, thereafter we should give first priority to the discarding of those which are bad.

Here, as I have said earlier, the 'thereafter' does not mean there is a strict 'one after the other' rule in *SAdhanA*. It happens that we have to exercise all the different steps of the *SAdhanA* together in a mixed fashion. At one stage some one of them becomes important or prominent and we usually talk of it as coming 'later' or 'earlier'.

When a foetus grows into a baby, does it grow in sequence such as, first the feet, then the stomach, then the chest and so on? All of them grow up simultaneously. So also these *SAdhanA*s have to be done side by side – not one after another. At each stage the concentration may be more in one or the other.

Thus we begin with sorting out the good and bad. The very sorting will teach us something about the task of discarding the bad and taking the good. And in due course of time this sorting will become automatic, by sheer practice over a long period of time! And that is when we have to start concentrating on the discarding of the undesirables.

And that is the part Number Two in the four parts of *SAdhana*-ChatushhTayaM. That is called **VairaagyaM** (Dispassion). It is also called *virakti* .

rAgaM and *rakti* both mean desire or liking. The discarding of desire or liking is *vairaagyaM* or *virakti*.

Sensual pleasures are the greatest obstacles to Spiritual wisdom.They are pleasures of the senses. When we run after a pleasure it means there is a desire for experiencing that pleasure. If we have no such desire, do we run after them?

So what it means to discard those obstacles to spiritual growth is to be rid of all desires – from the little desire for consumption of a snack to the great one of a desire for the obtaining of Bharat Ratna Award. This absence of desires is exactly what *VairaagyaM* means.

Tirumoolar, the Tamil mystic, describes Vairaagya parAkAshhTA (the apex of Vairaagya) as follows:

Cut off your desire; cut off your desire!
Even with God cut off your desire!
As you keep desiring misery follows
Cutting off desires – that is Happiness, Bliss!

[Tamil original: *Asai arrumingaL, Asai arrumingal !*
IsanoDAyinum Asai arrumingal !
AsaippaDappaDa Ayvarum tunbam
Asai viDa viDa AnandamAme !]

If desires are eradicated totally, moksha is right there!. Nammazhvar has also sung: *atradu patrenil utradu veeDu*, which means exactly the same.

'*tRshhNA*' is thirst. Desire is a thirst. When thirst arises, the tongue craves for drinking water; so also desire is the thirst for the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. Only when it is gone you can get NirvANa – that was the great discovery of the Buddha, say the Buddhistic texts.

Whatever religion there is among civilized society it does not fail to give importance to the eradication of desires.

Our Acharya also has given great importance to Vairaagya that eradicates desires. In his work *aparokshhAnubhUti*, when he refers to the *SAdhanA* regimen, he calls it (shloka 3) the *vairaagyAdi *chatushhTayaM** -- 'the four parts consisting of *VairaagyaM* etc.', thus mentioning *VairaagyaM* as the chief part.

How does the Acharya define *VairaagyaM*, let us see:

tad-vairaagyaM jugupsA yA darshana-shravaNAdibhiH /
dehAdi-brahma-paryante hyanitye bhogya-vastuni //

This is the Acharya's definition of *VairaagyaM* in Viveka-chUDAmaNi (shloka 21). 'That is indeed *VairaagyaM*', says he dramatically!

'What is?'. Revulsion from objects of enjoyment by this human body, all the way from those things seen, heard, etc. in this human world to those objects of enjoyment in Brahma-loka – that is *VairaagyaM*.

"jugupsA" means the feeling of disgust that causes one to reject it. An alternative reading is 'jihAsA'. The meaning is the same.

Once *jnAna* has been reached, then one feels love towards everything. There is no question of revulsion then. Because, then none of the objects whether bad or tempting, will affect him. In stages that precede that, it is not so. All objects of enjoyment of pleasure that cause us to slip down have to be discarded with distaste -- only then one can save our Self. For the later sprouting of the personality of Love, one has to create for oneself this feeling of aversion!

Revulsion is not of people. Certainly not. The aversion or disgust is only towards the bondage that originates from our attachment to them; it is only of the pleasurable things they may offer. If one runs away from household, it is not out of aversion or disgust of the mother, or of the wife, or son or daughter; certainly not. The repulsion or distaste is because of the obstacles to spirituality created by the bondage of attachment to them. The mother spoils our efforts at soul-cleaning when we fast for the purpose, by pitying with us on our fasting and tempting us with tasty food; when the spouse is at your side, the mind becomes vibrant.; the son has got to be admitted in an engineering college even if it costs a bribe of money; the daughter has to be married to a doctor according to her own wish and accordingly a costly dowry has to be met --- thus, each one of them binds you in a certain way. The repulsion is from this binding. The revulsion is from such bondage of these actions and from the enjoyable things that arise from them, not from the people concerned. Nor from the community of animals. Even in the shloka that we are discussing, it says "*bhogya-vastuni jugupsA*" – meaning, the disgust towards 'the objects of pleasure' and not towards jIvas. In other words, if we isolate ourselves from the *JIva*s, it is not out of hate or disgust for them but because through them we get attached to enjoyment of experiences.

Thus by discrimination between the permanent and transient objects we learn that all objects of sense-experience are transient and therefore we develop a distaste for them *jugupsA... hyanitye bhogya-vastuni*.

Note the words *hyanitye* instead of *anitye*. It is actually *hi anitye* that has become *hyanitye*. The word 'hi' gives an emphasis to what is being said.

Only when we develop a disgust do we stay away from those objects which generate a bondage of *MAyA*. An attitude of "Leave it alone; let it be" in this matter will not be a sAtvic attitude. It is only foolishness. " Not being afraid of what has to be feared is ignorance" says Tiruvalluvar. **anjuvathu anjAmai pethamai*. His Tirukkural teaches us to be courageous men not to be afraid of anything. Even then before one gets that courage, we should not bungle by our foolishness; so he says: "In this world one should certainly avoid those things of which we should be legitimately afraid; otherwise we shall only be foolish". Ignorance and foolishness are not far apart. Our Acharya who taught us to love everything – the same Acharya teaches us, to develop, in the early stages of spiritual ascent, a disgust towards those things which are in the nature of an obstacle to the growth of spirituality.

He gives a really telling analogy that actually may hurt us deep. It is an example which itself can be disgusting. The same example is given by him in three books, 'Bala-bodha-sangrahaM', 'aparokshAnubhUti' and 'sarva-vedanta-siddhanta-sara-sangrahaM'. In the first two, he says **yathaiva kAkavishhTAyAM** and in the third, he says: **kAkasya vishhTAvat asahya-buddhiH*. The analogy is to the leavings of a crow. Just as we have a natural disgust for the leavings of a crow, so also there should be a disgust towards things of sensual experience – this is the purpose of the analogy. Suppose we are having a picnic under a tree in its shade and suddenly from the branches of the tree a crow's leavings fall on your plate full of excellent food. That very moment we move away from the food in total disgust, don't we? Even if the crow is hushed away and we sit at another plate of good food, our mood would have been upset and the good food refuses to go in! That kind of disgust is what should be developed in objects of sensual enjoyment -- that is vairaagyaM, says the Acharya. When such a disgust becomes really intense, even a picnic will appear only as disgusting as the leavings of a crow! One will start thinking that there is no need for a picnic when, as the Acharya has said, it is only necessary to calm the disease of hunger by eating what one gets by *BikshhA* (ritual begging).

It is not as if we are talking only about the pleasures that one enjoys through this human body in this world. Our distaste has to be even in

those enjoyments one hopes to experience in the world of BrahmA. The *jugupsA* has to extend that far. **dehAdi brahma-paryante**.

The Absolute Truth that is formless and attributeless, called Brahman – that is the only thing to be aimed. The enjoyments that may be offered by The Lord whose form is Creator BrahmA, in his world, -- all these have to discarded as valueless.
In *SAdhanA-chatushhTayaM*, when the Acharya mentions vairaagyaM he actually refers to it with a long qualifying adjective as **ihAmutrArtha-bhoga-virAgaM** or **ihAmutra-phala-bhoga-virAgaM**. (Brahma-sutra-bhashya: I. 1-1; Vivekachudamani: 19).

'iha' + 'amutra' is 'ihAmutra'. 'iha' means this world we live in now. 'amutra' means the pitR loka or indra loka etc. which are not 'here' or 'near' but 'far, somewhere'. The world of the divines where several of the devas live as well as the farthest 'brahma loka' where Brahma lives – all of these are included in the 'amutra'. Tiruvalluvar says: "Those with no Money miss this world; those with no Grace miss the other world" – 'this world' here is 'iha' and 'the other world' here is 'amutra'. The experiences in that brahma loka are also not the spiritual experiences; nor are the bliss of the Brahma-loka the Bliss of the Atman. The pleasure of Brahma-loka also vanishes during dissolution at the end of the kalpa. It is not eternal or permanent like the Bliss of the Atman. Further, even there one gets only the pleasure that keeps the distinction between jIvAtmA and paramAtma and so it won't be even an iota of the great Bliss of identification of the two. Thus the 'virAga' is the 'vairAgya' in the experience ('bhoga') of the objects ('artha') that one gets in 'iha' or 'amutra'. That is why it is *'ihAmutrArtha-bhoga-virAgaM'*. When we talk of this in another way as 'vairAgya' in the experience of the fruits of this world or the other world, he calls it 'ihAmutra-phala-bhoga-virAgaM'. 'artha' is an object; 'phala' is that which we get from the object.

Those who have 'vairAgya' are known as *vIta-rAga*'s. The 'vAtApi GanapatiM' song has *vIta-rAginaM vinata-yoginaM*. In Mundakopanishad (III – 2 - 5), the Rishis are said to have obtained contentment in their Enlightenment, to have been established in the Atman, to be 'vIta-rAga's (free from attachment) and finally are described as 'prashAnta' – those who are fully composed.

It is the distaste that arises from vairAgya that is called *nirvedaM*. When one obtains complete indifference to worldly matters, that is 'nirvedaM'. Incidentally, it is this feeling that is at the source of 'shAnta rasa' – says the alankAra *shAstra*. '*vairAgyaM*' and 'nirvedam' are similar words. It is also spoken of in the same Upanishad (I – 2 – 12) that speaks of *vItarAga*'s. The Acharyal comments in his bhashya: The

prefix 'ni' added to the root 'vid' gives rise to the word 'nirvedaM' and the meaning is '*vairAgyaM*' -- *vairAgyArthe*. Two things that are spoken of very highly in the path of karma is what is known as *ishhTA-pUrtaM*, namely the yajnas and social services. But even they are only preliminaries (*pUrvAngas*) to be renounced after they have taken us to *jnAna*-yoga. Instead of taking them to be part of karma yoga, those who think they can lead us to the goal are only downright fools -- *pramUDha*'s, says the Upanishad. 'Not just ordinary fools, but totally deluded fools'. "An intelligent brahmin should discover by analysis that even the heavens that one obtains even by the highest type of karma are only '*anitya*' (impermanent) ; should get the knowledge that brahman which is actionless cannot be obtained by any action; and thus get *nirvedaM* , that is, he should get *vairAgyaM*. Thereafter he should seek a Guru who is a brahma-nishhTa, get the upadesha from him and himself get brahma-*jnAna*".

Earlier we saw that Karma yoga is the first stage; to get the formal teaching for brahma-*jnAna* after becoming a sannyAsi is the third stage; what comes in between as the second stage is the *SAdhanA-chatushhTayaM*; and the second item in this four-fold *SAdhanA* is *vairAgyaM*. But here the first stage is spoken of as karma, then is mentioned only *vairAgyaM* and then quickly the teaching of brahma-*jnAna*, which is actually the third stage, is mentioned. From this it is clear that *vairAgyaM* alone suffices and if one holds on to it steadfastly, all the four parts of *SAdhanA-chatushhTayaM* will be acquired automatically.

When the Acharyal is writing the BhashyaM for this Upanishad, several mantras earlier, when the matter of the worldly apara-vidyA and the spiritual parA-vidyA comes up (I – 1 -5) he says: "All can study the Brahma-vidya intending to give Brahma-*jnAna* and become very knowledgeable; but if one wants to get the experiential knowledge of Brahman, one has to go, with *vairAgyaM*, to a Guru, and get the upadeshaM – **gurvabhigamanAdi-lakshhaNaM vairAgyaM*" . Thus he refers only to *vairAgyaM* here.

We saw that the Acharyal has given the definition of '*vairAgyaM*' as *darshana-shravaN- AdibhiH jugupsA*, that is, "a distaste for all that is seen and all that is heard". He thus talks about two things 'seen' and 'heard'. Recall that Lord Krishna also mentions (in II – 52) two things **shrotavyasya shrutasya ca** -- that which is to be heard and that which has been heard. All the nonsensical things that we have heard and stored up in our memory constitute those that have been 'heard'. Further those about which we are dead curious and itching to know – 'I should know about that and about this' – these are the ones 'to be

heard'. From both of these we should get 'nirvedaM' – is what the Lord is saying (in II – 52). When the Acharyal writes the Bhashya for this he interprets 'nirvedaM' as '*vairAgyaM*'. The Lord says here that when the intellect which has been totally tainted because of its being immersed in the gutter of delusion comes out of that gutter, then one gets *vairAgyaM* in whatever that is heard or whatever is to be heard. The point of taintedness by delusion is explicitly named by the Acharya as "the confusion of the intellect in discriminating between Atman and anAtman". That is what was listed as number one in *chatushhTayaM*. The next one is *vairAgyaM*. The Lord also lists them in the same order in this shloka.

vairAgyaM is the absence of 'rAga', that is, desire. One who has *vairAgyaM* is VairAgi, also BairAgi. The bairAgi homeless renuciates of north India are so called because they are VairAgis. In other words we have been equating sannyAsa with *vairAgyaM*. One who has renounced rAga is VairAgi. One who is subject to rAgas (desires) is rAgi. He who has rAga is rAgi. Such desire-prompted individuals are called 'kAmayamAnaH' in the Upanishad (Br.U. IV-4-6). Desires actually destroy a person; so the Upanishads speak of him as 'kAma-hataH' (Tait. U. II – 8; Br. U. IV-3-33). Analogously, he who is not subject to desires is called 'akAmayamAnaH' or 'akAma-hataH'.

Usually we interpret 'rAga' and 'kAma' both as 'desire' and identify them. But there is a subtle difference between the two. At one place in the Gita (VII – 11) Bhagavan says *kAma-rAga-vivarjitaM*, to mean 'without kAma and rAga'. This shows that 'kAma' and 'rAga' are two different things. What is the difference? These are the subtle situations where our Acharyal by his extraordinary intelligence helps us with explainations. " 'Kama' is the thirst or '*tRshhNA*' in objects not yet attained; 'rAga' is the attachment in objects already attained" – thus does the Acharya distinguish the two. We shall not need this minute distinction here. Let us take both 'kAma' and 'rAga' to mean the same thing, desire.

The Upanishad says: He who has no *vairAgyaM* is a 'kAmayamAnaH' and he who has *vairAgyaM* is 'akAmayamAnaH'. The Upansihad further talks about them. The 'kAmayamAnaH' thinks that karma is everything and keeps on performing his karmas, then he reaps their fruits in the other world; when that gets exhausted he is born again here and revolves in the same rut of karma. On the other hand the 'akAmayamana', that is, the one who has *vairAgyaM*, is, the Upanishad goes on, 'akAma', 'nishkAma' and 'AptakAma' . When he throws off his desires he is 'akAma' (desireless). Instead of his making efforts to get rid of desires, when they themselves run away from him, he is 'nishkAma' (devoid of desires). Then he becomes an 'AptakAma' – one who has

attained his desires! When the Upanishad speaks like this, one gets the doubt: 'How does an 'akAmayamAna' (one who is not subject to desires) have desires? What does he desire to obtain?'. But this is explained by the next epithet which the Upanishad uses in the series: 'akAma', 'nishkAma', 'AptakAma' and 'AtmakAma'. 'AtmakAma' is one who has desire for the Atman only. When he gets that he becomes an 'AptakAma' – he who has attained his desire. Thus the one who has *vairAgyaM* becomes an akAma, nishkAma, AptakAma and AtmakAma; when he dies his jIva does not go to any other world. The Upanishad says that he is Brahman even while living and when the body falls, he is still immersed in Brahman (Br. U. IV – 4 – 6) . It is the state of desirelessness, that is, *vairAgyaM*, that has been said to be so qualified for Brahman-experience.

If one is not just a 'shrotriya' – a scholar with deep understanding of the vedas – but is also an 'akAmahata' , that is, one who is not destroyed by desire, he is the one who rises step by step, each times a hundredfold, in the bliss that starts from that of a ruler of this world to the ultimate bliss of Brahman, says Taittiriyopanishad (II – 8) and also (though slightly in a different way) Br.U. IV – 3 – 33. Thus here also, it is the destruction of desire, that is, being with *vairAgyaM*, is the prime qualification.
In the Gita also Bhagavan has emphasized as important, only the two things: "Practice and Dispassion" *abhyAsaM* and **vairAgyaM**. To still the truant mind in one place persistent efforts have to be made. Persistent effort is what 'practice' means. For stilling the mind the other important requisite is Dispassion (*vairAgyaM*), says He.

In the very beginning of Gitopadesha, when he talks about the characteristics of a 'sthita-prajna', he mentions as the first characteristic: **prajahAti yadA kAmAn sarvAn pArtha manogatAn**. This itself is nothing but *vairAgyaM*. In the last chapter, when he talks about what should be done in the *jnAna* path, after having attained success in the path of karma, he says **nitya*M *vairAgyaM* samupAshritaH* (XVIII – 52) – "Dispassion to be practised uninterruptedly".

vairAgyaM is the distaste in everything that you see or hear. This is Acharyal's statement (in Vivekachudamani). Of these, putting aside 'the seen', the Lord says in the Gita, as I told you already, two things "what is heard, and what is to be heard". Now in the same Gita when the Acharyal is doing the bhashya for **nitya*M *vairAgyaM* samupAshritaH*, he says "The absence of a thirst of desire in both the seen and the unseen' -- **dRRishhTA-dRRishTeshhu vishhayeshhu vaitRRishhNyaM**. What does he mean by deisre in the unseen? It is the desire for experience of heaven and in things like the post of Indra, etc. If one goes through the regimen of veda-ordained karmas as if they are an end in

themselves, one obtains such pleasures of the divine world. But they are not visible to our perception now, so they are called *adRRishhTaM*. *dRRishhTaM* means what is seen. The unseen is *adRRishhTaM*.

Thus we see ViarAgyaM from three different angles. One: The abandonment of the desires in everything that we see or hear; two: the abandonment of the desires in what we have heard or what we are going to hear; and three: the abandonment of desires in the seen and the unseen.

[Note by Ra. Ganapathy: In Gita XIII – 8 the word 'VairAgyam' occurs. When the Acharyal is commenting on this, he explains: "In the senses like sound etc. , a desireless attitude towards the experiences seen and unseen" . The etc. connotes all that can occupy the mind through the senses – just as the Mahaswamigal would want us to understand.]

Putting all this together we get the meaning for *sarvAn pArtha manogatAn*, that is, any desire that can occupy the mind has to be tabooed; that is what *vairAgyaM* is.

This is a very important part of *SAdhanA*.

BhartRhari was a great man. He has composed a *shatakaM*, that is, a piece of hundred verses, with great feeling and majesty, about Sannyasa and Sannyasi. He could have as well named it "Sannyasa shatakaM". Instead he has named it "VairAgya shatakaM*. If VairAgyam is there Sannyasa is not far behind – seems to be the thought.

What else is 'San-nyAsaM'? Is it not a total 'renunciation'? Unless you renounce that which is called desire, how can you renounce everything else? So it is not surprising that Sannyasam, as well as Renunciation, are both synonymous with *vairAgyaM*.

The great Tiruvalluvar has told us in Tamil about Dharma. In the chapter on Renunciation, he says that renunciation is when we attach ourselves only to the attachmentless God, thus renouncing all other attachments. It is by desire, by rAga, that one gets attachment. Alternatively, when we have an association with something, that is when we are attached to something, then there arises desire towards that – just as the Lord has said *sangAt sanjAyate kAmaH* (II – 62). Thus both desire and attachment are mutually cause and effect for each other. Therefore when Tiruvalluvar says *patru viDarkku* (abandonment of attachment), he is actually referring to the rise of *vairAgyaM*. He calls that renunciation and closes that chapter with the words *patru viDarkku*. In the same section of chapters there is another chapter

called “cutting off of desires” (*avA aruttal*), which is also only *vairAgyaM*.

VairAgyam is the walking off from all wealth. That VairAgyam itself is a great wealth, There is nothing equivalent to that in the whole world, why, nothing in the divine world either – says he very beautifully:

*VenDamai anna vizhuccelvam INDillai
ANDum akdu oppadu il*.

Almost the same thought (about renunciation and vairAgyam) has been expressed by Sadashiva Brahmendra. In his Atma-vidyA-vilAsaM he visualises the Sannyasi as a king (of the spiritual kingdom) and says: *svIkRRita-vairAgya-sarvasvaH* -- the one who has appropriated all the treasures of *vairAgyaM*. He himself was like that! Men like BhartRhari, Tiruvalluvar and Sadashiva Brahmendra were themselves in possession of great vairAgya. Their thoughts about vairAgya touch our hearts -- at least for that moment! From their mouths we learn how, though acquiring that kind of vairAgyam may be most difficult, once we achieve it we then really have the treasure of the bliss of the Atman, -- the treasure that belittles as trash all those treasures that we have been holding as great. Did not our own Acharya run away with the utmost vairAgya at the age of eight from home, from town and from the very mother who was treating him with extraordinary affection as her own very soul? In fact he has produced a panchakaM (a piece of five shlokas) where each shloka has the ending refrain: *kaupInavantaH khalu bhAgyavantaH* (Blessed are those with nothing but a loin cloth). In BhajagovindaM also he asks *kasya sukhaM na karoti virAgaH* -- Who is the one that will not get Eternal Bliss from *vairAgyaM*?

The moment one thinks of *vairAgyaM* one will not fail to recall the famous PattinattAr! He was born as an amsha of Kubera and was doing even overseas trade. But one day there came the boy, an amsha of Lord shiva, who left a written message “Not even a useless needle will come along with you on your last journey” and disappeared. As soon as Pattinathar saw that, he renounced all his immense wealth and left home clad only in a loin-cloth, carrying only a begging bowl (‘Odu’ in Tamil), singing the couplet

*VIDu namaakkut-tiruvAlangADu vimalar tantha
Odu namakkuNDu*.

In course of time even that begging bowl was thrown away by him since holding that ‘property’ was thought to be unbecoming of a renunciate. And he sang:

Hometown is not permanent; nor are relatives
Neither is the name they gave you .....

(In Tamil: *Oorum cathamalla, uRRaar chathamalla [uRRup-peRRa] perum chathamalla ...*)

When we hear the innumerable songs he has composed, vairAgya arises in us, even though temporarily just as one gets after a child-birth (called *prasava-vairAgyam*) or after visiting a cremation (called *smashAna-vairAgyam*) !

I told you about BhartRhari. There is a story that even he was a disciple of this Pattinathar. BhartRhari is also known as Bhadragiri. This Bhadragiri was a king of Ujjain; but he renounced his kingship and came to Tiruvidaimaruthur where he was sitting as a renunciate begging for food with a bowl in hand. He used to get Biksha (alms of food) for both his Guru Pattinathar and himself. It is amazing to note that one who was an incarnate of Kubera and another who had a kingdom to own both became renunciates with that much of dispassion! Even then Pattinathar thought that Bhadragiri did not have enough vairAgya! Because the latter had kept a begging bowl for his begging! A poor man went to Pattinathar and asked for alms. It is said that it was the Lord Himself of the temple (Mahalinga Swami) who went so disguised. And Pattinathar told him: "I myself have nothing; why do you ask me? Go and ask that 'family man' sitting at the western gate of the temple. And tell him that I sent you there!" When Bhadragiri heard this statement reported to him, he realised the force of the words 'family man' and in that very instant threw away his begging bowl!

There are more interesting things in this story; but I am not going to continue the story, for, then I won't have time to tell you about all the things I want to say about *SAdhanA*. When we are talking of VairAgyam I thought the mention of these great role models of renunciation would add to the depth of the ideas.

Here the one who sang *Odu namakkuNDu* ('we have the begging bowl') later came to the conclusion that even one who has the Odu (Begging bowl) is actually a family man! There is a similar story in the life history of Sadashiva Brahmendra. He sings in his Atma Vidya Vilasam (#46): "With the folded hand as pillow, the sky as blanket, the bare ground as bed, and dispassion as wife – thus sleeps a renunciate in the blessed state of samAdhi". Once he was himself in that blissful pose of sleep on the ground in an open field. A farmer girl who was passing by, remarked to her friend, with a sarcastic smile: What a sannyasi! He needs a head-rest for his head; what type of renunciation is this? This made

Sadashiva Brahmendra think: 'How come I am thinking like an ordinary man that the head has to rest above the level of the rest of the body in order to sleep? Unless I get rid of this attachment to the body my *sannyAsa* is not worth the salt. It is only Mother Goddess who has come in the form of this low-caste woman to give me this upadesha'. Thus thinking, he removed his hand that was used as a head rest and lay on the ground without any headrest.

But the same woman who had commented earlier passed that way again, saw the change in the posture of the sannyasi and again gave a sarcastic laugh followed by an equally sarcastic comment! She said: "A Sannyasi should know things for himself. Just to keep reacting to comments made by passers-by does not speak well of renunciation!"

That was the day when Sadashiva became an honest-to-goodness non-reacting, non-acting, non-responding inert-like entity, Sadashiva Brahman!

Thus even the commonfolk seem to be knowing what kind of *vairAgyaM* should a Sannyasi possess.! It is in such a land of ours we have modern Sannyasis who say they cannot remain without coffee or ovaltine! And if you ask, they may say: "We are ati-varNAshramis, who are above the Sannyasi level; as that low-caste woman said, we know what to do and what not to do"

Instead of showing off like this, if one wants to be really in possession of Atma-*jnAna*, the one single thing very, very necessary, is *vairAgyaM*. It is said (e.g., in Jabala Upanishad IV and other Sannyasa Upanishads) that when that *vairAgyaM* has been acquired, then that very day one can leave home as a Sannyasi -- *yad-ahareva virajet tadahareva pravrajet*.

But one should not leave home or karma in disgust of the present life not giving any permanent happiness. Such a thing will turn out to be dry. The disgust about the present impermanent life should be accompanied by the thought about the permanent bliss of the Atman. Then only it will turn out to be a right *SAdhanA* and in turn lead to everlasting bliss. Once the Realisation is reached, the disgust also will disappear and everything will be full of Love. In other words it is in association with the comprehension (vivekaM) of the syndrome of the permanent and the impermanent that one should practise *vairAgyaM*. Neither *vairAgyaM* without that vivekaM nor vivekaM without the *vairAgyaM* will suffice. They have to combine.

The very fact we are asked to analyse the distinction between the permanent and the impermanent is to discard the impermanent through dispassion. To get that dispassion is the first step of the spiritual ascent. That is why 'AparokshAnubhUti' gives importance to vairAgyam and classifies *vairAgyaM* as the first step. In 'VivekachUDAmani' also *mokshhasya prathamo hetuH* (Verse 69/ Verse 70 in another reading) – An extreme vairAgya in things impermanent is the first cause for Moksha – thus combining the two in a symbiotic way.

Thus these constitute the first two of *SAdhanA-chatushhTayaM*.

Let us go to the third now. Viveka and VairAgya are at least known to all people in a general way. But the *SAdhanA* parts that we are going to describe now may not be so known, even by name.

18. The Sextad of treasurable qualities.

The third part of *SAdhanA-chatushhTayaM* is called **shamAdi* shhaTka-sampatti* -- the sextad of treasures beginning with '*shama*'. These are: '*shama*', '*dama*', '*uparati*', '*titikshhA*', '*shraddhA*' and 'samAdhAna'. Of these people know about '*shraddhA*', but even here, they usually think it means a deep interest or involvement. It is not so. A firm conviction or faith is called *shraddhA*; I have already mentioned that *shraddhA* is faith in what the ShAstras and the Guru say. Again, the sixth one, called 'samAdhAna' is also a well-known word but not a well-understood word in its connotation of one of the six 'sampatti'. We shall take it up when we come to it in due turn.

The six are referred to as '*shamAdi*' by our Acharya. Note that it is '*shamAdi*' and not 'samAdhi'. The 'sha' is not the 'sa' of 'sa-ri-ga-ma-pa...' but the 'sha' of 'Shankara'. **shama*-damAdi upetaH syAt* says Brahma-sutra (III – 4 – 27). For the attainment of *jnAna* one should have *shama*, *dama* and the like. *tad-vidheH* -- that is the rule, adds the Sutra. Who made the rule? Obviously, the Vedas. It is *Ishvara* who has so ordained through the vedas.

Where exactly do the vedas prescribe *shama*, *dama* and the like? In Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad, (IV – 4 – 23) where Yajnavalkya teaches Janaka, he says a *JnAni* has to be a *shAnta* (one with *shama*), *dAnta* (one with *dama*), *uparata* (one with *uparati*), *titukshhu* (one with *titikshhA*) and *samAhita* (one with samAdhAna). In other words, only he who has practised and acquired all these can become a *JnAni* or can obtain *jnAna*. Here five of the six have been mentioned. The same order among them is also maintained by the Acharya. '*ShraddhA*' is the remaining one. It is actually basic to everything. The shruti talks about it

in several places. Thus we always talk about the sextad of '*shama*' and the like.

19. Shama and Dama

What is '*shama*'? The Acharya gives the following definition:

Virajya vishhaya-vrAtA doshha-dRRishhTyA muhur-muhuH /
svalakshhye niyatAvasthA manasaH shama uchyate //
(Vivekachudamani: 22)

The conglomerate of all sensual experience in the form of sound, touch, form, taste and smell by the five sense organs is called *vishhaya-vrAta*. By discretion (*viveka*) and dispassion (*vairAgya*) one has to analyse and discover that all these are only obstacles on the path to Self-Realisation and so we have to discard them. This is what is said by *muhur-muhuH doshha-dRRishhTyA virajya* -- meaning, 'often, by realising they are bad, discarding out of disgust'.

Our mind is always thinking about what it considers pleasurable and is perturbed because of the inability to reach them. Thus it misses peace and happiness. Once we discard the sense objects as bad then it would be possible to fix the mind on the goal of *SAdhanA*, the Atman, which is full of peace and happiness. In other words the mind that is frantically running after multifarious matters can be made to stop that running and can be tethered to one goal. That kind of control is what is called **shama*.

One should think about the negative effects of '*vishhaya-vrAta*', the gang of sense experience.
'*virajya*' : discarding them out of disgust.
'sva-lakshhye' : in one's own goal.
'*manasaH niyata avasthA*' : keep the mind tethered under control
'*shama uchyate*' : is said to be '*shama*'.

In short, the control of mind is '*shama*'.

Why does the mind run after sense objects? It is because of the footprints of past experience. They are called 'smell' or '*vAsanA*'. This continues life after life. This inter-life vAsanA continues in a latent form in the subtle body, even after the physical body dies. When the soul takes another birth and thus obtains a new physical body, the latent vAsanAs begin to show their mettle! If those vAsanAs can be eradicated

in toto, the mind will be calmed automatically. It is thus the Acharya defines '*shama*' in 'aparokshhAnubhUti'. (Just now what we gave was the definition from Viveka chudamani).

sadaiva vAsanA-tyAgaH shamo'yam-iti shabditaH

Abandonment always of desire-promptings through vAsanAs is said to be '*shama*.

It is enough to understand that '*shama*' is control of the mind.

The thing that comes next is '*dama*'. It is control of the sense organs. In fact there is a lot more to say about '*shama*'. But mind-control and sense-control have both to go hand in hand. So let us talk about some basics of '*dama*' also now and then we can go more deeply about both together.

Sense organs are ten – five organs of action and five organs of perception. But the latter cannot 'do' anything themselves. The organs of action do action themselves: actions done by hands – the names 'kara' (hand) and 'kAryaM' (action) are themselves indicative, the legs do action by walking, jumping and running, the mouth speaks or sings, and two remaining organs excrete waste or vIryaM from the human body. On the other hand the organs of perception are those which cognize (or perceive) things in the outside world and 'experience' them. The ear experiences sound, the skin experiences the smoothness or otherwise and the coldness or hotness of something outside, the eye perceives colour and form, the tongue experiences the taste like sourness, bitterness or sweetness and the nose knows the experience of smell.

When we do not keep these sense organs under control all the mischief happens. The *JIva* is bound to this mayic world through the experiences by these sense organs. Only when we control these organs may we hope to enter the world of spirituality. Such control is called '*dama*'.

The direct meanings of both '*shama*' and '*dama*' is control without any specific qualifier as control of the mind or control of the senses. But traditional usage recognises two controls – one, control of the sense organs which either receive or respond to knowledge from outside and control of the sense organs which do actions to help such perception or response and two, control of the mind which creates its own world of thoughts and constantly is roaming about with or without aim in that world. Usage distinguishes these two controls and so uses '*shama*' for mind control and '*dama*' for sense control. Since anyway both mean control the Acharya himself, in the beginning of his 'shhaTpadI stotraM'

goes against traditional usage and uses '*dama*ya manaH' where he wants to say 'control the mind' and uses '*shama*ya vishhaya mRRiga-tRRishhNAM' where he wants to say 'control the senses that run to the mirage of outside sense objects'. The Prakarana works of the Acharya are unique in describing the advaitic experiences. One can also get from them the rationale and procedure of *SAdhanA* regimen in a systematic way. On the other hand when we want to get at the siddhanta (conclusion) by analysing the pros and cons of Vedanta, we have to give weight to his Bhashyas. And we may be surprised to note that in these very Bhashyas he has sometimes interpreted *shama* and *dama* in a way contrary to their traditional usage! In fact this has raised even some controversy among scholars. Remember I told you earlier that the sextad of qualifications with the exception of *shraddhA* has been mentioned in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. In his commentary at that point, the Acharya has interpreted 'shAnta' (one endowed with *shama*) as 'one who has controlled the goings-on of the outer senses' (*bAhyendriya vyApArata upashAntaH*), that is, the one who has reached a position generally accepted to be the state of '*dama*'; and he has interpreted 'dAnta' (one endowed with *dama*) as 'one who has released himself of the thirst (tRRishhNA) of the inner organ, the mind, (*antaHkaraNa-tRRishhNato nivRRittaH*), that is, the one who has reached a position generally accepted to be the state of '*shama*'. On the other hand, in his prakaraNa work, Viveka-chu*dama*ni, he goes with the general trend of meaning. But this need not raise a debate or controversy. He wrote the Bhashyas almost soon after he was initiated into Sannyasa in his youth. Shama, *dama* both point to 'control' and he might have thought it fit to talk of sense-control first and then only of mind-control. And later when he travelled throughout the country he might have decided to follow the accepted tradition among the scholars.

'*dama*' and '*shama*' both imply a control on oneself by oneself. So when we generally talk of self-control in an integrated sense of both mind-control and sense-control, we may rightly use either '*dama*' or '*shama*' alone. In BrihadaranyakaM when BrahmA teaches the divines generally to be humble, he just says "dAmyata" thus using only the word '*dama*'.

An alternate name for Bharata, the son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala is 'sarva-*dama*na', meaning one who controls and reigns over all. It was because of the dominance of her beauty that Damayanti is so called. The God of Death, Yama, is called '*shama*na' because he calms away the life of every one, be he a king or a pauper, when the time comes for it.

From the word '*dama*' the two words '*damanaM*' and 'dAnti' have been derived; so also from the word '*shama*', the two words '*shamanaM*' and

'shAnti' have come. The words '*shamanaM*' and 'shAnti' are more frequently in use than '*damanaM*' and 'dAnti'. We say 'ushhNa-*shamanaM*' and 'pitha-*shamanaM*' for controlling heat and bile, respectively. Also 'krodha-*shamanaM*' for controlling anger. Though 'control' is generally the intention here, the connotation is more mild and points out only to a softening rather than a violent control. The word 'shAnti' itself connotes a calming down and stands for a peaceful process or state where the intensity of control does not surface.

'shAnti' is the state of calmed mind; 'dAnti' is the state of calmed senses. Usually sannyAsis are given the attributes like '*shAnti dAnti bhUmnAM*'.

[Note by Ra. Ganapthy: In the Mutt
the Shrimukham of the PithAdipati (head of Mutt)
includes this as one of the attributes.]

The eyes and ears can close themselves and stop seeing or hearing. The hands and legs also can be tied so that they are incapable of any action. But even then the mind will be having its own goings-on without any discipline. Even though the senses are not experiencing anything, the mind can imagine them and go through all the rumblings and turbulences. When the senses act they act only by the promptings of the mind and for the satisfaction of the mind or fulfillment of the desires of the mind. So what is necessary is to immobilise the mind in order to stop all the multifarious activities of the senses.

It is because of this importance of mental control and discipline that *SAdhanA* regimens talk first of *shama* and dwell on *dama* later.

Of course an objection may be raised: "If *shama* is achieved then automatically *dama* is also a part of it; so why has it to be dealt with separately?"

The complete control of the mind – what is also called the 'death of the mind' (*mano-nAshaM*) occurs only almost at the last stage. We are here talking about the penultimate stages. Of course one has to try to control the mind right from the beginning. But the attempt at such control will only succeed temporarily. The moment the eyes see a tasty dish or the nose smells something familiarly pleasant, all discipline goes to the winds. The legs take you to the dish, the hands grab it, and the mouth begins to chew it. Thus even the mind was having a little control of itself, the senses perceive the sense object and that starts a yearning and that does havoc to the control of the mind. Until we reach a spiritual height, our mind behaves like this – that is, controlled when the sense objectrs are not in the perception-range of the senses, and losing control when

the senses 'sense' the objects of temptation. Those are the situations when the 'eyes', 'ears' 'nose', 'legs' 'hands' etc. have to be imprisoned and bound. This is why, '*dama*' is mentioned as soon as '*shama*' is mentioned.

Kathopanishad gives a beautiful analogy for mind and the senses. *JIva* is like the master seated in a chariot. The body is the chariot. The intellect is the charioteer. The chariot has several horses. Which are the horses? They are nothing but our senses. The charioteer steers the chariot by pulling the reins thereby controlling the horses. Those reins are the mind. The intellect – the one which has already been tempered by *viveka* and *vairAgya*, the first two of the four parts of *SAdhanA-chatushhTayaM* – is now the wise intellect and therefore the right charioteer who pilots the chariot of the body along the path of life. The right path is the spiritual path. The charioteer has to pull the reins (the mind) the proper way, not too hard, not too loose, so that the sense-horses go only in the direction of the highest experiences in life. When the destination of Brahman realisation arrives, one releases the horses (senses) as well as the reins (the mind) and also the charioteer (the intellect), the *JIva* (the resident of the chariot) who is the master can enjoy the Self by himself for himself!

'*dama*' denotes sense-control; but here only the senses of perception (jnAnendriyas) are indicated. Just as it is the mind which is the force behind the five senses of perception so also it is the force of the senses of perception that motivate the karmendriyas (senses of action) into action. That is why, the control of the senses of action are not dealt with separately. The control of indriyas usually means control of the five senses of perception only. In Viveka Chu*dama*ni a little later (#76 or 78, depending on what reading you are using) these five senses are shown to be the harbinger of all evil. "The deer obtains its ruin by the sense of sound through the ear (Hunters play the flute, the deer gets charmed by the music and stands still; that is when it is caught). The elephant reaches its ruin by the sense of touch through the skin (The he-elephant is caught when he forgets himself in the pleasure of contact with a she-elephant, already known to him and now lured into his track). The moth meets its death by sensing the form through the eyes (Does it not burn itself by being attracted by the form of light-flame which deludes it?). The fish meets its ruin by the sense of taste realised by the tongue (The bait of the fisherman is the worm that prompts the fish to taste it and gets caught). The bee meets its ruin by the sense of smell (The smell of the champaka flower attracts the bee and it goes and sits inside the full blossom of the flower; when the flower petals close up the bee still remains there, being enchanted by the smell and that is when it dies, starved of fresh air). Thus each of the five different senses of perception

prove to be the cause of death for one of the five different species of beings. The human, on the other hand is a prey to all the five senses of perception. What to speak of the crisis in store for him?"

However, in shloka #23 he refers to **ubhayeshhAM indriyANAM**, where he defines '*dama*'. He says '*dama*' is the control of both types of senses, of perception as well as of action; the control is of the experience of pleasures obtained by both:

vishhayebhyaH parAvartya sthApanaM sva-svagolake /
ubhayeshhAM indriyANAM sa damaH parikIrtitaH //

'*dama*' is said to be the withdrawal of both kinds of senses (*jnAna* as well as karma) from their objects of enjoyment and limiting them to their own spheres (*sva-sva-golake*).

Here the 'withdrawing of the senses' makes sense; but 'limiting the senses to their own spheres' is not so clear. Let me tell you how I have myself understood this. It does not mean that one should not see anything, should not hear anything, should not eat anything, should not move about or do anything with hands and feet. No, the Acharya does not mean that. If we stop all activities that way then the journey of life itself would become impossible. And then where comes the *SAdhanA*? Only if the base screen is there you can draw pictures on it. Whatever is necessary for life's journey – like seeing, hearing, eating, walking, moving – has to be done. Thus what is necessary to be done automatically defines a limit, a limiting sphere of activity, on all the senses. This is what is called *golaka* by the Acharya. That particular activity of the particular sense (indriya) which is necessary for life to continue, that range of activity is its golakaM. Once you transcend it, it is detrimental to the spirit. That boundary shall never be crossed. An automobile for instance can go at a particular speed; the very purpose of an automobile is to go places. But there is a speed limit. In the same way in the journey of life so long as the journey is on, there is work for the senses. You cannot stifle them by cutting them off from their work.

The Lord says in the Gita (III – 8) : Do what is prescribed for you; Without doing any work you cannot carry on this journey of life. This has to be brought into concordance here.

Don't take *golaka* as 'orb'. Take it as 'orbit' – the path of the movement and not just movement. When all the planets keep to their orbits around the Sun the solar universe and the inhabitants of this universe carry on their routine normally. In order for life in the universe to be normal the movement of the planets has to conform to its schedule. What will

happen if one of the planets just go out of its 'orbit'? What will happen if the planets do not get into their respectrive orbits? Either way there will be chaos. In the same way the ten senses of man have to keep staying in their orbits and keep doing their prescribed work; otherwise, there will be no life – only death. Maybe everything will then have to start all over again according to the maxim *punarapi jananaM*. And we do not know whether we will get a human birth in that 'punarapi jananaM'. At least now we talk of the Atman and we have occasion to talk of '*SAdhanA*' to reach that Atman. Our new birth may not be anywhere near the availability of these opportunities. In short, we have to see to it that the indriyas do their necessary work but do not get out of their limited sphere of action. The *sthApanaM* (fixation, establishment) of the senses in their spheres of action is not a stoppage of the senses, but is a fixing of them in their own path.

Recall that all this applies to both jnAnendriyas (senses of perception) and karmendriyas (senses of action).
Usually the five senses of perception and the five of action are counted along with the mind as eleven indriyas. The eleven rudra forms of Lord Shiva are the adhi-devatas, the deities pertaining to these senses. When we fast on the Ekadasi day (the eleventh day of the lunar cycle) it is for starving these eleven indriyas. Manu has said:

ekAdashaM mano jneyaM svaguNeno-bhayAtmakaM /
yasmin jite jitAvetau bhavataH panchakau gaNau // (Manusmriti II – 92)

meaning, "Know the mind as the eleventh indriya, that has an interactive relationship with the pair of five indriyas each ; Just by vanquishing that one, we would have conquered the other ten".

There is another kind of classification. Mind and the five senses of perception (*jnAnendriyas*) only are together counted as six. In the Gita the Lord says *indriyANAM manashchAsmi* (X -22). More specifically, he says in XV – 7, *manaH shhashhTAnIndriyANi* -- 'the six indriyas including the mind'.

There are contexts where the Acharya also has the same opinion. For instance, the indriyas are sometimes called 'karaNas' (instruments); because, it is the instrument which implements the actions that fulfill the will of the jIva. On the other hand, the actions of thinking, planning, enjoying happiness and sorrow -- these are done by the mind which is within. So mind is called 'antaH-karaNaM'. Along with the five 'karaNas' that do work outside, the Acharya visualises that sextad as a bee and says in Soundaryalahari (#90) *majjIvaH karaNa-charaNaH shhaT-charaNatAM*. The bee has six feet and so the *JIva* with its six indriyas ('karaNas') is taken as a bee. All movement is with the help of the legs. In

life, all the movements of the jIva take place because of these six 'karaNas'; so they are as good as 'legs' for the jIva-bee! This is the 'karaNa charaNa' of the shloka. The creature with six legs is the bee. The bee immerses itself in the lotus flower and remains there in enchanted forgetfulness. So also the plea of the devotee is to be immersed in the lotus feet of Mother Goddess forgetful of itself like a bee inside the lotus flower. That is when the mind and the pair of five indriyas are calmed down and the *JIva* with *shama* and *dama* achieved, is immersed in the Absolute. Mother Goddess (ambaaL) has in Her hands a sugarcane bow and five arrows; the bow is to help us with '*shama*' for mind-control and the arrows are to vanquish the five senses thus helping us achieve '*dama*'.

In short, both mind-control and sense-control have to go hand in hand, complementary to each other. In fact all the parts of *SAdhanA* have to move in one wavefront and so are to be practised as such in mixed fashion. I already told you they are not supposed to follow one after the other in isolation. I have to emphasize this further in the case of '*shama*' and '*dama*'.

Sometimes the senses do act involuntarily; maybe we can say those are the times when the mind has nothing to do with them. But generally almost all the time, the stopping of the actions of the indriyas or of the mind, does need the sanction and prompting of the mind from within. The movement of the indriyas are in fact the deliberate prompts of the mind which tries to fulfill its desires through them. Of course there may be a little involuntary movement of the indriyas on their own. Movement, maybe, but never the stoppage of movement. It is the mind that has to stop the movement of the senses. Thus, not only is *shama*, the control of the mind, but *dama*, the control of the senses, also is the responsibility of the mind. Therefore it is that we also have to contend with *shama* and *dama* together.

Lord Krishna at one place talks of '*dama*' as the work of mind: "indriyANi manasA niyamya" says He in III – 7. The same structure of expression occurs in VI – 24 where he says "manasaivendriya-grAmaM viniyamya" – that is, the gang of senses has to be controlled properly by the mind itself. 'By the mind itself' – 'not by oneself' is what is underscored by the words "manasaiva" (= manasA eva). Thus controlling, gradually and slowly (*shanaiH shanaiH uparamet*) one should calm down, says he. In fact '*uparati*' is the next in *shhaTka-sampatti* starting from *shama* and *dama*. 'uparamet' means 'one should reach '*uparati*', namely the calming down of everything.

The Lord usually talks about *shama* and *dama* both together. *sarva-dvArANi samyamya mano hRRidi nirudhya ca* (VIII – 12) : Here 'sarva-dvArANi samyamya' (damming all gates) is '*dama*'; 'mano hRRidi nirudhya' (fixing the mind in the heart) is '*shama*'. The dvAras are the gates; these gates are the indriyas, namely, ears, nose and mouth – in which the gates are visible and explicit; and the skin, in which the gates are not visible, but we know every hair on the skin is only a gate-like equipment, though invisible; and finally the eyes, which we know is just a fixture in one of the openings of the skull and further light passes through the eyes and creates all the images that we see. So the controlling of these five gates is nothing but the *dama* that controls the senses. And the process of controlling the mind and stabilising it in the Atman is the *shama* described in "mano hRRidi nirudhya".

"bhavanti bhAvA bhUtAnAM matta eva pRRithak-vidhAH" – All the different attitudes of the beings emanate from Me, says the Lord. And then He gives a list of the highest among them: (X – 4, 5) Intellect, wisdom, non-delusion, forgiveness, truth, self-restraint (*dama*) , calmness (*shama*), ... And when he makes a list of all divine qualities in the 16th chapter, he includes both *dama* and *shama* in "dAnaM *dama*shca" and "tyAgaH shAntiH" (XVI – 1, 2) . As I have already mentioned, what is obtained by *shama* is shAnti (Peace) and what is obtained by *dama* is 'dAnti'.

A sannyasi is called 'yati'. The Tamil name 'Ethiraj' is only a mutilated version of 'Yatiraja'. 'Yati' means a Sannyasi. The direct meaning of the word is one who has the quality of control or one who has controlled. Shri Ramanuja is usually known also as 'Yatiraja'. The words 'yama' and 'yata' both indicate 'control' or 'discipline'. The divine Yama is one who controls every one by fear. He takes them to his locale where they are controlled and punished; so his locale is called 'samyamanI'. That matter of Yama pertains to control of others. But the matter of 'Yati' is control of the self. So the Shastras such as the Gita talk of such a 'yati' as 'yatAtmA' or 'samyatAtmA'. The forced controls take place in the city of SamyamanI whereas the Sannyasi who has strict self-control is called 'samyatAtmA' or 'samyamI'. Here the control is of the mind and of the senses. In other words he who has acquired '*shama*' and '*dama*' is the 'yati' or 'sannyAsi'.

The Lord says (IV – 39) **shraddhA*vAn labhate *jnAna*M tatparaH samyatendriyaH* -- the one who has, with *shraddhA* (faith and dedication), controlled all the senses and thus is a 'samyatendriya', attains *JnAna*. Actually He has symbiotically combined here *shraddhA*, *shama* and *dama* , all three occurring in *SAdhanA-chatushhTayaM*!

In describing the attributes of a sthita-prajna, He says: "Just as a tortoise draws its head into the shell whenever there is danger, a human being should withdraw his senses from the sense objects into himself" and thus emphasizes the need for sense-control, by giving this beautiful analogy. Whenever the senses go outward helter-skelter on their own, it is danger time for the human. The tortoise has to draw its head into the shell only when it smells danger; but the human has always to do this withdrawal. The Lord underscores this fact by using a simple additional word, almost innocuously as it were, namely, the word *sarvashaH* in that verse II – 58. *sarvashaH* means 'always and by all means' ! : *yadA samharate cAyaM kUrmo'ngAnIva sarvashaH*.

In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad the entire divine community gets the advice: (V – 2 – 1) *dAmyata*, meaning, 'Keep your senses under control'. The story goes as follows: Not only the Divines, but the Humans as well as the Asuras – all three species went to PrajApati, their Creator to get advice. They were told by BrahmA only a single letter "da" and were also asked whether they had understood it.

Generally every one knows one's own weakness. So if somebody tells him a message in a disguised way and asks him to understand what he needed to understand, they will get the message in the way they think it was applicable to them. To understand something oneself this way has also a greater value. It will stick. One will not find fault with the fault-finder, for the curiosity to decipher the message will win!

That is how, in the story of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the single letter 'da' was conveyed by BrahmA to all the three species (devas, asuras and manushyas) at the same time but each one of them understood it to mean differently. They understood it to stand for the first letter of a message specially intended for them. The divines took it to stand for 'dAmyata', that is, 'control your senses'. The Creator agreed with their interpretation of the message.

The humans took it to mean 'datta' that is, 'Give: Do acts of charity; be charitable'. This also was approved by the Creator.

The asuras took it to mean 'dayadhvaM', that is, 'Be compassionate'. Again the Creator gave his approval of this interpretation.

The Acharya in his Bhashya has commented on this that the three categories of people – devas, manushyas and asuras – are all of them in the human kingdom itself. People who are generally known to be good, but still do not have their senses in control are the 'divines'. People who have no charitable disposition and are greedy are the manushyas in the classification, because man's greatest weakness is greed and the

consequent absence of a charitable disposition. People who have not even an iota of compassion in their hearts are classified as asuras. In other words, all the three messages of advice are for humanity.

The moral of all this is that even those who have many good qualities do lack the quality of self-control. This is because the attractions of sense-objects have power to draw man into the vortex of *MAyA*. So the process of getting out of those attractions can be very difficult. '*dama* and *shama*' -- it is not necessary to separate them as two things; even for the divines the control of both the mind and the senses was what was advised – this control is what should be achieved with great effort. One should not leave off the efforts after a few failed attempts. One should not have a feeling of let-down by defeats in this effort. Trust in God and persistently make the efforts. Keep the practice without losing heart.
Even when the objects in the outside world though perceptible to the ears, the eyes, and the tongue, are not within the reach of these senses, the mind may be thinking all the time about the experiences pertaining to those objects. The control of these thoughts is what is called control of the mind. It is not at all easy to be achieved. What is to be successfuly attempted at first is, even though the desires in the mind do not vanish, at least in the outer world of activity the indriyas may be restricted not to graze around – in other words, *dama* (control of the senses of action). A vrata, a fast, a starving of the eyes from objectionable sights, avoidance of sense-pleasures on certain days – such are the efforts that must be practised with some persistence. This will lead to the mind being trained for the paractice of *shama* and becoming a little more mature. When the sense objects are not around, it may be possible to control the mind from thinking about the experiences with them and the mind may remain at rest; but once we come out from that solitude to the outside world, immediately the ears will long for movie music from the radio and the tongue will yearn for that tasty coffee or other drink it used to have. Thus each indriya, without even the prompting of the mind, will run after its old vAsanA. Independent of the reins the horses now are ready to run! Now again the 'weapon' of '*dama*' has to be used. Thus controlling the indriyas from running after the external objects, inspite of their availability around, the other weapon of '*shama*' of the mind has to be applied so that the mind also does not run after them. Thus the processes of '*dama*' and '*shama*' have to be used alternately as well as simultaneously until one is really sure that one has achieved the needed control of both kinds. The finishing line is of course the total peace that one obtains at the fulfillment of '*shama*'.

Thus what can be somehow accomplished is the process of '*dama*'. In the Mahanarayana Upanishad, with great sympathy, it prescribes '*dama*' regimen for a Brahmachari and a '*shama*' regimen for the renunciate

muni who has renounced everything. "The Brahmacharis hold that '*dama*' is supreme, and revel in the implementation of that; whereas the dwellers in the forests (the munis) hold that '*shama*' is supreme and revel in the implementation of that" (Narayanopanishad: 78 – 3,4). The intended meaning is that both '*dama*' and '*shama*' are to be started right from the Brahmachari stage so that when one gets to the stage of *sannyAsa*, one can attain the total fulfillment of '*shama*'.

Where the mind finally calms down and settles, that is the Atman. When the mind stops, the Atman shines. Even in the previous stage, the senses would have stopped running involuntarily and the mind would have of its own volition controlled the senses. Thereafter the residual vAsanAs of the mind would be the ones still to be eradicated. This eradication happens when '*shama*' is totally achieved. Such a complete cessation of the mind will generate the realisation of the Atman. Thus it is that '*shama*' is the final calming down. That is why we say "shAntiH shAntiH shAntiH" and also refer to it as "Atma-shAntiH". The word 'dAnti' (controlled mind and senses) is also of the same kind. The controlling action implies a force, whereas what follows is 'shAntiH'. In other words it is not 'control, then shAnti' but 'control, that itself is shAnti'.

All the great people pray mostly for the controlled calm of the mind. Lord Krishna also advises us:

Yato yato nishcharati manash-chanchalam-asthiraM /
Tatas-tato niyamyaitat Atmanyeva vashaM nayet // (VI – 26)

The use of two words '*chanchalaM*' (wavering) and '*asthiraM*' (unsteady) to describe the turbulent nature of the mind is significant. By whatever prompting this wavering and unsteady mind runs outward towards objects, from each such prompting shall the mind be pulled back and drawn into the confines of the Atman, says the Lord.

20. Uparati (Cessation)

Thus when finally one settles in the Atman, that stage is the next, called '*uparati*' in the sextad. '*uparati*' means stoppage, cessation. There is a meaning of 'death' also. In one of Tayumanavar's songs (**parAparak-kaNNi** #169) he says 'mind should learn to die'.That is the stage when mind has reached a no-work state and has calmed down thoroughly. By the continuous practice of *shama* and *dama*, mind has released itself from all the objects outside and remains quiet, without any activity for itself – that is *uparati*. That is the definition in Vivekachudamani (#24):

**bAhyAvalambanaM vRRitteH eshho'paratir-uttaMA **

This *uparati* is mentioned here as the highest (*uttamA*). '*bAhyAvalambanaM*' is the hold of the outside. The 'outside' does not just mean what is sensed by the senses of perception, like seeing or hearing or moving the hands and legs. Whatever is 'outside' of the Atman, other than the Atman, is all included in the 'outside'. Indeed all the thoughts that rise in the mind belong to this 'outside'. Mind stands thus released from everything. But this word 'stands' is almost equivalent to 'death' – that is why it is called '*uparati*'. Mind has no action now. But still Atman-realisation is not there. Once that happens it is just opposite to 'death'; it is the state of immortality (**amRRitaM**). But Atman is not yet realised, though the mind has no turbulence or vibration now, as if the mind is dead.

In the Upanishads we meet several arguments between opponent schools. A spokesman for one set of arguments might have answered all the opponents' objections and the opponent may become spell-bound and ultimately totally silent. The word that is used on such an occasion is "*upararAma*". It means the opponent "rested, devoid of arguments". In other words, he reached '*uparama*', the state of rest. The words '*uparama*' (the noun form describing the action implied in the verb '*upararAma*') and '*uparati*' are both the same. In fact 'yama' and 'yati' both connote the state of actionless rest. '*uparati*' is of the same kind.

He who has reached '*uparati*' is said to be an '*uparata*'. Such a person is described by the Acharya in his Bhashya of BrihadAraNyaka-upanishad as **sarvaishhaNA vinirmuktah sannyAsI** (IV – 4 – 23). Here '*EshhaNA*' means desire, longing. At another place in the same Upanishad (III – 5 – 1) a *JnAni* is said to be roaming about like a beggar, having abandoned the '*eshhaNA*' for son, '*eshhaNA*' for money ands '*eshhaNA*' for worldly life. Generally the three desires, namely '*putra-eshhaNA*' (desire for son) '*dAra-eshhaNA*' (desire for wife) and '*vitta-eshhaNA*' (desire for money) are said to be the triad of desires (**eshhaNA-trayaM**). In LalitA-trishati, Mother goddess has a name **eshhaNA*-rahitA-dRRitA*. It means She is propitiated by those who have no desires.

VairAgya (Dispassion) also connotes the state in which desires have been eradicated. But in that case it is disgust in objects that is dominant. That is the state where one has discarded things because of disgust. But now in '*uparati*' there is neither disgust, nor desire.

When we say '*VairAgya*' there was an implied disgust towards all desires and so the main aim was to eradicate the desires. In '*shama-dama*' the sole purpose was to subdue the mind from its desires and to subdue the

senses from acting to fulfill those desires. Thereafter no further action. The mind has rested after all this *vairAgya*, *shama* and *dama*. But the rest is not a total rest – such a total rest, annihilation, is still far away! The present rest is only like a recess. The AtmAnubhava, its bliss etc. are not there. It is almost as if there is a void; yet there is a peace since the turbulence is absent.

Since at this point the desires have been thrown off, the Acharya calls this itself (in Brihadaranyaka Bhashya) as *sannyAsa*: that is, he calls this 'uparata' a sannyasi. Actually out of the sextad of qualities, there are still three more: *SAdhanA*, *shraddhA* and *samAdhAna*. We have yet to see these three. After those three, there is again '*mumukshhutvaM*', the anguish for Release. Only after that, *sannyAsa*. Then, how did he bring it here? Let me remind you what I said earlier. These *SAdhanA*s are not supposed to be sequenced as if one follows the other strictly. They come only in a mixed fashion. When they come like that, when some one obtains a complete fulfillment in *VairAgya*, described earlier, he may take *sannyAsa* even right there : **yadahreva virajet tadahareva pravrajet**, as I quoted for you. If one is dead-set even on one one of the *SAdhanA*ngas, all the others have to follow. They will. That is why he might have thought: When '*uparati*' is fully achieved, *sannyAsa* has to follow. The direct meaning of 'sannyAsi' is 'well-renounced person'; that could be the reason why an '*uparata*' has been called a sannyAsi. For, the qualities that are yet to come are '*SAdhanA*', '*shraddhA*' and '*samAdhAna*' – in none of which there is any aspect of 'renunciation'. You will know it when I explain them. When the external holds (**bAhyAvalambanaM**) are all dismissed, that is '*uparati*'; and the discarding of all of them is '*sannyAsa*'. '*nyAsa*' is throwing off or discarding; doing it well is '*sannyAsa*'.

In 'Viveka-chUdAmaNi', right in the beginning itself the Acharya talks of '*SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*'. Again, far inside, he talks about viveka, *vairAgya* and *uparati*. You may wonder why he talks about these well after a person has taken *sannyAsa* and has gone almost to the peak of *SAdhanA*. A little thinking will clear this. All the *SAdhanA*ngas mature gradually into perfection as you go spiritually higher and higher. That is viveka-*vairAgya*, elaborated in the beginning, is again taken up in shloka 175 (or 177) and he says that only by their 'atireka', that is, extra growth, the mind becomes pure and becomes eligible for *mukti*. Again, further on, (shloka 376/377) he says, in a superlative way,

vairAgyan-na paraM sukhasya janakaM pashyAmi vashy-AtmanaH

'For the yati who has controlled his mind, I know of nothing other than *vairAgya* that gives him happiness'.

Similarly, after *vairAgya* comes knowledge and after knowledge, *uparati* – thus the complete fulfillment by *uparati* is mentioned in shloka 419/420.

But then the mind has now come to a certain *uparati*; will the ascent end there in almost a dry manner? No. It may appear so. But God's Grace will not leave it so. This seeker who, with the single goal of seeking to know the truth of the absolute Brahman, has controlled all his desires and rested his mind with such great effort, would not be left alone by God just like that. Nor would He give him Brahman-Realisation immediately. His karma balance has to be exhausted, before that happens. Before that time comes, He would give him the opportunity to reach the *samAdhAna* stage that makes him ready to receive the upadesha of the mahAvAkya. And then the *sannyAsa* and then the mahAvAkya. It goes on thus.

But between '*uparati*' and '*samAdhAna*' there are two more: namely, '*SAdhanA*' and '*shraddhA*'.

21. Titikshhaa (Patience, Endurance)

Next to '*uparati*' we have '*SAdhanA*' (meaning, endurance, forbearance or patience). The Tirukkural has a chapter on this subject. Our use of the word 'Next' does not imply that '*SAdhanA*' comes only after one attains perfection in '*uparati*'. I shall repeat what I have said many times, because it is worth any number of repetitions. To attain Atma-*jnAna*, one needs several things – discriminatory intellect, dispassionate mind. control of the senses and mind; and the mind has to wean itself away from all things and stay put in the state of '*uparati*'. In fact there are several other things to be achieved. If one thinks of perfecting one step before going on to another step, he is mistaken. As an example take a job in the Police Department. There may be several requirements for such a job – like age qualification, level of education, height, weight, character pattern, fufillment of restrictions or limitations with reference to one's caste and so on. All this means they should all be satisfied simultaneously, not 'one after another'. It is not like fulfilling the age qualification first and then beginning to study to fulfill the educational qualification! It is in the same sense the requirements of '*nitya-anitya-vastu vivekaM*' to '*mumukshhutvaM*' are to be concurrent and not sequential. In other words though they have been mentioned by the Acharya in a certain order, they have to be present and practised simultaneously.

Another thing must be mentioned. There are several parts like *vivekaM* (Discrimination), *vairAgyaM* (Dispassion) and *shamaM* (Self-control). In none of these can one expect to have attained perfection until the final stage of Realisation. Each of them will at every stage be somewhere below the mark of perfection. All of them go together towards perfection until the final Realisation happens almost suddenly!

Why do we have to do all this *SAdhanA*? The objective is to purify the mind completely to such an extent there is no mind left thereafter. What does it mean to say that there is no mind? Desire, the hankering after matter, should be absent. I just now told you that this eradication of desire and hankering after material things will happen at the stage of Realisation. In fact that statement itself has to be modified. Only if the Realisation of the Self happens, the taste for matter will vanish. In other words, Self –Realisation is first. Then only, -- 'then' does not mean 'after a time' – immediately, though only after the Realisation, does the material hankering vanish completely. The Gita is very clear on this (II – 59). " For each sense, if the corresponding sense-object is denied to it, by that practice those sense-objects will go away (in other words, the concrete physical experience of them would have stopped); but the taste of that experience of it – as they say, 'the cat that has had the taste' (*ruchi-kaNDa-poonai*, in Tamil) – that taste of experience would linger on internally and it will vanish only when the Realisation of the Atman takes place" :

vishhayA vinivartante nirAhArasya dehinaH /
rasavarjaM raso'pyasya paraM dRRishhTvA nivartate //

paraM dRRishhTvA -- Having seen the Absolute; Just by the experience of the Absolute Principle. **rasaH api nivartate** -- the taste of experience also vanishes.

On the one hand it is said that only when the mind vanishes along with all its taste of material experience will one have the Experience of the absolute and on the other hand it is also said that such taste will disappear only when that Absolute is experienced. Does this not look like the standard Tamil paradigm: "Marriage can be fixed only when the mental imbalance is disposed off; but the mental balance can be restored only when marriage is fixed"!

Not so. The craving for the taste has to go. The mind has to go. Every effort has to be made to achieve both and to have the vision of Reality ('*Atma-darshanaM*'). But it is not easy. The craving for the taste etc. will not disappear fully. When such a total effort has been done, the Lord with His Infinite compassion grants him the Realisation of the Atman

and in that very process, destroys the taste and the mind's craving for that taste. If everything is going to be the result of his effort, then what is the greatness of the Lord's Grace? In other words, till almost the last stage man has to be practising all the different *SAdhanA*s.

The various parts of *Atma-SAdhanA* have to be practised simultaneously, just as a high school student studies for the different subjects of his final examination, all together, though at any point of time it appears he is studying for them in a certain sequence. The very idea of sequencing the steps of the *SAdhanA* as if one follows the other is just to give a clarity of understanding. In the early beginnings of the lessons on music the *svaras* 'sa', ' ri','ga', 'ma', 'pa', 'dha' 'ni' are sequenced in order that the learner may get the right fixation for each of the svaras. When it comes to full-fledged music like a Kirtana or an Alapana, the upper and lower svaras do mingle in various orders.

The word '*uparati*' signifies a repose after all ties or attachments have been dispensed with. And 'then' you are supposed to practice the forbearance implicit in '*SAdhanA*'. This looks like telling a sleeping man to 'be patient'! So the word 'then' is not to be interpreted in terms of a sequence in time. Rather it should be interpreted as a juxtaposed addition like a 'plus'! The analogy of the high school student studying different subjects for his final examination should not be forgotten.

If one takes up the lesson of '*uparati*' seriously and succeeds in it to a certain extent, the mind will be free of perturbations of happiness and sorrow, unlike the normal mind which is always tossed between these two extremes. Even then, if pleasure or pain happens in an abnormal or subnormal way, there is likely to be a vibration from the state of '*uparati*'. It is in this context that '*SAdhanA*' is prescribed by the Rishis of the Upanishad. The word '*titikshhasva*' (Forbear) is actually the Lord's word (Ch.2 – 4) in the Gita.

The common word '*shItoshhNa*' is actually made up of two words: 'shIta' – cold, and 'ushhNa' – hot. It is a pair ('dvandvaM') of opposites. Similarly there is 'sukha-dukha' (pleasure and pain), another pair of opposites. 'Bear with hot and cold, pleasure and pain', says the Lord to Arjuna.

Off and on in the Gita the Lord mentions several such pairs of opposites. Says He: "Transcend all these pairs of dualities and be beyond all of them. Be a '*dvandvAtIta*' – one who has transcended all dualities. Whether your objective is fulfilled or not, be equanimous to both fulfillment (*siddhi*) and non-fulfillment (*asiddhi*). Such equanimity also implies only '*SAdhanA*' (tolerance, forbearance, endurance). In the last chapter also He refers to this topic of '*siddhi-asiddhi*' when He says:

"That *JIva* who has no impact by either fulfillment or non-fulfillment is the *sAtvika* doer" (Ch.18 – 26).
siddhy-asiddhyor-nirvikAraH kartA sAtvika ucyate.

The hot-cold pair that was mentioned in the beginning is again referred to in the chapter on dhyana yoga, where He further adds (Ch.6 – 7) another pair -- **mAna** and **apamAna**. In many places (2-57; 9-28; 12-17) He has mentioned the pair **shubha-ashubha** of direct opposites. The *shubha-ashubha* (auspicious and non-auspicious) is nothing but *puNya* and *pApa* (Spiritual merit and demerit). At several places He mentions the pairs **priya – apriya** (likeable and unlikeable) , **ishhTa – anishhTa** (favourite and non-favourite), **lAbha – alAbha** (gain and loss), **jaya – apajaya** (victory and defeat) and pleads for equanimity between these opposites.

We have to keep on patiently tolerating whatever now appears to be bad among these, so that in due course we can be totally indifferent to them. Extreme cold, extreme heat, , the inauspicious, the unpleasant, sorrow, dishonour, defeat – in all these, we have to build up such a tolerance. And this tolerance should also be practised towards what appears now to us as good, namely, healthy heat, healthy cold, pleasure, honour, success, the auspicious and the pleasant. The Lord would not have mentioned both if he did not mean these also, in his list of objects towards which we have to be equanimous. Both good and bad have to be taken equally, 'suffered' equally, treated equally indifferently.

One can easily understand what it is to tolerate/endure what is bad. Maybe we cannot do it in practice; but we know what is meant. But what is it to say: 'Endure the good things!'? Isn't it funny? – To 'endure' the good things? That will be understood only if we take a few steps up the ladder of *saadhanaa*. Even those that appear to be 'good' will turn out to be 'unwelcome' at a certain stage. Suppose a cool wind blows softly. It is pleasant to the body. But the thought will arise: "Why this hankering after the pleasure for the body? Cold or hot, whatever wind blows, let it blow. That should be the goal. Why should one isolate the so-called soft cold wind and the 'pleasure' that it is supposed to bring? Why can't one be indifferent to its 'pleasing' effect?"

In the same manner, when one gets money or status, or when one receives the aplombs of others, one will begin to think: "Why can't I allow poverty to stay with me? Let people not be pleasant to to me. So what? Already I have trained myself to tolerate bad things; then why should I now be different when the good things arrive? If I change now then I would be making a distinction between good and bad". In other words, just as we feel now that bad things are unwelcome, so also, when one

has risen up the ladder of *saadhanaa* a certain number of steps, one will begin to feel that even the so-called good things are unwelcome. The policy of 'Whatever will be, will be' is what leads to the feeling of tolerance of 'bad' and that is '*titikshhaa*' . When one is ready to reject what is called 'good' by calling it equally 'unwelcome', the attitude of '*titikshhaa*' means that even that 'unwelcomeness' is tolerated. This is the '*titikshhaa*' of even the good things.

Even though we might want to think indifferently about both good and bad things, our karma of the past might bring in certain good things in spite of ourselves. Without our wanting it wealth might pour in. Relatives and friends may behave very favourably. More such good things might happen. One may think 'Oh No. I don't want these good things to happen. Only if I keep cool and happy when bad things are happening to me I can check my success in *saadhanaa*. The good things are only traps that draw me deeper into *MAyA*. I don't want them'. Such thoughts again speak against '*titikshhaa*'. One has to show '*titikshhaa*' even of good things; in other words, even the good happenings must not be unwelcome – they also must be suffered, endured!

The Acharya has defined '*titikshhaa*' as **sahanaM sarva-dukhAnAM** in Viveka Chudamani as well as in his AparokshAnubhUti. It means to 'bear all sorrows'. Here 'all' includes the so-called 'pleasures' also because what appears to be pleasing or a pleasure turns out to be really a sorrowful thing from the point of view of eternity. Only '*JnAna*' is happiness. Happiness is only that which arises from advaita-*jnAna*. Any experience in the world of duality is opposite to that *jnAna* and therefore is only to be considered as unhappiness, not happiness. At least what appears to be an unhappy thing now gives us a distaste for this worldly involvement and thereby it moves us a little towards enlightenment; whereas, what appears to be a happy experience binds us further to the world of involvement. Consequently one will have to develop an attitude of treating those happy experiences only as unhappy ones. At a later stage , just as one bears misery with forbearance, so also one should be able to forbear with what appears to be happiness. That is why the Acharya says **dukhAnAM sahanaM** (forbearing the sorrows) and stops with that. All our scriptures recommend to us the forbearance of both pleasure and pain equally; in other words, even what appears to be a happy pleasing thing should be 'endured' as indifferently as we are expected to endure the unhappy things.

Of course that happens after we reach a certain stage of maturity. But even at an earlier stage, at a 'lower' stage, we have to observe '*titikshhaa*' of good things in another way. When a good thing happens our mind gets

excited about it. The excitement is as bad as the one we get when an unhappy thing occurs. In both cases the equanimity of the mind is the victim. Only when the mind is steady without any vibration can one have the enlightening realisation of the Atman. Thus even the excitement that naturally follows a happy feeling should have to be 'endured'. It is another kind of forbearance. When we do not think of a weight as a burden, it does not any more weigh with us. When there is no weight on either side the needle of the weighing balance is steady and straight. Think of the 'good' and 'bad' as the two side-plates of such a balance. On whichever side you may place a weight, the balance is going to tilt. So neither the experience of the unpleasant nor the emotional excitement that might be caused by the pleasant should be allowed to tilt the needle of the balance from its normal equanimous position. The 'good' also should not 'weigh' with us. That is the '*titikshhaa*' of the 'good'.

In all that we have said what we call 'good' is not with respect to our spiritual progress. It is what we ordinarily call 'good' from our mundane material world, that is, what pulls us away from progress on the spiritual path.

There is a certain negative aspect in these 'good' things, that is not there even in the 'bad' ones. When we meet with something that is pleasant and happy for us, we always wish that it should happen again; we want 'more' of it. This peculiar desire that the 'good' should repeat is called '*spRhaa*' in Sanskrit. To prevent the rise of such '*spRhaa*' is also '*titikshhaa*'. Recall the Lord's words:

dukhesh-vanudvigna-manAh sukheshhu vigata-spRhaH (B.G. II – 56)

In other words, '*titikshhaa*' stands for not being perturbed by a miserable happening as well as not being affected by **spRhA** at the onset of a happy occurrence. One is not to be influenced by the dualities like pleasure and pain. To be away from duality means non-duality. When duality disappears, the bondage of *samsAra* is cut and the gates of mokshha are already open. In Gita V – 3, Bhagawan has shown the ultimate goal itself as the end result of '*titikshhaa*': **nirdvandvo hi mahAbAho sukham bandhAt pramucyate** meaning, He for whom duality is gone easily releases himself from bondage.

One who has '*titikshhaa*' is called '*titikshhu*'. Such a one is characterised by our Acharya as one who tolerates or endures dual opposites -- **titikshhuH dvandva sahishhNuH** -- in Brihad-AraNyaka bhAshya (IV – 4 - 23). The vanishing of duality means there is only One. And the One is Atman, no doubt.

In summary the Acharya's clarion call is : "One should not worry about either what is directly an unhappy thing or about what appears to be pleasant but in reality is also a miserable thing. 'Not worrying' means 'not wailing' about it. Nor should one look for anitdotes for either the *sukha* (happiness) or the *dukha* (unhappiness). Silently one should be forbearing both".

**sahanaM sarva-dukhAnAM apratIkAra-pUrvakaM /*
*cintA-vilApa-rahitaM sA titikshhaa nigadyate //** (Viveka Chudamani #24 (or 25))

sA titikshhaa nigadyate : She is said to be '*titikshhaa*'
sarva-dukhAnAM sahanaM : forbearing all unhappiness
Note that so-called happiness is also included in the 'unhappiness'.
apratIkAra-pUrvakaM : without searching for steps for nullifying (the 'sukha' or 'dukha') Note '*pratIkAra*' means 'antidote' or an 'annihilating step'.
cintA-vilApa-rahitaM : without worry (*cintA*) or lament (**vilApa**).

Now let me take up the feminine gender used here. *sA *titikshhaa** says the Acharya. '*titikshhaa*' is a feminine word. But it is not just grammar that is involved here. When he talks about '*nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka*' (Discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral) he says **so'yaM nityAnitya-vastu-vivekaH**; here he uses **saH ayaM** -- 'that is he' – thereby invoking a masculine construction. The word '*vivekaH*' is masculine. Maybe because of the age-old traditional opinion that a feminine mind is prone to vacillation and a masculine mind has a discriminating tendency.

On the other hand the concept of dispassion is indicated by the neuter gender specification **tad-vairAgyaM** -- That is dispassion. Maybe because, by means of dispassion one's mind becomes immune and inert!

In the process of discrimination there is an inherent analysis involved. Consequent to that, the mind becomes desireless. So in discrimination there is an action (though mental) whereas in dispassion there is not so much action. Action indicates a masculine power (**paurushhaM**) and so is indicated by '*saH*' (he) whereas the inaction-like inertness of dispassion is denoted by a neuter '*tat*' (that).

The words '*shama*' (mind control) and '*dama*' (sense control) both occur in the masculine as 'shamaH' and 'damaH'. Both imply control. Accordingly they adopt the gender that implies action, namely the masculine gender.

After saying what '*shama*' is, he says 'manasaH *shama* uchyate' – this is what is known as '*shama*' of the mind -- and here the masculine 'shamaH' is used. He does not say '*shamaM* uchyate' in the neuter gender. But he does not use the explicit 'saH' (he) here as in the case of 'viveka' (discrimination) where he said 'ayaM saH' – this is he. Also when he defines '*shama*' instead of saying just 'mind control' he says 'sva-lakshhye niyata-avasthaa' meaning 'what stays in its own goal'. After the active masculine work of controlling the mind, one stays in the peaceful state of resting in the Atman; it is this state that is meant by '*shama*'. So, maybe, the Acharya did not want to emphasize the masculine aspect of *shama*, by using *saH* (he) for 'shamaH'.

On the other hand, when he talks about '*dama*' (control of the senses) he says *sa damaH parikIrtitaH* meaning "he is called damaH", where the masculine gender is explicitly emphasized. When the senses run amuck, to control them and draw them behind a lot of masculine activity is needed, certainly.

The word '*uparati*' is feminine. When we equate activity with masculinity then the actionless restful state has to be feminine. And so he says *uparatir-uttaamA* -- the highest is '*uparati*' (cessation) – using the feminine for 'the highest'.

And, for the subsequent '*titikshhaa*', he specifically uses the 'sA' (she). Forbearance is known to be a special characteristic of women in general – the quality of a mother. Don't we usually refer to the Goddess Earth as the ideal for tolerance?

22. Shraddhaa (Faith / Dedication)

In the sextad starting with 'shama' the next one is '*shraddhA*' (Faith/Dedication). When one is involved in something by the sheer conviction – not by any direct 'proof' -- that what the *shAstras* or the righteous ones say must be right, that is known as '*shraddhA*'. Compared to men, women stand higher in '*shraddhA*' – so long as they do not involve themselves in academic research. In fact, I think, even after their modern involvement in studies, they are still one step higher in *shraddhA*. Maybe in the days to come this will be different.

Shraddhaa leads to Belief (AstikyaM) as I already mentioned. Among those who have become non-believers, women are probably just one-fourth of the number of men. Even the wives of leaders of parties of non-

believers, have faith in temples, austerities and worship. I think the '*shraddhA*' word is rightly feminine!

Right in the beginning when I talked about '*shraddhA*' I told you this topic will recur again at the end of the *SAdhanA*. We have now come to that second level '*shraddhA*', the higher grade one.

At this stage the seeker has taken several steps towards his spiritual maturity. To inquire and convince oneself what is eternal and what is ephemeral; to develop a dispassion towards the ephemeral; to quell the thoughtful mind by self control and convert it into an emptiness; to cultivate patience and tolerance – in all this he has made sufficient progress. So at this stage what is this *shraddhA* for? That is something to be there right at the beginning, when he was putting the foundation for all his *SAdhanA*. In the beginning when he was nowhere near any familiarity with spiritual conduct and regimen, there was a meaning in prescribing a *shraddhA* for him by saying, "This path does not allow intellectual proofs and verifications; many things have to be taken on faith from the *shAstras* and the words of the Guru". Now that he has taken significant steps towards spiritual progress, why bring the *shraddhA* back again? It is because, by the very fact of his progress gained upto now, there is danger of his losing the very faith that has brought him so far!

In the beginning he was likely to have had some modesty and naivety and a consequent *shraddhA* because at that zero stage one is rather scared about the strict requirements of discrimination, dispassion and sense-control and one wonders whether all these are achievable. At that time it was easy to believe that perhaps in the spiritual field there might be many things which cannot be understood or argued out by the rational mind and one must trust the words of the scriptures and the wise. But now after one has made some progress on the spiritual *SAdhanA* path, one is likely to think that the mind is now clear and hereafter it will understand all that has yet to be achieved on the path of Self Realisation. This is a kind of ego – an unrecognizable ego that creeps in. Things do happen even upto the stage of Self-Realisation, that cannot be understood by the smartest intellect . Even a *JnAni* who has achieved that Self-Realisation will not be able to explain them by his intellect. One has to continue with the same regimen without questioning them until the Self-Realisation sprouts up like the rise of the Sun. When those things happen, one has to take them as they are, without analysing them by the intellect. One may have to be content with the thought: "The *SAdhanA* that has brought me so far will certainly take me further by the same Grace of the Lord that brought me up to now; I shall not subject it to any intellectual questioning." Even after one has

obtained Enlightenment, the things may still be inaccessible to the intellect. Even our Acharya – there cannot be a better Acharya than he – does not try to tell that secret of achievement to us in the language of the intellect. "I cannot describe it. Simply keep on proceeding with Faith" – this is his message and accordingly he keeps this *shraddhA* at this advanced stage of *SAdhanA*.

Had the Acharya told us all the secrets, there would not have been a necessity for Ramanujacharya to establish a VishishhTAdvaita. Somewhere in the philosophy of advaita Ramanuja asked an intellectual question and not finding a reply to that, he thought he had a suitable reply to it and that became his vishishhTAdvaita. OK, but did that reveal all the hidden secrets? No. That is why a Madhwacharya had to establish his dvaita. But even then intellectual questions remain unanswered. That is why still there are many advaitins and many vishishhTAdvaitins. And we are arguing and arguing. Though these arguments are going on at the intellectual level, those who came thereafter, without worrying about testing everything on the touchstone of the intellect, simply follow their own Acharyas with *shraddhA* on the plea "I am born in this particular Smarta or Vaishnava tradition; let me follow with faith what my Acharyas in my tradition have taught us" – and they have reached great spiritual heights accordingly.

A smarta (belonging to the advaita tradition) may say that nothing would equal the experience of identity of *JIva* and Brahman, whatever these followers of other traditions may claim about their spiritual achievements. Let him say so. But they are certainly greater than many of these smartas who don't practise any *SAdhanA* with *shraddhA*. Maybe they have not reached the peak experience of realisation of nirguna brahman, of which the smartas speak. But isn't it the same brahman that appears as the *Ishvara* or saguna brahman? Those achievers of the other-tradition-followers do somehow establish a rapport with that *Ishvara*. And they do obtain a certain godly nature, blessing of Divine Grace and a heart of compassion. Even on the spiritual side, rather than simply bragging about belonging to the glorious advaita tradition without knowing anything worthwhile about the Atman, except one's body and the goings-on of the mind, those experiencers of other traditions who are convinced that their soul has been born only to worship and propitiate the Divine are certainly greater. One who thinks that his pure mind which is full to the brim with that kind of bhakti is the Atman is superior to some one who has had no experience of anything connected with the Realisation of the Atman. Once the mind becomes that pure, automatically in course of time there is the chance of that very mind eradicating itself leading to Self-Realisation. But let that be in the future. Right now, those followers of other traditions have, as I

said, because of their *shraddhA*, obtained a divine contact and a divine grace and benefics. That is the very reason there are great souls in all our traditions, known the world over.

It is the play of Mother Goddess – Bikshaa of Illumination – that, at a certain stage, one rises on the strength of his *shraddhA* alone, without any effort on the part of the intellect. That is when *shraddhA* becomes most significant. Even those who have taken several steps on the *SAdhanA* path should simply continue in the path of *shraddhA* and ask no questions; questions will not get any answers palatable to the intellect, nor will it be able to elicit any answers from the Guru understandable by the intellect. It is for this reason that *shraddhA* has been placed as one of the parts of the *SAdhanA* regimen.

This kind of *shraddhA*, that is the opposite of "I shall find it myself; I will be able to intellectually understand it", has to be there not only in the beginning but till the end. "The *shAstras* say so; our guru says so. Let me go on doing what they say – whatever may happen in between. It will automatically take me to the Goal" – this attitude is *shraddhA*. It is not just one of the components of *SAdhanA* ; it is the peak component. The Acharya says in his introduction to the second chapter BrihadAranyaka Bhashya **shraddhA* ca brahma-vijnAne paramaM *SAdhanA*M*. The Lord also emphatically says (B.G.IV-39) **shraddhA*van labhate *jnAna*M* ((only) he who has *shraddhA* gets the enlightening wisdom).

A special status is attached always to the mantras of the Upanishads called *mahA-vAkyas* that declare the identity of jIva and brahman. Even among those mahAvAkyas, one of them gets a further unique status, because it is the one which is directly imparted to a shishhhya (disciple). It is the one in Samaveda, where it is given to a celibate youngster who is not a renunciate. The Absolute ParamAtmA who is denoted by 'That' is what You, the jIvAtmA, are – This is the message there. The father Uddalaka Aruni is the one who doles out the teaching; and the receiver of the teaching is the son, Svetaketu. The father keeps on reeling mantra after mantra and ends up with the emphatic refrain: "That is what You are". As he goes along, right in the middle, he says, "Go and bring a banyan fruit, my child".
"Here it is", says the son and produces the fruit.
"Break it" says the father.

[Note by R. Ganapathi, the author of the Tamil rendering: 'Here the Swamigal gives the conversation in a dramatic fashion feigning two voices, one of the guru and one of the disciple.]

"Done, my Lord"
"What do you see within the broken fruit?"

"Seeds, and seeds, like small small particles"
"Well, my child, break that seed also"
"Done"
"What do you see inside, now?"
"Nothing, my Lord"
"The nothing that you are referring to has an invisible subtle thing in it. "It is from that subtlety the entire banyan tree springs out" says the sage Aruni, and it is at that point, he addresses the child with affectionate warmth : "Saumya (Smart one), Believe me. Have faith in what I say. **shraddhasva**" **shraddhasva** means 'Have *shraddhA*'.

This is the *mahAvAkya* that is at the lofty peak of Vedanta that is taught as the great first step to SanyAsis at the time of their taking sannyAsa. And when this upadesha is being given first to that supremely qualified celibate youngster, the Rishi finds it necessary to say *shraddhasva*. This just means that one has to have *shraddhA* as his only armour even at the last moment when the stark reality of Realisation of Brahman takes place.

Not only in the trust that we place on the concepts and the like. The trust has to be also that, 'by that Guru who gives them to us one would also see the final gate open for us'. This is very important. Even though he might be a *JnAni*, he has to play his role of a human, just as God plays the part of an Avatara. Even that would be only a way of showing the right path to some one. But when he involves himself in some of these human activities, the disciple may land himself into a doubt about whether his guru is indeed a *JnAni*. Once he starts doubting why the guru is acting like an ordinary human, and whether such a personality can ever deliver the spiritual release that he is seeking, there begins the disciple's downfall. That very doubt assumes gigantic proportions and like a ghost occupying his brain, does not allow him to continue his *SAdhanA*. The constant thought that one has been cheated devours him as well as the dreams about his goal. "*samshayAtmA vinashyati*" (B.G. IV – 40) says the Lord -- 'He who doubts, goes to ruin'. And when He says this he adds the words *ashraddha-dAnascha*, meaning 'one who has no *shraddhA*'. In IX – 3, He says

ashraddha-danAH purushhaaH nivartante mRtyu-samsAra-vartmani --

'the man without faith (is ruined and) comes back to this transmigratory cycle again and again'. In fact he frightens us with a warning, at the same time very compassionately. It is not just a false warning; it will surely happen that way. We should not allow it to happen. We have to develop an unshakeable faith in the thought 'I have come to this Guru. Let him appear to others in whatever way they think. As far as I am

concerned, God will not let me down; He will certainly grace me, through this Guru, with the Release that I seek'. The conviction and faith that we usually develop in our Vidya-Guru (the teacher who instructs us with the basics of education) in our early days, -- that same conviction and faith has to be there in the dikshA-guru (the Guru who finally grants us the sannyAsa status). It is important to cultivate this *shraddhA*-cum-*bhakti*-cum-*sharaNAgati*.

Of course it is true that one should resort to a guru only after thorough enquiries about him. But suppose you land yourself with a fake guru. Even then, if without losing faith in him, if you surrender to him, the All-knowing Lord will bless you with Enlightenment through that Guru, though he may not himself be a *JnAni*!

"Conviction comes only by actual perception by ourselves as truth; instead of this if one goes on faith by the *shAstras* and the Acharyas who repeat those *shAstra*ic statements, that cannot give a firm conviction" – such thinking is nothing but absence of *shraddhA*. On the other hand *shraddhA* is the faith that says: "By the very fact that something is not comprehensible to my little intellect it must be higher than what can be revealed by my own inquiry; it must be the truth revealed to the Rishis and passed on to us by the Shastras".

One of the six accessories to Vedic knowledge is called *niruktaM*. It was done by Yaska. It delves into the word-meanings of words found in the Vedas. When dwelling upon the meaning of the word '*shraddhA*' he says it originated from the two root words 'shrat' (indicative of Truth) and 'dhA' (which means 'fixing'). So the integrated meaning of the word '*shraddhA*' is to 'fix something in the mind as the truth' – in other words, to believe in something with conviction.

In Chandogya Upanishad (VII-19-1) there is a mantra which means: "This is the kind of *shraddhA* that we should have in that fundamental invisible subject, that should always occupy our mind; only then can we think right" -- *When there is *shraddhA* then and there is right thinking*.

Brahma-vidyA (Knowledge pertaining to the subject of brahman) should be taught only to those who have *shraddhA* – says Mundaka Upanishad. Who are those so qualified? The Upanishad gives a list of such qualifications. (III -2-10). Those who discharge their obligations (karmas) in the right manner; *shrotriyas* (those who have excellent scholarship of the vedas); those who have an intense anguish to be in brahman; and those who have *shraddhA*.

In Prashnopanishad also (I – 10) it says those who seek the Atman become eligible to do so by their tapas (austerities), celibacy (brahmacharya), *shraddhA*, and learning.

In the Gita, Bhagawan explains in one whole chapter the details of divine qualities as against the 'asura' (undivine) qualities and when he finishes this chapter, says: "He who transgresses the rules and regulations of the Shastras will get neither success nor happiness; therefore, O Arjuna, keep the Shastras as your *pramANa* (basic law) and decide on what to do and what not to do". Having said this, right in the beginning of the next chapter he says there could be an inborn shraddha, totally unrelated to Shastraic issues, and this could be in three different kinds, namely, rajas and tamas which are not desirable, but also a desirable sAtvic *shraddhA*. All this only shows the importance that one has to attach to the concept of *shraddhA*.

The Acharya keeps emphasizing, in all his works, the *shraddhA* in Shastras and the words of the Guru.

He has added '*shraddhA*' as one of the '*shamAdi-shhaTka-sampat*' (the treasure-sextad beginning with shama), along with shama, dama, uparati, *titikshhA*, *samAdhAna*. But he has not added it as a sixth, following the five mentioned. The first four are mentioned in that order in Brihad-Aranyakopanishad; he keeps that order and now adds *shraddhA* as the fifth. So shraddA comes after *titikshhA* but before *samAdhAna*.

The word '*samAdhAna*' has several meanings. One of them is the establishment of truth after meeting doubts. Usually the proponent of one school makes a claim and the opponent from the other school raises objections to the claim. These objections and the arguments laid in support of the objections are collectively called 'pUrva-pakshhaM'. Now the original proponent meets all these objections, and establishes his proposition. This process of meeting objections is called 'samAdhAnaM'. And the established proposition is 'siddhAntaM'. When one listens to the arguments of the purva-pakshha side, even the disciples of the proponent himself, may begin to doubt the truth of the proposition of their own master. In other words their faith in their own master's proposition would waver. This loss of faith, which is the opposite of *shraddhA*, is what is 'pacified' by the '*samAdhAna*' of their own guru.

When the Acharya includes '*shraddhA*' as one of the components of *SAdhanA*, the implication is there is what is called 'ashraddhaa' (the opposite of *shraddhA*, namely, lack of faith). To conquer that lack of faith is '*shraddhA*'. Having conquered that, one reaches the '*samAdhAna*' stage. Just like Peace after War. When faith has to duel with lack of

faith, more faith (*shraddhA*) is needed. Afterwards, when there is no more duel, it is the '*samAdhAna*' stage.

All this means that '*samAdhAna*' has to be preceded by '*shraddhA*'.

That is why when the Acharya decided to to keep '*shraddhA*' – the basic prerequisite for any spiritual venture – also as a component of *SAdhanA* at the higher stage of entering sannyAsa, he decided to keep it before 'samadhAna'. Because '*samAdhAna*' is the stage when the mind is settled enough to receive the sannyAsa rigour. So naturally it comes after the first four, namely, shama, dama, uparati and *titikshhA*.

The *SAdhanA* components though sequenced thus do not turn out to be that sequential. I already told you how they have all to be practised simultaneously. By continued practice of the *SAdhanA*, one rises on the spiritual ladder but one also slips. Very often it happens that the fall through a slip is more than the rise. You rise by two steps, but you also fall by four steps! So further practice of *SAdhanA* makes you rise by two steps but you now fall only by three or two steps! Practise further. Practise, practise, practise. This persistent and consistent practice gives even more than the expected success, if it is coupled with the intensity of the *SAdhanA*, the strength of the will to do it, and the power of the Lord's Grace. One may even jump like a frog from a lower step of the spiritual ladder to a step several steps higher!. And for all this it is the *shraddhA* that gets things done. And that is why *shraddhA* is kept before '*samAdhAna*'.

The Acharya himself has given a deep meaning for '*samAdhAna*'. But we shall come to it later. Before that we shall see how he has defined '*shraddhA*'. And still before that, just as we saw how it comes before '*samAdhAna*' we shall also see how it comes after '*titikshhA*'.

We were going to see why *shraddhA* has been kept after *titikshhA*.

The discretionary enquiry about the transcendental and the ephemeral (nitya-anitya-*vastu*-viveka) results in a certain conviction about what is impermanent; but the conviction is not so strong about the permanent. Isn't the permanent one the Atman? Unless one has an experience how can conviction about it be strong? But the experience of the Atman is to be had right at the very end. By all the enquiry, by all the listening to the teachings of one's Masters, by all that reading of the various works of the Acharya, and by all that exposure to the Upanishads and other philosophical works, one intellectually arrives at the conclusion that there is certainly a thing called Atman and it must be of the nature of the fullness of sat-cit-AnandaM. But the conviction in this conclusion will

not be as strong as the conviction that arises about the impermanence of the universe of objects, because the latter is experiential. The clarity with respect to the Atman cannot be expected to be that perfect. In other words, we are more knowledgeable about what is to be discarded rather than about what is to be merged in. Thus a disgust-cum-dispassion starts with what is to be discarded. Following that, instead of running after the impermanent non-Self, one, through that very dispassion, engages oneself in the control of the senses and the mind – shama and dama. In due time the craving for the ephemeral objects of the universe disappears and the mind becomes empty. This is uparati. But even here there is no experience of the Atman. The misery of experience of the non-self is not there, but still the bliss of the fullness of experience of the Atman is also not there. Then comes the stage of *titikshhA* – the unaffectedness by the happiness and misery of the outside world. Even here the progress is only on the side of the discarding of the non-self, and not on the side of the experience to be.

Another point has to be noted here. A shadow, a trace, of the bliss of the Atman will however be there right from the beginning, just as one feels a cool breeze slightly sneaking through a hot summer day, because of a distant rain somewhere. That trace of bliss is the grace of the Almighty. And that grace increases to light showers – but not a downpour. Hot sun, and off and on some cool air, now and then some showers. This is how it goes, because the bliss of the Atman comes only after numerous lives. We forget the fact that through all that journey through several lives we have been immersed in the non-self. We think we have not been compensated well enough after all the *SAdhanA* we have done in this life. We feel a sense of disappointment and there is an intense anguish. By the steps of our *SAdhanA* we think we have achieved quite a bit of tolerance and endurance (*titikshhA*), but this anguish for the blissful experience of the Atman comes from nowhere, as it were. It actually comes because the Lord Himself is testing you. This is the time when you need *shraddhA* so that you don't leave off your *SAdhanA*. That is the reason for *shraddhA*, the higher level *shraddhA*, being kept after *titikshhA*.
The definition that the Acharya gives to *shraddhA* is:

shAstrasya guru-vAkyasya satya-buddhyA-vadhAraNA /
sA shraddhA kathitA sadbhiH yayA vastU-palabhyate //
(Verse 25/26 of Vivekachudamani)

"The noble ones say: *ShraddhA* is the conviction arising through the intellect that *shAstras* and the words of the guru are indeed true; by this *shraddhA* is the Reality attained".

Ordinarily we take faith or *shraddhA* to be that which discards the function of intellect (and takes things on faith). Here it says the ShAstras and words of the guru are taken to be true by an analysis of the intellect -- **buddhyavadhAraNA**. There is no contradiction. Because, analysis or confirmation by the intellect does not mean one takes *shAstras* and words of the guru as true only if the intellect confirms them after an analysis. Then what does it mean? It is the intellect that has to decide after an analysis: "I cannot expect to know everything. It is not possible to offer a judgement all by ourselves. Regarding matters connected with after-life and with the Self, things incomprehensible to us, but intuited by the *jnAna-dRRishhTi* (intuited wisdom) given by the Lord Himself and by one's own experience by the authors of the ShAstras and the Guru who knows the ShAstras; what they say have to be accepted by us without further inquiry". To arrive at this conclusion by use of one's intellect is what is called "*buddhy-avadhAraNaM*". It is not that the intellect is used to decide on the Truths; the intellect decides that there is no place for intellect here!

Mark! This is not what a stupid who has no power of the intellect accepts anything without question. Such a one will get cheated. When we said '*nitya-anitya-vastu-vivekaM*', we did mean the process of discriminating between the good and the bad and that would certainly imply the use of the intellect. In order to discriminate, one has to develop and train one's intellect to become sharp. On the other hand when the Shastras and the Guru are saying something which is not comprehensible by that intellect, he has to accept that without allowing the intellect to intervene. It is more difficult not to allow the intellect to intervene, rather than allow it to do its function. This is possible only if there is modesty to the extreme. One has to develop that kind of modesty. Instead of having a stupid man's faith, one has to cultivate an intelligent faith in the words of the Guru and of the Shastras, without countering them by objections – this is the *shraddhA* that is being talked about.

avadhArana has two meanings. One is 'a deep conviction'. The other is 'a limitation'. Both the meanings have to be integrated here. The intellect limits itself by concluding that this is 'beyond my own jusrisdiction' and therefore is determined to consider Shastras and Guru-words as true. By *shraddhA* one can reach the Truth is what is implied by **yayA vastu upalabhyate**. 'She' (*sA*) is called *shraddhA* – the word is feminine – by which the Absolute Reality (**vastu**) is obtained (**upalabhyate**).

In the Tamil region we use "*vAstavaM*" and "*nijam*" for something true. The word "*nijam*" does not mean that "*nijam*" means 'what is in its own nature', or 'what belongs'. Probably our usage that gives the meaning 'true' to it must have arisen thus. When we dress up for a particular role

in a drama we play the role, don't we? That is only a role, a pose, a disguise. When we are off the disguise, we become what we are usually. So a disguise or a role presents only a falsity, whereas when we take off the role we become our true personality, whatever we are. Since a disguise means falsity or untruth, its opposite, namely, the role to which we naturally belong, -- that is our '*nijam*' – is taken to denote truth. This is how '*nijam*' must have come to stand for 'truth'! But let that be.

But the meaning of '*vAstavaM*' as something that is true, is a correct one. The word has been derived from '*vastu*'. The nature of '*vastu*' is '*vAstavaM*'. '*vastu*' means a 'thing' ordinarily; but its most important connotation is 'that which truly exists'. Things and objects are not in our imagination; they actually exist and that is why a thing is called '*vastu*'. Thus '*vastu*' means something that truly exists and so we also use '*vAstavaM*' the property of '*vastu*' for 'truth'.

In the defining shloka for '*shraddhA*' that we were discussing, it says, 'by means of *shraddhA* is the reality obtained' **yayA vastu upalabhyate**. Ordinarily though we call everything that exists in the operational world as '*vastu*', when enlightenment comes upon us all these will be known as existing only in our imagination, because it is the absolute Brahman only that really exists in the absolute sense. That is the '*vastu*' ultimate. And that '*vastu*' is obtained only by *shraddhA*.

In this definition of *shraddhA*, it is the intellect that realises its limitation and gets the conviction that *shAstras* and the words of the guru are true and this conviction is *shraddhA*, says the Acharya. But in his 'aparokshhAnubhUti' he does not even rely on this role of intellect to voluntarily limit itself. There he does not give any such leeway to the intellect and accordingly he gives the simple definition in the commonly understood way:

nigamA-chArya-vAkyeshhu bhaktiH shraddheti vishrutA *

meaning, *ShraddhA* is the exhibition of bhakti (faith and dedication) towards the words of the Guru and of the ShAstras.

It is very customary to link the two words bhakti and *shraddhA*. 'bhakti' denotes the aspect of love and liking and '*shraddhA*' denotes the aspect of faith. But if we think about that, faith or trust comes only if there is a liking and the liking comes only if there is a trustworthiness. The two are inseparable. In the words of the guru and the ShAstras, we should have this faith coupled with liking and this love coupled with trust. That is *shraddhA*. Love is what involves our heart in the thing. Such

involvement of a heart-felt trust in the guru and the *shAstras* is *shraddhA*.

23. Samaadhaana

After Shraddhaa the Acharya lists *Samaadhaana* as the sixth item in the sextad of spiritual accomplishments. The words *samaadhaana* and *samaadhi* have the same meaning. The six 'treasures' starting with 'shama' are known as 'shamAdi shhaTkaM' [shama-Adi (beginning with shama) – shhaTkaM (sextad)] and this 'shamAdi shhaTkaM' terminates with 'samAdhi' !

SamAdhi is the final goal. The final aim is brahman. To be totally immersed in brahman is samAdhi. Being the final goal it cannot be termed as a part of the *SAdhanA*. It is the final state of accomplishment. Accordingly the Acharya does not also mention it in the second stage of *jnAna* path, namely, the *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM* (the four components of *SAdhanA*a) . Thereafter, in the third stage, where one adopts the renunciate stage, when one goes through the regimen of shravana, manana and nididhyAsana, this is not mentioned as one of those exercises. Because it is just the end-result of all this *SAdhanA*. In the state of samAdhi one experiences it and does not do anything by one's effort . Thus it is that the Acharya never mentions samAdhi as a component of *SAdhanA*. However, --

There are two grade-levels in shraddhaa, as there is in bhakti. The samAdhi I talked about just now is the higher grade; there is another one of a lower grade. The lower grade samAdhi is the 'samAdhAna' of the 'shamAdi-shhaTkaM' spoken by the Acharya. 'samAdhi' has generally the connotation of being in unison with the goal of brahman; so in order to make a distinction he calls this as 'samAdhAna'.

I told you already how the Acharya adds 'shraddhaa' to the five accomplishments mentioned by Rishi Yajnavalkya in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. And Yajnavalkya calls the person who possesses them as 'shAnta, dAnta, uparata', etc. The Acharya calls the accomplishments defining them as 'shama, dama, uparati', etc. and makes them as components of the *SAdhanA*. Yajnavalkya names the one who has the last (the fifth) accomplishment as 'samAhita'. That which makes him a 'samAhita' is named by our Acharya as 'samAdhAna'. 'sama' + 'Ahita' is 'samAhita'. 'sama' + 'AdhAna' is 'samAdhAna'. The two words 'Ahita' and 'AdhAna' have the same meaning; namely, 'to unify, confirm, establish, in one place'. What is supposed to be established, confirmed? Where?

'sama' means equality – no high, no low. There are other meanings also. What is full or complete is also said to be 'sama'. 'samAdhAna' means to unify the mind and establish it completely in one place.

[Note by VK: I have used the word 'mind' here
for the Tamil word 'cittaM' that
the Mahaswamigal uses in this chapter.
But as he goes along he explains the usage
of 'cittaM' for 'manas' (Mind).
This explanation will come in the next post.]

It should not be allowed to move this side or that side. We all know the mind thinks of several things at the same time. To converge it into one place and firmly establish it there is 'sama AdhAnaM' or 'samAdhAnaM'. The one who has so established the mind by fixing it in one place is a 'samAhita'. By doing this the perturbations of the mind are all calmed and it becomes focussed completely at one place. By such a 'samAdhAna' the peace of a calm restful mind is obtained.

What is that one thing into which the mind is to be focussed without running into all directions?

shuddhe brahmaNi : 'In the pure unmixed Brahman'. To establish the mind always and in all manner, completely in Brahman is 'samAdhAnaM'.

*samyak AsthApanaM buddheH shuddhe brahmaNi sarvadA /
tat-samAdhAnam-ityuktaM .... //*

This is how the Acharya defines it in Vivekachudamani shloka 26 (27).

'samyak' means 'correctly' or 'completely'. Here both meanings have to be taken in. 'AsthApanaM' means ' the establishing of'. 'The intellect has to be always (*sarvadA) established completely in Brahman in the right manner (*samyak*); this establishing is said to be (*ityuktaM*) samAdhAnaM'.

Brahman is the only thing which is unmixed with *MAyA*. What is referred to as the substratum of the entire universe is Brahman; the same thing when referred to as the substratum of the jIva is called Atman. Brahman which is the same as Atman is the only thing which is untouched by *MAyA*. Hence it is called 'shuddha brahman' – that is why the shloka has 'shuddha Brahmani'. Even a little mixture of *MAyA* will make it different. *Ishvara* Himself has such a mixture of *MAyA*.The universe which is totally mixed with that *MAyA* is being administered by that *Ishvara*, who has *MAyA* with him (**MAyA*-sahita *Ishvara*h). Brahman does not do any

such thing as administration of the universe. Brahman has nothing to do with the universe or its affairs. Of course it is the substratum, basis of the universe; but from that Brahman it was *MAyA* that produced the vision of the universe. Brahman is not related to the universe.

The dim light produces the vision of the snake from the rope, but the rope in reality has no relationship with the snake. It is an unmixed rope all the time.

That kind of unmixed thing-in-itself is what is called shuddha Brahman. Instead of the saguna form of *Ishvara*, if the mind is focussed on nirguna Brahman, that is said to be 'samAdhAnaM'.

Our *SAdhanA* is Atma-*SAdhanA*. The *SAdhanA* is for the Realisation of Brahman which is attributeless (nirguNa) and which is the Atman . Therefore it is necessary to keep the mind unshaken in the Brahman which transcends the *MAyA*, instead of in the *Ishvara* with His *MAyA*.

By *Ishvara* is meant all the different forms of God. Originally it was one such form that was worshipped by us and that is why the mind was trained to focus itself on one thing.That was the first stage. In this second stage, the mind has to have its 'AdhAna' in the Brahman without form.

Off and on one will recall the saguna form of *Ishvara*. When it comes, don't think of Him as the administrator of this mAyic universe but think of Him as Grace Personified (**anugraha*-svaruupaM*) which granted us the thought that we have to transcend this *MAyA*. And with the determination that 'It is He (that saguNa form) who shows us the path of *JnAna* towards the nirguNa Brahman and so we should no more cling to the saguNaForm of His', one should turn one's mind towards the Atman principle. He is the One who shines as our Atman. So holding on to the Atman is as good as holding on, doing bhakti, to Him. The mind should always be turned towards the nirguna brahman; even if the memory of the saguna Brahman recurs, knowing that the basis of that saguNa one is only the nirguna brahman, we should dissolve the saguna in the nirguna.

I have been telling you of 'the mind' so far. But the Acharya has referred to '*buddhi*', the intellect. *samyak AsthApanaM buddheH* are his words – namely, 'the intellect must be caught hold of and fixed in Brahman'.

The intellect (**buddhi**) is only one particular aspect of the mind.

Cit is Knowledge. The organ that the *JIva* has that is associated with knowledge is 'cittaM'. This is an internal organ; called 'antah-karaNaM'. By 'Knowledge' is not meant just what is done by the intellect (*buddhi*). Though what is done by the intellect is part of this Knowledge, 'cittaM' is not just that. The feelings that arise in the mind (manas) is also part of it. The work of the mind, the work of the intellect, what the mind thinks, feels, what the intellect knows – all these together constitute what is called 'cittaM'. Because of this combination of works of both the mind and intellect, it is customary in advaita works to refer to the process of cleaning up the mind and the intellect and of
focussing them as 'citta-shuddhi, citta aikAgriyaM'.

There are four: cittaM, manas, *buddhi*, ahamkAraM.The four together constitute 'antah-karaNaM'. 'Thought' is something that is common to all the four. But its source is 'cittaM'. The 'cittam' that produces thought associates itself with the other three. Manas is the instrument of feeling. It does not know good and bad. It drowns itself in all kinds of feelings. It is the intellect that is the instrument of discrimination between good and bad. Only the intellect has the power of judgment.Ahamkaara is the mood (bhAva) that arises first in all thoughts. The thought of separate jIva as differentiated from the ParamAtmA, with an 'I' of its own, is what is known as ahamkAra (Ego). When and only when that is destroyed then only the separate *JIva*-hood will go and the status of the Atman in its Realisation of one-ness with the ParamAtmA arises. This destruction/end of the Ego is the apex of *SAdhanA*.

When he defines 'samAdhAna' the Acharya talks of the intellect (*buddhi*) – the role/pose of 'cittaM' when it exercises the power of discrimination – and says that this intellect has to be fixed in Brahman.

Ordinarily, cittam is equated with manas (mind). In the same manner, what is to be monitored and controlled with effort is the manas (mind) – this is the common understanding. Even if we do not understand the meaning, we are in the habit of saying 'The mind does not have samAdhAna (peace or rest)' or 'Rest your mind, pacify the restlessness of the mind'. In ritual mantras they say 'manas samAdhIyatAM' in the sense of 'Let the mind rest in peace'. And in reply to that prayer, one says *samAhita-manasaH smaH*. Note that in all this, it is the mind (manas) that is talked about.

In other words, we equate 'manas' and 'antaH-karaNaM' in all our ordinary exchange of ideas. 'Control the mind, Let the *MAyA* covering the mind be removed, May the dirt of the mind be erased' – these are the statements in the literature of spirituality and Atma-*SAdhanA*. The reason for all this is that it is the mind (manas) that draws the *JIva* by its

feelings into all directions. When the Acharya defined 'shamaM' in this sextad, he says it is "the state wherein the mind (manas) is anchored to the goal (lakshyaM) of the Atman" -- *svalakshhye niyatAvasthA manasaH shama ucyate*.

The next one 'damaM' is also the controlling of the mind's agents, the senses. 'uparati' is also another component of mind-control. Holding back the channels (vRtti) from proceeding to outside attractions is 'uparati' and the channels are nothing but flows of the mind. The tolerance or patience implied in 'titikshhaa' is also a work of the mind. Thus all that we have seen so far are *SAdhanA*s that correct the mind.

Here when he talks of 'samAdhAna' he talks about the 'fixing' of the intellect (*buddhi*). We have heard many speak "The mind has to become still; the mind has to be drawn and made to be fixed on one thing; it is the mind that has to be anchored ..". In this kind of environment it will be odd if I tell you to do such things with *buddhi*; I did not want to appear different, right from the start. So I tried to be smart and without saying it is the mind or the intellect that should be brought under control, I mentioned 'cittaM' which is common to both. Also the Acharya himself has shown me the way for that. In AparokshhAnubhUti (Verse #8) he says "The unitary focussing of cittaM on the goal of Absolute Reality (*sat*) is said to be 'samAdhAna'*:

cittaikAgRyaM to sallakshhye samAdhAnam-iti smRtaM.

Having made all this introduction, we shall now see why the Acharya has mentioned the intellect here (instead of simply, the mind).

When he was talking about *shraddhA* earlier, though he made it clear that *buddhi* (intellect) has to be kept aside and it is only the mind that has to posit the faith, still he said that it is the confirmation by the intellect (*buddhy-avadhAraNaM*) that is called *shraddhA*. And we explained by saying that it is the intellect itself that has to decide that it has to play no role and thus make way for the mind to accept the words of the Guru and the Shastras.

The present context where he says that *buddhi* (intellect) has to be focussed on brahman, and that is samAdhAnaM, is being done in the same strain .Without being swayed by emotion, it is the intellect as the component of the internal organ that weighs truth and falsity and makes judgments in all worldly matters. That same *buddhi* has now to be withdrawn from that function and coordinated to converge on matters relating to Brahman. He says that is samAdhAnaM. It is not only the feelings of the mind that run helter-skelter; the intellect also does the

same. But we usually think it is the play of emotional feelings that is bad; we do not think in that manner of the goings-on of the intellect. In the name of 'Pursuit of Knowledge', the intellect goes in search of all sorts of information and all of us are in the habit of praising such action. It is generally an acceptable thing to say: "We should know everything; all arts and science. Even thieving is an art. (Recall the Tamil saying: *kaLavuM katrumaRa*). Even the Acharya got the award of 'sarvajna' (all-knowing)". In fact I myself have told you many times the same things. But note that such things are not told to a spiritual sAdhaka who is advancing in the second stage. They were all said to one who is far behind; that was the stage when the intellect has to be sharpened. It is that sharpness of the intellect that had to be used to do the 'nitya-anitya-vastu-vivekaM' (the discrimination between the ephemeral and the transcendent). This viveka (discrimination) is totally a function of the intellect. After having become an 'Atma-sAdhaka' (seeker of spirituality) he does not need any more outside knowledge. The only knowledge that he needs is Self-Knowledge. His intellect should not any more digress into other matters. The only subject to which it should now be anchored is the pure Brahman.

The Gita (V -28) says *yatendriya-mano-*buddhi*H* that is, not only the senses and the manas, but the intellect also should be controlled. Intellect has to be stationed in brahman, without tossing itself into several objects.

This fixing of intellect in brahman has been called *brahmaNi buddheH sthApanaM* by the Acharya. But the Upanishads on the other hand say that we cannot reach brahman by our intellectual power. In two Upanishads, namely, Kathopanishad (II – 23) and Mundakopanishad (III-2.3) it says emphatically * na medhayA* (not by intelligence). Neither by mind, nor by speech, nor by intellect can the Atman be obtained – is well-known.Then why did the Acharya say so? It means he is not talking about the final Realisation stage of 'samAdhi'; he is only talking of the lower stage, *samAdhAnaM* and thus let us remember he has distinguished both.

So neither by intelligence nor by Vedic scholarship can the Atman be obtained. If that is the conclusion of those two Upanishads then by what shall one obtain the Atman? You have to 'choose' it. This process is called 'varaNaM'. What does one mean by 'varaNaM'?
What is 'varaNaM'?. 'vara' means 'best'. When a bridegroom is chosen for an eligible daughter; the bridegroom is called 'varaH' in Sanskrit and 'varan' in Tamil. Also another meaning is one who has been chosen from among several. This choice is inbuilt into the word 'svayamvara' where a bride (usually a princess) chooses her match from an assembly of several princes who consider themselves eligible bachelors for the princess. She

chooses whomsoever she likes best. The act of choosing is 'varaNaM'. We look for a proper guru, finally choose one and seek him as our guru – this is 'guru-varaNaM'. Accordingly there is 'sishhya-varaNaM' also.

In a similar manner we have to choose 'Atman', by discarding everything else. We have to keep praying "Please reveal yourself, O Atman. You are nothing but my self; but I am not able to recognize it. All this mind, speech, and intelligence (medhA) which think of myself as 'I', cannot recognize you. Therefore please reveal yourself by yourself". A continued prayer like this will one day flash the truth. It will nullify the intellect, manas and speech and produce a Self-realisation as the Atman itself.

This is 'Atma-varaNaM'. The reciprocal process by the Atman, is beautifully described in the Upanishads and called *vi-varaNaM*. The word means 'revelation of what is inside or hidden'.

In sum, the sAdhaka has to do only this. He should understand that intellectual smartness will not work with Brahman. What will work is only a constant prayer, after having discarded everything else, to Atman itself, to be the chosen goal,. The word 'varaNaM' which is the process here, includes in it the concept of 'prayer' also; that is how the Acharya has constructed his Bhashya for those mantras of the Kathopanishad.

The same Acharya here says: "Establish the *buddhi* (intellect) in shuddha Brahman". What is meant by this? I think it is only this: The intellect should dwell, not on shuddha brahman, but in a one-pointed way on what has been said by the Guru and the Shastras about Brahman.

To allow *buddhi* or intellect to be drowned in the ocean of Brahman comes at the end of the third stage: samAdhi.

Here it is 'samAdhAnaM'. 'BrahmaNi' does not mean 'in Brahman' here but 'in matters pertaining to Brahman' – what the ShAstras and the Guru say about it. This is the right way to understand it. The purport is that we should direct the intellect to dwell always on the philosophical implications of Brahma VidyA.

In the exercise of *shraddhA*, we made the intellect to confirm (avadhAraNa) the faith in what the ShAstras and the Guru say. In continuation of the same , as a logical conclusion, the Shastra of the Atman has now to be learnt, by the intellect itself, without any doubts raised by the intellect. The Guru might add something of his own, which may not be in the ShAstras. That also has to be absorbed in the same way.

Realisation or Experience of Brahman (*brahmAnubhava*) comes much later. That is the true Enlightenment. Right now whatever has to be learnt through the intellect has to be absorbed as '*buddhi-jnAna*M'. The total force of the intellect has to focus on this now. This is the *samyak AsthApanaM* (Right fixation). And this has to be done always. This is the 'samAdhAna' of the intellect.

Now the Sadhaka has not yet matured to sit in dhyana and have his intellect dissolved in the Atman. At this stage the intellect keeps on doing its functions. Use that intellect only in those functions which help you rise in spirituality. And what could be those functions except to know well the ShAstras about the Atman? Except for the formal initiation (upadesha) into the mahAvakyas (which has to be done only at the time of taking Sannyasa), everything else has to be learnt now by proper study.

They have to be learnt at the feet of a guru. This is the VidyA-guru.The one who later gives him the sannyAsa and initiation into the mahAvAkyas is the Ashrama-guru. It goes without saying that the latter has to be a SannyAsi himself. Probably he might have been the Vidya Guru earlier. Or probably he might be a scholarly practitioner of the Vaidic Karmas.

24. Who is qualified to receive the teaching of the Upanishads?

There is an opinion that only SannyAsis have the right to study the Upanishads. In other words only a SannyAsi should teach Upanishads and that too to SannyAsis only. They say that the others such as, a Brahmachari, a householder, etc. may learn Vedanta from other expository books. When a brahmachari goes through the study of the Veda-recitation, he also learns to recite the Upanishads. Certainly. Among the various vidyAs and upAsanAs therein, many are intended for householders. Even then, without concentrating on the learning of the meanings, one can learn to recite. If desired, one can get to know the content of them in outline. But a deep study in detail of the meanings of the Upanishads is only for the SannyAsis. This is their opinion.

But what appeals to me is what tradition has handed over to us. Whether one is a brahmachari or a householder, they have been learning, in fact deeply, all the Upanishads. So I think only the initiation into the mahAvAkyas is to be postponed to the event of taking over SannyAsa.

Of course in the recitation of the Upanishad itself, the mahAvAkyas will come. But it is only the SannyAsi who can use it for a japa. For this he has to receive by the process of DikshA, the mahAvakya mantra from the SannyAsa Guru only.

Otherwise, all those who are eligible to learn the vedas, in whatever stage of life they are, can learn the Upanishads from a guru. This, I think, is the opinion of the learned and this has been in vogue for a long time.

As support to this one may state that originally those who gave out the Upanishads or were the recipients of the Upanishads were themselves not SannyAsis. But I don't like to lean on that point. For when the yugas change, the dharmas also change. The spiritual strength of people of the earlier yugas does not subsist in those of the later yugas. That is why dharma *shAstras* prohibit certain things which were in vogue in the earlier yugas. We should not transgress those injunctions of the *shAstras*. Therefore it is not a valid point to quote instances from the Upanishadic times in support of the continuance of those practices. Of course the SmRti does not specifically say that Upanishads are only for Sannyasis. But instead of taking my stand on this, I would rather go by what has been handed to us by tradition.

There is what is known as 'ShAnti pAThaM' consisting of certain mantras and invocatory shlokas, prescribed for being recited at the beginning of every Upanishad class. One of those mantras says: " Who once created Creator BrahmA and taught Him the Vedas, that Almighty is the One who enlightens my intellect; being a seeker of MokSha, I surrender to Him". The word used here for the seeker of MokSha is 'mumukShu'. Only the advanced seeker is called mumukShu. In Svetasvataropanishad, which, though not among the ten topmost Upanishads, has been commented upon by the Acharya, it is said that this Upanishad was taught to advanced SannyAsis. People who advocate that SannyAsis are the only ones to be taught the Upanishads usually quote this fact. But our Acharya has mentioned in his commentaries that several portions in the Upanishads are only for the manda-adhikAris (those who are not fully qualified). Certainly a mumukShu is not a manda adhikAri. So I go by the traditional viewpoint, namely, instead of saying that Upanishads can be learnt only after one is advanced in *jnAna*-acquisition, I would say only by the learning of the upanishads one would advance in the acquisition of *jnAna*. Traditional practice has legitimately adopted this relaxation.

25. Rigour in 'SamaadhaanaM'

SamAdhAna is the grounding of the intellect completely and firmly in matters pertaining to Brahman.

Samyag-AsthApanaM buddheH shuddhe brahmani sarvadA /
tat-samAdhAnam-ityuktaM na tu cittasya lAlanaM //

Right fixation of the intellect in shuddha-brahman, always, is said to be 'samAdhAnaM', not the pampering of the 'cittaM'.

Note that he starts with *buddhi* (intellect) but ends with 'cittaM'. The latter is the source for the thought-process that always goes with the other three, namely, *buddhi* (intellect), manas (mind), and ahamkAra (ego). So cittaM may refer to either *buddhi* or manas according to the context. Here first he has talked about the one-pointedness of *buddhi* and immediately talks about 'cittam'; so the latter may be taken to refer to *buddhi* or the instrument that generates the thought.

'na tu cittasya lAlanaM' is significant. 'lAlanaM' means fondling through pampering. Sometimes we do offer sweets to a child in order to get something done by the child. The same kind of indulgence is done to a sAdhaka in his beginning stages, so that he takes interest in the upward climb of spirituality. Instead of forcing him to do the difficult task of concentrating on a nirguna (attributeless) goal, we do allow him to take resort to a saguna upAsanA, in fact even to several forms of the Divine, and thus in a sense pamper him. But when he has made some advances on the *SAdhanA* ladder, we should not continue this indulgence. At this advanced stage we have to put an end to this over-indulgence and with some rigour turn him into the upAsanA of nirguna brahman. In the first stage we might have been lenient, as far as it goes, but when he has passed through the second stage and has now arrived at the stage of readiness for Sannyasa there should be no more 'lAlanaM' of the 'cittam'. It should fully turn to thinking only about Brahman and the teachings about Brahman.

All this not only applies to a guru training the sishhya, but to oneself. One must guard oneself against self-pampering. When the Acharya says "See that the intellect gets fixed in Brahman and matters connected with Brahman and do not allow any pampering" he means one should not think now at this advanced stage "Let me not compel myself to think only about Brahman all the time; let the intellect dwell on other things for some time. When it is necessary to draw it back I will be able to do it; I have come so far in *SAdhanA*, so it should not be impossible for me". This kind of self-pampering has to come to a dead stop some time and the time has come now when one has come to the samAdhAna stage of *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*.

26: The sextad of the paramAtmA and the sextad of the JIvAtmA

The sextad of the JivAtmA is *shama, dama, uparati, titikShA, shraddhaa and samAdhAna*. This is the sextad of spiritual treasures. This, remember is the third component among the four of Spiritual *SAdhanA*. Just as the householder has six categories of karmas to do, the Acharya has prescribed these six eligibility qualifications for one who is seeking the SannyAsa Ashrama. But as I said earlier, even the householder must have some practice in these six; only then he will be able to meet the responsibilities of his life with peace and comfort. And some distant day he will also become eligible to enter the fourth Ashrama, Sannyasa.

We refer to the Almighty God as 'Bhagavan'. The reason for that name is that the Lord has six 'bhagas'. This is mentioned in Vishnu Purana. 'Bhaga' also means 'treasure, excellence (*sampat*)'. Bhaga is also a name of the Sun-God. Whatever excellence shines like the splendour of the Sun is called bhaga. The Lord has six Bhagas:

1. Lordship: the power that controls everything else. It is known as *aishvarya*.
2. Dharma: the power that has created so much order in the universe and also regulates the life of everyone by creating the numerous ShAstras. He is the personification of this regulatory order.
3. yashas: (Fame and Glory) We sing His glory all the time. And for centuries, starting from the time of the Rishis of the Vedas, people have sung His glory and majesty and still we don't seem to have come to the end of it all.
4. shrI : Wealth. All the wealth that we know of comes from Him.The little worldly wealth that we see is nothing but perhaps less than one percent. of the bliss of Brahman, and that little thing shines like great wealth by the power of His *MAyA*.
5. VairAgyaM: Dispassion. With all that excellence of wealth that emanates from Him he has no attachment to that treasure (*sampat*) of His.
6. Mokshha: In spite of the fact that He is Lord of the whole universe, he discards that as *MAyA* and remains in His natural state as Brahman and this itself, Mokshha, is the sixth bhaga of His.

With this we have seen the six components of the sextad beginning with shama. The sextad is the third component of the *SAdhanA*-

chatushhTayam. The fourth and last is mumukShutvaM (Longing for mokSha).

27. Mumukshhu-tvaM (Longing for moksha)

The meaning of 'mumukShu' is one who longs, (wishes, desires) for mokSha. He for whom that wish is fulfilled and Self-Realisation is obtained is called a 'mukta'. Only after being a 'mumukShu' one can become a 'mukta'.

Of course every one wants to get out of this mire of *samsAra* and reach that stage of mokSha which is permanent bliss. But just a vague or minor wish for mokSha does not become the 'longing' (*kAnkShA*) inbuilt into the word 'mumukShu'. Intense desire, an anguish coupled with readiness to take every effort possible – only when all these are present it becomes a *kAnkShA*. And that kind of longing for mokSha is what makes a mumukShu. His characteristics, his nature, what he does – all these constitute 'mumukShu-tvaM'. 'mumukShutA' is also another word. The Acharya gives the definition in his aparokShA-nubhUti (verse 9) thus:

samsAra-bandha-nir*mukti*H kathaM syAn-me dayAnidhe /
iti yA sudRRiDhA *buddhi*H vaktavyA sA mumumkShutA //

The flow of words reflects a desperate craving and pleading, almost a cry, before the Lord or the visible Guru. 'Oh Ocean of Mercy!' goes the plaint in despair, 'when will I get the relief from this bondage of *samsAra*?'. The seeker is asking with a firm determination to obtain Release. We cannot call it a 'mumukShutA' arising from 'sudRRiDhA *buddhi*' (firm and determined will) if the desire to get out of this worldly tangle is the result of misery and disgust caused by an insufficiency of wealth or of health, a bereavement, or an enmity. This firm will is the one that longs for a release from this *samsAra* with the unshakable determination that arises, not from the dubious significance of either the worldly miseries or the release from them, but from the thought – even when the worldly life happens to be a life of ease and comfort – "Even this is *MAyA*; I must get release from this bondage of *MAyA* and realise the Reality of the Atman". The longing for mokSha, that is, 'mumukShutA', is not that which longs for a release after feeling a bitter taste from the miseries of life. It arises from an extreme anguish that results from an intellectual conviction that one has to get out of this *samsAra*, because it is a *MAyA*. 'mumukShutA' is a feminine word; so 'She' (*sA*) is used in the shloka. The complete meaning of the shloka can now be given.

“ The confirmed will that reflects in the anguish-filled prayer to the Merciful Guru ‘When would I be able to get release from this bondage of *samsAra*?’, is mumukShutA”.

When he talks about the same subject in Viveka Chudamani (shloka 27/28), he says
sva-svarUpa avabodhena moktuM icchA mumukShutA /
that is, it is not enough to be relieved from the bondage of *samsAra*; the *JIva* is not to become inert, after the release from bondage. One must have *svasvarUpa avabodhaM*. This means one should get the awareness of enlightenment that experiences one’s true status of Atman. That is what is important. One should pine for that. The anguish that is called mumukShutvaM is for the experience of Truth rather than for the eradication of *MAyA*. One prays for the ending of bondage only because of the fact that the bondage has got to disappear for the purpose of Realisation.

28. Why is the ultimate stage termed as ‘Release’ and nothing more?

However generally the importance is given more to the release from bondage rather than to the Realisation of the Self. This is how the final goal of fullness is described as mokSha’ or ‘*mukti*’. Those words do not describe the state that we reach; instead they talk about the state that we are leaving behind. The two words ‘mokSha’ or ‘*mukti*’ both indicate only the state of release. The Tamil use of the word ‘VeeDu’ also does the same. The English word ‘Liberation’ also says the same thing. The root word is ‘muc’ in Sanskrit. (‘u’ as in ‘put’). It has an alternate form, namely, ‘moc’ (the ‘o’ as in ‘go’). The root word ‘muc’ gives the noun ‘*mukti*’. There is another noun ‘muku’ (not very much in use) meaning release. He who gives ‘muku’ is ‘Mukunda’. The root verb ‘moc’ gives the noun ‘mokSha’, ‘mocanaM’ and ‘vimocanaM,. All these are words which indicate the release from the bondage of *samsAra*; they do not say anything about the infinite bliss that comes at the Release. Thus why has this final goal been called by something which indicates only the release part and does not indicate anything about what we get after the Release, namely the Realisation as the very brahman? Why has it not been called by something which indicates the bliss? Why?

I think there are two reasons. First the Bliss of Brahman cannot be described by words. This may be the prime reason.

The other reason could be as follows. Every school of philosophy has a book of sutras as its authoritative source (*pramANa*). And that is where the tenets of the school are given in short aphorisms. Our Vedanta tradition has 'Brahma-SUtra as its source authority. The very first Sutra mentions about what is in the book and what the subject is. The subject is 'brahma-*jijnAsA*'. '*jijnAsA*' means the desire to know. 'Brahma-*jijnAsA*' here means 'the enquiry made with the purpose of knowing brahman'. The subject which is thus enunciated is the object-goal of those who take this book as the authority (*pramANa*). So our goal – we all belong to the school of Vedanta -- our objective, should be 'to know brahman'. First there should be the desire to know; only then we will make efforts to know. Thus that desire to know – *jijnAsA* –must be there first. In other words the authoritative *sUtra* book for our Vedanta-school talks the knowing of Brahman as our 'lakshhya' (object-goal). Indeed, to know brahman is to realise brahman. So our goal, the goal of our religion, is Realisation of Brahman. To help us reach that objective the *sUtra* book makes all enquiries and tells us about matters pertaining to brahman. The point to be noted here is that the first *sUtra* does not mention the Release from bondage of *samsAra* as the subject of the book but mentions only the Realisation that is got at the Release. Brahma-*jijnAsA* thus does not talk about the negative aspect 'Mokshha-*jijnAsA* – the desire to know about Release, but talks about the positive aspect, namely, the Experience of brahman.

When the basic *sUtra* of the Vedanta school is itself mentioning the Brahman experience as the ultimate goal, why is that MokShaM is talked of popularly as the ultimate goal? I have already given one reason for this. Another reason strikes me. The ideas of the Vedas and Vedanta go back to antiquity. Later, that too in ancient times, other schools and religions did blossom – namely, BauddhaM, PAtanjalaM (that is, Yoga Shastra), NyAya (Logic). Humanity did generate different opinions. Among these, there did come in later times, schools and religions much different from the basic Vaidika school of thought. There came even some which were totally against the Vaidik religion. However, except for the Lokayata school of thought, all others have agreed to the central point of reaching a state which transcends the bondage of *samsAra*. The Lokayata school which contends that "There is no God; no Atman, no after-life; so there is no question of karma or karmic experience, let us eat well and enjoy well" is not eligible to be called a religion. The others, though different from pure Vedanta, certainly keep the goal of Release from worldly tangle.

However, none of them talk about the bliss after the Release! BauddhaM talks about the state of void – nirvANa – at the end of it all. Nyaya – and its sister-school, Vaisheshhika – talk of the goal as 'apavarga', which is

said to be only a state of sorrowlessness, but there is no talk of any state of happiness or bliss. The Release from the bondage of *samsAra* produces sorrowlessness. Since there is no mention of any happiness, one might even think of it as an inert state which does not recognize any unhappiness. The 'kaivalya' that is the goal of Sankhya is only the Release from the play of *MAyA* caused by PrakRti; there is no talk of any positive happy state. In Patanjali's yoga also, the very *sUtra* talks negatively about the control of flow of mind and there is no positive mention of any Bliss of Realisation. Obviously the bondage of SamsAra as well as the impact of *MAyA* are both felt only by the mind-flow and so if one can stop that mind-flow by a rock-like dam, the resulting Release is the Release from *samsAra*.

All these different schools and religions have been there since ancient times. And that may be the reason why our Vedanta also has mentioned the so-common 'mokShaM' as its lakShyaM (goal).

If one goes by the Vedanta route and obtains that MokSha, it has to be only Realisation of Brahman. It does not mean there is something new called Brahman which is 'realised'. Nor does one obtain any new happiness of a state called sat-cid-Ananda. The *JIva* is always Brahman. He is a mass of sat-cid-AnandaM. Still *MAyA* has played its trick by binding a blindfold on him. When the *SAdhanA* is complete, that blindfold gets severed. He is released from *MAyA*. That is, he obtains MokSha. And simultaneously and automatically he knows his true nature as Brahman. So all the *SAdhanA* is for the removal of *MAyA*, to get a release from *MAyA* – not for producing a sat-cid-Ananda Brahman, nor to obtain it, nor for any action related to that. It cannot be produced or created. Nor can it be destroyed . It is always existing. It is with us all the time --*svayaM siddhaM* --. There is nothing like 'obtaining' it.

Looked at this way, what is achieved by *SAdhanA* is only the breaking of the *MAyA*-bondage and the Release implied therein; so it is but fitting to call the goal of *SAdhanA* as 'MokSha'.

29. Mumukshhu: Definition by the Acharya

One has to come out of this *MAyA* and become Brahman; this should be the only thought of the mind. One who is thus totally involved in this manner is said to be a 'mumukShu'. The Acharya in shloka #27(or 28) of Vivekachudamani gives this definition:

ahaMkArAdi dehAntAn bandhAn-a*jnAna*-kalpitAn /
sva-svarUpA-vabodhena moktum-icchA mumukShutA //

Here he talks about both the *MAyA* that has to be discarded and the Realisation of the Natural state, that one experiences after the release from the *MAyA*.

Ignorance itself is *MAyA*. It is because of *MAyA* that Ego is imagined as an 'I' distinct from the Supreme Self. This ego is the source of all the hierarchy of errors. The hierarchy starts in the form of that ego as a subtle thought and ends up with an individualised ego in every physical (sthUla) *JIva*. What thinks of the body as oneself is the action of *MAyA*. The *JIva* has been bound by imagined bondages right from the subtle ahamkAra down to the concrete physical body. This is what is said in the first line of the verse above.

[Subbu-ji's explanation of 'dehAntAn':
'dehAntAn' is one word which is a plural of the word 'dehAntaH'. The meaning is 'the group consisting of members starting from ahamkara upto deha.' The overall meaning of the verse considers each member of this group to be a bandha. Thus ahamkAra is a bandha, *buddhi* is a bandha....upto deha which is a bandha].

[Another comment by Subbu-ji:
Incidentally, the verse is a profound refutation of the several schools that hold any one of these members as the ultimate reality. The verse 'deham praanamapi' of the Sridakshinamurtistotram is called up to one's memory when the above verse is read.]

The desire to be rid of this bondage is *moktuM icchA* (desire to be released). The anguish for the release is *mumukShutA*. Such is the negative definition of 'MokSha'. But what the final goal is, is also mentioned right in the middle of the shloka in a positive way: *sva-svarUpAvabodhena*. 'avabodhaM' means waking up. The waking up is the awakening to wisdom from the darkness of ignorance. Wisdom about what? About 'sva-svarUpa', that is, about Atman, one's own natural true state. Instead of saying ' awakening to wisdom about Atman' we better say 'awakening to the Atman'. The Atman itself is the wisdom, knowledge. This awakening is called also 'Awareness'. The self-consciousness brought about by this awakening is not different from the Atman. They are both the same. *MAyA* is Ignorance; Brahman is *JnAna*, Knowledge. That Knowledge is the 'sva-svarUpa-avabodhaM'.

To be relieved of all bondages is not an end in itself. A person who thinks of it as an end-in-itself, because the bondages were the cause of one's suffering and so their end is all that is needed, is not considered as a

'mumukShu' by the Acharya. He does not leave the matter like that, as Patanjali did with his yoga theory that the stoppage of all mind-flow (citta-vRtti-nirodha) is all there is to it. Our Acharya's subject and object in the source book, Brahma Sutra, is 'brahma-*jijnAsA*'. So the anguish-cum-desire for release from all bondages is only for the Realisation of the non-difference between JivAtma and ParamAtmA – that is 'brahma-sAkShAtkAra' (Realisation of Brahman) -- and it is this desire that is 'mumukShutA'. This is clear from the shloka of Viveka Chudamani that we were discussing.

sva-svarUpa-avabodhena means 'by the awareness arising from the Enlightenment as the Atman'. It is through that awareness that one should desire to get rid of the bondage of Ignorance. But mark it! This does not mean: "First there happens Realisation of Brahman (this is the *avabodhaM*) and then follows the release from bondage. This contradicts what has so far been said. In other words, the so-called 'positive' event of Brahman-Realisation finally leads only to the 'negatively-stated' Release (mokshha) from bondage". No, this is not how it should be understood. No one who has studied Vedanta in depth or who has understood the teachings and works of the Acharya, would arrive at such a conclusion.

Between the two, namely, Release from bondage, and Realisation of the Atman, -- between these two, there is nothing that is before or after. Both are simultaneous. In total darkness we light a match. And there is light. Darkness is gone. Does light come first and then after some time does the darkness disappear? Are they not both simultaneous?

But note one thing. It is not that darkness goes and light comes at the same time! Light comes and at the same time darkness is gone!

This is where Vedanta is great. Its goal is to find the Light of the Self. Keeping this as the central focus, it starts from nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka (discrimination between permanence and impermanence) and ascends gradually from one step to another. Their objective was not the removal of misery (as was that of the Buddha), nor was it the stoppage of mind-flow that causes all misery (as was that of Patanjali); the Rishis of the Upanishads, the author of the Brahma-*sUtra* and the Acharya all emphasized the Realisation of Brahman as 'the Goal'. They prompted us to search for the Truth and go after it. Theirs was a "satya-anveshhaNaM". In other words, they declared: "Whatever is the Ultimate Truth, that has to be found by an intense inquiry. Let it be good or bad, let it be happiness or misery. The flood of Time brings events after events and the whole universe is in motion. For all this movement there must be a base of action. And that must be something firmer than all of them. So also in the case of the *JIva* that pertains to us, who are waxing

and waning, something grants us a life, a consciousness and a power; what is the permanent substratum of this? Let us discover it." With this trumpeting call the Upanishad Rishis marched on with infectious enthusiasm, confidence and courage and proceeded bravely like 'dhIras' towards that discovery. Truth for the sake of Truth, that was their clarion call. Theirs was not an aimless adventure of a distressed and crying mind that looks for ways to be rid of any existing despair in the hope of accepting whatever that comes. Their spiritual march was not a disgusting prompt by the torture of the mind flow; nor did they proceed as if they were running away to a distance which may hold or open up what they know not, but which they will accept, so long as they are assured of relief from the misery of the mind flow. On the other hand, they all started with a determination to discover that ineffable Light of the Atman that was shadowed by an unreal *MAyA*. Not only did they march to inquire and discover, but they urged the whole humanity to march with them on the same call!

I said they did not start with a distressed and crying mind. One who started with a distressed mind was the Buddha. But even about him, the followers of that religion speak of him only as one who went out seeking a positive state of Enlightenment and he got that Wisdom (bodha) underneath the Bodhi Tree. And that gave him the name The Buddha. Before he sat for meditation under that tree it appears he himself said something which has become a significant shloka in 'Lalita-vistAra' (A life history of the Buddha). It is so significant that even now we can cite that as the best example of a 'mumukShutA' :
*ihAsane shushhyatu me sharIraM
tvag-asti mAmsAni layaM prayAntu /
aprApya bodhaM bahu-kalpa-durlabhaM
naivAsanAt kAyam-idaM chalishyati //

meaning, "Let this body dry out on this very seat; let skin, bone and flesh die. Without getting Enlightenment, even if it takes as long as a kalpa, this body shall not move from this seat" ! This is the rock-like resolve that he made before he sat under the Tree. Whatever it be, our Rishis of the Upanishads did leave everything only to discover the Ultimate Truth.

To those sAdhakas whose only goal is to discover the Ultimate Truth, the Realisation of that Light of Truth becomes the only object of attainment. From that attainment itself they will be able to infer that the darkness of *MAyA* is gone. If we look at the way such Atma-*JnAni*s have described their experiences, we learn that they kept on pursuing their enquiry about the Atman and suddenly the Atman did shine. That is how they say it. They never say that some such thing as the bondage of *MAyA* disappeared and then there was Realisation of the Atman. Because, just

as Gaudapadacharya has said (in his Mandukya-kArikA), there is nothing in reality like bondage of *MAyA*, nor something which shows up as release of bondage. But now let me not take you into that 'high philosophy'. Whatever it be, the only objective of the right advaita-sAdhaka is the Realisation of the Atman. It is for that purpose, he keeps meditating, at the final stages of his *SAdhanA*, on the mahA-vAkyas. And he experiences the non-different status of *JIva* and Brahman, declared by the mahAvAkyas. By that very experience he knows that the bondage is gone. And that is why the Acharya says *sva-svarUpAva-bodhena moktuM*.

'Avabodha' means waking up to a perception. 'Waking up' does not mean that 'sleep' is gone and then 'waking' happens. One wakes up instantaneously. And by that itself one knows that 'sleep' is gone. The same way here.

We can even say more. *sva-svarUpa-avabodhAya* , that is, only for the awakening to One's Nature. (awakening to Spritual Wisdom). When one is in the state of 'mumukshhu' he desires release from bondage. When he goes beyond and attains enlightenment, he awakens to Wisdom (*sva-svarUpa-avabodhena*) and by that very awakening he knows he has been released from bondage.

30. Mumukshu – Base level & intermediate level

An one-pointed intense desire for mokSha is mumukShutvaM. (Here I have used the word 'mokSha' instead of 'brahman-realisation'. The former is the layman's understanding of it and the Acharya also follows the same; so I shall also go by the same tradition). But even those who may not have that intensity of anguish for mokSha, he accepts them, with a gracious mind, as base level (*manda*) and intermediate level (*madhyama*) and in the next shloka enthuses them.

In all *SAdhanA*s and upAsanAs, there are three levels – manda, madhyama, and uttama (top) – and accordingly practitioners are spoken of as 'mandA-dhikAri', 'madhyamA-dhikAri' and 'uttamA-dhikAri'.

In advaita-*SAdhanA*, only those who have reached a reasonable top level will have the deep desire for mokSha. In other words, only an uttamAdhikAri throws away all other desires and focusses on mokSha as the single goal. But the Acharya, in his compassionate view, has given a role to manda- and madhyama-adhikAris. Even the base level sAdhaka has started his *SAdhanA* only because he has a soft corner for mokSha.So the Acharya considers him, as having mumukShutA in the

'manda' stage. After doing some *SAdhanA* and attaining a little maturity he (the sAdhaka) starts thinking a little more about mokSha. This is the intermediate level. Even now his mind is not steady; it keeps wavering from this to that.The desire for mokSha which was only momentary in the beginning is now a little more stationary; but even this does not take any deep root because of the grip of *MAyA*. And that is when that intermediate level mumukShu begins to lose faith because of thoughts like "How can this poor me get the great achievement of mokSha? It is not possible". If this is the case of the intermediate level sAdhakA, then why speak of the basic level one? Both these have to be enthused into a sustained *SAdhanA* effort; so he says:

Manda-madhyama-rUpApi vairAgyeNa samAdhinA /
prasAdena guroH seyaM pravRRittA sUyate phalaM //

"Don't cry, my dear! Everything will turn out alright by the grace of the Guru. But you should also deserve it by practice of dispassion. Practice shamAdi-shhaTkaM. If you do that, even if your mumukShutA is of a basic or intermediate level only, by the blessing of the Guru it will improve and will get the desired result".

Among the three stages 'mandaM, madhyamaM, uttamaM', the third one, 'uttamaM' is here called 'pravRRittaM' (that which is well developed). Instead of crying at one's inability, if one makes the best possible effort, that along with the grace of the Guru, will make the effort a 'pravRRitta' one.

31. Guru's Grace

Not only for mumukShutA, but from A to Z everything in *SAdhanA* needs the Grace of the Guru. The Guru views with compassion the effort done with heart-felt intensity and purity by the disciple and blesses him at every step and that is what takes him to the next step.

Next comes the third stage of *SAdhanA*.

[Note by VK: Just to recall.
The first stage is karma-bhakti
for the purification of the mind.
The next stage is
SAdhanA-chatushTayaM,
consisting of Viveka (Discrimination),
VairAgya (Dispassion),
shamAdi-shhaTkaM
the sextad beginning with shama,

and mumukShutvaM (intense longing for mokSha)]

In this stage, the Grace of the Guru and surrender to the Guru are very important. So far, even if there is a small slip-up in the control of the senses, it may not be a big fault. But when one comes to the stage where he is ready to take sannyAsa and receive the upadesha of the mahA-vAkyas – and certainly beyond that – even if the mind errs slightly that will become a gigantic fault or sin. At that point if one thinks that one can self-correct it, he is mistaken. Of course self-confidence is a good thing. But just that confidence in oneself will not take one far in the question of defence against such slips. He needs the strength of Guru's Grace, in addition to his own strength, particularly at this stage he has to walk on razor's edge as it were. That is why the Guru's Grace is emphasized here. Once the strong adherence to mumukShutvaM is there, the SannyAsa and the receiving of the mahAvakya mantra has been done and so hereafter everything is going to need the Grace of the guru.

32. Ancient Scriptures and the Acharya on mumukshhu

About mumukShutA, (longing for mokSha), the Acharya has talked in several places. Particularly in the Viveka chudamani, detailing the five koshas one by one, when he comes to the mano-maya-kosha, he dwells on mumukShutA.

When he talked about *shraddhA* and samadhAna, we saw he related them to the *buddhi* (intellect). But when he came to mumukShutA, he relates it to manas, the mind. We should not take it to mean that mumukShutA is supposed to arise in the mind only. He actually shows that only when one attends deeply to the fact that there is nothing like mind, one can become a proper mumukShu and then proceed further on the right path. Till we reach a certain stage one has to sift good from the bad, all of which rise in the mind and take only those that are good. But after that stage the only aim should be mokSha. Thereafter the conviction should arise this way: "The good things, in the same way as the bad ones, do rise in the mind itself and are experienced only in the mind. So we should discard even the good ones, as well as the mind which is the basis for all of them and resort to the Atman, the only one thing, whether it is good or bad". And it is for this reason, when he talks about the manomaya-kosha, he gives the warning and advice intended for the mumukShu.

Firstly (*agre* is the word he uses) one should be steadfast in viveka (discrimination) and vairagya (dispassion). These have to be there in

abundance; 'excessive' (*atireka*) is the word – shloka (175/177). He says (shloka176/178): "Mind is a great tiger. It is roaming about in the forest of objects of enjoyment. The mumukShu, the pious person that he is, should not go anywhere near it. Therefore stay away from it". In other words, 'don't use the mind even to think good or do good'. For this the purification caused by a a lot of viveka (discrimination) and dispassion (vairAgya) is necessary. "It is the mind that originates, with no exception, all those objects for the person who is the experiencer (bhoktA) (shloka 177/179). It is the mind again that is the cause for man to orbit round actions and the experiencing of the results (shloka 178/180). In short, Ignorance (avidyA) – that is, a*jnAna*M, directly opposite to *jnAna* (Knowledge) -- is nothing but the mind. Knowledgeable persons say so:

ataH prAhur-mano'vidyAM paNDitAs-tattva-darshinaH (shloka 180/182)

Therefore it is the mind that has to be discarded. Before discarding it, it should be lightened by a purification. Unclean thoughts thicken the mind by their dust; that has to be purified and lightened. Then MokSha is in your hands". (shloka 181/183).

At the end of Viveka-chudamani he ends it by saying that the whole book is for a mumukShu only. It is clear therefore that till the last moment of Realisation, the longing (mumukShutvaM) for MokSha continues. The *SAdhanA* regimen contends that, after this (that is, after *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*) one receives sannyAsa and then goes through the processes of shravaNa, manana and *nidhidhyAsana* and then gets the Light of Realisation, thus becoming a mukta. But even though the shravaNa, manana and nididhyAsana are mentioned after the four *SAdhanA* angas that include mumukShutvaM, even in these stages (of post-*SAdhanA*-chatushhTaya stage) the intense longing for mokSha (that is, mumukShutA) has to continue unabatedly. He may go even to the peak of nididhyAsana, almost at the point of Brahman-Realisation – even at that time he is called only a mumukShu, says the Acharya at the end of the book. Look at the attributes he gives him in the last but one shloka of VivekachudAmaNi:

hitaM imaM upadeshaM AdriyantAM
vihita-nirasta-samasta-citta-doshhAH /
bhava-sukha-vimukhAH prashAnta-cittAH
shrutirasikA yatayo mumukShavo ye //

Those mumukShu sannyAsis who have eradicated the impurities in their minds by the injunctions of the *shAstras*, who have turned away from worldly pleasures and sensual experiences, who have calmed their

minds, and who have known the essence of the vedas – may they follow these good teachings.

I draw your attention to the way mumukShus are described in this shloka. It is clear therefore that till the moment that one gets to the point of the experience of Brahman, to the point of one becoming a jIvan-mukta, one is still a mumukShu.

The whole of Viveka Chudamani has been given by the Acharya a story-setting. The disciple asks the Guru (shlokas 49/51) "What is bondage of *samsAra*? How did it arise? How did it get rooted? And how do we release ourselves from it?". The teaching contained in Vivekachudamani is the reply to all these questions. The disciple listens with great bhakti towards the Guru and coupled with his true 'mumukShutA', as soon as the Guru finishes his teaching, he obtains all the wisdom and enlightenment – the supreme-most brahma-*jnAna* and brahmAnubhava – and thus being released from the very bondage about which he questioned earlier, he bows to his guru and departs as one who is *nirmuktaH* (shloka 576/577), the Released One. And the Acharya himself in his own words winds up the work with "thus has been said in the form of a dialogue between guru and disciple, the characteristic of the Atman, for the purpose of generating easy enlightenment for 'mumukShus'. It is only after this that verse *hitam imaM * appears, where he gives so many epithets for 'mumukShus'.
Since the Acharya has agreed to include three levels – base, intermediate and top (*manda, madhyama and uttama*) – among mumukShus, there is scope for all, from ordinary people like us all the way up to true Sannyasis who have calmed down their minds. Actually it only shows the broad-mindedness of the Acharya. But amidst that generous gesture, he has also clearly stated that the base level and intermediate level sAdhakas should rise to the top level by proper practice of dispassion and shamAdi-shaTkaM, by which they will obtain Guru's Grace and thereby their mumukShutA also will rise to its completion.

It is in concordance with this thought "Unless there is the intense strength of mumukShutA as well as the power of the Grace of the Guru, one cannot attain the Atman" that Mundaka Upanishad says 'The Atman cannot be obtained by a weakling'.

When it says Guru's Grace, it actually means 'the Grace of God'. The disciple should never forget that it is Ishwara, the Almighty who is coming as the Guru. Particularly in advaita-*SAdhanA*, since it is all a matter of search for *JnAna* instead of saguna upAsanA, in the place of the Grace of God one should stick steadfastly to the concept of Guru's blessings and allow it to take roots in the mind. I shall come back to this topic a little later. Now let me finish this topic of mumukShutvaM.

I said a weakling cannot attain the Atman. In that Upanishad, in the mantras before that, it details, in a sense, the defining characteristics of a mumukShu. Whosoever, not having any other desires, chooses, as DhIras, to woo only the Atman, to them does the Atman manifest Itself – says the Upanishad.

"To woo only the Atman", as is said here, is the positive aspect of mumukShutA. In opposition to a renunciation of *samsAra* out of disgust, what we do here is to identify something, with love, as most desirable for us – this is what is called 'varaNaM' (choosing). It is a 'svayam-vara' by us whereby we choose the Self after having discarded all that is non-Self. The Upanishad mentions here the goal as well as the interest in it as a pleasant, blissful, positive fact.

In his SopAna-panchakaM verse 1, the Acharya has also mentioned this positive aspect in the words *AtmecchA vyavasIyatAM*. It means that one should cultivate with determination, the desire to obtain Brahman-Realisation. SopAna-panchakaM is a set of five verses where he takes us step by step through the process, starting from the rock-bottom of karma-bhakti upto the state of Realisation. There, before he mentions the renunciation of the household as a SannyAsi, at the point of mentioning the previous step of mumukShutA, instead of pointing out what is to be discarded, he focusses on love towards the Atman, which is what is to be obtained, by saying 'desire to have mokSha'.

At several places in the Upanishads we are told about this matter of seeking what is to be sought rather than searching what is to be discarded. Appar Swamigal says: "After searching within myself I discovered for myself" (*ennuLe tedik-kaNDu-koNDen*). MumukShus have been referred to as *brahma-para*, that is, those who have their only goal (*lakShya*) as Brahman; *brahma-nishhTa* , those whose attachment is only in brahman-related matters – here, we are talking about persons whose interest is in the experience of Brahman; so 'nishhTA' here does not mean 'to be stationed in Brahman by experience'; so the meanings of attachment, dedication for 'nishhTA' are to be taken --, and *brahma-anveshhamANa*, those who are searching or looking for Brahman. In Prashnopanishad where it begins with six persons going to a Rishi, it only describes six mumukShus positively. The 'anveshhamANa' word used here is in concordance with the famous statement in Chandogya Upanishad (VIII – 7 – 1) where it says that the ParamAtmA is 'anveshhTavyaH' , the one to be searched, sought after.

Kathopanishad showpieces Naciketas for the entire world as an ideal mumukShu. That little boy had the only goal, only desire, to learn about the truth of the Atman. In a rare moment of anger, the father of the boy

had said: “I have given you over to Yama”. That, taken as law of the father’s word, makes him go instantaneously to the abode of Yama himself. After all it is Yama that takes the life when one dies. So Naciketas had a firm conviction that Yama must be knowing the mystery of the Atman which is the truth behind all life. He is determined to get the teaching directly from Yama himself. To Yama-puri, the very thought of which frightens people, the little boy proceeded as if it were his gurukulaM. The reason could only be his was a true mumukShutA! When he arrived there, Yama was not home. He returned home only three days later. All the three days the residents of Yamapuri wanted to play host to him, but Naciketas wouldn either eat nor accept any thing ‘Until I get taught what I sought, why would I take food, or for that matter, anything else?’ said he, with his mind anxiously set on his goal.

Then it is that Yama, the terror of the three worlds, became fearful of this bachelor boy, lest the sin of keeping him for three days stay without food at his place might consume Yama himself. So he gives the boy three boons, one for each of those days.

Of the three boons, the important one was the third wherein the boy asked to be taught the philosophy of the Atman.
Before Yama gave the supreme teaching to Naciketas, he put the boy to a test just to confirm the intensity of his mumukShutA (longing for mokSha). Or maybe Yama knew it all; he may just have wanted to put the boy to a test just to showcase to the world at large this ideal mumukShu.

The Lord of Death told the boy to ask for a different boon ‘because the Atman-philosophy is something which can confuse even the divines’. But the boy was smart enough for that. He says: “By the very fact you are categorising it like this, it must be great. So nothing else would be equivalent to that boon which I am seeking. Please give it to me. There is nobody else who can equal you in teaching this to me.”

Yama tries different artifices to convince the boy. “I will grant you lots and lots of elephants, horses, treasures, land, kingship, sons and grandsons, life as long as you wish. Whatever you desire I will grant it. I will send my own men to run your chariot and to play music for you. Please don’t press for your boon. Ask anything else” says Lord Yama. All this is a test. He forces a golden necklace on the boy.

Nothing tempted the boy Naciketas. “What all you are giving will one day return to you. I want only that which will be permanent, ever. I want only that. This Naciketas will not take anything else!”—says the boy most emphatically. The golden necklace is not even touched by him.

And Yama is completely satisfied. He praises the boy. "You have discarded all these gifts as *alpaM* (finite, trivial). You have kept your mind on VidyA only. May I get more and more seekers like you! (This statement of Yama shows that such persons are really rare). You are a *DhIra* (brave soul). The gates of Brahma Loka are open for you! (Here Brahma-loka does not mean the world of Creator BrahmA. It means that the gate is open for you to go forward to the Truth, that is Brahman." After praising the boy like this, he gives him the secret teaching as was demanded by him.

And at the end of the Upanishad we are told Naciketas, who came as a mumukShu, became actually a mukta (one who is released). And further, those who get to know the Truth like him will all get Release -- so ends the Upanishad. "Like him" means, " with that kind of intense mumukShutA".

We began with the four-part *SAdhanA* regimen. These four parts end with this 'mumukShutA'.

33. The four components of the armour of spirituality

The entire *SAdhanA* regimen is a four-pronged army to fight the bad elements and capture the kingdom of the Atman. The last of the four prongs was 'mumukShutvaM'.

'mumukShutvam' has been all along described as something to be achieved. What was there as a trace in the beginning, slowly got intense and that intense desire for mokSha is to be finally, at this stage, culminated to its peak intensity, by the intellect. Now and then it might have happened that one has slipped into the depressing thought: "Release of Bondage? Realisation? Not for poor me!" One should not give way to such a thought. Not only that. One should develop the positive attitude: "It is possible to achieve; to know the Truth. Why would it be inaccessible, if persistent efforts are made? Guru's Grace will manage all my ups and downs. So let me yearn for the Release, for the Truth, with all earnestness". This should be done as an exercise. "Was I not a total ignoramus once? Even for me the ascending steps of discrimination, dispassion, sense control, *shraddhA* became gradually accessible. Guru's Grace that has brought me so far would not let me down. It should certainly be possible for me – if only I intensely yearn for it". This is the exercise of mumukShutA.

Here ends the *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*. But remember, this is only the middle stage – second stage. Higher than this is the third stage.

34. Prior to the three components of the third stage

After practising well the four parts of *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*, one obtains through a Guru the Ashrama of Sannyasa as also the teaching of the mahA-vAkya, and learns from him all the traditional Shastraic knowledge along with direct experiential information. All these are learnt by the intellect, churned and digested into a heart-felt experience by constant meditation. These are the componenets of the third stage. After such persistent meditation , one attains Brahman-Realisation. That is the Release from Bondage; the Realisation of Truth.

These are usually sequenced as three components: 'shravaNa', 'manana' and 'nididhyAsana'.

So naturally you would expect me to take up the topic of 'shravaNa' now. But I am going to disappoint you. However you cannot fault me for that. Because the Acharya himself has 'disappointed' us at this stage. I am only following him in this disappointing act!

See the Viveka Chudamani. We have been following that in all these discourses so far. Because that is the Acharya's own magnum opus. After talking about mumukShutvaM, and then saying words of encouragement to the low-level and intermediate level sAdhakas, then he says at the point of winding up the *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*, (shlokas 29,30 or 30,31): " It is true that, if dispassion and mumukShutA are not intense but mild, then the Atman will not show up. In that low level, even if there is an appearance of the mind calming down, it is only a mirage-like show.But don't lose heart. Don't lose faith. Try to intensify the dispassion as well as the mumukShutA. Then, even the low-level as well as the intermediate level people can rise to the peak of excellence of controlling the mind. And by that means one can reach success also". Thus he ends the *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*.

This is where one expects him to go to the topic of shravaNaM. But he starts a new topic, namely, Bhakti!

35. Bhakti and its place in the path of jnAna

Viveka-ChudaMAnI (#31 / 32)
mokSha-kAraNa-sAmagryAM bhaktireva gharIyasI /
svasvarUpA-nusandhAnaM bhaktir-ity-abhidhIyate //

mumukShu is one who longs for mokSha. To help in the obtaining of that mokSha there are many procedures, many instruments of help. The processes of 'shravaNa, manana and nididhyAsana' (hearing, thinking and contemplation) are of such kind. All the components of *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM* (the set of four disciplines of the *SAdhanA*) that we have been talking about all along are only such instruments of help. Collectively they are all called 'sAmagrI'. It is not 'sAma-kriyA' as is wrongly spoken of in the Tamil world; it has no connection with 'kriyA'. When several things form necessary accessories to a certain object to be attained, they are together called 'sAmagrI'. We use the same word in the sense of 'instrument for help' (upakaraNa). Here the word used is *mokSha-kAraNa-sAmagryAM*. This therefore means 'among the instruments of help for the obtaining of mokSha'. *gharIyasI* means 'that which has weight'. Among the eight siddhis the process of becoming heavy like a rock is called 'gharimA'. 'gharIyasI' means 'heavy' and 'heavy' implies importance and connotes 'the best'. This is the meaning carried into the word 'ghanavAn' (a prominent figure). So here the Acharya says: 'the best among such instruments of help that lead to mokSha'. And what does he indicate as 'the best'?

This is where he brings in 'Bhakti'!

It is the Acharya who delineated for us the *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*, followed by shravaNa, manana and nididhyAsana. That completes the path – is the general understanding. But here he suddenly brings in something which is not there and says that is the most important instrument of help!

Whereas *jnAna* and bhakti are known to be two distinct paths to mokSha, it is he who wrote the Viveka-chUDAmaNi for us and chalked out the *SAdhanA* regimen, which is supposed to take us along the *jnAna* path. But in that very path, he gives so much importance to bhakti! He says the prime instrument of help for mokSha is bhakti!

In the *jnAna* path, that he presents and publicly preaches for the world, it is not as if there is no place for bhakti. But that place is at the very beginning, at the baseline. In other words it comes even before one starts the four-component-*SAdhanA*. Even before one gets admitted to his college of *JnAna*, karma and bhakti are subjects that should have been

finished! The eligibility for proceeding on the *jnAna* path is a mind which is pure and potentially capable of one-pointedness. Only then can entry be made in this path. In order to get that very eligibility, he prescribed desireless action for purifying the mind and also worship with devotion for disciplining oneself to become one-pointed. In sum, Bhakti is something that is an external component of (advaita) *SAdhanA*, far removed from the core regimen.

Among components there are what are called external (*bahiranga*) and internal (*antaranga*) components. The internal ones help directly in achieving the objective. External ones stay far away and help indirectly. For example, take a large dinner arrangement. The direct causes are the host and the occasion for which it is held. The farmer who produced the groceries used in the dinner, the officer who procured them, the shopkeepers who sold them, the cook who prepared the food, the one who supplied the vessels and crockery -- are they not all of them a cause? Among these, perhaps the cook and the servers may be included in the list of 'internal' components; but all the others are only 'external'.

In the same way it is well known that, in advaita tradition, *jnAna* is the internal *SAdhanA*-component for mokSha, and for that *jnAna* to arise, the internal components are shravaNa, manana and nididhyAsana, and, though not to that extent internal, but still to be included as 'internal', the four of '*SAdhanA-chatushTayaM*'. Outside of these are the 'external' components, namely karma and bhakti.

When such is the case, the prime-most proponent Acharya of advaita declares the external component Bhakti as a very important accessory (*sAmagryAM gharIyasI*) and makes it get the status of an 'internal' component. How is that? Why so?

You might have expected a Swami of advaita mutt to talk only of advaita; but it appears I have been talking too long elaborately and in this process of my extensive talk, only some of you might remember what I told you long ago: namely, the matter about the two 'grades' – 'lower' and 'higher' – in both *shraddhA* and bhakti. The Bhakti that was spoken of as a component for attaining one-pointedness of mind, is the 'lower grade' bhakti -- a subject at the high school level. In that context it is an 'external' component of advaita-*SAdhanA*. Now we have come to the level of a post-graduate Ph.D. level; at this point, the bhakti that is spoken of as *sAmagryAM gharIyasI* (the heaviest component) belongs to the 'higher grade'. Mark it; there is 'the highest' also. That bhakti is what is done by a *JnAni* who has attained Enlightenment. Why he does it, for what purpose and in what manner – these are questions for which answers are known only to him! Maybe even he does not know. Only the

Almighty who makes him melt in that Love knows. That matter is outside of our expositions.

What comes within our exposition is the bhakti which is an 'internal' component-*SAdhanA* for mokSha and which is spoken of *sAmagryAM gharIyasI*.

In order to know why the Acharya brings it in this fashion, we have to first understand what Bhakti is.

36. What is Bhakti?

A well-known general opinion about Bhakti is that it is to think of the ParamAtmA as a 'devatA murti' (form of a divine) with name and attributes and to lovingly worship that form. It is difficult to keep that love at the mental level only; so we have added to it certain actions like PujA (Ritual worship), darshan (of the deity) in the temples, and recitation of devotional hymns. There is nothing wrong here. But at the higher grade level of bhakti, one need not have to think of the Almighty as a Divinity with a form: one should get into the habit of showing love to the Almighty even when the latter is formless. When the deity of devotion has a form with eyes, nose, ears and hands – four hands, eight hands -- with decorative dress materials visible to the eyes, when we get to know their attributes, glories, infinite compassion and grace through the various puranas and hymns, it is easy to direct and focus our love on such a divine form. Love is Bhakti. Among all expressions of Love, it is the highest Love shown towards the Lord that is termed as Bhakti. It is easy to express Bhakti which is nothing but Love towards a Divinity with form, that has attributes pleasing to the mind. Whereas, to show Love towards a formless attributeless ParamAtmA that is incomprehensible even by the mind, is certainly difficult.

Maybe it is difficult for us at our level. Let it be. Left to us, let us be content with a divinity with form, a PujA and a pilgrimage to pilgrim centres. But to those sAdhakAs who are refined by their progress in *SAdhanA-chatushTayaM* (*SAdhanA*-set of four), it is easy to place their Love on something which has neither form nor attributes. Because, at their stage, it is not true that love sprouts only towards a form with attributes and glorious deeds. On the other hand it is a stage where love needs no object of love; it sprouts by itself. If that sprouting is not followed in reality, even in that refined state, all that *SAdhanA* will be swallowed by a burst of ego.

He will certainly get his MokSha because of all the *SAdhanA* he has done; but that will happen perhaps after crores of years when the total universe goes through the Grand Dissolution. What is this Ego that I am speaking of here? What is this Grand Dissolution? I shall revert to these topics later. But right now we should know what this Love is that I am talking about.

37. What is Love?

What is Love? The same Supreme Self has become all the souls. When thus there is a multiplicity of lives, the mAyic drama of mutual distinctions takes place. And at the same time, in the opposite direction, there is a welcome supreme force dispensed by the Grace of the Almighty, that helps to unify all the distinct elements; this is what is called Love. Usually human tendency is to gain something from the other person. The opposite cure for this is Love, that produces a sense of fulfilment by giving oneself to others. This is the difference between Desire and Love. When we like something it means that we obtain a satisfaction/happiness for ourselves from it. But when we love something or some one it means we give satisfaction/happiness to that something or some one. Desire implies receiving; Love indicates giving. Our happiness happens only when the other being has some treasure of either form (rUpa) or of quality (guNa), or, even, of money; only when the other being has one of these or something similar that we may acquire, we get the happiness that we expect. The attachment to the other being that we develop for this very purpose is what is called Desire. This is wrongly thought to be Love.

Love is what arises when our internal organ (*antaH-karaNaM*) is at its noblest height. Then it is that the mind and intellect are drawn into the Ego, and the antaHkaraNaM changes its location to the heart and works from there.

[At this point, the collator, Shri R. Ganapathy has this note:
"As far as I know, this thought and the consequent thoughts
that follow this seem to be new. Except on this occasion, even the
Mahaswamigal is not known to have spoken about these.
Regarding this, when he was asked to add further details,
he said: 'Whatever was said that day, that is all'
and thus put an end to any further discussion"]

Mother Goddess is Love personified. So in Her creation, even the most cruel beings have been blessed to show Love some time. And for those who have refined their mind by *SAdhanA* there arises the possibility of

the sprouting of Love all the time. And that is when the heart becomes the permanent location of the antaHkaraNaM.

38: Inner Organ and Heart

[Note by VK: I found the translation of the dense material in this Section (and a few following sections) very difficult. Either my English is not up to the mark or my knowledge of the subject-matter is not enough (or both!). So, reader, please read carefully and let me know how the translation can be improved. But let me also tell you. To my knowledge, these portions have not been so elaborately and so authentically clarified elsewhere in the literature. I therefore urge even those who have not been reading through these discourses so far, to read these few sections].

Even though the word 'inner' (*antaH*) is there in 'Inner Organ' (*antaH-karaNaM*), in stead of looking inside it is always turned outside. It is termed 'inner organ' because it is subtle inside and not concretely visible from outside like arms, feet, eyes, nose, etc. Its subject matter is the dualistic world and dualistic experiences. Generally it is so with all jIvas. It thickens by the dirt of experience and stays like the dirty and greasy stain attaching itself to cooking vessels. This is a matter of the inner organ.

The heart that I speak of, on the other hand, is again not the physical organ on the left side of the chest of the human body. Nor is it the anAhata-chakra, located in the dead centre of the chest, in the suShumnA nAdi that is within the spine. This heart is indeed the location of the very Atman.

[Note by R. Ganapthy, the collator of these discourses:
Shri Ramana Maharishi used to say:
"The (spiritual) heart, which is the location of the Atman
is within the right chest of a jIva"]

Of course it is true that the Atman is permeating everywhere in such a way that there is no space for 'space' and so no 'location' to be specified for the Atman. The words 'sarvaM' (all) and 'vyApakaM' (permeation) both need for their meaning the concept of space, but it is true that space itself is subsumed by the Atman as to be nowhere. However, for the mind (antaH-karaNaM) which is always drawn towards duality, to be turned to non-duality by the Grace of God, and towards meditation of the Atman, it needs some kind of a prop, at least mentally. For this reason if one attributes a form or qualities to the Atman and makes it totally 'saguNa' (with attributes) and dualistic, that is not right. Then

how do we create the prop? The Formless one that is permeating everywhere is something which surpasses all attempts to imagine it! That is why, even if the Atman is not attributed with qualities and form, a point has, as it were, been specified within the *JIva*'s body itself and the location of the Atman is to be imagined there. Who has done this specification? No less than the ParA-shakti Herself! She it is who showpieces all that dualistic *MAyA*. And She Herself when She chooses to show compassion by bringing some one into advaita has kept that unique 'point' as the 'Atma-sthAnaM' (location of the Atman), where the antah-karaNaM (Inner Organ) can converge. The antaH-karaNaM which lives on the strength of the individualistic *JIva*-bhAva created by itself, as well as the life-breath which gives life to the whole body – both merge into that single point, the single root of everything, The enlightenment of the self as Self also takes place right at that point.

It is a 'point', very small, like a needle eye. *nIvAra-shUkavat*, that is, as slender as the awn of a paddy grain; it has been said to be that small. Within the heart, which is like the bud of a lotus suspended in an inverted position, there is a subtle space. From there spreads throughout the body a hot Fire, the Life-power; and in the centre of that Fire there abides a tongue of Fire, dazzling like the flash of lightning; that is the PrANa-agni. That ends up at the point as the awn of a paddy grain. That point is the locale of the Atman (Atma-sthAnaM) – says the Narayana SuktaM.

[Note by VK: A question of language. What would be most appropriate? 'locale', 'location' or 'habitat' for *sthAnaM*?]

By the statement about the subtle space-point which is the locale for the Atman in the heart, it follows that all around the point there is the heart. That is also a small locale. The Upanishads use the two words 'daharaM', 'dahraM' for this. Both mean 'small'. In later times this 'dahraM' became 'dabhraM'. The heart and the Atma-sthAnaM (location for the Atman) within are called 'daharaM within daharaM' and 'dahraM within dahraM' in the Upanishads (Ch. U. VII- 1; Taittiriya AranyakaM XII – 16). The Absolute Reality of Brahman which is permeating everywhere 'is' in such a small space.

The entire universe is the cosmic expansion of the VirAT-purushha. The heart of this Cosmic Purushha is Chidambaram. The ChitsabhA (the assembly in the temple there) is the 'point'. This is the meaning of the well-known facts: "It is a subtle gate; there is nothing but space there. It is a secret. Among the kshetras corresponding to the five elements, Chidambaram is the AkAsha (Space)". Chit-sabhA is also called 'dabra-sabhA'. The direct Tamil equivalent of this is 'ciRRambalam' (meaning 'small ambalam'). The popular opinion that 'ciRRambalam' and

'cidambaram' are mutations of the same word is wrong. 'cit ambaraM' means *JnAna*-AkAshaM (Knowledge-space). The Sanskrit word 'ambaraM' has two meanings – one is 'Space', the other is, something unrelated to the present context, 'cloth'. But 'ambaraM' never means 'sabhA' (assembly). But there is a Tamil worl 'ambalam' – possibly derived from the Sanskrit word 'ambaraM'; and that has two meanings: 'space' as well as 'assembly'. The principle behind the Space-ambalam (in Tamil) is also the God Nataraja of the Sabha-ambalam, namely the Assembly of Dance.

That is the case of the Cosmic Purushha. But in every one of us, in our hearts, there is a small subtle gate, which is point-size.

I said the disposition of *JIva* goes into that, shrinks and shrinks and finally merges there. This is what happens when the *JIva* gets Godhood (of Shiva). It is delightfully called 'Involution'. It is the submerging action, by a convex caving in, of something which was expressing itself by expansion. On the other hand, Shiva who is nothing but Sat (Existence), that is, the ParamAtmA, when he evolves into the *JIva* with body, senses and antaHkaraNaM, that happens again in this same heart by the sprouting of the ego in the expression 'I am an individual *JIva*'. I told you earlier I will tell you about ahamkAra (Ego). That is this matter. AhamkAra is nothing but the thought of 'I' as distinct from Brahman. That thought is the starting point (dramatically termed as 'pillaiyAr chuzhi' in the Tamil world) of the process of evolution of Shiva into a *JIva*.

Evolution is called 'SrshhTi-kramaM' (the regimen of creation) and Involution is called 'Laya-kramaM' (the regimen of dissolution). 'Laya' is also known as 'samhAra'. But I did not use that word lest you may be scared. The 'samhAra' word has no connotation of freight. 'hara' means the action of grabbing. 'sam-hAraM' means the process of the Lord taking us over fully (*saM*) into Himself!.

It is the heart that is the locale at the time of creation for the ego to make the *JIva* separate (from Brahman) as an individual separate from Brahman; it is the same heart that is the locale at the time of dissolution (not 'temporary' but as a permanent 'identity') for the inner organ to converge inwardly to the Ultimate. Further when it converges further and stays at the sharp point at the centre of the heart, that is when Enlightenment takes place.

Let it be. Note that both when the JivAtma separates from the ParamAtmA and when it goes back and becomes one with the ParamAtmA, the locale is the heart that we spoke of above. The ordinary

example of the door of a house being both the entrance and the exit is good enough!

In the antaHkaraNaM there are four entities: cittaM, manas (mind), *buddhi* (intellect) and ahamkAraM (Ego). Of these the locale for the mind is the neck. That of the Ego is the heart. That of the intellect is the face. CittaM is specifically referred as memory power. When it is the memory power its locale is the navel. But really, the basics of all the three, namely, mind, intellect and ego is that which is called thought and this originates from cittaM. Therefore cittam does not need a separate locale for itself. When we vacillate between this decision and that, cittaM is at the neck. When we finally decide, by our intellect, to do something in a certain way , cittaM is in the face. When we establish ourselves as 'I, the *JIva*', cittaM is in the heart which is the locale for the Ego.

39. Ego and Love

It is this false 'I' that has to become the real 'I'. One has to give it some prop of something which can help it unify with Brahman from which it has separated and now has to be turned away from the multifarious objects of this dualistic unverse. It is necessary to make the Inner Organ go back to the Atman-locale in the heart. The Inner Organ is the conglomerate of the mind, the intellect and Ego. The Ego is the false 'I' which has fattened itself by its appropriation of things and objects from the pluralistic variety of the universe.The mind and the intellect function at the basic prompting of the Ego. When somebody has fattened himself well, how can he go through a small gate? When a fat person arrives at our house don't we sometimes make fun of him by saying that our entrance has to be demolished and redone to admit him?! But this gate (of the heart) cannot be broken or hammered into a smaller one! We have only to make the whole person (Ego) leaner! How to make him leaner?

How did he (the Ego) become fat? Seeing everything as distinct from everything else, he has been annexing and accumulating from this plurality and fattened himself. All that outer coating has to be melted/dissolved away now. Not only that. Afterwards that ego which is making him think of himself as a separate *JIva* has to be melted away. Only if it is reduced thus, it can hope to enter that small needle point through the heart and reach that advaitic bliss of the Atman within. How can that be done? – is the question. It can be done only by practice of 'Love'!

The egoistic false 'I' has been amassing left and right all along. That has to be changed to a process of giving oneself in love – that is the only way

to reduce the fat 'I' to a lean 'I'. That, and nothing else, is the route to go to the locale of the Atman.

One may ask: Did not one reduce the fatness of the Ego by dispassion, *shama* and *dama*? What was reduced was only the fat in the mind and the intellect. It is true that they were cleaned, sharpened, churned and reduced. But the Ego is more subtle than these. It is the one which drags us into the mire of duality, without our even knowing that it is so dragging us! We may not be outwardly bragging with pride: "I have got dispassion; *shama* and *dama*, etc. have been achieved by me". But inwardly without our being conscious of it, this individualised ego which has separated itself from the ParamAtmA, will be patting itself on its achievements. Actually the gains in Atma-*SAdhanA*, that have so far been obtained, along with the individuality, should be melted away in the Atman. Instead of that, the ego appropriates all the honours to itself. And it thus fattens itself! It is the feeling of individuality that is at the head of all these and that is what prevents it even of thinking to reduce and merge into the locale of the Atman. In other words, the most important thing needed for Brahman-Realisation, namely surrender of the ego, never takes place.

The function of Love – the noblest attitude of giving oneself up -- is exactly this: it prevents the ego fattening itself on the great achievements and helps it to thin out. Fortunately, the acquiring of discrimination, dispassion, *shama*, *dama*, etc. have refined the *antaH-karaNaM*. So if only one makes the determination, one can generate the necessary Love. And one can go on to surrender the ego and the individuality and thus exhibit this Love.

40. What is the object of Love of an Atma-sAdhaka?

But to whom do we exhibit this Love? What is the object of this Love? To whom does one give himself up? If it is to other people, other places, the nation, or the world – these things are out of place at this stage. For, such an action will germinate an attachment and a consequent danger! One need not forget the story of JaDa-Bharata. In earlier stages, service to others, to the nation and to the world are all good self-effacing acts that will result in the cleaning up of the mind and so turn out to be very good. That belongs to Karma Yoga. But now one is going on the *JnAna* path towards the discarding of everything that is *MAyA* and, love or service towards the to-be-discarded *MAyA* world is inconceivable. Of course it is true that a *JnAni* after he has attained Brahman realisation sometimes does perform worldly service by the prompting of the Almighty of the mAyic world. Our Acharya himself was one such. But that was,

after the stage of influence by *MAyA* – in other words, one has established himself as '*MAyA*-proof'! That *JnAni* is not doing things on his own volition; he does them as an instrument of *Ishvara*. Thus love can be expressed or exhibited either before one begins any such thing as advaita-*SAdhanA* or, after one has attained Realisation, in the form of service to the world or to individuals – but not at the present stage of advaita-*SAdhanA* that we are discussing. One in a million who has engaged in this *SAdhanA* not doing worldly service is also not a big loss to the world. In fact it is the other way. It is we who have to do service to him with the thought: "We have got ourselves into the mire of *samsAra*. At least some rare person is struggling to get the Release. Let us do whatever we can to smoothen his journey of life".

Thus neither to individuals nor to the society does this *sAdhaka* have to show his love. That does not mean he has to be inimical to society. There is neither love nor hate. Non-violence is his first characteristic – by the very fact that he has taken a promise at the time of taking SannyAsa, that not a single being shall have any fear of me – in other words, " I shall not harm in any way any living being". So he cannot have any hate towards any being or society. This absence of hatred, however, which has come as the effect of the strength of his *SAdhanA*, is not to be shown as an explicit love in the outside world.

However, when Love is sprouting from inside, that nectar of love has to be poured to some one to whom one should be giving oneself up – then only one can hope to reduce the ego and enter the innermost small recess of the heart. Who should be that some one, if not the Atman itself?! Atman should be wooed – that is what we said when we were talking about mumukShutA. The wooing should become a surrender to the Atman in a spirit of dedication of the self. The Atman should not only take over the individuality but actually 'vanquish' it to nothingness – that should be the attitude of Love towards the Atman!. Maybe before the Atman reveals itself, one has to go through severe testing. The readiness for such testing is to be shown by the attitude: " Am I keeping anything with me without being offered to you? Then why all these tests? I am ready to be consumed by you". This is where Love turns into Bhakti!

Love placed in the noblest of objects is Bhakti. Love placed on our equals is friendship. Love reposed in elders whether they are noble or not, is respect. Love placed in younger ones, or those below us, is grace. Love placed in those who suffer is compassion. Love placed in noble ones with humility is Bhakti. The noblest object is God and so if we humbly submit to Him with Love that is Bhakti. This Bhakti then becomes Guru Bhakti, Matru Bhakti, PitR bhakti, Bhakti towards our nation and so on.

Among these, only God and the Guru can really take our Love as well as our individual 'I' and melt it in the universal 'I'.

The SadhakA on the jNaNA path is supposed to have his God, not with attributes, but as the nirguNa-Atman. So he has to show his Love, Bhakti, only towards that Atman.

41. Nirguna Bhakti and Saguna Bhakti

Just now I talked about the Atman that tests, the Atman that reveals itself, the Atman that does the action of taking over the surrendering self. "Do all these mean that the Atman is not nirguNa but only a saguNa that does actions? If it is saguNa then that is not our objective. How can that be so?" – such questions may arise. This is where one has got to bring in *shraddhA* (Faith)! Our Acharya, who takes great care to show us the way, has already created this bodyguard of *shraddhA* for our protection! "Don't ask questions about saguNa and nirguNa. The very Upanishads which have talked elaborately about the nirguNa Atman has spoken at this point only thus. Take that in full faith and give yourself up to the Atman with Love. Thereafter you will be taken only to the nirguNa Absolute, so say all the Upanishads. So proceed just on faith" – this is what you have to repeatedly remind yourself and function.

If you want you may believe that the nirguNa brahman, in order to shower its grace on you, works for just that moment like saguNa, and then after sending you inside the core of your heart, within there it remains nirguNa and takes you over. Instead of resorting to such wishful thinking, the best thing would be to go forward with *shraddhA* and *shraddhA* alone!

Memory does go back to the *Ishvara* (saguNa brahman). As long as there is a mental action, thinking of anything good does bring back the memory of *Ishvara*, who is the aggregate of all that is good. Except for advaita, all the other schools of thought earmark him as the destination. How can an advaita-s*Adhaka* not think about Him? But when that thought does occur, start thinking: "Oh Lord, it is because of your Mercy my mind has ventured into advaita. And by Your Grace I am moving on this path little by little. I know you are doing all this, in your great compassion, to take me over finally into your advaitic oneness. So if I now worship you as a saguNa deity, I will be going against your own sankalpa. Please help me go forward on this same path" This is a kind of expression of gratitude for the path so far trodden and a prayer for the path that is remaining, so that the mind still stays on the nirguNa principle.

Gratitude, that is very important. The Bhakti that arises out of this gratitude – gratitude to Him who has directed us into this most remarkable advaita -- raises its head now and then. Of course we may have to maintain it for a very short time and quickly resume our journey. However, this Bhakti of short duration is so intense that all that bhakti that we did long ago for the one-pointedness of the mind pales into insignificance. When we were carrying on that Bhakti almost incessantly, it was like a routine, and sometime lifeless. But now on our *jnAna* path, a certain bhakti shoots forth as if from an underground spring, along with a sense of gratitude, and even though it is only for a moment, it is full of life.

But since our objective is nirguNa, even from this, the mind has to be turned off.

However, if there is the thought that it might still be better if there is a saguNa-mUrti for directing our Love, especially at the beginning of this advanced stage of *SAdhanA*, then certainly there is the Guru. Pour all your Love and Bhakti on him. He will lift you up and make you direct your Love towards the nirguNa. Has not our Acharya said: *prasAdena guroH seyaM pravRttA sUyate phalaM* (See KDAS-46: Sec. 29) –'By the Grace of the Guru, the effort will become pravRtta and will give the desired result'.

After all what is Love? Is it not what goes and attaches to you wholly? But here the thing to which we get attached is not for being possessed by us. Instead it should possess us; that is the anguish with which we get attached. What should go is the so-called individual self or ego. To whatever we attach deeply for that very purpose, that is Love, that is Bhakti.

But just because love or Bhakti is but a deep attachment to something, it does not mean such an involvement in chess or cricket or being a bibliophile is Love or Bhakti. Because such attachment is all for fattening the individual 'I'. In other words it feeds the 'svayaM' (the outer self). On the other hand feeding the 'svayam' (to the Self) – that is, the 'svayam' is to be fed to the Self -- is Love or Bhakti. This is the grand 'svayamvaraM' wherein the bride is 'fed' to the bridegroom!

42. Cooling life-giving Love

Another point to be noted is this. What we are attached or involved in is something that has life. In the name of this involvement our little self establishes a relationship. But afterwards, this relationship, as well as itself are all gone and it becomes that. This is Love. Life! That is important. Life unites thus with life. That is Love. Can you imagine chess or cricket having life?

But we know monumental examples where the practitioners of music, dance, literature give up all their lives to such arts as if they are divines with life. And when they dwell at the peak of excellence in their performance, we say "they performed as if in trance, forgetting their self". It only means, for that moment they gave themselves up to those arts. And the 'life' within the art makes them reach a peak of excellence.

In Science also the same self-effacing 'intuition' produces the discoveries attributed to Einstein and others. One may say that such scientists did not consider their Science as a living devatA. But all living beings have a super-Being as their common source. That central source is the root source of all the arts and sciences and of all knowledge and action. When the scientists devote themselves heart and soul to their science in a dedicated fashion, it is that common Universal Source of Knowledge that sparks them with that intuition about new truths and discoveries. Even in chess and cricket also this might happen. But in all these, the beauty of the relationship of one soul giving its all to another living soul is absent. That 'mAdhurya-rasa', the taste of sweetness, is what is missing!

Starting from nitya-anitya-vastu-vivekaM (discrimination between the real and the unreal), the *SAdhanA* that goes through vairAgya (dispassion), *shama* (sense control) and *dama* (mind control) and uparati (cessation), has been a dry affair keeping everything as well as oneself dry like an inert object. There has been no trace of a relationship with ticking life. If one goes that way one will only end up in the emptiness advocated by BauddhaM. But Vedanta's Brahman is not emptiness. It is a fullness, full of the quintessence of bliss. The Taittiriyopanishad has revelled that *JIva* in its Fullness becomes Bliss itself (II – 7). It is the cit (Knowledge) that has become Life. It is the essence of cit and Ananda, Fullness of cidAnanda. The whole concept of Bhakti is to conceive of it as a living fullness, relate ourselves to it and develop the thought that we should dissolve in that fullness. That is how through Bhakti one cools and waters the dry *SAdhanA* regimen.

When we kept it dry, that was also justifiable. There are methods of cure where the medicine is administered only after one is made to starve. Even among crops, sometimes they are allowed to dry up and then only proper watering is done to cool them and make them grow better. It is the same situation here. We usually are in such a state where, in the mind, intellect and ahamkAra, thoughts, feelings and determinations arise as food for them. It is necessary first to dry them all up. By that very drying up the sprouting of love takes place by which that very ahamkAra becomes ready to be offered as food to something else. That is when it can be converted into Bhakti towards the Universal Source of all Life.

Bhakti towards Brahman, that is, the Atman, bhakti sometimes towards the saguNa *Ishvara*, bhakti towards the Guru, all these are a must. One more bhakti is a must. You remember, after all the four-component *SAdhanA*, one is now ready for the SannyAsa and to receive the mahA-vAkya teaching. We are going to learn deeply all the *shAstras* and Upanishads. These mantras as well as the philosophy imbedded in them are equally living things, -- not just pieces of information to be learnt from writing. They are living divine things. Just as the icons of the temples which have been ritually invoked by PrANa-pratishhTA, the mantras etc. are deities in the form of the akshharas (letters). We have to set up a relationship with them, a sort of love that takes us to that state where we ourselves melt into nothingness . These principles of philosophy that the Guru teaches us and which are to be absorbed by manana and dhyAna, are wrongly considered to be dry philosophy. They should be practised with great bhakti as if they were equivalent to the icons with life. All along we have been doing *SAdhanA* in a dry mechanical way; but hereafter we have to do the shravaNa, manana etc. with great devotion that breathes a cold air.

The next step being sannyAsa, one may think that this is the 'dry' stage in the *SAdhanA*. On the other hand, the wet and cool weather is going to start only now. It is dry only from the outside. The outside world thinks it is a 'dry' world which discards the 'outside'. But in reality that is the world that is full of the coolness of nectar of love. Outside there is only bark and shell, but inside there is the sweetness of coconut-water. That is the nectar of love which has to be milked from the Thing that is inside everything. This is the stage of SannyAsa that the Acharya has shown to us with great compassion.

43. To remove the conceit of the ego

There are two things to be avoided by a *sAdhaka*. He should not turn out to be dry and lifeless. Secondly he should not fall a prey to conceit or pride. The ego as part of his inner organ (antaH-karaNa) has to go finally. But that is a big task that will be achieved almost at the end. Right now we are talking about the commonly understood 'egotism' ('*aham-bhAvaM*', in Tamil). Usually the technical *shAstra* literature does not make a distinction between *ahamkAraM* and this *aham-bhAvaM*'. I am making the distinction for clarity. Egoism is the name given to the ego's thought of 'I' and egotism is the name given to the conceit and vanity of a swelled head. The head swells because of the thought: "I have advanced far above the base-level and intermediate-level sAdhakas, far above the ordinary karma-bhakti path and am now advancing on the *jnAna* path" and this thought is the end of it all! The Acharya has kept Bhakti in order to promote the modesty and humility that is most needed now. The 'I' itself has to melt in Love to become a zero; when that is so, what to speak of any 'weight' of the head! Bhakti will make him really light-headed. *JnAna* path has been recommended only for the top-level aspirants. In order for him not to lose his balance by that very qualification of topness, and for his *SAdhanA* not to be broken by the weight of such extraneous thoughts, the submissive attitude of bhakti becomes necessary. However much we may woo Brahman with love, unless brahman itself does the 'revealing' (known as 'vivaraNaM'), there is no scope for salvation. It is with this thought that one has to submit humbly before the ideal goal. To obtain this submissive attitude it is only Bhakti that helps. Not only in the case of that phenomenon at the apex level. The submissive bhakti should extend to the belief: "Whatever I have achieved so far in *SAdhanA* is all the Grace of God! What I did was effort only. The very thought of making that effort and the continuance of that effort were all again the gift of God!" Only by this the renunciation of egotism (conceit and pride), a property most important of all the properties to be renounced, at the time of taking SannyAsa, can materialise.

44. Two stages of ego in sAdhanA

"When We say 'Love' or 'Relationship' it needs two people. Consequently it is dvaitaM. It should not come anywhere near advaita-*SAdhanA*" – this might be the general understanding. Yes, for a long time during the course of the *SAdhanA* it remains that way. In other words, understanding love to be limited to just kindliness one is not supposed to bring it anywhere near actions. But in due course of time, by the very fact that a refinement takes place by *SAdhanA*, one gets to know what

true love is. The relationship that arises from that is not any more dualistic. One knows that it is to become a relationship whereby the one who relates gives oneself up to the object that is admired and dissolves to the extent that there are not two now, but only one. And then one gets the maturity to practice what one has known. That is where Love has been termed as Bhakti by the Acharya. If one continues in that practice, the maturity ripens further and thereafter there is only the non-dual dissolution!

For what purpose does one begin a *SAdhanA*? His goal is the thought "I should reach Brahman. I must become Brahman". And he continues the *SAdhanA* to reach that goal. But when he reaches the goal, does the 'I' who started it all become the Brahman? No. Not at all. There is no one to claim that 'I' now. There is only Brahman. Only when the 'I'-hood ends there is Realisation (*sAkShAt-kAraM*). Even the word 'Realisation' is only a formality (*aupachArikaM*). It is actually wrong to say 'One realises Brahman'. No one can do anything to Brahman. There is no 'sAkShAt', no 'karaNaM'. Nothing can be done with Brahman. Really what happens is, in that final state this very person (*sAdhaka*) vanishes. Whoever did the *SAdhanA* he himself is not there at the end of the *SAdhanA*; only the goal remains! It is this very phenomenon that the great Ramakrishna described as "the story of the doll of salt examining the depth of the ocean".

Desirous of being totally consumed and dissolved by it, one sacrifices himself to it. That is what is termed here as 'higher-grade' bhakti.

When one begins *SAdhanA* we keep on using the word 'I' in our thoughts: "I should get Release. I should reach Brahman. I should become Brahman". It is impossible to sacrifice that 'I' at that stage itself. Even the thought of it might be scaring. Many westerners who are strong in their intellect and courage are fearful of the thought of sacrificing the *JIva*hood – the feeling of an individual self – and they say: "What? Am I to sacrifice my individuality?". Even when one is not afraid from the very beginning itself, the *JIva*-hood does not disappear then and there. Only when all old vAsanAs are extinguished it will go. The extinction has to be done by means of the *JIva*-hood itself. The *SAdhanA*-set- of- four is for that very purpose. First the effort goes with the thought "I shall try to cultivate Discrimination"; after some time one gets the satisfaction "I have got some Discrimination now" and then the effort continues with the thought "Now I shall try to cultivate Dispassion" and this, afterwards becomes "I have cultivated some Dispassion now". This goes on. All the time the efforts as well as the results are all based on the individual self. This is an ego-based feeling, no doubt, but it is necessary to enthuse ourselves in these earlier stages. Nothing wrong. Not only for

encouraging ourselves in the progress but also for a proper regret and due correction at times of slipping down. Only when the individual feeling of 'I' is there, the thought will arise: "Oh, I have slipped down. I should correct myself and practise more carefully". On the other hand if we rationalize it by an incorrect use of Vedanta by saying "After all everything is false; there is no individual jIva. So where is the slip? Where is the correction?" then there will be no upward progress of spirituality. The apex attitude of "There is no individual 'I' at all" is not to be imagined on the way. If in that imagination one ignores the necessary self-effort, then there is nothing to hold you back and all the *SAdhanA* will go waste. The very fact of *SAdhanA* is for the egoistic individual self. It is not for the Atman. Does the Atman have to do *SAdhanA* to realise itself? The Atman is actionless and it remains as it is always as Atman. Therefore it is the individual *JIva*, that has to do the *SAdhanA* basing its actions on the ego which is the cause for its individuality.

However, after one obtains a certain success in controlling one's senses, mind and intellect, having discarded much of those that need to be discarded, having obtained the formal teaching about the Atman to be realised, one reaches the stage of readiness for being in the only thought of That and that is the stage when the ego joins the set of those that are to be discarded. Hereafter whatever is achieved is not to be 'earned' as the result of effort by the *SAdhanA* of the *JIva*, but they are the solvents of the self awarded by the Grace of God. That is why the *SAdhanA*-set-of-four ends with 'mumukShutvaM' according to the Acharya. So what happens thereafter is not by the *sAdhaka*'s effort; He has nothing to earn. They are what he has to do to sacrifice himself. They are shravaNa (listening), manana (thinking) and nidhidhyAsana (contemplation).

When we manufacture a cracker we pack tightly a lot of explosive material inside, wrap it up by decorative paper, and make it attractive from outside. All this is done for the final purpose of lighting up the wick and explode it so that nothing remains of that cracker. Here also the ego inside has to be exploded so that nothing remains. In Tamil one word for cracker is 'vANam'. The vANaM' (that is the ego) is elaborately prepared through a *SAdhanA* for the final purpose of exploding it and making it 'NirvANa!

It is true that even in the beginning, everything happens by God's Grace. But during those times the JivAtmA was engaged in self-purification and for that to happen well God's Grace helped. But now the purification task has reasonably progressed. Now the purified antaH-karaNa (inner organ) has to reach step by step the state of experience. 'Reach' is really not the right thing; unusually instead of 'reaching', now it is 'giving'. As Manickavachagar said, it is a smart trading. One gives up the *JIva*-bhAva

and receives the 'shiva-sthiti' (the state of being the Absolute). But even this is only true in a poetic sense or in the sense of bhakti. In reality, there is no *JIva* who receives the 'Shiva'. *JIva* is gone but Shiva remains!

Bhakti has been prescribed for reaching this maturity of the vanishing of the ego. The Acharya says, as it were, "I have prescribed *SAdhanA* so that you may acquire the wealth of the sextad (ShamAdi sampat) starting with Shama, the wealth of Dispassion, the wealth of Discrimination, etc. You have acquired them all. Hereafter you must learn to empty yourself. That is why Bhakti has been prescribed.".

45. Bhakti and the Heart

As one progresses in the bhakti, Love and the submissive attitude consequent to that, the *SAdhanA* that has been done so far make the mind and intellect light and they are drawn by the ego to be sucked into the recesses of the heart. Everybody knows that in that bhakti, the true bhakti wherein the individual soul delivers itself to the paramAtmA -- this is Atma-nivedanaM – there is no role or work for the intellect. Not only that. Even the mind has no work there. Mind is nothing but an aggregate of volitions and indecisions (samkalpa-vikalpa). These two have no role in true bhakti. True bhakti is the state where we rest in the thought "It is Thy Will". The feeling of bhakti is not one among the many feelings that arise in, and are experienced by, the mind. VatsalyaM (affection), madhuraM (pleasantry) and dAsyaM (servanthood) are often talked about as the indicator-qualities of bhakti. But there is a mountain of difference between these and the affection that a mother gives a child, the love that spouses exchange with each other, and the submissiveness that a dedicated servant shows to his boss. Is there not a ton of difference between the affection shown by a woman to a neighbour's child and the tenderness that she showers on her own child? Far more than that is the bhakti that a great devotee shows to his god of devotion! The same degree of difference will there be when love or servanthood are exhibited as bhakti to the Lord! These feelings arise somehow through somebody and are of a unique class by themselves, far more purified, far more powerful, than ordinary feelings of the mind.

Thus, true bhakti is not the work of the mind. It arises from the ego itself that lies deep within as a steadily rooted feeling of 'I' without any of the perturbations of the mind. Further it arises not to nurture that ego, but to lighten it and dissolve it in the unique self that is also its own root source by going into the locale of the Atman. For desiring to dissolve there must be some one to desire. Without its being there, how can there

be a desire to dissolve? And that singleton is the ego. It is not the ego that does the bhakti, but the ego exists for doing the bhakti!

What should not be forgotten here is this. This bhakti that arises in this quest for the goal of advaita is not like the ordinary bhakti which has the goal of varied experiences of 'rasa'. Because for that experience of the 'rasa' one has to hold on to the individual jIva. So do those philosophers say who consider bhakti as an end-in-itself and that itself as mokSha. But here, the basic maxim that in order to be doing bhakti eternally, the egoistic individuality has to be there eternally, is invalidated. Indeed the objective here is to dissolve the ego by Love. How can it remain continuously dissolving? After a certain period of dissolution, the ego has to be totally extinguished, so that there is nothing more to dissolve. If Bhakti is intended to be a coating to be applied over and over, then one can be doing that continuously. When actually it is not a coating, but an acid in which the ego dissoves, then how can it be an eternal process? Bhakti plays the role of acid for the ego. The ego thus gives itself up to bhakti; thereby in the heart which is the locale for the ego, the ego thins out and thins out until there is no more ego but only bhakti pervades there. And the heart then becomes the locale for bhakti.

As one matures in that bhakti, along with the change in Ashrama (i.e. having taken SannyAsa) and along with that bhakti -- that is, dissolving the ego in the goal through Love – one continues the shravaNa, manana and nidhidhyAsana. Bhakti now sprouts fast and full in the heart and the feeling of ego is eradicated. But before it is totally eradicated, the locale which is like the physical heart is filled up by the subtle atoms of bhakti.

Wherever the Upanishads speak of the heart as the locale for the ego, (Ch.U.VIII – 6 – 1, BrihadAranyaka U. IV-2-3) the Acharya speaks only of a 'lump of flesh' . Even then it should not be taken to mean it is a full-fledged physical organ. That is why the words "like the physical heart" were used above. It is the organ which pumps blood that is totally physical. This heart however is in between the physical and the subtle. The chakras that yogis speak of, and many of the nADis are totally subtle. They do not fall in any X-Ray. This heart also is not to be captured by X-Ray. Still it is not that subtle. It is this heart which somehow controls in an integrated manner, by its life-feed, the blood circulation done by the physical heart, the passage of breath conducted by the physical lungs, the functions of the nerves prompted by the physical brain and the functions that take place in the digestive organs and the associated passages. It does this control through the nADis that start from it. Without the feeling of 'I' in the *JIva*, what can happen in a body? That is why this 'power' has been given to the heart which is the locale for the ego. Probably because of the importance for the JIva of all

the physical functions of the body and the necessity of the *JIva* to monitor them, this heart is also kept 'semi-physical'.

Even though it is semi-physical, once the continued practice goes on with the thought that ego is to be dissolved, in due time it becomes subtle and becomes almost just space. The Atma-sthAnaM (the locale for the Atman) however is more subtle; it is kAraNa-AkAshaM (causal space) – it is the centre point of the heart. This subtler thing cannot be approached by anything physical or semi-physical. Only by lightening the ego, making it subtle, it can enter the subtler space. This lightening of the ego (*ahamkAra-kArshyaM*) is what is done by Bhakti.

When Bhakti ripens, it is only Love that shines through the whole heart more prominently than the flesh and the nADis. That is why it goes by the name of the heart. When somebody has no love or kindness we say they are heartless. Sometimes we combine the two and say loving heart, or kind heart. The Inner Organ (antaH-karaNa) has four organs in it. But note that never are they identified with their physical locations in the body. The location of mind is the neck, but we never call those who have a good mind as one with a neck! Or, for that matter, someone with a good intellect as one with a face!. The reason is, among these fleshy physical organs, the organs of the *antaH-karaNaM* sit like a person in a chair; the chair is never identified with the person in that seat!

The heart also, when it is semi-physical, is the chair for the ego, as I told you earlier. But we do not call some one with a lot of ego as one with a heart. It is in the subtle form of the heart that love, unlike anything else, penetrates deep into the core, and that is why we identify love with the heart. Further when we refer to Bhagavan as *hRdaya-vAsI* we are not saying that it is He who sits in the semi-physical heart donning the robe of *JIva* with an ego. We are actually saying that it is He who shines forth from inside having melted the physical into the subtle by Love at its peak of excellence. Maybe we are not understanding it in all this detail but at least we understand that He manifests himself in Bhakti that is full of Love.

46. The NaaDis of the heart: JnAni's life rests, Other's lives leave

Isn't it strange? From that very heart things take place – even those which are not related to Love! That is *Ishvara*'s mysterious *MAyA* shakti! All this because, the heart is the locale for the ego. The nADis that

control and monitor the jIva's personal matters of life start from there and proceed to the other organs giving them the life-force, as we have seen earlier.

Several semi-flesh nAdis go forth from this heart in all directions. Among them are those which end in one of the nine Gates. (*nava-dvAra*). For all those who have to take another birth – in other words, for ninety-five percent. of all the people, life leaves through one of these gates. Besides these nine there is a gate of the size of an atom at the top of the head. For all people life enters into the foetus through that gate. But at the time of death of all those who have to have another birth, life leaves not by that gate but by one of the other nine gates. For those who do not have to be born again, other than the *JnAni*, life leaves only by the gate at the head. That is what is called "kapAla-mokShaM".

I said "other than *JnAni*". So what is the case of the *JnAni*? Other than the *JnAni*, who are those that are not destined for a rebirth?

The prANa of the *JnAni* does not go anywhere outside at the time of the fall of the body. There is no mokSha which he has yet to get. And in the same way, there is no mokSha which has to be obtained at some time after death, for him. Whenever he got his *jnAna*, that is, the Realisation of Brahman, then itself, his antaHkaraNaM (the mind of the jIva) has been extinguished and he has been released from *MAyA*; so he becomes a mukta, a *JIva*n-mukta then and there. Thus he has been 'released' even when being in the body and the prANa does not have to go anywhere after the fall of the body, for mokSha.

He has been thinking of the Atman, as his life, the supreme life. Without even recognizing it as bhakti, but with a great attitude of bhakti, he has been doing his *SAdhanA* for the purpose of dissolving the ego. By this process, it dissolves and dissolves and reaches such an emaciated slender state, that it enters the small gate of the heart which is the locale of the Atman, converges into the Atman, unifies with it and itself gets extinguished. And immediately he becomes a mukta.

However, his life (PrANa) has not left him. He is living and he is also a mukta; that is why he is called a *JIva*n-mukta. Then in due time one day his body dies. Why should he live after reaching the mukta state, and when does his life part with him – these are questions into which we don't need to enter at present. Mostly the opinion is that he lives in order that his *prArabdha* may exhaust itself. When it thus exhausts itself, then life also leaves. Let us be content with that (explanation). Thus even after Brahman-realisation he has his life (prANa). What happens to that prANa at the time of his death? Just as the ahmkAra (since the

mind and intellect has gone into the ahamkAra – so we can as well say it is antaHkaraNaM now) has already gone into the heart-gate and merged into the Atman-locale, so also now when death takes place the prANa also merges in the same way in that Atman-locale. In other words, when the *JnAni*'s body dies, his prANa does not go outside anywhere through any nADi. In the Upanishad and the Brahma-*sUtra* it is so declared clearly. (Br. U. III-2-11; IV-4-6) (Br. S. IV-2- 12 to 16).

In general parlance also, it is never said that the *JnAni*'s life is gone; it is usually said that it has ceased, settled or disappeared.

Other than the *JnAni* who are those that have made themselves not to be reborn in this world? They are generally called 'upAsakas'. There are several categories among them. They all have something in common. They all know that this world or this body is not the end of it all. That there exists a basic Truth is a confirmed belief of all of them. They all have the thought of the necessity to release themselves from this world and the bondage. The common opinion stops here. Beyond this there are lots of separate opinions. And the observances also differ accordingly.

One of those opinions holds the basic Truth as nirguNa, just like the advaitin. However he thinks (contrary to advaita) that the Truth basis differs from *JIva* to *JIva*. The advaitin holds that even though it is nirguNa, it is sat-cid-Ananda-ghana.But he (the other opinion) thinks it is a blank, but still not void (like the Buddha). He performs yoga by controlling the mind and for ultimate union with that blank Existence. We call him yogi. He also thinks that the individual jIva-bhAva – ego – has to be destroyed. However, he has not known correctly about the one absolute True status . About the control of mind also, he commits the same error. "I am not the mind. I am Brahman. Why should I be tossed about by something which is not Me. Let me constantly recall the Shruti statement that 'I am Brahman' and put an end to this" – this is the thought of the seeker on the *jnAna* path, but the Yogi does not do it. In order to overcome the difficulty in the direct control of mind, he gives much importance to breath control, and only with its help he controls the mind.

[Note by the Collator Ra. Ganapathy:
The mind and the breath have both the same
root-source; and so this is possible]

By such a process, even though his goal Truth is a blank kaivalya, strangely, the breath shakti goes to prANa-shakti, its source, that prANa shakti goes back to the mahA-prANa-shakti, which is the root-source of all living beings, and by the might of that shakti, he obtains several

miraculous powers. And he gets the added responsibility of not missing his goal by being attracted by them.

Another opinion holds that the Basic Truth is only saguNa. He thinks: 'We should reach that goal; but we should not merge in it. Because if we merge into it then there will be no possibility of enjoying, by experience, its multifold qualities. Either in one of them or in all of them one should experience it and it is in this experience there is the Bliss for the JivAtman. So without being one with it, I should be outside and be permanently enjoying that. And that is mokSha'. Only by placing our Love on something we can experience and enjoy how it is and what it does. So he considers Love as the basis of all that experience and he practises loving it. We call him a Devotee (Bhakta). Not only does he think that one should not become one with the paramAtmA which is saguNa. He goes even further: "Such a union with the paramAtman is not possible. The Lord has not provided for such a union" – this is his contention.

Another proponent, however, is not able to do the *SAdhanA* by breath and mind control; or he is not interested in that direction. Nor is he able to do bhakti by pouring out his mind. But he is also one of those to be listed in the 'upAsaka' category of those who wish to be released from this *samsAra* and the world of sensual pleasures. He does believe in the existence of God but he is not able to hold on to Him either by bhakti through a feeling for Him, or by *jnAna* through his intellect, or by any saguNa or nirguNa conception . So, on the path for Release, he keeps on doing his *svadharma* duties and obligations without being attached to the fruits thereof. Whatever the Vedas have prescribed as samskAras for purification of the *JIva*, he performs. We should also include in this category those, in the modern world, who do service, without the thought of any gain for oneself. But whether it is a religious karma or social service, whatever he is doing, he should be one who longs for a retreat from *samsAra* (Release from Bondage). Not only should he not be thinking of one's own benefit, he should not be thinking of the results, to others, of his actions or service by the work or service he is doing. In other words, there must be no stubbornness that the result must happen. On the other hand, the conviction should be: "There is a God above. Whatever happens to anybody will happen only by His Will, according to norms of dharma and justice. I have no right to demand that things should happen only a certain way. I should keep on doing whatever appeals to me to be just and good . And leave the results to that dispenser of fruits (*phala-dAtA*).
This is the path of Karma yoga and the one who follows it is a karma yogi.

From what I have said so far, it is clear that except for the seeker on the *JnAna* path, the other three major ones, namely, a Yogi, a Bhakta and a Karmi (the one who adopts karma yoga) – all three of them – are 'upAsakas'. In the same category we may include all those who follow different schools of philosophy which do not object to the Vedas and which do not subscribe to the idea that 'there is no Ultimate Truth, there is only a void'.

All the above get release from *samsAra* after their death. They are not reborn. However, the soul that goes out from their body does not immediately get absorbed or unifed with the ParamAtmA. Because, none of these had the goal of non-dual one-ness and an identification with the absolute. They did not think of it nor did they understand it and do what was required for that. Even when one asks for it, the Lord does not give it out so easily; so why would He give it unasked?

However, all these have asked for release from *samsAra* and from rebirth and have followed noble paths, the Lord grants them that release from *samsAra* certainly.

In this way. The souls that left their bodies do not return to this world. Instead they go to Brahma-loka And that grants them the release from the *samsAra* of this world and all the attendant sufferings and also from the rebirth. This is mokSha.

Brahma loka does not mean the world of Brahman.. You would have inferred this yourself from all that you have heard from me so far. Yes, there is no loka (world) for Brahman). What we refer to as Brahma-loka is just the world (loka) of the God known as Creator BrahmA.

But instead of calling it BrahmA's world (the world of the four-faced deity BrahmA) we should call it saguNa-Brahma-lokaM. Knowledgeable people call BrahmA as Hiranya-garbha and Brahma-loka as Hiranya-garbha-loka.

Nirguna brahman is subtler than the subtle state. By the work of *MAyA* the concrete creation takes place. This is the concrete state. In between the two states is the state of Hiranyagarbha. This is the state where creation has not yet taken place, but the saguna-brahman with its *MAyA* has kept the whole creation within itself as if in the embryo stage. Hiranya means gold. AvidyA (Ignorance), otherwise *MAyA*, by itself is like darkness, but by the presence of Brahman-consciousness it works out this wonderful task of creation, the consciousness which thus shines and reflects is said to be golden.

The gate that allows things to go out is also the gate through which things enter. So the creation which came out from Hiranyagarbha goes back inside through the same Hiranyagarbha. When does it go back? – when Hiranyhagarbha is of age one hundred and thus his lifetime is over, he merges into nirguNa brahman. In our reckoning, 1000 caturyugas (the period of four yugas: Krta, Treta, Dvapara and Kali) make one day-time of Hiranyagarbha. Similarly another 1000 caturyugas make one night of his. So that his one full day is 2000 caturyugas. His years are calculated on this basis. Like that he lives 100 years of his. All that time Creation goes on. When he is of age 100, he is taken in into Brahman. Along with him all the worlds, jIvas and all that was created would go and merge into Brahman. Brahman alone is there now. Whatever time was spent in all this creation, an equal time goes on without any creation, but with Brahman alone. Then Creation begins again.

When the lifetime of Hiranyagarbha ends his Creation work ends and he merges in the ParamAtmA. This event is called 'Adyantika-pralaya'. You may recall I earlier mentioned it and told you I will come back to it later.

For the majority of of us jIvas who have a lot of karma balance and instead of going on the path of Karma-yoga, or Bhakti, or Yoga or *JnAna*, have to repeatedly die and be born, they are destined to suffer lakhs and lakhs of janmas till that pralaya. He who goes by the *jnAna* path merges in brahman in this life itself. The others who are 'upAsakas' escape from the birth and death syndrome, but still do not get the advaita-*mukti*. They go to Brahma-loka and from there at the time of Adyantika-pralaya dissolve in the very brahman along with Creator BrahmA.

What would be that Brahma-loka like? He who reaches there would not have either the internal enemies like lust, anger, etc. or the external enemies like disease, heat and cold, asura, etc. Their life will be pleasant and pure. This is true of all kinds of upAsakas who go there.

Besides this, for each particular kind of 'upAsaka' it will be different.

For the Karma person, it will be a place where whatever he desires that is not faulty will be fulfilled.
For the Bhakti person, it will be a place which has the favourite deity that he wanted to reach. Brahma-loka does not mean that there is BrahmA there. Various bhaktas might say that even beyond, further higher up, there is Vaikuntha (the loka of Vishnu) and there is Kailasa (the loka of shiva); but really it is this Brahma-loka that appears to different viewers in a different way. The same paramAtmA shows up as Vishnu, Shiva in the 'different' lokas.

Incidentally, BrahmA is not the favourite deity (ishhTa-deivam) for no one! Then why is this called Brahma-loka? Maybe that is exactly the reason!. Let me explain. The ShAstras assign this Hiranya-garbha loka only to those who perform their religious rituals without desire for the fruits thereof, but as a path to mokSha. Not only in the spiritual type ShAstras like Upanishads but also in Manu-smRti, which is a Dharma-*shAstra*, the assignment of Brahma-loka is only for such persons. He does not have a favourite deity in particular. So on the plea that he goes back from Creation to the Source, the world that is the path from one to the other is given the name of the Creator. Maybe,in a lighter vein, one might say that if it had been named after one of those favourite deities, the others in the same category might object to it!

We can be more 'generous' and include some more in this list of 'upAsakas'. Originally once upon a time only the Vedas were there all over the world. Later, in the other countries, somehow it all got mutilated and in course of time, the very fact that there was a vedic path was itself forgotten. At some places some great men established a religion or a religious philosophy – and these were made in such a way that it promoted devotion to the divine, good character and spirituality. All those who follow these other religions and religious works may be included in the list of 'upAsakas'. We may even suppose that they will also go to Brahma-loka and that will be their 'heaven' or 'the relieved state' which is their goal according to their belief.

We can be even more generous and broad-minded. Once our Vedic religion itself was objected to and there were founders of other religions. Let the matter be whatever with these Founders. In fact our Vedas have said (see Br. U. IV.3.22) the Veda is not a Veda beyond a certain stage. Maybe one or two people might have transcended by themselves the ritual regimen of the Vedas. Let us not try to infer anything about those individual people. But unlike the avaidik (i.e. which do not accept the vedas) religions that sprang up in other countries, other religions in our own country were established by objectors to the Vedic religions that prevailed here. I am now speaking of those who came in later times in these other religions. They have been following these non-vaidik religions as their veda and have been revering, with devotion and dedication, their founders and other important persons as much as we revere our rishis and Acharyas. They cannot be faulted for this. For them also it is possible that Brahmaloka is their destination. For them it may be exactly what they think it is – void or whatever. Whether *Ishvara* gives them Brahma loka or so, let me have the credit of being 'broad-minded' for giving them this! If you ask the hard-liner Vaidik people, they might not agree with me. They might opine: 'If those who belong to the non-vaidik religions follow their religion steadfastly, as a consequence they will be

born in their next birth in some vaidik religion and only by properly doing the upAsanAs there they will reach Brahmaloka'.

I have to tell you one or two more points on the subject of mokSha.

It is not as if only the mokSha of the 'dualistic'kind is what will be obtained by all the followers of the Bhakti path till the end. That was said only with respect to those devotees who circumscribe themselves by a non-advaitic philosophy. But in actuality, when one adheres to bhakti that comes from the heart and overflows in its own natural way, it cannot be circumscribed by any boundary. Such were the devotees, like the Alwars and Nayanamars. Instead of limiting themselves to visishtadavaita or shaiva-siddhanta, they just allowed themselves freely to be led by their noblest emotion of bhakti, wherever it tossed them, to whatever experiences they were subjected to. For many of them, even this process was not enough; they were not satisfied with doing this from outside, they wanted to be one with their Ultimate. They poured all this in their songs and some have sung about the non-dual experience that they were blessed with. Such travellers who journeyed on the path of parA-bhakti and were led on to the continuous state - *anusandhAnaM* - of one-ness, will not go to the saguNa-brahman of Brahma-loka. Instead they will reach the MokSha of non-dual Realisation (*advaita-sAkShAtkAra-*mukti*).

The person who by himself does not do any yoga-*SAdhanA*, but keeps on praying to God that He should grant him advaita-mokSha, to him also the Lord grants the Brahma-nirvANa, that is superior to Brahma-loka. What the pilgrim on the *jnAna*-path obtains, through his *SAdhanA*, without recognising that it is also the Grace of God, this devotee-type person obtains by prayer, knowing full well it is the blessing/benediction (prasAda) of God. Of course elder traditionalists in our religion may say that the Lord might not just give him advaita-mokSha on a platter, he will also be turned towards the *jnAna* path and then only he will be made to reach his goal.

Thus there are several yogas. In one of these it has been stated that one should hold on to the primeval shakti, hold on to it and rise on the sushumnA nADi, chakra after chakra, and finally through that Power reach the Source of that Power, namely the ShivaM that is Brahman and unite with it in one-ness. And that *mukti* has been depicted as an advaita-*mukti* only. For such upAsakas also, we may be sure that the destination is not Brahma-loka, but the advaita-*mukti* itself.

Another opinion is the ashhTAnga-yoga siddhas who speak of the goal of samAdhi in the attributeless Absolute also obtain *Brahma-nirvANaM*

(advaita-*mukti*). But the words of the Gita don't support this. There is no greater suthority than Lord Krishna Himself. That He calls only *JnAni*s as 'sAnkhyas' or 'sannyAsis' is well-known to scholars of all the different traditions. Krishna says: Only those who go on the advaita path become 'brahma-bhUtas' while living in this world and reach 'Brahma-nirvANaM' when the body falls. (B.G. V -24). 'Brahma-bhUta'-becoming is also only Brahma-nirvANaM'. Just to show the difference that one is in the jIvan-*mukti* stage even when being in the body, we use the term 'Brahma-bhUta'. To clear this , He himself says one or two shlokas later: (V-26): "abhito brahma-nirvANaM vartate …": "In both situations, that is, both in this world and in the other world, *JnAni* gets the Brahma-nirvANaM'.

He also says what happens to those who go along the ashhTAmga-yoga (the eight-component-yoga) path, what we ordinarily call the yoga-mArga. But the Yogi he refers to must have practised well his ashhTAnga-yoga, and must have perfected both the breath-discipline and the mind-control regimen. In addition, as an added qualification he should have deep devotion and must be one who constantly and continuously thinks of God – not just one who has to think of God (**Ishvara*-praNidhAnaM*), as per the prescriptions of the yoga*shAstra*, for the purpose of developing concentration . Krishna says "mAM anusmaran" (remembering Me continuously) "satataM yo mAM smarati nityashaH" (B.G. VIII – 13, 14) (he who remembers me always and every day) . Such a yogi who has also devotion, even though he may leave the body in the contemplation of praNava that has been equated to shabda-brahman, will still not get the advaita-*mukti*. This is what the Lord says in the eighth chapter called 'akshhara-brahma-yoga'. It has been described
that his soul goes only to Brahma-loka along the path of the 'uttarAyaNa-Sun'.

[R. Ganapthy, the collator of these discourses, writes this note at this point:

In Chandogya VIII– 6.5 also, the *JIva* who leaves the body in the contemplation of Aum is said to reach saguNa-brahma-loka only

In the fifth prashna of prashnopanishad the *mukti* ascribed for the worshipper of Aum has been commented on by the Acharya in his Bhashyain the same way.]

47. Correct meaning of Death in Uttaraayana

The idea of 'Death in Uttarayana' has become well-known. But the general opinion about it is not correct. What I am going to say may surprise you. But I am telling you only what is in the Bhashyas of the Acharya. (B.G. VIII-24. Brahma-*sUtra*M IV -3. Chandogya U. V-10-1.

Brihadaranyakam VI-2-15 – Bhashyas of these by the Acharya). The Acharya never interpreted 'Uttarayana-death' as death in the six months of Uttarayana. Then how has he interpreted it? The Yogi (a desireless karmi and all upAsakas and bhaktas – other than *JnAni*) goes to Brahma-loka by a divine path called devayAna after the soul leaves the body through the nADi that goes from the heart to the head. But before reaching the terminus there are several junctions! Each of these is the seat of a devatA. First comes the seat of Agni. Then comes the seat of the devatA for the daytime; then the devatA for the white fortnight and then the seat for the devatAs of the UttarAyaNa period.

Mark this carefully! It is not UttarAyana period. It is the devatAs of the UttarAyaNa period.

Thus the Acharya has explained that it reaches the terminus after crossing several junctions. The Lord also already has said in the Gita only in accordance with what has already been said in the Upanishads of Chandogyam and BrihadAranyakam.and others. The Brahma *sUtra* and the Bhashya of later times (later than the Gita) also explains this point without the least possibility of any doubt.

In the same manner, the dakshhiNAyana-death is wrongly associated with the result of having a next birth. DakshhiNAyana-death does not mean that the time of death is dakshhinAyana, but the seats of the devatAs associated with dakshhinAyana constitute the path (*pitRyAnaM*) of the leaving soul.

Further, another matter. This kind of passage through the path of the seats of the devatAs like those of UttarAyaNa, then passing through junction after junction, finally arriving in Brahma-loka, and then at the time of Grand Dissolution, becoming one with Brahman – all this process has nothing to do with a *JnAni*. So by looking at the date or tithi of the leaving of the body of a *JnAni*, it is not right to conclude that "the time is not that of UttarAyaNa and so they have not got mokSha"!

48. Two different results of Karma-yoga

I mentioned many times that for one who follows karma yoga well his mind gets purified on account of that and he gets the eligibility to tread the *jnAna* path; and that, if such a karma-yogi gets that mental purity and starts *jnAna*-yoga, either in this birth or in one or two more births, he will obtain his advaita *mukti* in that very life. How does this reconcile with the present statement that karma-yoga is nothing but one of the many upAsanAs, and that instead of going to the path of *jnAna*yoga he

will go to Brahma-loka and then he will get advaita-*mukti* only after several crores of years when the Grand Dissolution happens?

Let me explain this. It all depends on what he has been aiming at, what he has been keeping as his goal.

If he had had the goal as advaita, and if however he started karmayoga-type of life just to get the mental purity and eligibility for *jnAna* yoga, then that itself would lead him to the path of *jnAna*, as soon as his mind is purified; and he will also soon reach the destination of advaita *mukti* .

If, on the other hand, his interest, taste or inclination not being in the *jnAna* path, he lives a life of a karma-yogi (and nothing more) only with the thought "Let me be relieved of this *samsAra*. Whatever possible, let me do the karmayoga right", he will obtain only the Brahma-loka as his result. As I said earlier, the Lord does not voluntarily give what was not asked.

Let us analyse how we got into this topic. We started analysing the question: "Is Bhakti an allowed concept on the *jnAna* path? How is it a garIyasI sAmagrI (most prominent accessory or instrument)?". After one was told how to control the senses, mind and intellect, bhakti was mentioned only for the control and destruction of ahamkAra which is the basis of *JIva*-bhAva. It is the sword to cut asunder the very root; that is the 'garIyasI sAmagrI'. All this we saw. We further saw how the (spiritual) heart is the seat of ego and how, if we make it the seat of bhakti, and by that very bhakti if we dissolve the ego gradually and thin it out, then it will go through the gate, the seat of Atman, in the middle of the heart and the *JIva*-bhAva disappears and stays as the Atman.

It was in that context, the question arose: "If the *JnAni* goes like this, what happens to the others? They also have their ego in the heart. If it does not go into the seat of the Atman, then where will it go?"

And thus came all the other matters in reply to this. "There are several nADis that emanate from the heart. Among them are also those which end up in the nine gates of the body. The mind, intellect and ego of all those whose karma-bondage has not been cut asunder will remain fat, without getting thinned out, till the last breath. That last breath carries that heavy luggage of the antaHkaraNaM and goes out by one of those nine nADis. Later when another birth occurs, it enters that body. Besides these nine, there is one nADi which goes to the head. Those who do not go by the *jnAna* path, but still have the objective of the removal of the bondage of *samsAra* and do the various upAsanAs, --for them the soul leaves by that head-nADi and reaches Brahma-loka."

49. The NaaDi that goes to the head: Mistaken Notion

Another matter. This is about the nADi that goes to the head. Just as there is an incorrect opinion about uttarAyaNa-death so is the case with this. Even those scholars who do know rightly about the UttarAyaNa death that it only means passage through the various seats of the devatAs associated with UttarAyaNa, even elder knowledgeable people, who have written commentaries and glosses on the Bhashyas of Acharya in order to explain them better, -- even they, do not hold the right opinion about the nADi that goes to the head. They all think that it is the sushhumnA nADi spoken of in the yoga-*shAstra*.

But this is not that sushhumnA.

That sushhumnA of Yoga-*shAstra* starts from the mUlAdhAra at the base of the spine and goes straight up to the head. The nADi that we saw and which is spoken of in the Upanishads and Brahma-*sUtra*, starts from the heart. The process of the ascent of prANa-shakti on the sushhumnA that starts from the mUlAdhAra, is a matter that pertains to the yogis who perform *SAdhanA* for that purpose. They hold on to the *lokAdhAra-shakti* and through that become one with shivaM in the head. That is a particular yoga matter. Our Vedanta which is based on Upanishads does not touch upon those things.

[Note by R. Ganapathy: This is based on the prominent ten Upanishads
covered by the Acharya Bhashya]

It will not go in a roundabout way dealing with breath, shakti, etc. Vedanta shows the way only to experience the goal by a proper intellectual enquiry, keeping a straight aim on the target, namely the Real 'I' which is what subsists after the discarding of the little 'I'. The nADis that, according to the Upanishads, starts from the heart, are related to the process of life as well as end of life, for the entire humanity. Among them the most important one is the one that goes to the head. Nowhere in the Upanishads or Brahma-*sUtra* is it called the sushhumnA. They only say *mUrdha-nADi*, that is the nAdi which is in the head or which ends in the head. In the Gita also (VIII – 12) *mUrdhny-AdAyAtmanaH prANaM* where the reference is to the leaving of the body by bringing the PrANa to the head, both in the text and in the bhAshya, there is no mention of sushhumnA. As the Acharya was going on writing the BhAshyas for Upanishad after Upanishad, only in the early

bhAshyas, namely, Kathopanishad, Prashnopanishad,and Taittiriyopanishad, has he mentioned sushhumnA. Also in Taittiriya, he has referred to the heart (hRdayaM) as even the physical heart all of us know. Let me explain why.

When the person who treads the path of *jnAna*, at the apex of his *SAdhanA*, resorts to bhakti for the extinction of his ego, the mind and intellect come into the semi-physical heart, the seat of the ego; the heart is filled up by love in its subtle form and the ego thins out and then goes and shrinks into the central gate -- all this process takes place (involuntarily) without his knowledge! The Atman is attributeless, so the mind has no hold on it or has only a vague hold. So as the Guru has told him he holds on to what appears as the root or source of breath and thought and he concentrates at that 'point'. That is all. The Guru might have told him and he would have learnt that it is the center of the heart. Still in actuality, his cittam (antaHkaraNaM) will not be drawn into it permanently in its entirety then and there. To a certain extent he has located something like that and his cittam stations itself there for the moment. All the vAsanAs have to be exhausted, ego has to be totally extinguished; only thereafter, it stands there for good. Here 'stands' has two connotations: one is, 'stops, halts'; the other is 'endures, abides, belongs'. So here what happens is, the process begins with the first meaning and ends with the second. The whole process which thus takes place in relation to the heart and the nADis is not in his knowledge. His attention is not there. His only attention, and all his thought, is – and should be -- in the Atma-sphuraNaM (Sparking of the Atman) at the seat or locale that he has caught hold of almost as a bhAvanA (attitude). His concentration is all on the goal of Realisation. If he thinks of anything as a 'path' now, it will be a distraction. Attention to the path will stray you from the goal; and then the path will also disappear! And you will be left back with the straying mind; back to square one!

Suppose somebody tells us that Ambal (Mother Goddess) has manifested somewhere in your vicinity. What would we do immediately? Mentally we get a kind of locale for Her and we rush on the road to find it in reality. And as we rush, do we pay attention to the track that we pass through – whether it is a country road or a macadamised road and so forth?

Therefore, if we accost an enlightened *JnAni* and ask him about the heart, the nADis and the Gate that Vedanta talks about, he may not tell us anything! He does not know about what is happening to himself; wherefrom would he know about the other persons, devotee or layman? How do you expect somebody who does not know how he came here to know what kind of shops or buildings were there on his way?

But then how did the enlightened Rishis mention these things in the Upanishads? After they got their enlightenment, after again they got the siddhi that never slips at all, the paramAtmA Himself, in token of His appreciation, makes the mysteries of His creation and other secrets known to them and also tells them about all the processes related to upAsakas as well as laymen. Revelling in the sweetness of those leelAs and miracles, they have made it known to others also.

But after all the information reached others, they have also done some blurring. Doesn't the touch of *MAyA* come everywhere? That might be the reason! If we go to some *JnAni* to resolve the perplexity, he is not knowledgeable! Or perhaps, he knows only to that little extent that the Almighty has opened out for him! Probably he (the *JnAni*) does not himself want to know anything more! Nor does the seeker , who just received the information just because the *JnAni* condescended to tell him something, develop any further interest in it, to seek more knowledge! In this state of affairs, the vague knowledge itself becomes and remains the complete knowledge!

It is in that manner, when everybody was thinking that the mUrdha nADi that goes to the head was itself the sushhumnA of the yoga-*shAstra*, it was at that time that our Acharya manifested on Earth! He was all-knowing even at birth. There was nothing which was not known to him. However, having manifested as a human being to show the way to humans, he had to show that he learnt everything only from the Guru. First he studied several *shAstras*, as a Brahmachari, staying with a guru (*gurukulavAsaM*) and then from a sannyAsi-guru he took over the Brahma-vidyA. Thereafter he wrote the Bhashyas as per the orders of the Guru.

When he thus wrote the Bhashyas, he did something which demonstrates his great humility. Though he was himself an all-knowing person as also one who had the experience, he did not claim to say anything on the basis of his own experience or knowledge. He always leaned on *shAstras*, tradition and the regimens of elders' observance (*shishhTAchAra*) and the things approved by them. "If I said things on my own authority, what guarantee is there that things will happen to others in the same way it happened to me? Only by declaring theories on one's personal authority did the Bauddha and Jaina philosophies go wrong and it has been left to us to make the correction" – this was the thought of the Acharya and accordingly he restrained himself and made tradition do the talking. In matters unrelated to the growth of spirituality, even when the traditional belief was not right, he thought "Let me not touch it. Once I meddle with it, that will leave the precedent

for others to do the same and discipline will be lost" and thereby he spoke only in conformity with tradition and its beliefs.

The matter of the heart and the NADis that Vedanta talks about is one such. By knowing about them there is not going to be any gain of spirituality; nor is there any loss by not knowing about them.There is a great difference between the sushhumnA and other nADis that Yoga ShAstra talks about and this (matter of the heart, etc.). The Yoga-*shAstras* say several things about how you have to practise, how you have to generate the activity of prANashakti in the nADis, make it ascend or climb, and you may reap such and such results. Among these there are also included some for the growth of spirituality. On the other hand, we cannot do anything with the heart or nADis or the central gate, enunciated by our Vedanta *shAstras* and obtain any result.It all depends on his life style, upAsanA, self-enquiry and accordingly the *JIva*-bhAva automatically goes and joins thosenADis or the central seat of the Atman.That is all. In the Yoga*shAstras*, whatever movement of the prANas that one creates through self-effort, that influences and formulates the life and *SAdhanA*. In Vedanta, on the other hand, depending on the life style, routine and *SAdhanA*, certain things happen, beyond his control, in the nADis etc. And knowing those 'certain things' he does not gain anything; nor does he lose anything by not knowing them.

The matter of the yoga-*shAstra*-nADis is like a careful climb up a ladder. Every step there has to be done by self-effort. VedAanta-nADis are like an elevator. It lifts you up by itself. You don't have to do anything. You don't have to know how the lift works. Even if you have a wrong understanding of it, it does not fail to do its job.

That is why when the Acharya wrote the Bhashyas, in the beginning days, whatever general opinion was there about the nADis he also wrote the same way and used the 'sushhumnA' accordingly. He did not elaborate on it, but he did write briefly about it. Later when the matter came up more deeply in BrihadAranyaka and Chandogya Upanishads and also in the Brahma-*sUtra*, instead of using the word 'sushhumnA' he just said 'the nADi that goes to the head' and stopped there. Even then he did not say explicitly that 'it is not the sushhumnA'. Also he did not do any correction to his own usage of 'sushhumnA' in the previous Upanishads. Obviously he does not give importance to insignificant controversies! Only I am making a big issue of this!

But then why did he take up the matter of UttarAyana-dakshhiNAyana and emphasize the right thing, that was contrary to general opinion? Of course even the knowledge of that matter does not also profit you

spiritually in any way. However, by knowing it wrongly one wrongly concludes that some non-entity who dies in the uttarAyaNa period as a great soul; but even this thinking is excusable. It is the other opinion, namely, thinking of a mahAtmA who had his final exit from the body in dakShiNAyana, as an ordinary person destined to be born again – this is certainly unwholesome and that is what made the Acharya emphasize the right thing.

Where he says why Bhishma was waiting for a death in Uttarayana, in the Bhashya of Brahmasutra IV-2-20, we see the noble mind of our Acharya. *AcAra-paripAlanArthaM*, says he – that is, for the purpose of conforming to worldly practice.

Another interesting point to note. The name 'sushhumnA' itself was there originlly only for the mUrdha-nADi, spoken of in Vedanta! The sushhumnA is the first ray among the most import seven of the Sun. Appayya Dikshidar has mentioned it in his stotra of the Sun. ('Aditya stotra ratnam': Shloka 4). It is the Sun's rays that run through the nADis (that Vedanta speaks) that run from the heart and spread through all the parts of the body and produce the semi-physical juices which are the source for blood, bile and flegm. Chandogya Upanishad (VIII – 6) has this matter. Of these nADis, the nADi through which the Sun's sushhumnA ray runs is the one which goes from the heart to the head. Therefore it is that one which was originally called the sushhumnA nADi. The Yoga-*shAstra* people used that name for the central nADi which is most important for their yoga. Though the source of sushhumnA goes to the Sun, they gave that name to the agni-nADi because of its centrality, in their *shAstra*, instead of giving that name to the sUrya-nADi.

The fact that the Acharya who uses the name mUrdha-nADi in the BrihadAranyaka and Chandogya Upanishads and in the Brahma-*sUtra* – in all three of which the topic is elaborated – left the name of sushhumnA uncorrected in the first three places where he used that name, probably has the following explanation. He might have left it like that in order to bring home to everybody the fact that it is the heart-nADi of Vedanta that had the original name SushhumnA. But really what has happened is the reverse. Scholars of later times have concluded that just because in those three places it has been called sushhumnA, in the other places also it is the sushhumnA of the mUlAdhAra that has been mentioned!

50. Bhakti of the path of JnAna superior to Bhakti of the path of Bhakti

We started with the question: "Is there something like bhakti even in the path of *jnAna*?". We pursued the inquiry and finally we have arrived at the understanding:

"It is this (*jnAna*-mArga) bhakti that helps to obtain even the most permanent advaita-mokSha (non-dual Release) right in this very birth. It helps the *JIva* to identify and become one with the Brahman, the basic Truth. On the other hand, the bhakti talked about by the path of Bhakti, comes to an end with the unification of the *JIva* with what turns out to be just a charade adopted by the substratum of Truth together with *MAyA*. However much the qualities of saguNa-brahman (brahman with attributes) are extolled superlatively, it is only a charade or disguise. Here the word 'unification' itself is a misnomer. There is no unification here. It is only a kind of unison that experiences the union by being separate. For crores of years in a kalpa one may enjoy it, still it does not become a permanent (*shAshvata*) mokSha – though the originators of that path may claim it to be so. One day when the saguNa brahman itself is taken into the nirguNa (attributeless) brahman, this whole thing ends and thus this bhakti is useful only to obtain an impermanent mokSha".

The devotee might say "Let me keep on continuously doing this bhakti". But Bhagavan (saguNa brahman) says: "It cannot be so. I am done with this charade. How can I carry on this charade for ever? At some point or other I have to be what I am. And that point of time has come. I am tired of this play. For whatever time I have carried on this drama, that much time it is going to be only rest hereafter" and terminates the show by throwing off His *MAyA* and remains nirguNa. Without *MAyA* and *Ishvara* where is the question of a *JIva*? So he also has to go for advaita mokSha along with Him! That is the only permanent mokSha. For a whole period of time equal to BrahmA's lifetime the paramAtman rests, that is, stays alone in its nirguNa status, and then again Creation begins; but now the one who had reached advaita *mukti* earlier would not now be born again in this new creation.

So what we have learnt now is that bhakti is that which dissolves by Love the ego at the base and unifies it with the Source. But the destination being nirguNa, there is no scope for our melting in the varied rasas (quintessences, dispositions) of quality of Bhagavan, it turns out that the melting is in the unfragmented infinite Consciousness that transcends all qualities. Infinite Consciousness means a living entity that is not circumscribed by definitions. The taproot for the *JIva*-bhAva is the concept of I-hood. This feeling has to be dissolved in the Infinite Consciousness. This goal of dissolution is the only thing in the mind of

the seeker on the *jnAna* path. In fact he thinks so without recognising that that very thought is the true bhakti. In his thinking, it is not a union with something of which we do not know a thing, nor is it a union with the void, nor is it a path towards annihilation because there is nothing to be united with. Instead of any of these, his is a positive thinking, whereby the longing is to unite with the living fullness of sat-cid-AnandaM. This is how any sAdhaka who has cared to learn the advaita-vidyA would do his *SAdhanA*. 'This life has to be dissolved in That which lives' – this very concept is Love; even if he does not recognise it as such, Love sprouts by itself. "Such a good thing as Love – why should it be done without recognising it to be so? Just because of the ignorance of this fact, one thinks of Brahman purely by a philosophical intellect and allows himself to be drawn away by the intellect. It may open up the heart to show Love and by that very act close up the only route to cut asunder the root of ego that has anchored itself there". It is with these thoughts, perhaps, the Acharya decided to explicitly proclaim loudly : *mokSha-kAraNa-sAmagryAM bhaktireva garIyasI* (Among the instruments of moksha, bhakti is the most important).

I said bhakti is the union with the universal Source by the dissolution of the ego through Love. Generally it is understood that to do exactly that with the saguNa form of that Universal Source is bhakti and that such bhakti is different from the bhakti path of the *jnAna*-finder. Whence came this understanding?

An attitude or a disposition does not show up in all its brightness so long as it remains the same way only as an attitude, like a nail pinned to the wall. Only when that disposition shoots forth new and newer branches and manifests in action through the *JIva*, does it brighten up. The swaras 'sa' and 'ri' alone however much they are emphasized, will not be palatable to the ears, until all the seven svaras show up. Barring the silent samAdhi that takes place after the mind fully rests, the various dispositions of even little little activities of the mind will not show up unless they take new and newer forms. 'Not showing up' does not mean they are not visible to outsiders; even to the individual himself they will not be felt in his consciousness.

Bhakti in the NirguNa implies an anguish of the indivudal soul to dissolve in the Universal Soul. That one-pointed anguish is like extending a single svara. There is no scope for new and newer colours in it. Whatever new is done is the action of the mind. But this individual is set towards the goal of the extinction of the mind. He has already disciplined it by shama and dama. As far as he is concerned, to know about it (activity of the mind) is an undesirable matter that comes under 'ego consciousness'. Therefore he himself would not recognise the bhakti

aspect in all its brightness. Why talk of outsiders? They will have no idea of his bhakti!

The thing towards which bhakti is being directed -- does it at least do anything to cause an explicit showing up of the bhakti? No! Not at all! How can the nirguNa-brahman react? The saguNa *Ishvara* who administers the activities of the entire universe is the one who admires his bhakti and causes him to mature to higher and higher levels of perfection. The Lord's intention however is not to direct him to a saguNa (worship) and so He does whatever He does, only implicitly. Thus the bhakti is taking place in a one-sided way, even without that 'one side' knowing it!. This is the true bhakti that dissolves the ego. Even then it does not show up! In addition to its function of dissolving the *JIva*, this bhakti dissolves itself without itself being visible to external perception! It is a bhakti which imparts to him an extreme renunciation, and is itself a renunciate!

On the other hand what about saguNa-bhakti? There is a tremendous scope in it for branching off into new and newer types of tastes and methods of exhibitions according to the attitudes that spring up towards the saguNa-mUrti who keeps performing ever-new miracles and leelAs.

Over and above all, it is here that the relationship of love shows its exhuberance. A relationship of Love of the *JIva* with the nirguNa brahman is like setting up a rapport with one who is in the samAdhi-nishhTA, who is unaware of even the strike of lightning on him! On the other hand with a saguNa-mUrti it is possible to direct our bhakti through a relationship with Him in several ways as the Lord, as a Son, as a Mother, as a Friend, as a Husband. And that attitude shows up in multifarious actions like dancing, singing, bhajans, sankirtana, pilgrimage, festivities, discourses etc. The lifeline of this path is to do bhakti and so all this is done very consciously.

As the crowning glory of it all, the recipient of this bhakti, namely, the Lord Himself, does react to it. Maybe He does not do it to all devotees. But to those who have reached some peaks of excellence, He gives darshan, He performs varied miracles and reciprocates with a Relationship of divine love towards them that is million times richer than their own bhakti towards Him. Sometimes He makes them cry in despair, He scolds them to the extreme and among all this crying and faulting, He showers His nectar of Love through His divine play! Just to hear stories and songs of such LeelAs of His towards these devotees – that itself gives a great bliss, to all others, of companionship with Him. Even to all of them He keeps pouring His Grace, rather subtly, but

certainly in a way that imprints itself in their minds and reminds them of His proximity to them.

Thus the bhakti-bhAva shines explicitly even when one is only having a dualistic relationship with the saguNa brahman and this is the reason for this being called a bhakti path and the one doing this being called a bhakta.Accordingly the two are distinguished from a *JnAni* and the *jnAna* path.

However when it comes to a self-effacing offering to the Absolute it is the *jnAna*-pathfinder that soars higher than the bhakta of the bhakti path.! The bhakti path-finder certainly has extinguished for himself the ego as far as the worldly matters are concerned. Even within himself his own mental inclinations have mellowed his ego. However, deep within himself, there is the ego which is the taproot for the existence of the *JIva*; he has not willed to extinguish that. For doing bhakti, for enjoying that experience of the blessed qualities of the Divine, for the bliss of tasting that relationship, he thinks he has to have that individuality of his *JIva*-ego. Earlier we distinguished between ahamkAra and aham-bhAva. Of these only the latter has been sacrificed by him, but not the former.

Therefore, though it is in the bhakti literature that surrender has been emphasized, the bhakti pathfinder, instead of making a total self-effacing surrender, he surrenders only part of his self and has kept the remaining ego of the JivAtmA for the purpose of experiencing the paramAtmA. It is not a total surrender. It is the *jnAna*-path-finder, who does not use such words, but who has offered his JivAtmA as a camphor in the Fire of the Absolute. This is the true and complete Atma-nivedanaM, SharaNAgati, Bhakti , Prapatti etc.

Bhakti is thus the most internal accessory for the achievement of advaita. And the Acharya has chosen the words pregnant with this meaning, when he says: *mokSha-kAraNa-sAmagryAm bhaktireva garIyasI*.

50. Atman full of life, Not just an Abstraction

That was the first half of the shloka. In the second half he gives the definition of Bhakti:

sva-svarUpAnu-sandhAnaM bhakti-rity-abhidhIyate

Bhakti is said to be the unbroken union with one's own natural Self – the Atman. *bhaktiH iti abhidhIyate* means 'it has been named bhakti'.

Do 'anusandhAnaM' of one's own natural state, says he. What is 'anusandhAnaM'? *sandhAnaM* means a unification or joining with something. A meeting'! If that union stays continuously, it is 'anusandhAnaM'.

Does unification with the Atman mean that Atman is one thing, and the JivAtman that fuses with it is another? No. No union or joining with the Atman is possible. Even this kind of little or minute duality is not permitted there. The merging, the fusing, the union -- all these are out of place here. What happens is, having 'swallowed' /'consumed' the *JIva* that pines to unite, pines with love and anguish – in other words, having swallowed the antaH-karaNa (inner organ), It stands alone. So it is not a question of 'anusandhAnaM' of the Atman which is the Real Nature. It has to be immersed in the constant memory of the Atman and the filling up of the chittam with that – this is what we should understand by 'anusandhAnaM'. In the case of the intellect also this is what we did. It was said that the intellect should be established and rested in shuddha-brahman; but intellect cannot approach anywhere near shuddha-brahman and so we understood it to mean that the intellect should dwell on matters or teachings or the Shastras pertaining to Brahman. In the same way here also, to say that one should do 'anusandhAnaM' on the Nature of the Atman, is only to mean that the 'anusandhAnaM' (being in continuous union with the Atman) is of the thoughts about the Atman.

This anusandhanaM begins well before sannyAsa. But it is further strengthened and deepened after sannyAsa and in due course the sAdhaka gives himself up totally, and the Atman alone shines thereafter.

Continuous fusion or merging is certainly the Bhakti out of Love.

One thing should be said about the para-brahman consuming the *JIva*-bhAva snd Atman alone remaining. It is not that the consumption is done in one go. It consumes but then it also regurgitates. Again it swallows; again it regurgitates. The state of being in samAdhi, and then coming down from samAdhi – these are both the swallowed and regurgitated states. Everytime the *JIva*-bhAva is consumed and later spit out it comes more emasculated and dissolved. But it still is. And those are the times when the anusandhAnaM with bhakti has to continue with the hope of further dissolution.

When he talked about *mumukShutA* (in shloka 27) he mentioned *sva-svarUpa avabodhaM*. Now when he is talking about bhakti, he says *sva-svarUpa anusandhAnaM*. 'avabodhaM' means an awakening.

MumukShutA was said to be to desire that one should get Release for the sake of the awakening to the Atman. In the beginning of the shloka (27) itself his reference is to the 'ahamkAra' that I have been talking about all along. The subtle ahamkAra is the 'alphA' of the *JIva*.

Starting from that and ending with the physical body, everything is a bondage, which is an imagination because of *mAyA*; it is from this bondage we have to get Release. Just a Release is not enough; "That Release is to be obtained for the purpose of awakening to the Real Nature of one's Self (for *sva-svarUpa avabodha*). If one pines in anguish 'for this awakening' (*avabodhAya*), then one gets that awakening and by that itself (*avabodhena*) one may get his Release – that is how we understood it. In fact in shloka 27:

*ahaMkArAdi dehAntAn bandhAn-a*jnAna*-kalpitAN /
sva-svarUpAva-bodhena moktum icchA mumukShutA *//

the word *avabodhena* is to be in the context of the end stage, whereas what begins with *avabodhAya* (for the awakening) ends with the awakening.

Thus mumukShutA is the desire for relief from the bondage of the ego; after the mumukShutA he places bhakti in the logical sequence. This bhakti emasculates the power of the ego. Among the mind and intellect and the ego (which together make up the antaHkaraNa), the mind is tamed by shama, dama, etc., the intellect by *shraddhA* and samAdhAna, and then the ego is controlled by mumukShutA and tamed (reduced) by bhakti – so goes the logical sequence.

Actually When the Atman-awakening takes place – the Atman is certainly awake all the time; but since we don't know it, we name the time when we know it as the time of Atman-awakening – at that time, the individual sAdhaka vanishes!. But it is not true to say we vanish. "Even the self-luminous Atman appears to sleep for us who are overcome by *MAyA*; Let us wake up" – if and when this thought is there, then we are there. A vague sense of the Atman-awakening, it is only an imagined perception, that cannot be described as this or that – such a thought also persists. In fact it is beyond all description. But a thought persists about the Atman-Brahman, as a something which is Infinite, something that is perfect and pure, something that is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. In fact the conception of either the Infiniteness or the sat or the cit may not be precise or well-defined; however there will be an idea of them all. Until the antaHkaraNaM totally vanishes, some thought or other will continue; and certainly the opinion or bhAvanA about the Atman will also continue to exist. When such an Atman-awakening is imagined, one should not

think of it as just an abstraction, but conceive it as a living principle. And then lay down this little soul to That; having got to this state, thereafter the continuance of that same bhAva is bhakti. This is the *anusandhAnaM* after the *avabodhaM*. It is like waking up after sleep; after the awakening, next comes the setting up of a relationship! Even the relating should go and give place to the relationship which keeps the goal of an identification!

Do not have any notion (of the Atman) this way or that way. Whatever it is in reality let it show, let it take over. Keep only a watch. Don't give attributes to it like sat, cit or infinite. Leave it 'As is'. Yes, it is difficult to leave it like that and be quiet. But it is not impossible at this advanced stage. When one keeps on conceiving it in terms of this or that attribute, involuntarily one may come to the stage of thinking: "Why all this build-up? Let us see it as it is". When one sees it without any preconceived notion, there is the danger of it appearing as dry and void nothing. So even though you may not have any other conception (of the Atman) you should not leave off the basic truth that the Atman is not a void, it has life. The word 'life' reminds us that since we are also living, at the base we are also life and so there is an automatic relationship. And relationship means there is scope for love. We must make it true love. It should not be a wrong love that expects something for this little soul from that universal soul. Instead 'this' should go and unite with 'that' and 'that' should consume 'this'. This anguish should become a true love.

In order for that relationship and that life to show itself, the Acharya has used the word 'svarUpa' in both places by saying 'sva-svarUpa avabodhaM' and 'sva-svarUpa-anusandhAnaM'. There is a double occurrence of 'sva' in 'sva-svarUpa'. The first 'sva' means "one's own". The second 'sva' means "natural". So 'sva-svarUpa' means one's own natural form (rUpaM). It is the natural, true, Atman, the form which is unmixed with *MAyA*, of the *JIva* that has an artificial form mixed with *MAyA*.

You may ask: Wherefrom did the Atman get a 'form'? Here 'rUpaM' does not mean 'form' or 'shape'. Whatever is one's nature, that is called 'rUpaM'. The derived word 'nirUpaNaM' (proof) is derived from the idea that proof is nothing but a demonstration of the true nature.

[Note by VK: I am not translating here four or five lines where the Mahaswamigal discusses the Tamil word 'uruvaM' and its derivation from the Sanskrit word 'rUpaM']

However when we say 'rUpaM', our mind does not take it to be of an inert nature but something which has life. For instance when we say "the

musician brought forth the 'rUpaM' of the rAga very well" we actually feel that the rAga itself is a living soul. In fact we do that to every art form. Science is never spoken of that way. Do we ever say "The Professor brought forth very well the form of Physics"? The reason is that Science is not thought of as a living thing like Art. I am saying all this because whenever we speak of the nature of something in terms of 'rUpa', there is always some connection with the concept of life. And when the prefix 'sva' is added and it becomes 'svarUpa', it is generally taken to refer to something substantial that has the *JIva*-power. The very word 'Atma-svarUpaM' brings to our mind something with life. The small word 'sva' indicates something that is there naturally for oneself. And the words 'for oneself' also connotes in our mind a sense of life for that thing.

We speak of life. Certain words have life! When we say sat-cid-AnandaM', sat means that which is. The word 'is' means only 'is with life'. We speak of it as 'Being', 'Existence' or 'Life'. The word 'Being' smacks academical and may not have the connotation 'with life'. The word 'Existence' is still more dry and metaphysical and appears to refer to life itself as inert. It is the word 'Life' that indicates a living that is ticking and the word itself has a poetic element in it. The word itself has life and so what it represents also broadcasts the *JIva*-essence. Similarly with the word 'svarUpa'. Mainly to make us understand that Atman is full of life, not a dry principle, the Acharya has prescribed mumukShutA for the *svarUpa-avabodha* (awakening to one's own natural state) and, after that awakening, bhakti for the relationship of love of that *svarUpa* and the continued mental communion (anusandhAnaM) with it.

Thus in both places the Acharya uses the word *svarUpa*. But further ahead in shloka 32/33, he quotes a different opinion: "There are also people who say that Bhakti is the 'anusandhAnaM' of the Atman-principle".

svAtma-tattvA-nusandhAnaM bhaktir-ity-apare jaguH

svAtma-tattvA-nusandhAnaM : The continuous reflection on the principle of one's Atman.

bhaktir-ity-apare jaguH : Others say (it) is bhakti.

The very statement "Others say" shows that this is not the contention of the Acharya. His own contention has been stated in the earlier shloka as *sva-svarUpAnusandhAnaM* (the continuous reflection on one's own Natural Self). Right now he is being fair to the other opinion-holders who say it is not 'sva-svarUpaM' (one's own natural Self) but 'svAtma-tattvaM' (the principle of one's Atman).

What is the difference? All along we have been saying 'Love' 'Life' and 'Warmth' .

[Note by VK: The Mahaswamigal uses the word *Iram* in Tamil. The literal translation of this would be 'wetness' . But this does not make any sense in the English language. It is surprising that the corresponding word which gives the meaning intended in the context is 'warmth' (of the heart)!]

In contrast the other opinion-holders contend that, keeping the Atman as an abstract principle, continuous reflection on that principle (tattva) is Bhakti. They do not hold the Atman, the goal, to be a living entity worthy of being loved, nor do they hold the sAdhaka as a soul who dissolves in that universal Soul; instead they hold that Bhakti is the continuous thinking of that philosophical principle. One may ask: "When they do not agree with the relationship with something that is living, how can they say that this thinking of a principle is bhakti". Their answer comes from a narrow interpretation of bhakti, which they hold to be only a one-pointed involvement in one thing and nothing more.

RupaM is inherent nature. Tat-tvam is also the same. In fact it is 'tat-tvaM' that directly means 'inherent nature'. However, 'sva-svarUpa-anusandhAnaM' has an implied sense of internal dissolution of the individual soul in the Universal source, which sense seems to be absent in 'svAtma-tattva-anusandhAnaM'. It looks as if some inaccessible principle is being experienced from a distance,

Whatever it be, The vote of the acharya is not for this. So why worry about it? Let us not take just a dry involvement as bhakti, but take it as something which is Love of a Living entity.

All this has been said by the Acharya just to show the second opinion prevalent among advaitins themselves. In fact, it is this second opinion that has been more popular! Many devotees of the Acharya and many disciples do subscribe to that opinion! Indeed I myself started all this discussion by asking the question: "How come he is talking about Bhakti in *JnAna* path?" and am going through all this explanation !

The bottom line of all this explanation is: The thinking about the Atman is to take place in the fashion of a relationship of Love. But the relationship is not supposed to continue for ever. Instead of that purpose which involves duality, the real bhakti is to desire to get dissolved in that non-dual Ultimate.

I hope you have now understood what it is to have bhakti towards nirguNa. Also you would have understood why bhakti is the 'garIyasI sAmagrI' (the heaviest accessory) for mokSha.

51. Bhakti of the path of JnAna, enunciated by the Veda itself

In the path of *jnAna* the direct *SAdhanA* that finally takes you to the destination is called 'nidhidhyAsanaM'. It is also considered as belonging to dhyAna-yoga. When considered like that, it is thought of as continuous reflection on the tattvaM, without the notions of life, relationship, etc. But it is not so. It has to be practised only as dhyAna-yoga in which the bhakti yoga of self-surrender through a relationship with the Universal Life is imbedded. In Vivekachudamani itself the Acharya has made this explicit in another place. He doesn't talk of it as his opinion alone. He says the commandment of the Veda itself is this: (Shloka 46/48)

**shraddhA*-bhakti-dhyAna-yogAn mumukShoH
mukter-hetUn vakti sAkShAt shruter-gIH /*

A basic *shraddhA*, over and above it a mix of Bhakti yoga and dhyAna-yoga – which means dhyAna yoga in which the Bhakti attitude is imbedded -- this is what leads to *mukti* for a mumukShu. Thus says the Veda itself. *shruteH gIH* means "the word of the Veda".

"Is that so? Does the Veda itself say that in the path of *jnAna* there is also bhakti? Where does it say so? In Kaivalya Upanishad. It occurs in Krishna Yajur Veda. The beginning itself of its teaching says

**shraddhA*-bhakti-dhyAna-yogAd-avaihi*

meaning, By *shraddhA*, bhakti and dhyAna-yoga (reach brahman).
It is these words of Upanishad that formed the basis of the Acharya's own statements.

52.Even in Sutra BhAshya

It is not only in Vivekachudamani that the Acharya has talked about Bhakti as an 'antaranga *SAdhanA*' of *jnAna*. Even in (Brahma-)Sutra-Bhashya he has said the same thing. Why did I say "Even in"? Among

the various Bhashyas, expository works and stotras in the name of the authorship of Acharya, there are many questions raised about whether it was he who wrote it. Though people ask such questions of one another, one thing that all of them unanimously agree about is his authorship of Brahma-Sutra Bhashya. Further, among all his works on advaita *shAstra*, it stands at the peak. So whatever is said there has a high value.

In Brahma-*sUtra*, the means of achieving Brahman-experience is called *samrAdhanaM* . (III -2-24). The word gives the same meaning as 'ArAdhanaM' or 'samArAdhanaM'. The worship through bhakti is called 'ArAdhanA' in general. Here, worship through *jnAna* is called 'samrAdhanaM'. When the Acharya elaborates on the word in his Bhashya, he says

bhakti-dhyAna-praNidhAnAdi anushhTAnaM.

praNidhAnaM is a word synonymous with 'samAdhi' or 'samAdhAnaM' ; it means a complete one-pointed unification. Whenever we think of *jnAna-SAdhanA* for the purpose of Brahman-experience, we always think, in line with the Acharya's teachings, that it is a discipline of meditation by making the antaHkaraNaM totally one-pointed. But the same Acharya here gives priority to bhakti and then only mentions dhyAna and recommends a praNidhAna (profound meditation) in both cases and by both means.

Like ArAdhanA, upAsanA also generally refers to worship of something with attributes. Not just 'generally'. In Vedas and Vedanta ShAstras it is so referred. Instead of Karma-Bhakti – *JnAna*, the Vedic scholars call it Karma- UpAsanA – *JnAna*.

In Brahma Sutra (IV – 1 – 1) it says, one has to repeatedly recall (mananaM) the teaching that was learnt – in other words, one has to think about it, analyse it and confirm it . Here in the original sutra there is no mention of upAsanA done with bhakti, or the *jnAna-SAdhanA* based on the intellect. It is just a general mention of necessity for mental repetition. But it is clear from the organization of the Sutras that go before and after that the repetition recommended in the context is for a mumukShu who has formally obtained the MahAvakya teaching.

The Acharya has clearly emphasized this point in his commentary.

But when he finishes the commentary on this particular sutra, he himself takes up the matter of the upAsanA path and demonstrates how

the Upanishads talk about both the process of upAsanA and the process of knowing as the same without any distinction between them.

DhyAna is the continuous dwelling mentally on the meaning of something which has been repeatedly already analysed (manana) by the mind after hearing it (shravaNa) as taught; in the same way if a disciple dwells his mind without break on his guru we call it guru-upAsanA; if a subject does the same thing to his Lord the King, we call it upAsanA of the King; a chaste wife does the same thing to her husband and we call it 'pati (husband) upAsanA' -- thus demonstrates the Acharya. Thus he delineates the highest bhAvas among all bhakti-bhAvas -- AtmanivedanaM (offering up of one's self), dAsyaM (servitude), mAdhuryaM (Love) . Only after doing all this, he comes to the Upanishad matter of knowing and worshipping and says they have been spoken of as the same and also offers two examples in this context (ChandogyaM IV-1-4 and IV-2-2 for the first example; ChandogyaM III – 18-1 and III – 18 – 3 for the second example).

Of the two, the first example is a great support to what we have been talking all along. Instead of keeping the goal as just an abstraction, it should be figured as a living entity and it should be contemplated on with love and devotion. Let me tell you what it is. One hamsa bird, as it flies along in the sky, tells another hamsa bird about a *JnAni* named Raikva in a most complimentary manner: "Whatever every one knows is all subsumed by what he knows". This shows that he should be a brahma-*JnAni*. A King by name Janashruti, who was relaxing in the balcony of his house heard this statement of the bird and sets out to find this *JnAni*. And here comes our topic. He goes to request that *JnAni* to teach him that Knowledge which he knows. But when he goes there, he does not say: "Please teach me the Knowledge of Wisdom that you know". Instead he says: "Please teach me about the Deity that you worship (do upAsanA)"! in other words, it is very clear that what we call Philosophical enquiry, research or contemplation, in Vedanta tradition is to be done with the attitude(bhAva) of a worship of a living mUrti (icon, deity). This is of great significance, since it is straight from the Upanishads, and our own Acharya has specifically quoted it, in almost what looks as an out-of-context mention.

The Acharya, though he writes elaborately in his commentaries, usually makes all that elaboration only to explain what is there in the original; he never goes about in a roun-about way or take unnecessary digressions. Even Vinobha has said: "The commentaries that he makes for the *sUtra*s are themselves crisp like the sutras themselves. *vyartha-vistAr kahIm nahIm karte* (he nowhere does unnecessary elaborations)". If such is the nature of our Acharya and here he appears to be drawing something out

from a total out-of-context source, it only means it is of great significance.

At the same time he is a great supporter of Tradition. So probably he thought it not fit to explicitly mention and elaborate bhakti in his advaita *shAstras* and create confusion in the minds of unknowing people. So he might have left it for disciples to learn from their respective gurus at the appropriate time. However, when it comes to Viveka Chudamani in which he condescends to explain as if this is his final upadesha (teaching), in the manner of *eshha AdeshaH, eshha upadeshaH, etad-anushAsanaM* (This is the commandment, this is the teaching, this is the order), he talks about bhakti and mentions it as the most important of all the accessories to *jnAna*-yoga.

54. JnAna itself is Bhakti: Krishna

More than the idea that bhakti is an important accessory for *jnAna*, Lord Krishna has shown that *jnAna* itself is Bhakti. He mentions four categories of devotees and in naming them he lists 'ArtI, jijnAsu, arthArthI and jnAnI' (B.G. VII – 16: Arto jijnAsur-arthArthI jnAnI ca bharatarshabha). 'Arta' means the distressed sufferer. 'jijnAsu' means the one desirous of knowledge, that is, the one who wants to know the Truth and makes effort to know. 'ArthArthI' means one who desires wealth, money, possessions, property, power etc. The fourth is *JnAni* himself. The formal order among these should be ArtaH, arthArthI, JijnAsu and jnAnI. For the purpose of metre requirements, the order has been changed in the Gita verse. Our business here is the mention, namely, the jnAnI as the topmost devotee. Why can't we take him as a dvaita (dualistic) *JnAni*? – may be a quixotic question here. But this has been met with already by the Lord's statement in the next verse : He has one-pointed devotion (*eka-bhaktiH*). The Lord caps this by the further statement **JnAni*-tvAtmaiva me mataM* (*JnAni* and Myself are One – that is my final opinion). Later when he dwells on 'bhakti-yoga' itself and teaches the upAsanA (dualistic saguNa upAsanA) he only uses the words *atIva priyaH* (XII – 14 – 20) (most dear to Me), he never says "he is Myself"; from this it is clear (when he talks about this *JnAni* here) he refers only to the advaita-*JnAni*. In the teaching of bhakti-yoga he says: "The nirguNa-*SAdhanA* gives difficulties (klesha) and dukha (unhappiness) for those who are conscious of their body" and then goes on to teach the saguNa-upAsanA. In other words, for those who are too conscious of their body, the *jnAna* path is not easy to attain and that is why he teaches the saguNa upAsanA to them; not with the idea that the saguNa upAsanA is superior to the *jnAna* path. Let that be. Later when he starts talking about the qualities of the Bhakti upAsaka from the

shloka *adveshhTA sarva-bhUtAnAM …* (The one who has no hate towards any being ,,,,) through seven or eight shlokas and winds up the chapter with "Such people are dearest to me", it will be clear to any neutral observer that whatever qualities he has described here apply only to a *JnAni*. Nowhere has he said in Bhakti yoga, about revelling in the multifarious qualities of Bhagavan, weeping, laughing, dancing, singing, going into unconscious trance, establishing relationship with God through various moods like, servitude, filial affection, etc. or enjoying the ritual bathing (abhisheka) or decoreating the deity, etc. The qualities that He enunciates, viz., love and affection to all beings, getting rid of the feelings of 'I' and mine, equanimity with respect to happiness and misery, fear and delusion, contentment with whatever one gets and being independent of possession and property – all these qualities are only those of the *JnAni*! There is also one shloka which describes devotees:

Mac-cittA madgata-prANAH bodhayantaH parasparaM /
Kathayantashca mAM nityaM tushhyanti ca ramanti ca // B.G. X – 9

Those who have turned all their mind toward Me, who have reposed their very lives in Me, who are constantly enlightening each other and talking about Me and for whom that is the satisfaction and that is the delight! But note that this statement does not come in Bhakti Yoga or about those generally termed to be bhaktas. It comes under ' VibhUti Yoga' where the Lord's Glory and Power is declared to be manifested in the whole universe. In short He says those who see such Godly Power and Glory in everything repose their mind and life in the Lord and revel in thinking and talking about Him. However they are not dry philosophers, but 'bhAva-samanvitAH', that is, knowledgeable people (budhas) who are involved in God with Love. In other words they are like *JnAni*s as described by the Acharya. Further on when the Lord continues, He does not propose to give them Bhakti Yoga. He specifically promises to Grace them with the path of *JnAna*, that is, *buddhi* yoga; and burn any remnants of darkness of ignorance in them by the Lamp of Wisdom (*jnAna* deepena).

In the final chapter also He says "bhaktyA mAm abhijAnAti" – by bhakti one knows Me right; and thus emphasizes the *jnAna* angle. The root 'jnA' gives rise to both the words '*jnAna*M' as well as 'jAnAti'. 'Through Bhakti one knows Me as I am, thereby enters Me and by My Grace obtains the eternal Immortal position' -- so ends His message in the advaita fashion. In pursuance of the same, while giving it to Arjuna, He says 'Adopt Buddhi Yoga' – not Bhakti Yoga!

Thus there is no ringing of bells, no offering of flowers, no relationship in several moods. However it is the mood of Love with which one gives

Himself up to the Universal Life-Source and this apex bhakti is what plays an important role in the path of *jnAna*.

55. Third Stage

Once we have passed the *SAdhanA*-set-of-four, we come to the third stage, the final stage. No one here (in this audience) is likely to go to that stage. Because it is a stage to be performed after one has renounced all wealth, possession, property and kinship. So possibly it may not have to be explained here. But still, since I have said so much about advaita-*SAdhanA*, let me just touch upon it for the sake of completion.

Three things come there. Listening to the teaching; confirming what one hears by repetitively thinking about it; and keeping the antaHkaraNa in that thing and meditating on it. These three are always to be practised right from the basic stage all through the *SAdhanA*, according to the necessity and capability of the sAdhaka. Therefore I should not leave out telling you about it.

56. SannyAsa

Even though no one here may (or should have to) reach that stage, I have to talk about it since the very first part of true advaita sAdhanA starts with sannyAsa. All links and bondages have to be cut asunder completely. It is not so for others. All seekers, however, have to work for reducing their attachments to a certain extent. It is therefore good to learn about the SannyAsa stage at least to the extent of hearing about it.

If we have to know about the Atman, we have to be constantly thinking about it as the only task and only goal. The grand goal being Brahman, one has to totally dedicate oneself to that goal and be attached to that only task. If we have other attachments, interests and also try to do this, that mAyA and this jnAna cannot coexist. We cannot succeed in fanning a fire by simultaneously pouring water on it. It is the renunciation of all other tasks and goals that is called SannyAsa.

Only after taking up SannyAsa one gets the eligibility and right to receive the teaching of the mahAvAkyas that the Vedas proclaim in forms like “This Jiva itself is Brahman”. Brahman also means Veda. Since the Vedas which are verily Brahman themselves declare Jiva as Brahman the mahAvAkyas get that exclusive spiritual power. Just by knowing well that Jiva is brahman and by meditating on that will not make that goal a fact of experience. That declaration has to be repeated as a japa through

the conglomerate of the letters of these veda-mantras and has to be meditated upon as a regimen; that is what makes the goal accessible. 'Accessible' does not mean 'easily accessible'! I only said it in a comparative sense. To hope to obtain Brahman-realisation by just continuous thinking about it is like a man who wants to have a bath, starts all the way from digging up a well for the purpose. But to reach the same goal through the mahAvakyas of the Upanishads is like drawing water from an alreadyt constructed well. Of course you have to draw the water – not like opening a tap and using the downpour from it. The drawing of sufficient water from the well depends on the size of the bucket or the pail, the depth of the well and other factors. The Samskaras of the individual influence the efforts to be made just as the smallness of the bucket will force you to draw water several times. But when you compare this with the process of our digging up of a well – well, that is the comparison I mentioned.

Moreover this is protected water. There is a watchman! Only if he allows you, you can draw water. That watchman is called the Guru!

The conglomerates of sound vibrations called mantras suck in several ways the Power and Grace of the Absolute, that is permeating the entire space and produce for us the many beatifics of this world and the world beyond. Among such mantras the mahAvakyas that identify the JivAtmA with the ParamAtmA without any distinction are at the peak. The Acharya speaks of them (in Aitareya Upanishad Bhashya 1.3.13) as sounds that wake you up to Atma-jnAna, the advaita jnAna that lies dormant in the JivAtmA that is sleeping in Ignorance. It is the Guru that trumpets the drum of the MahAvakyas, wakes you up, as it were, from your sleep, thus waking you up to Enlightenment.

That Guru takes care to dispense the mahAvAkya teaching only after checking the Sishya's eligibility and after initiating him into SannyAsa. That eligibility is nothing other than the progress, to a certain extent, in Viveka (Discrimination), VairAgya (Dispassion), shama (sense control), dama (mind control), etc. in the SadhanA-set-of-four.

The Vedas have 1180 shAkhAs (branches). Each ShAkhA has an Upanishad of its own and every Upanishad has a mahAvAkya. Though there are thus more than 1000 mahAvakyas, four of them, one for each Veda, have been held as important. It appears from 'Visveshvara-smRti', which details the SannyAsa Dharma, 'Nirnaya-sindhu', an anthology of Dharma ShAstras, and from other authoritative sources for Dharma ShAstra, and knowledgeable tradition that at the time of SannyAsa dikshhaa (formal initiation) these four mahAvakyas are to be formally transmitted from the Guru to the initiate. And there is also scope for the teaching of other mahAvakyas. Also there is a tgradition that the new

SannyAsi who is getting the dikshhaa must also get the additional mahAvakya that occurs in the ShAkhA to which he belonged before he took SannyAsa. There is also a further tradition that first the PraNava ("Aum") is taught and then the mahAvakyas.

To hear and listen to such mahAvAkya teaching is what is called 'shravaNa' in Brahma-VidyA-shAstra. The direct meaning of 'shravaNaM' is 'hearing/listening'.In the Tamil Tirumandhiram Verse #139, Tirumoolar means by this word 'Receiving the mahAvakyopadesha'. Tayumanavar, in one of his songs, refers to the three processes, 'shravaNa, manana and nidhidhyAsana'. Tirumoolar follows the 'shravaNa' word by *guru-vuru-cintittal* meaning the memorisation of the mantra taught by the guru. The Tamil word *uru* here means mantra-japa that is manana. By thus memorising and repeating the mantra one is automatically led on to the next stage of 'nidhidhyAsana'.

There is an old saying *sannyasya shravaNaM kuryAt* -- one should do the 'listening' part only after taking up sannyAsa.

The object of this shravaNa is to obtain mukti as nirguNa-brahman right where you are without having to go anywhere. Inferior to this is the union with saguNa-brahman by going to Brahma-loka along the path of the Sun. Even for that, according to Mundakopanishad (1.2.11) a mature Jiva – who is learned and also accomplished with the qualities of shama, dama, etc. has to leave home, go to the forest, and do penance, living by bhikshA. So does it not mean that one who receives the teaching on NirguNa-brahman has to take SannyAsa first? The next mantra talks about him. He examines the whole world-experience and decides: "Everything revolves around karma. Our goal of the Atman will not be accessible to/by any karma. So let me abandon all karma". In other words he is ready to take up SannyAsa. But it has to be done only through a guru. So he goes in search of a guru. The words 'only through a guru' is because of the emphasis *guruM eva* in the Upanishad. The Acharya explains why *guruM eva* occurs there: "Even a scholar who is knowledgeable on everything should not make his own efforts and hope to independently obtain Brahma-jnAnaM".

Later in the same Upanishad (III-2.4) it says, 'It is not only by a man devoid of spiritual strength or a man overcome by delusion that the Atman is unattainable, it is not attainable even by one who is doing the austerities but who is 'alinga', that is, one devoid of the symbol that represents sannyAsa'. This is the way the Acharya comments on the word 'alinga' in the Upanishad.

In BrihadAraNyakaM also (IV-4-22) the qualifications for sannyAsa are enunciated: "The one who wants the spiritual world, renounces the

present world and his home. Because that is how in ancient times the learned ones whoi studied the spiritual vidyA just discarded the desire for kith and kin, desire for wealth and property and desire for the other worldly attractions and they left home literally as beggars".

In every work there are always expressions of different opinions but following them there is also the reconciliation passage that comes later. So also in this BrihadAraNyakaM, earlier to this passage in (III-5) it says "AtmAnaM viditvA", that is, cognising the Atman, 'discarding desires for kith and kin, wealth and property and the other world, they run away as beggars'. Here the words "AtmAnaM viditvA" looks like saying 'after one has cognised the Atman'. It appears that this means, in contrast to what was said earlier, namely the earning of eligibility for SannyAsa for the sake of earning the Atma-jnAna, it is now said that sannyAsa takes place after the acquisition of jnAna. This is a legitimate question; but the answer comes if we carefully examine the context. In the same mantra, the question is raised: "How will a jnAni behave?". And the answer comes; "Howsoever he may behave, he is just such, he is a jnAnai".In other words he is not regimented by any shAstra or regulation. For such a person , where is the need for the rule that he should adopt the fourth Ashrama among the four Ashramas? So we should not interpret "AtmAnaM viditvA" to say "after learning by experience" but should interpret it as "understanding by the intellect".It is clear therefore "He who confirms by his intellectual understanding that what he has heard and learnt from the advaita-shAstras is true, now throws away all his desires and becomes a sAnnyAsi" is what is said here.

There is a custom of offering me a PoorNa-kumbha (the formal ritual reception with a vessel full of purified water). At that time, as well as in your marriages and other functions when you offer the sacred offering to the Achareya, there is a mantra which is recited by the Pundits. It refers to "those great ones whose antaH-karaNa has been purified by sannyAsa-yoga"

[cf. Mundaka U. III-2.6.
*vedAnata-vijnAna-sunishcitarthAH
sannyAsa-yogAd-yatayaH shuddh-satvAH*]

Here the reference is to the jnAnis. And this again shows the contention of the Upanishad that sannyAsa is first, and then only, through that purification one obtains jnAna.

An 'atyAshrami' is one who is either in the SannyAsa-Ashrama or one who is even higher than that, namely one who is a jnAni whom no ShAstraic injunctions touch. The Svetasvataropanishad (VI-21) seems to be teaching Brahma VidyA only to such atyAshramis. There is an Upanishad called Kaivalyopanishad. The Acharya used to quote from it

often. In the beginning of that Upanishad it says the atyAsharami goes to a solitary place, sits in a straight Asana, controls his senses and mind and meditates on the Shiva svarUpa, his Atman.

After shravaNa, come manana and nididhyAsana. Just as it says: "Only after becoming a sannyAsi the shravaNa process takes place" so also there is also an authority for saying Only a SannyAsi has the right to do manana and nididhyAsana: *mananAdau sannyAsinAM adhikAraH*.

In Brahma-sUtras, the sannyAsis are referred to (III-4-17) as *Urdhvaretas*. This means those who don't waste their energy in low activities of the senses, but take it Brahmasutras and also upward into noble paths. Reading through those portions of the the Achary'a Bhashyas on them, it is clear that they (the SannyAsis) are the ones who are qualified for the third stage in advaita-sAdhanA. A jnAni has to be a sannyAsi; should be.

Brahmasutra has another name for it: 'Bhikshu-sutra'. Bhikshu means sannyAsi. One who lives, not on one's home-food, but on BhikshA (formal ritualistic begging) is called a bhikshu. The book that is totally dedicated to enquiry into Brahman being called 'bhikshu-sUtra' shows that it is the sannyAsi who has the right for this v idyA.

When a matter occurs in the Gita, then there is no higher certificate needed! If we question whether the matter of sannyAsi having the only right for shravaNa etc. has occurred in the teachings of the Lord, the answer is yes! "All karmas finally end up in jnAna" (IV – 33, 34), says the Lord and continues "The seers of Truth will teach you the jnAna. One should bow to them, be in servitude to them, and learn by questioning and further questioning". Ending up of karmas means thereafter it is only sannyAsa. Does it not then mean that "Only such a sannyAsi has the eligibility to receive the teaching of jnAna"?

Truth is the absolute ultimate, no, it is tapas (austerity) that is ultimate. No again, it is dama (control of mind); it is only shama (control of the mind) -- and so on goes the Narayanavalli, detailing the greatness of one after the other (Mahanarayana Upanishad. Anuvaka 78). But finally, it says: "It is none of these that is ultimate. SannyAsa is the Ultimate Principle. The Creator Brahma Himself has said so".

When one reaches the higher rungs of the ladder of sAdhanA to know the Atman, it is possible only by the SannyAsi who has left karma behind. Atma is inaccessible by karma. It has to be enquired into, meditated on, further meditated on, and then in due course even that meditative action has to stop – only in that stage one can know the Atman. 'To do karma and also to do dhyAna simultaneously' is incompatible. So long as one is

in karma stage, associated with that there will be several relationships. *sangAt sanjAyate kAmaH …krodhaH … * as the Lord has said (B.G. II – 62), a single such association will set up a chain relationship of kAmaM, krodhaM, etc. and finally end up in *buddhi-nAshAt praNashyati* (intelligence is destroyed and the individual is lost). That is why the Acharya says in Vivekachudamani (147/149) "karma-koTibhiH na shakyaH" – even if a crore of karma is done, the bondage will not cease. *viveka-vijnAna-mahAsinA vinA dhAtuH prasAdena sitena manjunA* -- It can be cut asunder only by the grand sword of sAdhanA starting from nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka (discrimination between the unreal and the real) up to the vijnAna stage when one gets the wisdom of experience, by the Grace of God.

If one has to dedicate one's life to cut this bondage, one has to get away from family, relationships, profession and even all religious obligations.

But one thing should not be forgotten. It is not as if any one can just throw away religious obligations of karma and become a sannyAsi. The Acharya has never said so. He has ruled that such a right is there only for those whose minds have been purified. How to purify the mind? The emphatic direction of the Acharya is to discharge all the karmic obligations systematically and without default. The same Acharya who said that even a crore of karma cannot give you release from bondage, in his great compassionate anguish at the dim prospect of this being misused by immature people who may throw away the karmic obligations as well as their svadharma and thus destroy themselves, has, right in the next shloka, cleared this matter:

**shruti-pramANaika-mateH svadharma-*
nishhTA tayaivAtma-vishuddhir-asya /
vishuddha-buddheH paramAtma-vedanaM
*tenaiva-samsAra-samUla-nAshaH //**

The latter half of the shloka says:
'tenaiva samsAra-samUla-nAshaH' : through that alone the samsAra bondage is cut along with its roots.
Through what?
'paramAtma-vedanaM' : the sparking of the jnAnaM about the paramAtmA.
'Vishuddha-buddheH' : to the one who has had his mind purified.

How does that purification of mind happen? He gives it in the first half.

Svadharma-nishhTA : (he who is) fully and firmly established (nishhTA) in one's own dharma.
Tayaiva Atma vishuddhiH : By that alone the mind gets purified

Well, how does one know what that svadharma is?
The answer is already there in the very bveginning of the shloka:

Shruti-pramANaika-mateH: The nishhThA of svadharma comes from the unique faith and comviction that the religious sanction comes from only the vedas.

What the Vedas say is the authority. With that faith one goes about doing his svadharma as the be-all and end-all. That is svadharmaika-nishhThA. The svadharma that the Vedas talk about is the division into the varNas and the allocation of duties to each. There is also prescribed what a Brahmachari should do, what a householder should do, what women should do and so on . So the nishThA that comes from the authority of the Vedas means the nishTA in the discharge of all karmic obligation. Thus one should do one's karma completely. That is what gives purification of mind. And then follows Atma-jnAna as well as the end of all bondage.

When one does karmas according to the prescriptions of the Vedas, first it drains all the dirt from the body by those sheer karmas. Not only that. Simultaneously the dirt of the mind is also rinsed and wrung out. Afterwards one stops doing his karma but now goes into the karma of the mind by doing dhyAna. And still later even that dhyAna stops and he reaches the stage of jnAna.

So the sequence is first dharma nishThA, then karma-nishThA and finally jnAna-nishThA. Nothing should be missed here. One should not move forward without having done the earlier one. Nor should one have anything to do with the earlier one once he has moved forward. When a cloth is washed, we do mix a lot of water and wring the cloth for the dirt to go. But once the dirt is gone no more wringing is necessary. If we keep wringing the cloth after that it will only damage the cloth. What is necessary now is to dry it up in air. This is the going to the jnAna path! The air and sunlight evaporates the water in the cloth. But jnAna evaporates the cloth itself. It is not just a total end of the cloth. The Jiva cloth is there no more, but now it has become a golden sheet of Brahman. The nishThA in the Atman that the Jiva was engaged in is not any more the action of the Jiva, the Jiva is not there any more, the Existent Thing (*sad-vastu*) that was in an experiential form in the culmination of the nishThA – that alone remains. It is the Peace Ultimate, it is the parAyaNaM talked about as the peak state. *nishThA shAntiH parAyaNaM …* says the Vishnu sahasranAmaM.

57. Chain of linked names in Vishnu-sahasranAmam

nishThA shAntiH parAyaNaM comes in Vishnu-sahasranAmaM. Some names occur here in a chain, relating to each other beautifully on the same concept. There are nine names (of God) strung together like flowers in a garland, on the idea of SannyAsa.

*…. nirvANaM bheshhajaM bhishhak /
sannyAsakRt shamaH shAnto nishThA shAntiH parAyaNaM *//

nirvANaM is the end of jnAna-yoga. He is the same as the saguNa-mUrti VishNu.

bheshhajaM means medicine. He is the medicine in the form of jnAnaM for the disease of samsAra.
Muthut-tANDavar was a devotee of God Nataraja. He lived before the age of the musical trinity of Tamilnadu. When a snake bit him he considered Lord Nataraja as the only medicine and sang an extempore Tamil composition beginning with *aru-marundoru tani marundu* (meaning: the rare medicine, the unique medicine) on Lord Nataraja. He was relieved from the snake poison..

When the poison of karma invades the system the medicine of jnAnaM that is the antidote for the poison is only the Lord.

He is not only the medicine; but He is also the Doctor who gives the medicine! So He is *bhishak* (Doctor). Here in Tiruvanmiyur (in Chennai, India) the Lord presents Himself as "marundIshvara" (the Lord who is the medicine). In the town called Vaideesvaran Koil he is called "Bhava-roga-vaidyanatha swami' meaning the JnAna-Acharya who cures the disease of samsAra. In his commentary on Vishnu Sahasranama, the Acharya says "the Doctor who gave the medicine of the Gita for all the world".

In the Gita the Lord gave his final diagnosis and the curing medicine, which is SannyAsa. He leads us on through the path of karma yoga ultimately to the SannyAsa in jnAna yoga. In the science of Ayurveda, they first give you a laxative-type of medicine and then only they give you the medicine that is needed for the illness. So also the Lord gives first the laxative of karma yoga so that all our karma-garbage may be exhausted and then finally when he gives the medicine of jnAna, he prescribes sannyAsa. In the beginning it was he who created the four Ashramas and made Sannyasa the fourth Ashrama. So He is *sannyAsa-kRt*, the maker of SannyAsa.

We saw a lot about *shama*. That is also the form of the Lord. When the mind stills to rest that is shamaM. That is in fact the heart of jnAna yoga, its life. Right now it is unbridled in us and from this through the various stages of its control little by little, we have to go through several steps. Finally when nothing of the mind is left, it rests in the Atman; that is the destination point. That is the goal of a SannyAsi. At this place the Acharya gives a quotation which pinpoints a unique dharma for each Ashrama. It says: "For the SannyAsi his dharma is shamaM; for the Vana-prastha, his dharma is the conglomerate of tapas and vratas, all together called niyama; for the householder the dharma is charity; and for the brahmachari it is serving the guru.

*yatInAM prashamo dharmo
niyamo vanavAsinAM /
dAnameva gRhastAnAM
shushrUshhA brahma-chAriNAM //

Next comes the name *shAntaH*. He who has shama is shAntaH.

Only next to this, the word *nishThA* appears. Having become a sannyAsi, and then also a shAnta for whom the mind is totally at rest, he establishes himself firmly in the nishThA of the experience of jnAna, that state is also the Lord. This is The SaguNa Brahman who is our Lord with attributes, in His nirguNa state.

And in that state there is a total peace. Therefore *shAntiH*. And that is the supreme goal; therefore *parAyaNaM*.

58: SHravANAm ET AL – Vedic Commandment

As soon as the sannyAsa is taken, one gets the mahAvakya-teaching. To receive it is shravaNaM. 'mananaM' is the chewing and churning of that in the mind by repetitions and analysis. Following that is the dhyAna that is done to get the direct experience; this is called nidhidhyAsanaM. These three complete the sAdhanA.

These three (shravaNa, manana and nidhidhyAsana) are actually commands of the Vedas. The same Upanishad which talks about shama, dama, uparati and titikshhA (BrihadAraNyakopanishad: II-4-5) also gives the commands about these three. But shama, dama, etc. are not directly given as an order, they are recommended only indirectly by saying that a jnAni would have these treasures of spirituality, namely he will be a "shAnta, dAnta, uparata" etc. But these three have been what is called

an 'injunction' in the form of a formal order. *shrotavyo mantavyo nidhidhyAsitavyaH*. "The Atman principle only has to be listened to, has to be repeated in the mind and has to be meditated on" – this is the rule.

We shall take these one by one now.

59. ShravaNam and SushruushhA (Respectful Service)

First there is shravaNaM. It stands for the receiving through hearing/listening of the teaching of the mahAvakyas from the Guru. Along with that he teaches also several other matters about tradition according to Brahma-vidyA ShAstra. He also tells you several methodologies of how to reflect through DhyAna on the non-difference between Jiva and Brahman. Receiving all this through hearing is also shravaNaM.

It does not mean that it is just hearing through the ears. One has to receive it in the heart and hold on to it. This is what is formally called shravaNaM. When we refer to the action of eating we usually refer only to the action that takes place in the mouth. Actually the purpose is to get it into the stomach and get it digested and absorbed into the blood. The mouth is only an external organ whose action is termed 'eating'. So also the external organ, the ear, does something and we name it shravaNaM, but it really means that what the ear consumes has to be digested in the mind and intellect as 'nectar' of upadesha and finally it has to be absorbed in the heart. When the 'Vinayakar Ahaval says *yen cheviyil yellaiyillaa aanandam-aLittu* it means it goes through the ears into the heart and creates Bliss there.

Sound is what belongs to the all-permeating space principle. That is why there is importance to shravaNaM of receiving the teachings that are in the form of sound. Our Veda-mantras are the sound-chains that have been caught as such, so as to be accessible to our ears, by the Rishis through their extra-sensory powers, in the form of subtle sound vibrations that emanated in space from the very breath of the Lord . What they heard through their subtle ears should also be heard only by our physical ears and not be written down and learnt – this is the rule. Then only the quintessence of the teaching that has to reach the heart-space, the Source of everything, will go through by tracing the Universal Space, the breath of the Absolute, and the breathing paramAtmA. Hence the importanc of shravaNaM.

Another thing. When we learn from a book, the book, being an inert object, may show the writing but it will not feed us the life behind the writing. It is when the letters come through the live medium of the Guru or the Acharya who has known the essence of the Teaching, that the upadesha enters as a living message.

Furthermore, only when there is the upadesha coming from the Guru there happens the disciplic bhAva (*shishhya-bhAva). The humility and the sense of smallness are necessary for the destruction of the ego. The thought that "I am doing the very difficult jnAna yoga sAdhanA" certainly will bloat the ego; it is only the sushruushhA that one does to the Guru – who is himself in that enlightened state – that will knock you on the head and constitute the strategy for killing the ego.

[Note by VK: The Tamil word the Mahaswamigal uses here as an attribute of the Guru is *anubhavi*. The literal English equivalent would be 'Experiencer' A few paragraphs later, the Mahaswamigal himself explains what *anubhavi* means.]

I said 'sushruushhA'. The Tamils wrongly call it 'sishruushhA'. If we go by the root word for sushruushhA, it is related to 'shravaNaM'. The root 'shru' means 'to hear'. It is from this that both the words 'sushruushhA' and 'shravaNaM' have come. The direct meaning of 'sushruushhA' is 'to long to hear'.

The meaning of 'to long to hear' when related to the Guru, is 'to long to do what is heard'. It is not just hearing that matters. The heard matter may be to one's liking or not. Either way there is no question of discarding it or leaving it just there after a word of appreciation. Without any scope for liking or disliking, what is heard must be put into practice. Thus 'sushruushhA' in its extended form has the meaning 'to long to practise whatever is going to be heard'.

'Listen to what is said', we usually say. We find fault by saying 'One is not being heard'. On all such occasions what we mean by 'heard' is 'heard and done'. Similarly, 'to long to hear for the very purpose of doing what is going to be heard' is *sushruushhA*.

To do what one is told one needs a lot of the quality of humility. Once the quality of humility is there, a natural desire will arise to do service to him before whom we are humble. In other words respectful humility will automatically breed the willingness to serve. It is that service that has come to be known as *sushruushhA*.

'Go to the Guru! Fall at his feet! Listen! Do service! Serving him get the upadesha of jnAna from him! --*tad-viddhi praNipAtena pariprashnena

sevayA*, says the Lord.(B.G. IV – 34). *praNipAtaM* is 'straight fall'. 'pAtaM' is fall. 'nipAtaM' is a clean fall. 'Pra-nipAtaM' (= *praNipAtaM*) is a very clean, straight fall, as a total surrender. *pari-prashnena* means by a constant and repeated questioning. That is exactly 'sushruushhA'. As soon as He says that, he adds 'sevayA', meaning 'by service'.

The matter unwinds here by a chain of one thing leading to another. The way the Gita shlokas appear here tells us that one gets the jnAna-upadesha from a guru only after one has abdicated all karmas and become a sannyAsi. "More than the yajna that one does in karma yoga with external accessories, the internal yajna of jnAna yoga is superior. All karma finally terminate in jnAna" says He in the previous shloka. Having said that, immediately he follows: "The jnAnis who have directly seen the Truth—that is, experienced – will teach you jnAna. Go to them, fall straight at their feet, question and listen repeatedly, and serving them, learn". This occurs in JnAna-karma-sannyAsa-yoga. When we put all these together, it is clear that he is talking about getting the Brhma-vidyA teaching from a jnAni only after throwing off karma and taking up sannyAsa.

The sequence goes like this. First we hear by the ears. The very hearing is done for obeying what we have heard. This is sushrUushhA. The inseparable part that comes out of this is the humility. And from that the respectful service. Thus starting from hearing by the ears it leads on to service. And the service itself has got the name of sushruushhA. In due course of time people came to think that sushruushhA means service; its original meaning of 'listening' disappeared from vogue.

But, more than the sushruushA of respectful physical service, the Guru considers as great (and is pleased at) that sushruushhA by which the disciple receives, with a clean heart, with the intention of carrying out in practice, the teaching imparted by the Guru with all the humility and the respect it deserves. He will not think as greatly of the service that the disciple does for the Guru's physical comforts as he would, of the spiritual progress that the sishhya makes by properly benefitting from the treasures of the Atman that the Guru transmits to him. It is the proper sushruushhA of the ears that constitutes the greatest sushruushhA of service. ShravaNa-sushruushhA is what is superior in the eyes of the Guru. Instead of his being served by the disciple, he would rather have his disciple rise spiritually with the instrument of the upadesha he transmits. But from the point of view of the disciple, however, both kinds of sushruushhA must rank equally important. One should receive the upadesha from the bottom of the heart and obey accordingly in practice; and one should also consider the dispenser of

the upadesha as Ishvara himself, surrender to him and do all kinds of respectful service to him .

The mantra that is taught does half the job and the Grace of the teacher completes the other half!

Where is the scope for all this when one learns from books?

60. Is an enlightened guru available?

Guru is always depicted by shAstras as an *anubhavi* (one who has seen the Truth directly): 'brahma-nishhTha' in Upanishads, 'tatva-darshinaH' in the Gita. Such a person, who has truly realised Brahman – would such a person be available in modern times? Don't worry about it. If you are crying in true anguish with sincere mumukshhutA (longing for Release) the Lord will not fail to show you such a one. Whether he is a brahma-nishhTa or not all the time, you will be shown the best available one and the Lord Himself will enter into him at the time when you are being givn the mahAvAkya-upadesha. That is how it happens. That is how. No doubt about it.

[Note by the Collator Shri R. Ganapathy:
Here the Mahaswamigal speaks with great conviction,
emotion and emphasis that he is passing on a great truth]

Just as the disciple is feeling the anguish whether an *anubhavi* guru will be available even these days, the Lord is also looking for, with the same anguish (!) whether a proper mumukshhu is going to come; so such a person would not be missed by Him. Maybe He will not appear in concrete form in the body of a human Guru, but it is possible that He manifests as a subtle guru in the very antar-AtmA of the disciple and grace him. But if I say it this way, it may turn out in this independent age where humility is wanting, people might go with the impression: "Even the Shankaracharya of the mutt has said so. A separate individual as a Guru is not necessary. The Lord will come into us directly and grace us from the inside". It is really very rare for such a thing –without an external human guru, for the Lord Himself to come as an internal guru -- to happen. Rare top-ranking mumukshus will have that privilege. Or if there is an enormous amount of pUrva-samskAra from the earlier lives, even if one is not a mumukshhu but just an ordinary person, the Lord

Himself on His own pulls him out and blesses him with all grace. To make this the general rule is totally wrong.

61. Involvement in one single goal

Now we have come to the stage where one has taken up sannyAsa and also received the upadesha from the Guru. Afterwards what should the Sannyasi do? Let me tell you that he should certainly not be doing what I am doing now! [The Swamigal laughs]. I am getting into all sorts of newspaper gossip; am I not? History, Geography, Local news all of it are coming into my speeches and actions. A true SannyAsi would have nothing to do with all these.

[Ra. Ganapthy adds a footnote here: The Mahaswamigal is describing now the dharma that pertains to a SannyAsi who is yet to reach his siddhi. With great humility combined with humour he laughs at himself saying he is not following rules. But actually he is a Jivan-mukta, an enlightened soul. He can do anything, no rule will bind him.]

All the time he has to be only in the thought of the Atman; that should be his speech, that should be his goal. The Mundakopanishad says (II – 2) "Leave off all talk about anything that is non-Self. In the bow of PraNava (that is, the MahAvakyas), mount the arrow of your own self, shoot yourself at the goal and be fixed there". The one idea of the non-difference between Jiva and Brahman should be the only occupation of your mind. All other talk is only an unnecessary exertion for the throat, says BrihadAraNyakopanishad IV-4-21. Lord Krishna builds it up like this: *tad-buddhayaH tad-AtmAnaH tan-nishhTAH tat-parayaNAH*.

Keeping the intellect in the Atman, the life itself in the Atman, and firmly established in that one Self, with That only as the goal (B.G. V – 17) – this is how he should be. This is what He says in "sannyAsa-yoga". When he talks in "vibhUti yoga" it is He who plays all the other roles and those who know this revel in His thought only, their very life in Him, exchanging with one another thoughts about Him and narrating to one another the stories of His Glory and thus dance and revel in great satisfaction about Him.

maccittAH madgata-prANAH bodhayantaH parasparaM /
kathayantashca mAM nityaM tushhyanti ca ramanti ca //

In the same context, Vidyaranya Swamigal talks about nirguNa upAsanA (that is what a SannyAsi should be doing) and says: The only thought being Brahman, the only conversation between each other being That, the only teaching among one another is That – thus a Sannyasi has That as his only occupation.

If there is a number of sannyAsis at one place gathered together, the teaching of one another (bodhayantaH parasparaM) and the recalling to one another (anyonyaM tat-prabodhanaM) take place. But such crowding of several sannyAsis and their living together is not first of all recommended as a good thing. Scope arises for attachment, enmity, hate, competition, jealousy and differences of opinion. So after becoming a SannyAsi one should hasten to a solitary place. No attachment or bondage should be allowed to develop. Staying at the same place for more than three days is taboo. The SannyAsi should keep moving. That is the meaning of a 'parivrAjaka'. That is the Dharma of a Parama-hamsa SannyAsi.

[Ra Ganapathy's note: But this does not apply to heads of mutts who have organisational and training responsibilities.]

In sum, after one gets the upadesha, the Sannyasi has to have the only goal of obtaining a direct perception of the advaita brahma-bhAva that has been taught to him by his guru.

To achieve this, two processes – manana and nidhidhyAsana – are prescribed. NidhidhyAsana may also be called nidhidhyAsa.

ShravNa, Manana, NidhidhyAsana – with these three the elaborate presentation of advaita-sAdhanA comes to an end.

62. ShravNa, Manana, NidhidhyAsana – Characteristics

The mental analysis of the upadesha by rolling it over in the mind repeatedly is what is called mananaM. Thereafter, without scope or necessity for any more enquiry, analysis, research or debate in the mind, follows NidhidhyAsana, which is the one-pointed identification in that Atma-tattva, about which there is now perfect clarity, and the mind is without any vibration.

The Acharya has graced us with an expository work (*prakaraNa-grantha*) called "AtmA-anAAtma-vivekam" in prose in the form of questions and answers. What is shravaNa, what is manana, what is

nidhidhyAsana, -- all these are defined there in a very crisp fashion. Usually there are six components of proof by which a matter is established as a conclusion. That the advaita truth is what the Vedas declare will be explained by the Guru through the medium of all these six components of proof. To listen to and receive it is shravaNaM. Having learnt about the non-dual entity one analyses and pursues the reasoning in his mind in accordance with the Veda-ShAstras; this is mananaM. Mark it; I said 'in accordance with the Veda-shAstras'. This is important. The logic that you follow has to be in accordance with the Veda-shAstras. Your mental make-up has already been tuned properly by the sAdhanA-set-of-four, particularly the component of shraddhA therein. One does the mental analysis of the Guru's upadesha without being drawn astray by the narrow intellect, wrongly called rational mind. The Acharya has warned us against this in his sopAna-pancakaM: *dustarkAt suviramyatAM shruti-matas-tarko'nusandhIyatAM* -- meaning, Discard distorted logic; adopt the logic consistent with the purpose of the Vedas. Such an analysis is mananaM. Having confirmed it by the intellect, now you have to experience it. So without being distracted by any other thought, the mind (cittaM) should now flow like flood in the one direction (of the Atman). That is 'nidhidhyAsanaM' – that is how he defines it in AtmAnAtma-vivekaM.

In between I told you about the six components of proof. What are those six? The subject of a book can be known from the beginning and end of it. This is called 'upakrama-upasamhAraM'. This is the first of the six. The second one is repetition. If a book declares the same thing repeatedly, it is clear that it is the subject of the book. This is called 'abhyAsaM'. The third is 'apUrvaM'; if an idea is presented in a most unusual way, that is the subject. The fourth is the process, called 'phalaM' of telling something and immediately listing the positive effects of it one by one. The fifth is the method of praising something sky-high; this kind of praise is called *artha-vAdaM*. And the last, namely the sixth, is 'upapatti' which brings out the reason, the concordance and logic and establishes that such and such is the subject.

63. Penultimate stage to siddhi

Several ideas about the Atman will get clarified during the mananaM, and that itself will lead to the nidhidhyAsana of meditation on that One Atman alone.

When the manana-nidhidhyAsana are deep, many things will occur -- may occur -- known only to the Ishvara and that Jiva who is the sAdhaka. Some things may occur which are not comprehensible even by

the Jiva. Here he should not falter just because they are incomprehensible; it is for this that the Acharya had already instilled into him enough of shraddhA and bhakti! So without getting confused about the fact that nothing is being comprehended, he will go on in the straight path that the Guru has shown him. Ishvara also will do things that wring out any residual karma or vAsanA in order to take him on to his final destination. Only when such VasanAs and karma get destroyed, that process itself will set up the chain of further wringing out in the heart-nADis – this is called "nAdi mathanaM" – which makes the merging of the antaHkaraNaM in the heart.

I wonder whether it is right for me to say these things to you. Because the sAdhaka's only thought should be Brahma-anubhavaM ("Brahman-experience"); so when I say 'nADi', 'heart', 'mathanaM' etc. he might get distracted from his one-pointedness by unnecessary observations about 'wringing of the nADis', 'merging in the heart' etc. Actually these things take place involuntarily. So there is no need to know about them. By being distracted by the beauties of the garden outside one may finally fail to enter the house!

Further Ishvara may not be doing everything the same way to every one. He might have several ways of handling. The old (karma) balance might be different from person to person and Ishvara's manner of settling them also will differ accordingly. Also He has his own style of several leelAs of pleasing Himself! Once He takes the sAdhaka to his destination, there will not be any scope for His leela, so he might be doing something new for every one! Maybe some of them might not have any such 'wringing' or 'mathanaM' at all! Why, even it may be that for some there may not be any necessity to make the mind one-pointed at the Atma-sthana in the heart, and one might be able to think of the Atman as transcendent and all-pervading and be able to concentrate on it.

It is in view of all this that the Acharya simply says "Carry on your nidhidhyAsana deeper and deeper and keep going" and then just mentions the Brahman-Realisation as the destination and winds up there.

64. Manana that transcends intellect; Nidhidhyaasana that transcends mental feeling

There are three authorities -- shruti (the Vedas), yukti (reasoning), anubhava (experience) – for knowing the Truth. Of these it is said that shruti corresponds to shravaNaM, yukti corresponds to mananaM and anubhava corresponds to nidhidhyAsanaM. The mantras of shruti and

all the matters pertaining to Brahma-vidyA are heard by the disciple through his ears (shrotra) from the guru. It is quite fitting therefore to associate shravaNaM with shruti.

The concept of 'yukti' is a little more tough to be understood correctly. This 'yukti' (reasoning) is not the rational thinking by which in the ordinary world we use our intellect to arrive at conclusions. Nor has this word 'anubhava' (experience) the common connotation of experience that happens to us merely at the level of the mind in several alternating ways! What is being said here is a 'yukti' (reasoning) that will be done, at the highest sophisticated level, by the mind and intellect – which have been flooded by shraddhA and bhakti, calmed, rested and purified, after all that sAdhanA -- when they are converging to the very base of the ego for the purpose of destroying that ego. Similarly, the 'anubhava' is what such refined and tempered mind and intellect have known by this 'yukti', as now experienced at the deepest layer of the mind right from the very base of the ego. I dare not lecture about them now. If it truly happens to a fortunate one amongst us, he will know it by himself.

[Note by VK: Usually I don't add any word whose equivalent either in language or in sense does not exist in the Tamil original. In the above paragraph I have made one exception. The word 'sophisticated' is mine. I am not very clear why I want it there. But after having typed it almost without thinking, I feel that without it, I am not getting the Mahaswamigal's mind! Readers should decide whether it should be there or not.]

That neutral state of peace and quiet is said to be sAtvikaM. On the other hand, if we are vacillating by the force of emotion as we usually are, that is called rAjasam. The reasoning of our intellect at such a time is therefore rAjasic, and so, wrong. But the third stage sAdhaka whom we are discussing now, has destroyed his rajasic intellect and made it satvik. The reasoning that it carries out will be totally different. It will not be the reasoning that we do by objecting to the Truth and the Shastras, circumscribing ourselves by a small boundary called rationality. Instead it will be concordant with the ShAstraic Truth and be the reasoning of a wisdom that is superior to 'rationality'. About this the Acharya has said:

Mokshaika-saktyA vishhayeshhu rAgaM
nirmUlya sannyasya ca sarva-karma /
sashraddhayA yaH shravaNAdi-nishhTo
rajaH svabhAvaM sa dhunoti buddheH // (Viveka Chudamani 182/184)

The only involvement should be for Release (from samsAra). All attachment to sense objects should have been uprooted. And accordingly leaving off all karmas, becoming a sannyAsi, whoever with shraddhA is established in shravana, manana and nidhidhyAsana, he it is that discards all rajas nature of the intellect.

Note that the sAdhanA regimen of mumukshutvaM, sannyAsaM and shravaNa etc. have all been mentioned. And in that state, the reasoning itself will be unique.

So also in that stage, the 'anubhava' or experience will also be unrelated to the senses but related to the antarAtmA.

[Laughing, the Mahaswamigal says] I am telling you in the manner of a professor. That kind of reasoning will be 'super-rational' and the experience 'mystic'!

MananaM, the process of mental repetitions of the upadesha, is for the purpose of the mind to stay put instead of giving any scope for digression or distraction. It is this mananaM that is called 'AvRtti' in Brahma-sUtra. "The Vedas have repeatedly prescribed repeated memorisation": --*asakRd upadeshAt* (IV – 1.1.) How long should one do this memorisation? The Acharya replies with a sense of humour: If you are told to husk paddy, you should not be asking 'how long should I husk it?'. You have to husk until you see the rice coming out. So also until the Atman comes out of the cloud of avidyA, you have to be in that same thought, same repetition, same dhyAnaM.

65. To be rid of two wrong conceptions

However much the mind and intellect might have matured, until the Brahman Realisation happens, mAyA does not spare you. Maybe it is not right to throw the blame on mAyA. Realisation is the apex of all sAdhanA. It cannot be achieved unless all karma is extinguished. What can be done if, inspite of all the sAdhanA done, the earlier karma is several times heavier? Maybe for their extinction, right now, not by the work of mAyA, but by the Grace of Ishvara, there arise undesirable thoughts that shake up the sAdhaka. I am not referring to thoughts of kAma, krodha, etc. They have all been extinguished much earlier. There are two other undesirable thoughts or conceptions. One is called *asambhAvanA* and the other is called *viparIta-bhAvanA*.

[Note by Ra. Ganapathy:
As far as this collator knows, these two words

'asambhAvanA' and 'viparIta-bhAvanA'
occur in the very first 'taranga' of 'VichAra-sAgaraM' in Sanskrit,
which itself is a translation from a work of the 19th century in Hindi by
Nischaladasa.
In advaita works, 'asambhAvana' is known as 'samshayaM'
And 'viparIta-bhAvanA' as 'viparyayaM'.]

"SadhanA has been done for so long. The so-called goal is impossible. After all I am finite. How can this finite little being become the Infinite Universal Brahman?" This is 'asambhAvanA'. In fact it is the question which casts a doubt on whether the advaita experience is a possibility at all. When this doubt crystallises and matures, instead of being a doubt it turns out into a reply to the question and says to itself: "No. It is not possible. It is only Duality that is possible. And that is the truth. Jiva is different and Brahman is different" – this is 'viparIta-bhAvanA'. 'After such long effort, I am still only a separate Jiva, so I have to remain only as a separate Jiva. This is the duality in which I have to be always' – it is this trend of thought that creates the 'viparIta-bhAvanA'.

Of these two, to eradicate the 'asambhAvanA' one needs to do mananaM. And to get rid of 'viparIta-bhAvanA' one needs 'nidhidhyAsana'.

'asambhAvanA' might have covered one entirely like moss. But if one is constantly chewing in the mind the Vedanta statements and analysing them by the matured mind, repeating the powerful mantras in the form of the mahAvAkyas, even if the real Brahman experience does not occur, the possibility of its occurrence will get crystallised in the mind.

Maybe the possibility becomes acceptable, but unless it has actually occurred, thus leading to resolution of all doubts once for all, how will this acceptance be sufficient? The present everyday experience is a direct experience of duality. We are having a direct observational experience of Brahman as something different from us. If advaita is the truth that also should become a direct such experience. In other words, without a Brahman-realisation, how can the viparIta-bhAvanA disappear? That direct experience will occur only if the nidhidhyAsanA continues as a single dhyAna to the exclusion of everything else. There is no other way. That the (familiar-to-the–Tamil-world) 'panchAmRtaM' is composed of honey, milk and ghee, etc. and can therefore be expected to be nothing but sweet, is mananaM. However, there could be a doubt. 'Is it truly a sweet dish? Maybe the sweet things together by some combination make it bitter. Who knows?' When such a doubt arises, the only way to get out of the doubt is to taste it; how can there be a resolution of the fact otherwise?

If one goes through the nidhidhyAsanaM with perfect dedication to the prospect that the Ultimate Reality, the existence of which was conclusively confirmed by reasoning in the course of the process of mananaM, must show itself up in one's experience, it will certainly show its taste off and on. Of course the taste, the taster and the taste-Giver would have become all one! Even though that state disappears, one gets the confirmation that there is certainly an advaita experience. How can the viparIta-bhAvanA rise up thereafter?

The very fact that in this third stage these negative bhAvanAs pop up is in a sense a God-sent blessing in disguise! It is because of that the sAdhaka continues in full earnest his manana-nidhidhyAsana efforts in order, one, to get the intellectual conviction at the level of his antaHkaraNa that advaita is the Truth and two, to get one's own shades of experience at the level of the inner Self! Otherwise he may be a little easy-going and miss it entirely! Even if it is not missed it may certainly get postponed. Only when a counter-thought occurs one gets the motivation for a full-fledged no-mercy onslaught to check it either way. It is in that sense the two dispositions of asambhAvanA and viparIta-bhAvanA help as 'incentives'!

66. Greatness of Manana & NidhidhyAsana

The mananaM that keeps analysing the conceptual matter off and on leads on to the nidhidhyAsana which shows the same thing as an experience. Thereafter there is no analysis or churning. There is only that single thought, dhyAna. The Acharya has a favourite way of saying this. *samAna-pratyaya-pravAha-karaNaM*. He uses this expression in many places. (Sutra-Bhashya IV-1.7.8; Gita Bhashya XII – 3). Just as the flow of a flood of water converges in one direction so also the converging of thought in one direction is what dhyAna means. 'Just as oil flows down in a straight wire-like appearance – taila-dhArAvat' is also another expression of his.

'Muni' is a Sanskrit word for a great person who is a perfect jnAni and spiritually very powerful. He is actually the best among Rishis. Only he who is an adept in the process of 'mananaM' is called a 'muni'. In Sutra Bhashya III – 4 – 47, this is how the Acharya speaks of the derivation of the word 'muni': *mananAn munir-iti (ca) vyutpatti-sambhavAt*. He also says there that the word 'muni' has a special significance in jnAna--*jnAna-atishaya-arthatvAt*. Thus the process of 'mananaM' is not just repetition for memorisation, nor it is, as we think of it usually, a logical reasoning at the intellectual level to import spiritual matters just into the

brain. It is far higher than that. It is something that dwells on matters clarified by the touch of intuition.

Remember our Acharya is one who gave the noblest status to the hearing (shravaNa) of the teaching from the guru. If the same Acharya says "Let it be understood that mananaM is a hundred times greater than shravaNaM". *shataguNaM vidyAn-mananaM*, then at how really a high level should shravaNaM be counted?

And he doesn't stop there. If mananaM is a hundred times greater than shravaNaM, he says nidhidhyAsanaM is a hundred-thousand times greater than mananaM: *mananAdapi nidhidhyAsaM lakshha-guNaM*.

MananaM is not just dead information; it is knowledge full of life. But even that knowledge becomes tiny little in the face of experience. You may know everything about sugar, you might have bales and bales of high class sugar, but they are not equivalent to that experience one gets from the taste of a little pinch of that sugar. That is why he says nidhidhyAsaM is one hundred thousand times greater than mananaM.

NidhidhyAsaM is also not a one-shot affair by which one gets established into a permanent Brahman-experience. It is only with a self-effort that one does what is called nidhidhyAsaM. And he gets flashes of that Brahman-experience. The moment we say this we know there is duality in this. The Brahman-experience, instead of glittering, twinkling and disappearing like a lightning flash, if that lightning of brahmAnubhava 'electrocutes' him in a sense, killing his Jiva-bhAva, and makes him the nectarine brahman itself, that will be the end of it all; that is the siddhi position. The sAdhanA stops there, the sAdhaka himself becoming the sAdhya (the goal) sthAna (locus).

Just as hands and feet do works, so also nidhidhyAsa is work done mentally. However glorified it is, there is the duality of action and of doer; so how can it be considered as the Final Truth that stands alone by Itself?

Even so, so long as one continues as a Jiva, the one noblest thing that he can do not to be that Jiva is to keep thinking only of Brahman; as such one has to steadfastly hold on to the nidhidhyAsa-action.

67. Worm becoming the wasp; Making the worm a wasp

The action of constantly thinking about brahman ends up in the state where one has become the action-less brahman.

There is what is called a *bhramara-kITa-nyAyaM*. Bhramara is the wasp. KITa means a worm. The worm is said to be constantly thinking of becoming a wasp. That constant thinking, it appears, causes its own transformation of its form and the growth of wings and finally it becomes a wasp and flies away from the nest. So it is said! The nidhidhyAsaM of the worm makes it the wasp – this is bhramara-kITa-nyAya. In the same manner the Jiva in the constant thought of Brahman, thinks of 'this' Jiva becoming 'that' Brahman, thinks that even now 'this' is only 'that' and such a nidhidhyAsana all the time ends up with the Jiva becoming Brahman – so says the Acharya in Viveka chudamani 358-359/359-360.

This has been said by the Acharya in order that the jnAna-pathfinder does not get side-tracked into the direction of saguNa-brahman. In other words he has wound up the context of Vivekachudamani by saying that by the sheer power of this constant thought one automatically becomes Brahma-svarUpa. In actual fact this becoming happens only by the Grace of God! It is by His Grace that the JivAtma becomes the ParamAtmA! The Acharya certainly knows this; and knows this quite well. To win over the karma-mimamsaka-upholders this is the final BrahmAstra that the Acharya used: "No action by itself gives the result; the results are given by Ishvara". When that was the case, he would have never subscribed to the idea that the very mental action of nidhidhyAsana would automatically produce the great result of Brahma-nirvANaM.

MayA's function of hiding things is called 'tirodhAnaM'. Right now the real Brahman that we are is *tirohitaM*, that is, hidden from us. The hidden thing comes out by the dhyAna of ParamAtmA – so says BrahmasUtra, but immediately, lest we may think it is an automatic consequence, it adds, clearing up any confusion, "This hiding as well as the bondage (caused by the hiding) are both by Ishvara. When we do nidhidhyAsanaM, the removal of the hiding, the manifestation of the Truth and the grant of mokshha, all are again the work of Ishvara". (III – 2-5). When the Acharya writes the BhashyaM on this, he says, more explicitly, "This manifestation will not happen automatically or naturally for all and sundry. Only to that rare person who makes effort to do intense nidhidhyAsana it happens by God's Grace". *na svabhAvata eva sarveshhAM jantUnAM* -- 'Revelation' does not happen naturally for everybody. *Ishvara-prasAdAt samsiddhasya kasyacit eva Avirbhavati* -- 'By God's Grace It reveals only to that rare person who has the highest achievement'.

[Note by Ra. Ganapathy:
See the Mahaswamigal's related discourses in Tamil under the Sections
'The jnAna gift of the Lord as per Adi Shankara' in
http://www.kamakoti.org/tamil/part4kural364.htm
and 'The bondage of Karma is by the Lord;
the attainment of jnAna is also His Grace' in
http://www.kamakoti.org/tamil/part4kural367.htm]

In advaita shAstras it is customary to depict God's Grace as Guru's Grace itself.

[See again http://www.kamakoti.org/tamil/part4kural365.htm
under the heading: 'The duality in the form of Guru does not intervene']

But the Acharya in the apex of his prakaraNa-granthas, namely, the Vivekachudamani (476/477) has given a higher place to Ishvara's Grace over and above Guru's Grace. A person asked me this question. The reference is to the statements: "The Gurus stay on the banks of the ocean of samsAra and being on the bank they teach you how to swim across the ocean of samsAra. It is the disciple who, on his own, has to get the prajnA of True Knowledge, and keeping it as the boat he should cross the ocean; and this prajnA is granted only by God".

Maybe the Acharya thought: "In the coming ages, there may not be many gurus of knowledge who have attained enlightenment. Even then, as far as the disciples are concerned, even through them (such gurus) the Lord Himself will grant the release" and so depicted the gurus as those who have not crossed; but however he added, the disciples will cross (the ocean) by God's Grace.

Another reason may also be mentioned. If a disciple gets the true attitude of surrender, by which he totally surrenders to the Guru and leaves it to him to 'do whatever he likes', then that Grace of the guru itself is the boat as well as the favourable wind, and it ferries him to the other shore. But that kind of total surrender is not possible by every one. Even if he does not do the total surrender, he may default by being a little indifferent in his sAdhanA, thinking that "After all he is our guru. He is the one who blessed me with the teaching . So his own Grace will surely lead us on to the goal of the upadesha. How can this fail to happen?" Coupled with the absence of total surrender if this kind of default persists wherein even the sAdhanA is not perfect, and if there is the indifferent attitude in the hope that the Guru will take care, -- such a possibility should be prevented. Addressing such defaulters, in other words, to emphasize the fact that one should not lax on the self-effort on the alibi of Guru's Grace, the Acharya must have said "Guru shows the

way from the bank; it is you who have to set sail in the boat and cross the ocean".

Though the Acharya said "You have to do it yourself" he must have also thought this might end up in boosting up one's ego in the thought "Thus after all it is our own effort that has all the power". So he also says that even though it is you who do it, that is also Ishvara's Grace. It is He who prompts you and keeps you company.

If we carefully note what the Lord says in the Gita we would know the Acharya has said the same thing. When He winds up the Gita, the Lord says: "Surrender to me and rest. I will take care of you!" A little before that he also says "Do a total surrender to the Lord in every possible way. By His Grace you will attain the highest goal of Peace". And He Himself says in another place *uddhared-AtmanAtmAnaM* 'one has to lift oneself by oneself' and thus talks of self-effort as great. Unless one does the total surrender, it is self-effort that wins – this is the sum and substance. In all this also there is God's Grace in hiding!

He who does the nidhidhyAsana really deeply does forget himself off and on and gets hooked up to Brahman but he also comes out of it. He who causes them to happen is Ishvara. From the very beginning, from the time one begins with nitya-anitya-vastu-vivekaM – why, even further down, from the rock bottom practice and performance of karma and bhakti -- the agent-provocateur who takes him up inch by inch, in answer to his efforts, is only the Ishvara. But He never explicitly shows Himself, even a little, to be so. It is the sAdhaka who has to infer it, by the thoughts 'I think my mind is now purified a little, some dispassion has come, it is now possible to still the mind for a moment at least' and so on, by observing himself. He does the nidhidhyAsana, but to be lost in that trance even for a moment is His work! Formerly, the action of progressing in the sAdhanA, as well as attaining greater and greater maturity, was the responsibility of the JIva. But now he is progressing towards the state of actionlessness; what action shall he do now? He can only think of it; except for that how can he do the 'becoming That' as an action?

We say 'I passed the examination'. Actually the act of passing, was not done by us. Our action was only to write the examination. Yes, we did it well. But we cannot 'pass' ourselves. Some responsible official has to 'pass' us. Our business ends with writing the examination. The awarding of the 'pass' is by the person responsible for it. (Of course I am talking about the period before Indian Independence. The methods of 'gratification' or 'applying pressure' for the purpose of ensuring a 'pass' were not known in those days!). To 'pass' in the sAdhanA examination, which means to 'pass' to be admitted to the world of actionlessness, it is

the Grace of the Ishvara, the 'phala-dAtA' (dispenser of fruit) that is not only the capital but also the instrument of action.

Unlike the case of the ordinary examination, where the result is only a piece of news, the value of which is only a further job or an eligibility to pursue studies further , in the case of sAdhanA, a pass in the final examination of nidhidhyAsanA is indeed a great Experience. There is nothing above or beyond that. It is nothing but Brahma-nirvANa, advaita-moksha.

The truth certainly is that the Lord makes the JIvAtma as paramAtmA, as a result of the constant thinking of the former.

In the Tamil world, there is a saying which is in conformity with 'bhramara-kITa-nyAya'. "The wasp stings and stings and makes the worm one of its family" goes the saying. *koTTik-koTTi kuLavi tan-niRam AkkitrAm*! It is not that the worm becomes the wasp by itself; it keeps on thinking about the wasp, the wasp continues to sting and converts it into the form of the wasp – so goes this saying. It is in that manner Ishvara does to the JIvAtmA who does the nidhidhyAsana.

Mark it! There is a difference! The One who does the transformation here is the Ishvara who is the saguNa-brahman. But the transformation he does to the JIvAtmA is the formless nirguNa-brahman! And the Jiva does the dhyAna only to become nirguNa and not for becoming the saguNa Ishvara! So this transcends all analogy and stands very high!

From the beginning Ishvara did not reveal Himself as the one who was granting the progress step by step. Even now he only plays 'blind and seek'. Now and then he takes the sAdhaka to samAdhi and later permanently makes him a JIvan-mukta or a videha-mukta. However there is a major difference. In earlier stages, all the cleaning up or purification and other touches-up that were happening in the mind, had Him as their Cause. But now He destroys the very mind itself! Once the mind has vanished, how can this (sAdhaka) get to know Him (the saguNa Brahman)? And that is why even now the work of Ishvara is a black box to the JIva! But though it is not visible to the eyes, it is million times proximate in the sense that there is a unification between 'this' and 'that' NirguNa. The saguNa Ishvara who makes the JIva a nothing, also makes Himself a nothing and shines only as a sat-cit-Ananda tattva only. [The Mahaswamigal laughs here] I said 'shines'; is it the light of a bulb of one thousand watts? We are running out of language here! We are only talking at our level like this in order to attempt to communicate!

Indescribable by words, unreachable by the mind – nothing more blissful, nothing more peaceful than that, nothing more independent,

nothing more of knowledge – it is a state, the truth of truths, the universal One! That is the destination for the jnAna path, and for the regimen of advaita-sAdhanA, wonderfully paved for us into a royal path by the Acharya.

By his Grace we got the fortunate opportunity of talking about it, hearing about it and thinking about it. Let us pray to him that we should be able to march forward in that path, little by little.

68: What is to be done immediately?

The First thing to be done is the discharge of obligatory karmas – what the shAstras have ordained and in the manner they have chalked out. Nowadays 'advaita' has come to mean the discarding of all karma, and all AchAra (regulatory prescriptions). They think 'advaita' is a free license to be without AchAra. And they even advise 'conventionalists' such as me and say "What is there in all this (AchAra)?". Without an iota of experience of advaita or the JIva-Brahma-non-difference, without having made even the slightest effort towards that, they get into the habit of playing with expressions of opinions like "How can Atman have karma? Or regulatory prescriptions? By observing varnAshrama dharma are we not contradicting advaita?" In other words, they intervene into advaita only to do what they like irrespective of the shAstras. I have all along been shutting my mouth (and not talking about advaita), lest I become a party for the promotion of such opinionated sins. Somehow it has happened that I have talked about it all. But let me not wind up with a guilty note. The final goal being advaita, every one should know at least an outline of it – this has been the maxim of the Acharya. And by his Grace only I have been able to tell you something; and that is my satisfaction.

Let no one immediately take all this (advaita-sAdhanA) seriously. At the core of your mind, hold on to the thought that JIva and Brahman are the same. Once you hold on to it, it will have its own effect. What you have to do voluntarily is to discharge your karmic obligations according to the shAstras.

In the advaita shAstra that has been handed down to us by tradition through the efforts of great 'anubhavis' one has been asked to move on to advaita-sAdhanA only after one has reached a reasonable perfection in the discharge of his shAstraic duties.

More fundamental than that we should make efforts to become ethically pure. Beginning a great sAdhanA to become that 'Pure One' (*Ekam sat*)

does not mean that we ignore the necessity to be ethically pure! The word 'sat' has, in addition to its meaning of 'Brahman, the Reality', has also, according to Lord Krishna Himself, (B.G. XVII – 26) the meaning of 'good', that is, a good quality or character. *sad-bhAve sAdhu-bhAve ca sad-ity-etat prayujyate*. We call those who are good, as sAdhus; that has its origin from the word 'sat'. We speak of people as 'sat' (good ones) and 'asat' (bad ones). As such, we have to hold on to this 'sat' (the good) and then through this go to that 'sat', the Reality!

This 'sad-guNa' (good quality) and that brahma-jnAna are not unrelated. Without this that will not be obtained. The Acharya says: For that, this is the 'sahakAri cause' – i.e. the accessory cause; the cause with which it cooperates and produces the fruit (phalaM). The word 'phalaM' and 'sahakAri' remind me of the type of mango called 'sahakAra mango'. It is a mix of different types of mangoes. In Kanchipuram there is a mango tree of this type and it is at the foot of such a tree that the Goddess is united with the Lord Ekambareshvara (cf. Mukapanchashati AryashatakaM shloka 64). In the same manner the good quality 'sat' and 'jnAna' have to integrate together to produce the ripe fruit of moksha. In the Gita, at a certain place (XIII – 7) where He delineates what jnAna is, the Lord says: "Self-pride is wrong. Pretentiousness is taboo. One should have the quality of ahimsA (non-injury), forbearance and straightforwardness". Beginning thus He reels off a big list. That is where in the Acharya's Bhashya, he himself raises the question on behalf of the opponent "How can these things be jnAnaM" and replying to the objection, says "All these are 'sahakAri' causes for jnAnaM and hence themselves called jnAnaM". Further he adds that these are the good qualities that constitute the fertile ground for the spark of jnAnaM.

The statement that self-pride is wrong implies only the necessity of humility. A humble nature. We should all begin with that kind of humble nature and make efforts to become good. Keeping the thought of that 'sat' (the Reality) at the bottom of our hearts, and with the Grace of the Acharya, let us all do what we should for this 'sat' (goodness).

One should close with the word 'sat' (Recall *om tat sat*). So let me mentally say so for all of you.

CONCLUDED.
PraNAms to all students of advaita.
PraNAms to the Maha-Swamigal.