THE SYSTHESIS OF YOGA IN VAISNAVISM OF RĀMĀNUJA

Vaiṣṇavism as developed by Rāmānuja is one of the oldest living religions of India, having its origin in the RgVeda, the earliest religious literature of the world. It is a monotheistic system which upholds Viṣṇu as the ultimate Reality (paratattva) and believes that the exclusive and devoted worship of this Deity leads to the realization of the highest Spiritual Goal (parama-purusārtha). For this purpose it has laid down a way of life which among other things covers a religious and spiritual discipline (sādhana). Unlike Śaivism and Śāktaism, the other two major living religions of India, it has a philosophical basis and constitutes a part of the Viśistādvaīta Vedānta expounded by Rāmānuja on the authoritative sources of the Upanisads, Vedānta-sūtra and Bhagavadgītā - the triple foundation of Vedānta.

Vaiṣṇavism of Rāmānuja is thus closely related to the Viśistādvaīta Vedānta of Rāmānuja. The two are complimentary, one representing the theoretical study of the philosophical doctrines and the other representing the practical side of Vedānta dealing with the way of life leading to the realization of the Supreme Spiritual Goal. Sādhana or the ways and means of attainment of Viṣṇu, which is the highest goal occupies an important place both in the Viśistādvaīta Vedānta system and the Religion of Vaiṣṇavism. The term yoga in Vaiṣṇavism, in its broadest sense applies to this sādhana. The sanskrit term ‘yoga’ bears several meanings. In Patañjala yoga, the term is used in the technical sense as concentration of mind (citta-vrtti nirodha). It is applicable to the eight-fold discipline (aṣṭāṅga-yoga) to be practiced for achieving samādhi leading to the state of Kaivalya or the existence of puruṣa (individual self) as totally free from the association of the mind (citta) and its functions. In the Bhagavadgītā the term yoga is employed in different contexts meaning different things. In the Upanisads and the Vedānta systems, it is applicable to the sādhana or means of attainment of the Supreme Goal and in particular to dhyāna or meditation. In some modern religious movements, the term generally refers to the practice of meditation in different forms. However in Vedānta, the term yoga is applicable specifically to the sādhana or the religious and spiritual discipline laid down for the sole purpose of achieving the spiritual goal (parama-purusārtha).

For details, see S.M. Srinivasa Chari – Vaiṣṇavism, its Philosophy, Theology and Religious Discipline, chapter 1.

See Amarakoṣa, yogah sanāhanopāya dhyāna sangati yuktisū
What is the nature of yoga as śādhanā in Vaiṣṇavism of Rāmānuja? How this doctrine of śādhanā has been formulated by Rāmānuja by synthesizing different theories on yoga as presented in the Upanisads, Purāṇas, Pāṇcarātra treatises, Pātañjala yoga school, Vedānta-sūtra of Badarāyana and Bhagavadgītā in particular? How the doctrine of śādhanā developed by Rāmānuja differs from Pātañjala yoga, Saṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta and other post-Rāmānuja theistic schools of Vedānta and also some of the modern religious movements? These are the important points that need to be considered to understand properly the theory of yoga in the Vaiṣṇavism of Rāmānuja. The present article is primarily devoted to this matter.

Vedānta is regarded as a mokṣa-śāstra or a system of philosophy primarily intended to teach the ways and means of liberation from the bondage in the form of cycle of birth and death in which the individual souls are caught up. The mere knowledge of the Ultimate Reality and other ontological principles is of no value unless it leads to the attainment of a higher goal. Thus the Tatārīṇa Upaniṣad states: ‘Brahmavid-āpnoti param’ – “The knower of Brahman attains the Supreme Goal”. The Vedānta therefore accords equal importance to the śādhanā which is the means of attainment of a fruitful goal. Hence the Vedānta-sūtra of sage Bādarāyana which is the basic manual of Vedānta philosophy comprising four adhyāyas, devotes the first two parts to the discussion of Brahman which is the Ultimate Reality and the entire third adhyāya titled ‘Śadhanādhyāya’ deals with the nature of śādhanā, while the fourth adhyāya titled ‘Phalādhyāya’ is concerned with the discussion of the nature of the Goal. The Upanisads which are the fundamental source-books for Vedānta philosophy deal mainly with the nature of Reality and also enjoin the observance of śādhanā for the attainment of Brahman. The Bhagavad-gītā which is another important source-book for Vedānta lays greater emphasis on śādhanā. The Yoga darśana of Pātañjali which is one of the important schools of Indian philosophy is also devoted mainly to lay down an elaborate religio-spiritual discipline for achieving Samādhi, leading to Kaivalya, a state of total liberation of puruṣa or the individual self from the shackles of bondage. The theory of yoga in the correct sense of śādhanā or upāya for attainment of a higher Spiritual Goal should therefore take into consideration the teachings contained in all these source-books viz. Upanisads, the Vedānta-sūtra, the Bhagavad-gītā, the Yoga darśana of Pātañjali and allied treatises such as Viṣṇu-purāṇa and Bhagavata among the purāṇas. A sound and philosophical doctrine of yoga as means to mokṣa or the liberation of the
soul from bondage should incorporate all these ideas and present a consolidated doctrine of sadhana. As will be seen later, such a perfect synthesis of yoga is brought about only by Rāmānuja in the Vaiśnavaism developed by him, unlike the other schools of Vaiśnavaism of the post-Rāmānuja period.

Briefly stated, Bhakti-yoga, according to Rāmānuja, is the direct means to moksa. This view is based on the authority of the Bhagavad-gītā which explicitly states that the Supreme Deity in the name of Lord Krṣṇa, who is the very Brahman of the Upaniṣads, cannot be attained by any other means than ananya-bhakti3.

But according to some Upaniṣads, Jñāna which is also termed as Vedana is the direct means to Brahman. Thus states the Mundaka Upaniṣad: Brahma-veda brahmaiva bhavati – “he who knows Brahman becomes Brahman”. The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad explicitly states that other than the knowledge of Brahman, there is no other means of escape from human bondage. Thus it says: tamevam viditva atimṛtyum eti, na anyah panthā vidyate ayanāya. On the authority of these Upaniṣadic teachings, Samkara maintains the theory that only by means of knowledge of Brahman, the Supreme Goal is to be attained. The jñāna or the knowledge conceived as the means (upāya) does not refer to mere verbal knowledge derived from the study of scriptural texts (sravaṇa), the reflection over what is studied to gain conviction (manana) and meditation on the truth (nididhyāṣana), but the intuitional knowledge (aparokṣa-jñāna) in the form of the realization of the identity of jīvātman and Brahman (atmaikya-jñāna). In view of this Samkara admits that the Jñāna-yoga taught in the Bhagavad-gītā is itself the direct means to the Supreme Goal. The term Vidyā employed by Bādarāyana as the direct means to mokṣa4 is interpreted by Samkara to mean that only through atmaikya-jñāna, the Supreme Goal (purusaṁtha) is attained.

There are also several Upaniṣadic texts which affirm that upāsana, also termed as dhyāna and nididhyāṣana which means unceasing meditation on Brahman is the direct means to the attainment of Brahman. The scriptural injunctions such as upāsīta, dhyāyīta, nididhyāṣītayaḥ de. refer to the observation of meditation on Brahman

3 Bg. XI-53and 54. nā ham vedair na tapasa na dānena no cejyaya sakha evamvidho draṣṭum draṣṭavān-asi mām yathā bhaktīyā-tu ananyaya śakya aham evamvidho ‘rjuna jñānam draṣṭum ca taitvena praveṣṭum ca parantapa

4 See V.S.III-4-1 puruṣārtho atah (vidyātah) iti bādarāyanaḥ saabdai

as the means to the Supreme Goal.

Has then Rāmānuja is justified in advancing the theory of Bhakti-yoga as the direct sadhana to mokṣa? Further the term
bhakti or bhakti-yoga is not mentioned in the principal Upaniṣads or the Vedānta-sūtra of Bādarāyana, except in the Bhagavad-gītā and the Vaisnava purāṇas such as Viṣṇu-purāṇa and Bhāgavata. These are some of the important issues which are to be clarified before formulating the theory of bhakti-yoga as sādhana. Besides, the Yoga-dārśana founded by Patañjali is acknowledged as a separate school of thought, though it is closely affiliated to the Sāmkhya dārśana, which has developed in addition to the metaphysical doctrines, the details of the religio-spiritual discipline under the name of aṣṭāṅga-yoga or eight-fold discipline as upāya for the attainment of a spiritual goal. Though the Yoga-dārśana is rejected by Bādarāyana as far as its philosophical doctrines are concerned, the yoga-sādhana in the form of aṣṭāṅga-yoga is generally acceptable to him since some of the yogāṅgas are referred to in the Vedānta-sūtra while describing the components of upāsanā. Rāmānuja was therefore required to synthesize all these points in formulating bhakti-yoga as the direct sādhana to mokṣa.

Rāmānuja is aware that the term ‘bhakti’ is not mentioned in the Upaniṣads. Nevertheless he points out that the concept of bhakti is implicit in the Upaniṣadic texts teaching the nature of sādhana for mokṣa. The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad and also the Katha Upaniṣad make a significant statement describing how Paramātman (Brahman) is attained by an aspirant for mokṣa. Thus it states: ‘nā ‘yam ātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā śrutena; yamevaśa vrūte tena labhyah; tasyaiśa atmā vṛūnta taṁc’ svām’. It means – “This self (Brahman) cannot be attained by the study of Vedas, nor by meditation, nor through much hearing. He is to be attained only by one whom the Self (Paramātman) chooses. To such a person the Self (Paramātman) reveals his true nature”. This statement does not refer directly to a specific sādhana to be pursued by an individual seeking to realize God, apart from the grace of God. Prima facie it appears to contradict the following statement of the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad enjoining the observance of a sādhana for realizing Ātman (Brahman): ‘Atmā vā are prastavyah, srotavyo, mantavyo nididhyāśitavyah’. It means – “It is the Ātman (Paramātman) who is to be seen (realized), to be heard, to be reflected on and meditated upon”. Without entering into the discussion of the different interpretations of this text by the commentators, it may be noted that this significant teaching imparted by sage Yajñavalkya to Maitreyī, wife of Yajñavalkya seeking to know how to achieve immortality

2 Br. Up. II-4-5
(amrtatva), lists the various steps to be undertaken for attaining Brahman viz. sravana or learning from a qualified preceptor about philosophical truths, manana or reflection over what is learnt to gain conviction and nididhyasana or the constant unceasing meditation on the Reality culminating in the darśana or direct intuition (sākṣātkāra) of the Ātman. Thus there is apparent conflict between the two texts – the statement of Brhadāraṇyaka enjoining the observance of nididhyāsana and the statement of the Mundaka regarding the futility of sravana, manana and meditation to attain Ātman. But the Upaniṣads being the Revealed Scripture, cannot present two conflicting teachings. Such apparent conflicts need to be overcome by adopting the principles of interpretation provided by the Māmāsakas.

According to the rules of interpretation, the statement of the Mundaka Upaniṣad is treated as a viṣista-vidhi or as an injunction with specific qualification. Its implication as explained by Rāmānuja is that mere sravana (hearing), mere manana (reflection) and mere nididhyāsana (meditation) undertaken without intense love for Paramātman cannot serve as a means to attain God. Only that individual on whom God showers His grace (yamaiva eṣa vyuhte), he alone can achieve Him (tena labhyah). The question then arises: Whom God chooses to receive His grace? The answer, according to Rāmānuja is that the person who is dearest to God, is chosen by Him (priyatama eva hi varaniyo bhavati). Otherwise the dispensation of grace would be arbitrary and God would be subject to partiality and cruelty (vaisamyam naIrghanyandoṣa). Who is then the dearest to God? The answer to this as pointed out in the Gita is, he who craves to have eternal union with God and meditates on Him with devotion is the dearest to God (atyanta priya) and to such a person He bestows divine vision.

In offering this explanation Rāmānuja seeks the support of the Bhagavad-gitā. The following verse of the Bhagavad-gitā elucidates the Mundaka Upaniṣad.

Na'ham vedair na tapasā na dānena na ce'jaya
Śakya evaṁ-vidho draṣṭum draṣṭavān asām yathā
Bhaktyā tu ananyayā śakya aham evovidho'jrjuna
Jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca parantapa

7 See RB 1-1-1, the section dealing with लोकु मम सद्धान्त
8 See Bg. XI – 53 and 54
"I cannot be seen in the form you have seen me now either by the Vedas, or by austerities or by gifts or by sacrifices. But by unswerving (single-minded) devotion to me, O Arjuna, I can thus be truly known, truly seen and entered into (attained)."

The first verse points out that by mere study of the sacred texts it is not possible to know Paramātman fully. Nor is it possible to know Him fully through the performance of yāga or sacrifices and other austerities (tapas) and also offering gifts. That is, none of these acts devoid of bhakti towards Paramātman, serves the purpose of knowing Him in His true form with His full glory.

In what other way can He be known? The second verse of the Gītā answers this. It is only through the means of ananya-bhakti towards Paramātman that it is possible to know Him fully in all His aspects. Ananya-bhakti is needed not only for knowing Paramātman (jñātum) in His full form, but also for obtaining His full vision (draṣṭum) and also to attain Him (praveṣṭum). These are the three stages – a) Full knowledge b) vision and c) attainment in mokṣa and all the three are possible only by ananya-bhakti. Thus it may be observed that the concept of bhakti or bhakti-yoga as the direct means of attainment of Paramātman is implicit in the Upaniṣadic text enjoining meditation (nididhyāsana), but it is made explicit in the verses of the Gītā.

Further the word bhakti bears the same meaning as nididhyāsana or meditation mentioned in the Upaniṣads. The word bhakti is derived from the root ‘bhaj’ which means sevā or meditation (bhaj sevāyām). According to the Nighantu (glossary of Vedic terms), the terms sevā, bhakti and upāsti bear the same meaning9. The term sevā is therefore taken to mean ‘bhakti’. In common usage bhakti is understood as love towards the respected or elderly person (mahāṇīya visaye pṛitiḥ), as compared to love towards a child. Pṛiti or love is a state of knowledge, a mental disposition. Bhakti therefore means unceasing meditation with intense love towards the Supreme Being (sneha-pūrvam-anudhyānam)10.

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9 See Śrutapratikāla commentary on Rāmānuja Bhāṣya on VS 1-1-1 ‘sevā bhaktir upāsti iti naighāntukāḥ’
10 Ibid: sneha pūrvam-anudhyānam bhaktirity-abhidhīyate
The general concept of bhakti in the sense of devotion or reverence to a Deity is accepted by all religions. This kind of bhakti of a general character is not regarded by Rāmānuja as the direct means to mokṣa. As will be explained later, bhakti as upāya or sādhana for mokṣa refers to the rigorous religio-spiritual discipline to be undertaken by a qualified aspirant for mokṣa and it is to be pursued continuously for the life time until the total liberation from bondage is secured. The more appropriate term for bhakti as upāya is bhakti-yoga as outlined in the Bhagavad-gītā. In fact, the central doctrine of the Bhagavad-gītā, according to Rāmānuja, is the advocacy of bhakti-yoga as the direct means of attainment of the Supreme Goal. Thus in a characteristic way, he states in the preface to his Gītā-bhāṣya that Lord Kṛṣṇa, under the pretext of persuading Arjuna to fight the war, introduced bhakti-yoga, as aided by karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga, which is enjoined in the Upanisads as the direct means to the Supreme Goal.\footnote{See RB on B.G. preface.}

In the Upanisadic parlance, this bhakti-yoga is termed as upāsanā. Bādarāyaṇa employs the term Vidyā to denote upāsanā as the means to the Supreme Goal.

As will be explained later while dealing with the nature of sādhana, this bhakti-yoga or upāsanā on Brahman, referred to in the Upanisads and the Vedānta-sūtra involves not merely bhakti towards God in a general sense as commonly understood, but a rigorous religio-spiritual discipline including āstāṅga-yoga enunciated in the Yoga system. It should also be preceded by the acquisition of philosophic knowledge of jīvatman and Paramātman, the strict performance of prescribed rituals without any selfish motive, purely as Divine service and also meditation on the jīvatman (jñāna-yoga), as outlined in the Gītā.

Yoga as upāya or the means to mokṣa in the Viśisṭādvaita Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism expounded by Rāmānuja refers to such a religio-spiritual discipline.

Before we discuss the details regarding the nature of the sādhana in Vaisnavism, Rāmānuja examines the issue whether jñāna, also termed vedana and darśana is a direct means to the Supreme Goal as claimed by Śaṅkara and if so, what is its relation to bhakti-yoga as enunciated in the Gītā? This is an important controversial issue in
Vedānta and it needs to be clarified to understand the theory of Rāmānuja on the subject of yoga.

As pointed out earlier, the Upaniṣadic texts mention that veda or vedana meaning knowledge of Brahman, is the direct means to realize Brahman. Thus states the Svetāsvatara: 'tamevam viditvā mṛtyum atyeti, nāḥ nyāḥ panthā ayaṇāya vidyate'. The Taittiriya says: 'Brahmaṇa paraṁ īṣṇoti'. On the basis of such texts Śaṅkara maintains that jñāna is the direct means for the attainment of Brahman. The Vedānta-sūtra also cites the expression 'vidyā' derived from the root word 'vid' or 'to know'. Vidyā is interpreted by Śaṅkara as 'atmaikya-jñāna' in accordance with these Upaniṣadic texts. The upāsanā, dhyāna, nididhyāśana etc. which mean meditation on Brahman, is taken as subsidiary means to bhakti-yoga, referred to in the Gītā.

Rāmānuja does not question the basic teaching of the Upaniṣad that jñāna is the means to mokṣa. The issue which he raises is: What is the kind of knowledge that serves as the means to mokṣa? Is it the knowledge of Brahman as generated by the Upaniṣadic texts or is it jñāna in some other form? The first kind of jñāna is known as vākyārtha-jñāna or the knowledge which arises from the study of the Upaniṣads which teach the identity of Brahman with the individual self, as conceived by the Advaita Vedānta, on the basis of the premise that jīvātman is identical with Brahman. But such a verbal knowledge derived from the study of the sacred texts is not found to remove the bondage.

To meet this objection a modified view is presented by the Advaitin. It is not mere verbal knowledge which is mediate in character (parokṣa) that removes bondage, but on the contrary, a kind of intensive knowledge of immediate character (aparokṣa-jñāna) generated by constant meditation, culminating in the direct realization of the identity of the individual self with Brahman (atmaikya-jñāna) that serves as the means to the liberation from bondage. This view is also rejected by Rāmānuja as untenable on the basis of detailed critical examination of all arguments advanced by Śaṅkara in defence of this theory.

After a critical analysis of the theory advanced by Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja comes to the conclusion that jñāna or knowledge of Brahman referred to in the Upaniṣads as the

1See RD.1.1. section on 'andhasthātām', for details.
basis of detailed critical examination of all arguments advanced by Śaṅkara in defence of this theory.\(^\text{12}\)

After a critical analysis of the theory advanced by Śamkara, Rāmānuja comes to the conclusion that ānāna or knowledge of Brahman referred to in the Upaniṣads as the means to mokṣa should develop itself into steadfast meditation or bhakti (bhakti-ṛūpāpanna ānāna). This explanation has the full support of the Upaniṣadic teachings. The Brahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad states: ‘tamevam dhīro viṣṇāya prajñām kurvīta’. It means that only after knowing Brahman (by means of study of the Scripture and reflection thereon), the upāsana is to be performed.\(^\text{13}\) The Chāndogya text says: ‘yastam atmanan anuvidya viśjanāti’.\(^\text{14}\) It means that after one has known the true nature of Ātman (Brahman), one practices meditation. The Brahadāraṇyaka enjoins more specifically: ‘Ātma vā are drastavyah, śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāśitavyah’.\(^\text{15}\) This significant teaching made by sage Yājñavalkya to Maitreyī to teach the ways and means of attaining immortality (āmṛta) sums up the nature of the sādhana to be pursued for attaining mokṣa. As interpreted by Rāmānuja, it enjoins nididhyāśana or meditation on Ātman (Brahman) preceded by śravaṇa (learning from sacred texts) and manana (reflection on what is taught) and nididhyāśana or unceasing meditation on Brahman, culminating in darśana or the vivid vision of Brahman almost similar to the visual perception of an object (darśana-samānākaraṇa). According to Rāmānuja, darśana referred to in the text is not the goal in the form of actual realization of Brahman, as some commentators interpret, but it is a perfected state of meditation (nididhyāśana) and not the actual direct vision of Brahman which is possible only after one has been totally disembodyed from bondage and attained the higher abode of Viṣṇu (paramapada). Darśana is therefore a specific term used for nididhyāśana, which is a general term. As will be explained presently, the terms darśana, ānāna, vedana bear the same meaning as the terms such as nididhyāśana, dhāya, dhruvā-smṛti employed in the Upaniṣads. These are synonymous terms. Otherwise, it would amount to the admission of different paths to mokṣa. But as the goal is the same viz. attainment of Brahman, all these paths cannot be different. Nor can they be taken as alternative paths. Taking the instance of darśana and nididhyāśana, darśana in the form of direct vision of Brahman is an easier method.

\(^{12}\) See RB. I-1-1, section on Laghusiddhānta for details

\(^{13}\) Br. Up. IV-4-21 tamevam dhīro viṣṇāya prajñām kurvīta. Prajñām means upāsana.

\(^{14}\) Ch. Up. VIII-12-6

\(^{15}\) Br. Up. VI-5-6
Whereas nīdīdhyaṣāna is a rigorous method to be pursued for a long time, these two cannot be taken as alternative paths (väkalpa) for attaining the same goal. Since dhyaṇa and upāsana are not different means to mokṣa. This view is supported by the fact that thevery Upanisadic texts dealing with the upāya to mokṣa, employ the terms dārsana and upāsana as interchangeable words in one and the same passage. Thus, in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad discussing the manner of doing upāsana on Brahman, the passage commences with the statement ‘mano brahmaṇīt upāśita’¹⁶ which means ‘Brahman is to be contemplated as manas’, by using the term ‘upāśita’. While concluding this passage, it is stated: ‘ya evam veda’¹⁷ meaning ‘he who knows thus’. The term veda is used here in place of upāsana mentioned at the commencement. Taking into consideration the context of the passage, veda at the concluding statement means the same as upāsana used in the beginning. In another passage of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad referring to the greatness of Raikva, the opening sentence states: ‘yastat veda tat sa veda’¹⁸ meaning ‘what Raikva knows that is to be known’ etc. While concluding this narration it is stated: “Whatever devatā you contemplate (tvam upāste)¹⁹, tell me in detail about the same deity”. In this passage, unlike the previous one, the term veda is used at the beginning and the word upāste is used at the end. If we take into consideration both these passages, it is obvious that according to the Upaniṣads, vedana and upāsana bear the same meaning. Otherwise it would amount to the admission of two different means for mokṣa and it is unlikely that the Upaniṣads prescribe two different means for attaining the same goal.

Further, according to Rāmaṇuja, the different terms used in the Upaniṣads such as upāsana, dhyaṇa, smṛti-saṅgati, vedana and dārsana are to be taken to mean the same as bhakti referred to in the Gītā and implied in the text of the Munḍaka as pointed out earlier. The main reason for this conclusion is that if these terms are understood differently, it would amount to the admission of several means (upāyas) to mokṣa. Since the goal to be achieved is the same, the means cannot be different. It should therefore be admitted that all these terms bear the same import. According to the principle of interpretation laid down by the Mīmāṃśakas, when different terms are used in the same context, the general term should be taken to bear the meaning of the specific term.

Accordingly, in the present jñāna, dārsana, vedana, dhyaṇa, upāsana, dhruva-smṛti which are employed in the Upaniṣads as upāya for mokṣa, are treated as general terms whereas bhakti mentioned in the Bhagavad-gītā as upāya for mokṣa is taken as a

¹⁶ Ch. Up. III-18
¹⁷ Ch. Up. IV-1-4
¹⁸ Ch. Up. IV-1-4
¹⁹ Ch. Up. IV-2-2
specific term meaning unswerving devotion to God. The term bhakti, according to the etymological meaning (bhaj sevāyām) is the same as upāsana. As already observed upāsana and vedana are employed as interchangeable words in the Upaniṣads. Taking all these facts into consideration, Rāmānuja comes to the conclusion that bhakti-yoga as the spiritual discipline is the upāya to mokṣa and that this view is in consonance with the teachings of the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta-sūtra.

**Nature of bhakti-yoga**

What is the nature of bhakti-yoga which is advocated in the Vaiśṇavism of Rāmānuja as the direct upāya to mokṣa? The principal Upaniṣads which generally speak of several Brahma-vidyās or upāsana of different types do not throw much light on the method of practicing upāsana except certain general characteristics of it. Nor does the Vedānta-sūtra, which accords such an important place to it, the major part of the third adhyāya being titled sādhanādhyāya does not present a comprehensive and consolidated account of its practice step-by-step, as the Yoga-sūtras of Patañjali describe the eight limbs of yoga. Though the later religious literature such as the Itihasas and Puranas with the exception of the Bhagavad-gītā commend the practice of bhakti-yoga and other forms of yoga, they do not provide us a practical guide to the practice of bhakti-yoga.

The only important Vedānta treatise which deals in detail with the bhakti-yoga is the Bhagavad-gītā. In his introduction to the Gītā-bhāṣya openly states that the Gītā is primarily intended to teach bhakti-yoga. In a characteristic way he says: "The Supreme Being, out of compassion towards humanity, incarnated Himself as Lord Kṛṣṇa and under the pretext of inducing Arjuna to fight the war, taught bhakti-yoga aided by jñāna and karma which is enjoined in the Upaniṣads as the direct means to mokṣa, the highest Goal of human endeavor." The words ‘vedāntotidam...bhakti-yogam’ in this statement clearly establishes that bhakti-yoga taught in the Gītā as direct sādhana is in accordance with the teachings of the Upaniṣads. He is therefore fully justified in advocating the doctrine of bhakti-yoga as the direct means to mokṣa and also incorporating all the details furnished in the Gītā about yoga as sādhana along with whatever material is available in the Vedānta-sūtra.

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20 See fn. 11
advocating the doctrine of bhakti-yoga as the direct means to mokṣa and also incorporating all the details furnished in the Gītā about yoga as sādhana along with whatever material is available in the Vedānta-sūtra.

Though yoga as a daśāna or philosophical system is rejected by Bādarāyana and also by the commentators on the Vedānta-sūtra in so far as its philosophical doctrines are concerned, the religio-spiritual discipline under the name of Asṭāṅga-yoga is accepted by him with some modification. Thus the Vedānta-sūtras, while discussing the nature and components of vidyā or upāsana, which according to Bādarāyana is the direct means to the Parama-puruṣārtha, mention dhyāna, the sixth limb of yogāṅgas, āsana or steady posture, dīhāraṇa or concentration of the mind on the object of contemplation, yama or cultivation of ethical values and niyama or scrupulous observance of prescribed rituals. The Bhagavad-gītā in the sixth adhyāya, which deals with jñāna-yoga according to Rāmānuja, for realizing the jīvātman (atmāvalokana), also refers specifically to a few important limbs of the yoga. Rāmānuja therefore acknowledges the need of the yogāṅgas laid down by Patañjali in formulating the theory of bhakti-yoga as the direct sādhana to mokṣa. While commenting on the Vedānta-sūtra which define the nature of dhyāna he quotes the following verse from the Viṣṇu-pūrāṇa: ‘tadṛṣṭa-pratyaye ca eka santatisca nisprhaḥ; tad-dhyānam prathamaiḥ āṅgaiḥ sādhbhīṃ nispādyate nṛpa’.

It means that the continuous unbroken series of meditation on Brahman is called dhyāna and that is to be accomplished by the first six yogāṅgas viz. yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra and dīhāraṇa.

Though Rāmānuja acknowledges the need of Asṭāṅga-yoga of Patañjali as referred to in the Vedānta-sūtra and also Bhagavad-gītā, the nature of bhakti-yoga as the direct sādhana to the attainment of Paramātmā is much more than what is enunciated in the Patañjala-yoga system. The bhakti-yoga advocated in the Bhagavad-gītā which is accepted by Rāmānuja as the direct sādhana, unlike Saṁkara, includes many other features. The first and most important point of difference is that the goal of Patañjala-yoga is kaivalya or the attainment of a state of existence by the individual self as totally free from the association of citta and its vṛtti or functions. The very second sūtra of Patañjali which defines the term yoga as cittavṛtti-nirodhaḥ is followed by the sūtra reading as: ‘tadā drastuḥ svānupe avasthaṇam’, implying that the goal of yoga practice is
the state of existence of jīvātman in its pure form as totally devoid of all influences of citta.

The goal of bhakti-yoga as stated in the Bhagavad-gītā is the attainment of Paramātman by the individual self. Accordingly, the practice of bhakti or bhakti-yoga covers many other factors. Though the adhyāyas 7 to 12 are stated to deal with bhakti-yoga, according to Rāmānuja, there is only one verse in the 9th adhyāya which describes the svarūpa or essential features of bhakti-yoga. The relevant verse reads: ‘manmanā bhava madbhakto madhyai māṁ namaskuru; māmevāisyai yuktvaivam-ātmānām matparāyaṇam’\(^{22}\). The meaning of this verse as explained by Rāmānuja is: manmanā bhava means that the devotee should focus his mind on Paramātman. Manana denotes dhyāna, also named as nididhyāsana or upāsana or dhruvāsmiti in the Upanisads, which means unceasing meditation on Paramātman who is the Supreme Brahman, who is the Supreme Ruler of the universe, who is endowed with infinite auspicious attributes, free from all defilements and who possesses a divine body. The meditation is to be practised with devotion (madbhakta). Madhyai bhava means the devotee should become engaged in the worship of God. The root word 'yaj' means puja or worship and in the present context it refers to the various modes of worship of God as laid down in the Pañcarātra treatises (bhagavadārādhana). This again is to be performed with love towards God. Māṁ namaskuru means to bow down or prostrate with humility to God by regarding Him as the Supreme Being and the jīvātman as a humble being solely dependent on Him (śeṣa). Matparāyaṇa means to regard Paramātman alone as the Supreme Goal. Ātmānām yuktvā means that in this manner the mind is to be disciplined towards God as the Supreme object of attainment. Ātmān in this context means mind and not Self as Śaṅkara conceives. Māmeva aisyasi means that with such a practice of bhakti-yoga one will surely attain only Paramātman. This explanation which is in consonance with the teachings of the Gītā establishes that bhakti-yoga is the direct means to Paramātman. This verse refers to three significant concepts viz. manana with bhakti, yajana with bhakti and namaskāra with bhakti. The fuller implications of these three terms as explained by Rāmānuja and further elucidated by Vedānta Deśika, an illustrious successor to Ramanuja, in his Tātparya-candrīkā (a commentary on Rāmānuja Bhāṣya) will fully bring out the nature of bhakti-yoga.

\(^{22}\) B.G. IX-34.
Dhyāna denoted by the word manana does not mean mere meditation on an object as it is ordinarily understood. In the initial stage, the mind is to be focused on the object of contemplation which in the yoga system is called dhārana. Dhyāna follows dhārana. It signifies a constant and continuous reflection on the divine form with all its glory. To be more specific, it means, as Rāmānuja explains, reflection on the svarūpa or the essential nature, rūpa or the divine personality and guna or the auspicious attributes of Brahman. The various upāsanās or vidyās such as Sad-vidyā, Dahara-vidyā, Ānanda-vidyā, Upakosala-vidyā etc enjoined in the Upanisads prescribe the different types of meditation on Brahman as qualified with specific attributes. All these spiritual endeavours involve a conscious effort to think of all the glory of God not for a short period but continuously and repeatedly until such time as the goal is achieved. The flow of thought towards God should be like an unbroken stream of oil poured from a vessel (ailadāravav-ad-vijchinnena smṛti-santati-rūpana). This is what is intended in the expression dhruvā-smṛti used in the Chāndogya Upanisad for dhyāna or upāsanā. The same truth is reiterated by the Vedānta-sūtra when it states that meditation is to be repeated often. This is to be done, as already pointed out, with deep devotion towards God.

According to Rāmānuja, dhyāna also implies the entire eight-fold discipline known as astāṅga-yoga of Yoga system. Though the term ‘astāṅga-yoga’ is not explicitly mentioned either in the Vedānta-sūtra or the Bhagavad-gītā, it is implicit in the teachings offered in these texts about the methodology and the components prescribed for the practice of dhyāna or dhyāna-yoga. In the sixth chapter of the Gītā dealing with the jñāna-yoga, also named as dhyāna-yoga and also in the third adhyāya of the Vedānta-sūtra dealing with the method of observing upāsanā, some of the yogāṅgas such as steady posture (āsana), prāṇāyāma, control of the senses for gaining concentration of the mind, are referred to. As stated earlier, Rāmānuja openly admits the need of astāṅgas for successful practice of dhyāna leading to the attainment of the Spiritual Goal. This is evident from the fact that Rāmānuja, while commenting on the sūtras dealing with dhyāna, quotes a statement from Viśnu-purāṇa which explicitly mentions that dhyāna is to be accomplished with the aid of the first six yogāṅgas (dhyānam

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23 See RB, 1-1-1
24 See VS IV-1-1 āvrtīṁ asakṛdpadasāṁ
that dhyanam is to be accomplished with the aid of the first six yogangas (dhyanam prathamāngaiḥ sādhibhīḥ nispādyate). It is therefore obvious that prior to embarking on dhyaṇa, what is needed is the dhārana or concentration of the mind on the object of contemplation. This is the sixth limb of the yoga discipline. Dhārana in turn presupposes invariably, mental purity by way of cultivation of ethical virtues (yamas), observation of prescribed religious duties (niyamas), a steady posture (āsana), control of breath (prāṇāyama), control of the sense organs (pratyāhāra). It is only such a discipline with all the requisites when perfected a long period of practice that culminates in the actual realization or the direct vision of the object of contemplation. This final stage of yoga practice is known as samādhi in the Yoga system leading to the state of kaivalya or the realization of the individual self in its purest form. But in Viśiṣṭadvaita Vedānta, the final stage of bhakti-yoga culminates in the Paramātmā-saṅkatāra or the comprehensive vivid vision of Paramātman leading to mokṣa or the final liberation of the individual self from bondage.

Though bhakti-yoga covers asāṅga-yoga of Patañjali, its scope is far wider and more comprehensive than Patañjala yoga sādhana.

The yamas and niyamas referred to in the yoga-śūtra is of a general nature and these ethical virtues and religious observances are common features of all the spiritual discipline laid down by other schools of thought including Buddhism and Jainism. More than these general ethical and religious principles, the Upanīṣads and Bhagavad-gītā have laid down other requirements to be fulfilled as aids to bhakti-yoga mainly intended for the realization of the Supreme Spiritual Goal. On the authority of an ancient commentator on the Vedānta-śūtra known as Vākyakāra, Ramanuja prescribes a seven-fold ethical discipline named sādhanā-saptaka as an essential requirement for the successful practice of bhakti-yoga. These are 1) viveka or the purification of the body by consumption of sattvik food which promotes purity of the mind, as stated in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. 2) vimoka or getting rid of sensual attachment and anger for securing mental tranquillity. 3) abhyāsa or repeated reflection on God who is

25 V.P. VI-7.91. tadṛṣṭaḥ pratyāhāraṃ santatiṣya anyāsapravāhaḥ; tad-dhyanam prathamair aṅgaiḥ sādhibhīḥ nispādyate nrpa...
26 See RB 1-1-1 tatilabdhir viveka-vimoka-abhyāsa-kiyā-kaññāya-anavaṣāda-amuddharsebhyah sambhavāt
27 Br. Up. āhāra-suddhau sattvā-suddhiḥ
immanent in human souls. 4) *kriyā* or the performance of five-fold religious duty which will provide inner mental strength. 5) *kalyāṇa* or development of ethical virtues such as honesty, integrity, compassion, benevolence, non-violence etc which will give inner purity. 6) *anavaśāda* or freedom from despair due to disappointments and unexpected calamities. 7) *anuddharsa* or not to be overpowered by excessive joy so that tranquility of the mind is not disturbed.

The *Vedānta-sūtra*, based on the text of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad* also refers to the need of the development of virtues as an aid to *upāsanā*, such as *śama* or calmness, *dama* or control of senses, *uparati* or inner satisfaction, *titikṣu* or patience and *samāhitatva* or equanimity.

In addition to the ethical discipline, the *upāsaka* embarking on *bhakti-yoga* is required to perform without fail, all the *nitya* and *naimittika* karmas or the religious duties laid down as obligatory by the sacred texts purely for the pleasure of God. As taught in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, he should also observe *karma-yoga* or the performance of prescribed religious acts without any attachment to the deeds and also to the results accruing from it, purely as a divine service for the pleasure of God. On the strength of these teachings of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā*, Rāmānuja emphasizes that under no circumstances the *upāsaka* should give up the performance of prescribed religious duties and that these have to be observed for the lifetime until the *upāsanā* is successfully completed, until the attainment of the Supreme Goal.

Thus *karma-yoga* and *jnāna-yoga* taught in the *Bhagavad-gītā* become an essential *āṅga* or subordinate means to *bhakti-yoga*. The word *manana* or *dhyāṇa* stated as one of the three features of *bhakti-yoga*, covers not merely the eight-fold yoga discipline, but also the observance of *karma-yoga* and also *jnāna-yoga*.

*Dhyāṇa*, which may be appropriately termed as *dhyāṇa-yoga* is primarily a mental act (*mānaśa*) in the form of unceasing loving meditation on *Paramātman*. The other two features of *bhakti-yoga* viz. *yajana* implied by the word *madhyājī* and *nāmākāra*.

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28 V.S. III-4-27 *samadāmy-upetasyāḥ...*
See also Br. Up. IV-4-23 *tasmāt evam viś ānāta uparitaḥ titikṣuh samāhitō bhūva ātmāṇyeva ātmānam paśyeyat*. Paśy[et]
represent the physical (kāyika) and oral (vācika) acts. The root word 'yaj' means pūja or worship and in the present context it refers to all the various modes of worship of God as laid down in the Pañcaratra treatises. Thus yajana in its broadest sense includes physical as well as oral acts such as arcana or worship in the form of recitation of the names of God, offering flowers, fruits and food, lighting lamps, offering incense and sandal paste. In other words, it covers as stated by Vedānta Deśika, the entire mode of worship prescribed by the Pañcaratra treatises.

It may be noted in this connection that the different modes of worship of God mentioned in the Bhāgavata-purāṇa such as śravāṇa or listening to the glory of God, kīrtana or singing, smarāṇa or contemplating His greatness, pādāsana or offering worship at His feet, arcana or offering flowers with recitation of His names, vandana or prostrating before God, dāsya or feeling utter dependence on God, sakhyam or loving disposition towards God and ātma-nivedanam or surrendering oneself to God – either singly or collectively will not constitute the direct upāya to mokṣa as believed by some of the Vaiṣṇava movements of post-Rāmānuja period. They only sub-serve bhakti-yoga, which as a rigorous religio-spiritual discipline is the direct means (upāya) to mokṣa. Thus, according to Rāmānuja, yoga in the sense of upāya, which is of the nature of bhakti-yoga, also named as upāsanā, nididhyāśana, dhīṇa and vidyā is not a simple meditation on the inner self or God, as propagated widely all over the world by several religious modern movements. But on the contrary, it is a rigorous multi-form ethical, religious and spiritual discipline to be undertaken by a spiritual aspirant and continued over a long time for the purpose of attaining God.

According to the teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā, bhakti-yoga can also serve as a means to attainment of other goals such as aīśvarya or worldly prosperity, kaivalya or the state of blissful existence of the self and artha or wealth. Accordingly the upāsakas or those who adopt the pathway of bhakti, are classified into four groups. The one who aspires for recovery of the lost wealth, jīnaṇa or the one who desires to attain the blissful state of one's self, arthārthi or the one who wishes to acquire material wealth and jīnaṇi or the one who craves to attain God. Of all these, jīnaṇi is held in high esteem because

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29 See Tatparya-candrika on RB IX-34, bhagavat-sastradi prapancita visayo 'yam yajir-itī.
30 Bhagavata VII-5-23
31 VS III-3-56 mana subhadibhedat. See also VS II-3-1.
he is the one who does meditation without any selfish purpose exclusively for attaining God. As stated in the Gītā, he is regarded by God as His dearest (ātyartha-priyaḥ). The bhakti-yoga, which we outlined in foregoing pages, as the direct means to mokṣa, is the best one. The thirty two vīdyaś or upasanas mentioned in the Upanisads are of the same nature as bhakti-yoga outlined in the Gītā, though they are named differently because of the differences in the description of the object of contemplation viz. Brahman in terms of its attributes as stated in the Vedānta-sūtra. Thus for instance, the upāsana on Brahman sat or the ground of the entire universe is named 'sad-vidyā'. The upāśanā on Brahman as an indweller in the inner recess of the heart (dahara-ākāśa or subtle space) is known as dahara-vidyā. As the goal of these upāsanās is the same, viz. the attainment of mokṣa, they are regarded as alternative means (vikalpa) as explained in the Vedānta-sūtra. In all these cases the mode of meditation along with the various ethical and religious requirements explained earlier in connection with bhakti-yoga, remains the same.

This is indeed an arduous pathway to mokṣa. It is beset with innumerable difficulties and hardships and it is almost impossible in the present epoch for anyone to pursue the bhakti-yoga. Even the most competent person like Arjuna who was fully instructed by a person no less than the very God-incarnate, expressed grief towards the end indicating his incapability for the observance of bhakti-yoga. At this stage, the benevolent Lord Kṛṣṇa, out of compassion and friendly disposition towards Arjuna comes out with the advice to adopt the method of absolute surrender as an easier and alternative pathway to mokṣa. This is the doctrine of Śaranāgati or Prapatti. The Vaiṣṇavism as expounded by Rāmānuja has adopted this important doctrine. This is also regarded as yoga since it is an upāya or means to mokṣa. It is essentially an ethico-religious discipline comprising six components and hence called sādāṅga-yoga analogous to aṣṭāṅga-yoga or the eight-fold discipline of the Yoga system. Though the concept of Śaranāgati is acceptable to all religious schools, its development as an alternative direct means (upāya) to mokṣa is unique to Vaiṣṇavism of Rāmānuja. It is therefore important that we include a brief outline of this distinctive doctrine of yoga in this chapter.

32 V.S III-3-56. nānāśabdādibhedat. See also V.S III-3-1.
33 V.S III-3-57 vikalpa avīśṭa-phālatvāt
The Doctrine of Śadaṅga-yoga or Śaraṇāgati

According to the *Pancaratra* treatises, which constitute one of the important sources of authority for Vaisnavism, there are only two ways to attain mokṣa. It is either bhakti-yoga or prapatti-yoga. Thus it is stated in the *Pancaratra samhita*:\(^{34}\) *bhaktīyā paramayā vā’pi prapatti>yā vā mahāmāte; prāpyo’hām nā’nyathā prāpyo mama kaĩkarya lipsubhīh* – “There are only two ways, either through the means of *para-bhakti* or prapatti, that I can be attained by those who crave to do divine service to Me. There is no other way”. Both are important means for mokṣa and have been advocated as alternative methods intended for two different categories of individuals having different capacities and conditions of eligibility. The Upaniṣads and the *Vedānta-sūtra* have given greater emphasis to bhakti-yoga, also known as upāsana, whereas the Vaiṣṇava treatises have accorded greater prominence to prapatti. The Bhagavad-gīta has provided details of bhakti-yoga and also briefly mentioned śaraṇāgati in a single verse in the concluding portion of the last *adhyāya*. But the details of the prapatti-yoga, which is more relevant to the present age because of its easy observance by those who are incapable of following any other method and who yet desperately crave for the attainment of God, are developed in the *Pancaratra* treatises by the mystic saints of South India who have themselves adopted this method and in other religious treatises of Rāmānuja.

Both have been sanctioned by the śruti and smṛti texts. Bhakti-yoga which is a rigorous discipline, is restricted to certain class of individuals. On the other hand, prapatti is recommended as an easier path intended for all, without any restriction of caste, creed and status of the individuals. In view of this, the Vaiṣṇava acāryas right from the time of Nāthamuni (9th cent), have given preference to prapatti and advocated it as the easier means of mokṣa. Prapatti has therefore assumed great significance in Vaiṣṇavism of Rāmānuja.

The term prapatti is derived from the words ‘pra-pad’. ‘Pad’ means to move and ‘pra’ means in the best manner. In the context of upāya, the term implies total self-surrender to God as the sole refuge. A more appropriate Sanskrit term for prapatti is Bharanyāśa or atma-nikṣepa, that is, to place the burden of protection of the self in the care of God.

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34 Quoted by Vedānta Desika in his *Rahasya-traya-sāra*, Chapter XXIX
It is also known as Saranāgati or seeking God as the sole refuge, as implied in the Gītā verse: ‘māmekām saranam vraja’. 

This is not the place to go into the details of this doctrine. We are only concerned here to explain how the observance of self-surrender to God is regarded as Śadaṅga-yoga, a six-fold yoga discipline or upāya to attain the Supreme Goal.

Before we outline the six components of Saranāgati, we should take note of two important conditions of eligibility to be fulfilled by an individual who resorts to this pathway. These are akiñcanya and ananya-gatitva. Akiñcanya means absolute inability on the part of the individual to adopt any other upāya for mokṣa such as bhakti-yoga aided by karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga, as taught in the Bhagavad-gītā. Ananya-gatitva means the deep conviction that no other person or Deity other than the Supreme Being (Viṣṇu) can protect the individual and secure mokṣa. Both Yāmuna and Rāmānuja have emphasized these points by imposing on themselves these qualifications, in their ardent prayer for Saranāgati.

The six components of Saranāgati as stated by Vedanta Deśika on the authority of the Pāñcarātra treatises are:

1) Ānukūlya-sāṅkalpa: That is, a determined will on the part of the aspirant to perform only such acts as would please God.

2) Prātikūlya-varjana: That is, to refrain from acts which would cause displeasure to God.

3) Karpanya: The feeling of humility arising from the helplessness of an individual in resorting to other means of salvation.

4) Mahāvīśvāsa: The absolute and unshakable faith in God as the sole protector.

5) Gopitrā-varana: To make a request to God, seeking his protection.

6) Ātma-nikṣepa: That is, entrusting the burden of protecting the individual self to the care of God.

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35 See Yamuna’s Stotra-rain verse 22: akiñcana ananyagatissaranya, tvad-pūdamūlam śaranam prapadye.

See also Rāmānuja’s Saranāgati-gadaya…anantakāla samikṣayāpy-adṛṣṭa santāropāyah.

36 For details see S.M.Srinivasa Chari – Vaisnavism, its Philosophy, Theology and Religious Discipline, Chapter 13.
Each one of these constitutes an important component of *Saraṇāgati* and bears far-reaching ethical and theological significance. The first two āṅgas have ethical significance since they involve right conduct by way of strictly obeying the commands of the Lord. The sacred texts have prescribed the religious acts to be performed by an individual and prohibited certain acts. These are like the commandments of God and by strictly following the dictum of *śastra* one incurs the pleasure of God and doing the prohibited acts one incurs His displeasure. An individual, being subservient to God, it becomes imperative for him to please God by doing the right things and avoid His displeasure by refraining from prohibited acts.

The third āṅga kārpaṇya or humility is an important mental trait to be developed by the aspirant for mokṣa. It helps to arouse the compassion of God.

The fourth āṅga, maha-viśvāsa or unshakable faith in God as the only saviour is the most important part of *Saraṇāgati*. Such a conviction enables an aspirant to perform prapatti without entertaining any doubt regarding its effectiveness to secure mokṣa for him.

The fifth āṅga, goptṛtva-varaṇa implies that the individual who seeks liberation should make a formal request to God to grant him mokṣa, following the general principle that one grants the desired object only when it is asked for.

The sixth part, ātma-nikṣepa or the act of surrendering the self to the care of God is the principal component of prapatti (āṅga). It is not to be understood as handing over one's soul to the care of God like offering a commodity to another person. The individual caught up in bondage from beginning-less time (due to ignorance) had assumed that the self belongs to him and that he enjoys full freedom, thereby developing a sense of egoism. After gaining philosophic knowledge through a preceptor, regarding the true nature of īśvātman and its relation to Paramātman, he realizes that the self belongs to Paramātman and that he is solely dependent on Him, that it is the property of God and that he does not have any power or capacity to protect it. Ātma-nikṣepa or self-surrender is thus a specific mental state (mati-viśeṣa) qualified by the three important notions a) The self is not mine, but the property of God (svarupa-samarpana), b) That its protection is the responsibility of God (bhara-samarpana) and c) That the happiness derived from its protection is that of God (phala-samarpana). Along with such a mental attitude, the
individual seeking mokṣa should pray to God formally requesting Him to accept the responsibility of protecting his soul. This is the implication of atma-nikṣepa and Vedānta. Dēśika has expressed this truth in one verse: ‘My self, the responsibility of protecting it, the fruit of its protection, is not mine; it is that of Śrīpati (God); it is in this manner that a wise person should surrender himself to God.’

There are numerous episodes in Itihasas and Puranas narrating the observance of Saranāgati by the celestial deities (devatas), the sages, human beings of all kinds and even the living beings of lower kind such as animals seeking the refuge of the Almighty for securing the desired goals including mokṣa. The saranāgati observed by Visbhīśāna seeking the protection of Rāma in the Ramayana is a classic example. The efficacy of Saranagati or prapatti as a means to mokṣa cannot be doubted if we bear in mind and are fully convinced about the noble qualities of the Supreme Ruler and the intimate relation of jīva to God. God is sarva-rakṣaka, one who is willingly ready to redeem all jīvas. He is saranāgata-vatsala, one who has natural loving disposition to those who seek His refuge. He is sahaja-suḥti, friendly towards all by nature. Besides these divine qualities He is sarvajña (omniscent), sarvasaktimān (omnipotent) and satyasaṅkalpa or one whose words of assurance to the devotee never go false. On the other hand, the individual soul belongs to Īśvara and by virtue of its intrinsic nature it has the potential right and capacity to enjoy the bliss of Brahma. All that stands in its way to attain the spiritual goal is the accumulated karma from a beginning-less time and it is to be overcome by securing the grace of God by the observance of either upāsanā or self-surrender. If we bear in mind all these facts, there should be no room for doubt as to whether God would ever respond to our sincere and ardent prayer seeking mokṣa.

Prapatti-yoga, as we have explained, is total self-surrender with an ardent prayer and with unshakable faith in God as the saviour to accept the responsibility of saving the individual self. This point has been brought out clearly in the final teaching imparted to Arjuna by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad-gītā in the following significant verse: ‘sarvadharmaṇ pariyajya māme kam īśāraṇam vraja; aham tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyami ma śucaḥ’. The implication of this verse, as correctly interpreted by the Vaiṣṇava acāryas, is that when an aspirant for mokṣa is incapable of observing the path of bhakti-yoga along with karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga, he should surrender himself to God. The all-compassionate and all-powerful God will redeem him from all the sins standing as

37. Sri Nyasadasaka, Verse 1.

38. Sāt. XvIII. 66.
obstacles to mokṣa. The aspirant does not have to grieve any more with regard to the attainment of the goal.

Thus according to the Vaiṣṇavism of Rāmānuja, yoga in the sense of upāya or the means to the attainment of the Supreme Spiritual Goal applies both to bhakti-yoga as enunciated in the Bhagavad-gītā, Upanisads and the Vedānta-sūtra and also to prapattī-yoga as expounded in the Vaiṣṇava treatises of the Rāmānuja school.