CHAPTER XIV

VEDĀNTA (continued)

B. Viśiṣṭādvaîta

This is the system which is associated with the name of Rāmānuja. Its most striking feature is the attempt which it makes to unite personal theism with the philosophy of the Absolute. Two lines of thought, both of which can be traced far back into antiquity, meet here and in this lies the explanation of a great part of its appeal to the cultured as well as the common people. It resembles in this respect the teaching of the Gitā, though it naturally shows greater systematization both on the religious and on the philosophical side. Historically speaking, the elements of thought combined here are distinct. The first of them, viz. theism, is of the Bhāgavata type, inculcating belief in a personal and transcendent God who saves, out of mercy, such as are wholeheartedly devoted to him and are for that reason described as ekāntins (‘single-minded’). The second element in the teaching is still older, being based upon the Upaniṣads. Of the two Upaniṣadic views to which we have alluded (p. 62), neither in its entirety proved acceptable to Rāmānuja, but his teaching is more like what is described as Brahma-pariṇāma-vāda than Brahma-vivarta-vāda. The ideas of the unity of ultimate reality and of its immanence in the universe, as also the doctrine that jñāna is the means of salvation, are derived from this source. As to the success with which the two teachings are synthesized here, we shall say a few words later; for the present, it will suffice to mention that the synthesis was not initiated by Rāmānuja, though that should not be understood as minimizing the value of his contribution to the final shaping of the doctrine. The attempt to bring together theism and the philosophy of the Absolute is very old and may be traced even in parts of Vedic literature.

1 See e.g. SB. I. iv. 27.
2 This, as we shall see, is termed bhakti by Rāmānuja.
itself. We know that a similar synthesis is found in the Gītā where, as in the Viśiṣṭādvaita, it appears with the added feature that the theism is of the Bhāgavata type, not directly traceable to the Veda. The same also is found in one or other of its various phases of growth in the Mahābhārata, especially in the section known as the Nārāyanītya (p. 100) and in the Purāṇas such as the Viṣṇu-pūrāṇa. Only, in the time of Rāmānuja there was a fresh circumstance, viz. the reaction against the purely absolutist philosophy of Śaṅkara and its seeming negations calling for a new formulation of this old synthesis. There was, for instance, the advaitic identification of the jīva and Brahman which explains the Viśiṣṭādvaita assertion of the reality of the individual or its attempt to give the Hindus their souls back,¹ as Max Müller has put it. It was as a protest against views like these that the doctrine was given out in the South about 1000 A.D., and systematized somewhat later by Rāmānuja.

The sources of authority for the doctrine are two-fold, for which reason it is described as Udbhaya-vedānta; one, the Veda including the Upaniṣads and works like the Purāṇas which are for the most part based upon it; the other, the literature of the South found in Tamil which, though largely indebted to Vedic teaching, undoubtedly contains elements of non-Vedic thought. Of the immediate predecessors of Rāmānuja in this work of synthesis we may mention Nāthamuni (A.D. 1000), none of whose writings, however, has yet been discovered, and his grandson Ālavandār or Yāmunācārya (A.D. 1050), whose several works form splendid manuals of the essentials of the Viśiṣṭādvaita as they were understood before Rāmānuja took up the work of systematization. They are Āgama-prāmāṇya, Mahāpuruṣa-nirṇaya which is designed to show the supremacy of Viṣṇu as against Śiva, Gītārtha-saṅgraha, Siddhi-traya and two hymns—Śrī-stuti and Viṣṇu-stuti. Rāmānuja or the 'prince of ascetics' (yati-rāja), as he is described, is reputed to have been his pupil's pupil and his commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra, known as the Śrī-bhāṣya, that on the Bhagavad-gītā² and his Vedārtha-

¹ The Upaniṣads were not explained by him separately and that work was left for a much later hand—Raṅgarāmānuja.
samgraha which gives an independent exposition of the creed, form the chief scriptures of the system. His other works are Vedānta-sāra, Vedānta-dīpa, Nitya-grantha, dealing with forms of worship, and Gadya-traya. Of those who came after him, we may note Sudarśana Sūri (A.D. 1300), the author of commentaries on the Śrī-bhāṣya and on the Vedārtha-samgraha. Then came Veṅkaṭanātha, better known as Vedānta Deśika (A.D. 1350), whose many-sided scholarship and long labours contributed much to establish the doctrine of Rāmānuja on a firm basis. First, he formulated even better than his predecessors had done the objections to the Advaita, taking into consideration the defence put up by its exponents since Rāmānuja’s time. Not only did he thus render the doctrine stronger on its critical side; he also undertook the task of internal systematization and set aside once for all whatever departures from strict tradition had taken place by his time.¹ His is the second great figure in the history of Viśiṣṭādvaita and the early promise he gave of his future eminence is well indicated by the following blessing which Varadaguru, a famous teacher of the time, is said to have bestowed upon the boy when five years old: ‘May you establish the Vedānta on a firm basis, vanquishing heterodox views; may you become the respected of the orthodox and the abode of abundant auspiciousness.’² His works are too numerous to mention here. Some of the chief among them are his Tattva-tīkā, an incomplete commentary on the Śrī-bhāṣya, Tātparya-candrikā, gloss on Rāmānuja’s Gītā-bhāṣya, Nyāya-siddhāṇjana, Tattva-muktā-kālāpa with his own commentary upon it called the Sarvārtha-siddhi and the Sataduṣaṇī which is a vigorous attack on the Advaita. The Yatindra-mata-dīpikā of Śrīnivāsaśācārya (A.D. 1700) is a short manual useful for beginners.

² Pratiṣṭhāpita-vedāntaḥ pratikṣipta-bahirmaṭaḥ:
   Bhūyāḥ traīvidya-mānyāḥ tvam bhūri-kalyāṇa-bhājanam
I

While Rāmaṇuja holds in common with many others that knowledge implies both a subject and an object, he differs essentially from them in certain other respects. The most important of these is that discrimination is essential to all knowledge and that it is impossible for the mind to apprehend an undifferentiated object. What is known is necessarily known as characterized in some way, its generic feature being in any case apprehended along with it. The importance of this view we shall appreciate by comparing it for instance with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika one of nirvikalpaka according to which isolated reals are all that are apprehended at first (p. 250). According to Rāmaṇuja, such a stage in perception is a psychological myth and the savikalpaka of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is itself primal. Any analysis of it into simpler elements is the result only of reflection and has nothing corresponding to it in the mental process as it actually takes place. This should not be taken to mean that Rāmaṇuja does not admit the distinction of savikalpaka and nirvikalpaka; only to him, the two alike involve a complex content.

Perceptual experience is termed nirvikalpaka when the object is cognized for the first time. It is primary presentation that does not call up any previous impression of the same. A child sees a cow, let us say, for the first time; even then it sees the object as qualified in some way. When it sees a cow again, the sight of it is accompanied by a revival of the former impression and it is this second or subsequent apprehension— the cognizing of the new in the light of the old—that is described as savikalpaka by Rāmaṇuja. While ‘This is a cow’ represents the form of perceptual experience at the nirvikalpaka level, ‘This also is a cow’ does the same at the savikalpaka. Accordingly the psychological development implied by ‘determinate’ perception is not from the

1 It is pointed out that if at the second apprehension the former impression is not revived, the knowledge will be only nirvikalpaka and that it will continue to be so till such revival takes place. See VAS. p. 51 (com.).
simple to the complex as in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika; rather the complex itself, hitherto new, ceases to be so and becomes familiar through it. To put the same in another way, while according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika only the savikalpaka involves judgment, the nirvikalpaka merely furnishing the material for it, according to the Viśiṣṭādvaita all perceptual experience alike involves it. The savikalpaka does not thereby become the same as recognition (pratyabhijñā): ‘This is that Devadatta,’ for the latter refers to one and the same object as perceived twice whereas the former arises when different objects of the same type are cognized. In both alike, no doubt, a present object is associated with the revival of a past impression: but while in the savikalpaka it is only the impression of the attributive element that revives, in recognition that of the particular individual (vyakti) also does. Further, though all perception equally entails judgment, recognition includes a specific reference to the distinctions of time and place in which the object is cognized on the two occasions. It is not only at the primal stage of perception that the unqualified object (nirviśeṣa-vastu) is not known; all jñāna, including that of the ultimate reality, is necessarily of an object as complex (saguna). \(^1\) This constitutes a radical difference from Śaṅkara, who represents the Upaniṣadic ultimate as nirguna (p. 373). ‘If the Upaniṣads describe Brahman as without qualities,’ Rāmānuja says, ‘all that the description can mean is that some qualities are denied while there are still others characterizing it.’ \(^2\)

To know the nature of jñāna, according to Rāmānuja, it is necessary to understand the classification of ultimate objects which is peculiar to his doctrine. To the well-known distinction between spirit and matter which are respectively termed cetana and jaḍa in Sanskrit, he adds another which is neither. Jñāna is of this intermediate type. It is unlike material entities in that it can unaided manifest itself and other objects neither of which is possible for them. But what it thus manifests is never for itself but always for another. That is, it can only show but cannot know. In this latter respect it is unlike spirit, which knows though it is unable,

\(^1\) SB. pp. 70-5.

\(^2\) SB. p. 71.
according to the doctrine, to show anything but itself. To
take an example from the physical sphere, jñāna is like light,
which can reveal the presence of a jar (say) as well as of its
own, but cannot itself know either, its revelation of things
being always for another. It exists not for itself but for some-
one else. Its teleology takes us beyond it. The classification of
things here is accordingly not into jaḍa and cetana, but jaḍa
('matter') and ajaḍa1 ('the immaterial'), where the second
term stands for cetana and what is unlike it but is yet
distinct from jaḍa. Jñāna pertains to one or other of the two
kinds of spiritual entities recognized in the system, viz.
jivas and Īśvara. It is consequently described as dharma-
bhūta-jñāna—literally ‘subsidiary or attributive jñāna’—
which implies that there is substantive jñāna also. The
various jivas and Īśvara are jñāna in this higher sense. They
are compared to the flame of a lamp to which belongs and
from which proceeds their dharma-bhūta-jñāna like rays.
This jñāna is supposed to be eternally associated with a
subject—whether jiva or Īśvara—and constitutes its unique
adjunct. When it ‘flows out,’ as it is expressed, from the
subject to which it belongs and comes into contact with an
object, it is able to manifest that object to it. Throughout
mundane existence, it functions in a more or less restricted
manner but it ever endures. Even in deep sleep it is; but it
does not function then and does not therefore show itself, the
theory being that jñāna is known only along with some object
or not at all.3 Then the jiva remains self-conscious along with
the unrevealed presence of its dharma-bhūta-jñāna. In
dreams, as will be seen in the next section, the actual presence
is postulated of the objects dreamt of. Hence jñāna also is
then known; but its action being much more impeded than
during waking, the knowledge of dream-objects is dim and
hazy. In mokṣa, on the other hand, entirely free action is

2 Jñāna, though attributive to jiva or Īśvara, is in itself regarded as
a ‘substance,’ as will become clear later.
3 In the case of Īśvara the dharma-bhūta-jñāna, being all-pervasive,
does not contract or expand; but yet it undergoes transformations.
The consequent changes of form are what are meant by divine
knowledge, divine grace, etc.
restored to it. It becomes all-pervasive, with the result that there is nothing then which falls outside its range. The liberated soul consequently knows everything. The analogy of the lamp and the rays may suggest that the dharma-bhūta-jñāna is of the same stuff as the jīva or Īśvara, but only appearing in an attenuated form. That, however, is not the view of Rāmānuja, who takes it as a distinct entity,\(^1\) though always associated with and dependent upon another. It is, however, difficult to see the reason for postulating two kinds of jñāna, except it be the desire to make spirit in itself changeless and thus harmonize the doctrine with the teaching of the Upaniṣads whose whole weight, as Śaṅkara is never tired of insisting, is in favour of its constancy (avikriyatva).\(^2\)

Jñāna operates through the manas alone or the manas as assisted by some organ of sense through which it streams out towards its objects which are supposed to be already there. Rāmānuja describes the process of knowing as starting from the soul, then reaching the manas and then, emerging through the senses, meeting the outside objects. When thus it comes into contact with an object, it is stated to assume the ‘form’ (ākāra) of that object and somehow reveal it to the subject in question. It is clear that the conception of dharma-bhūta-jñāna corresponds to that of the antahkaraṇa in the Advaita, which also is supposed to go out similarly towards objects and assume their form before giving rise to knowledge (p. 345). But while the antahkaraṇa in that doctrine is physical (jaḍa) and requires an extraneous aid, viz. the sākṣin, to transform it into jñāna, this is jñāna in itself. The aids it requires, like the manas and the indriyas, are only for determining its appearance in particular ways—as knowledge of colour, of sound, etc. It is not only knowledge that is regarded as a modification of dharma-bhūta-jñāna;

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\(^1\) According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the flame comes into being first and the particles of tejas which constitute its rays are supposed to radiate from it afterwards. Cf. SV. pp. 842 f.

\(^2\) That such is the aim will become clear when we consider the case of Īśvara, who by hypothesis is everywhere unlike the atomic jīva, and therefore does not stand in need of any such aid.
internal states like desire and anger are also its transformations, so that they are forms of knowing at the same time.

II

To turn now to the logical implication of knowledge.¹ We have just drawn attention in noticing Râmānuja’s description of the process of knowing to the fact that objects are viewed as existing before they are known. They are therefore to be reckoned as real; and, since they depend in no way upon the self or the knowledge which brings them into relation with it, their reality is not merely relative but absolute. Râmānuja traces this realistic view to the old teaching of the Veda, using terms in doing so which are reminiscent of the description of knowledge given in the Prābhākara school.² In particular, his view is described as sat-khyāti which means that what exists (sat) is alone cognized and that knowledge in the absence of a real object corresponding to its content (yathārtha) is inconceivable. It is not enough for securing the correspondence here meant, if something or other exists outside to serve as a presentative basis. Consistently with Râmānuja’s view that a bare identity is a metaphysical fiction and cannot be known, the character of the object also should be as it is given in knowledge. In other words, the agreement implied in knowledge extends from the that (prakārin) to the what (prakāra) also of the object presented. While it is easy to understand this position so far as normal perception is concerned, the question will arise as to how it can be maintained in the case of illusions where we seem to have knowledge without corresponding things. Râmānuja’s explanation of them is two-fold:—

1 In some cases the realistic position is maintained by him on the basis of the Vedāntic doctrine of quintuplication (pañci-karaṇa) according to which objects of the visible world, which are all compounds, contain all the five bhūtas or elements though in varying proportions (p. 65). Thus in the case of the mirage, what is being looked at is a heated

¹ SB. pp. 183–8.
² Yathārtham sarva-vijñānam iti veda-vidām matam. Cf. PP. p. 32.
sandy waste which contains not only prthivi, the preponderating part of it, but also ap and the other elements however slight; and the apprehension of water there, we have to understand, is therefore only of what is actually presented to the eye. But such an explanation may do only in cases where the object of illusion, as in the example given, is one or other of the five bhūtas. Illusions, however, are by no means confined to such rare cases. We may mistake shell for silver where neither is itself a bhūta. To explain such cases, Rāmānuja resorts to an extension of the principle underlying pañci-karana. The illusion of shell-silver is due, among other causes, to the similarity between the two things, viz. their peculiar lustre. This similarity means to Rāmānuja the presence in the shell, though only to an extremely limited extent, of the very substance which constitutes silver. Likeness is to him another term for partial identity of material,¹ and so what is perceived even here is what is actually presented. That is, Rāmānuja justifies his view of sat-khyāti in such cases by pointing to what is a fundamental tenet of his system, viz. the unity of the physical world and the structural affinity that is discoverable among the things that belong to it.

(2) In other cases like the white conch seen yellow by a person with a jaundiced eye a different explanation becomes necessary, for as the yellowness is admitted by all to be there outside the knowing self, viz. in the eye-ball, the point requiring elucidation is not whether it is real but how it comes to be seen as characterizing the conch. The explanation of Rāmānuja, which is based upon the theory of vision current at the time, assumes that the yellowness found in the diseased eye-ball is actually transmitted from there to the conch along with the 'rays' of the organ of sight (nāyana-raśmi) as they travel to it in the process of seeing and that the new colour thus imposed upon the conch obscures the whiteness natural to it. The conch is accordingly supposed to become actually yellow, though only for the time being. Here also then knowledge is of what is given in respect not only of the relata but also of the relation between them. To

¹ Tadeva sadṛṣam tasya yat taddravyaika-deśa-bhāk: SB. p. 184.
the objection that if the conch becomes actually yellow others also should find it so, the answer is given that the yellowness here is of too subtle a kind to be perceived by anyone who, unlike the person in question, has not followed it throughout its course of transmission.¹ The explanation is no doubt arbitrary and unconvincing; but what our present purpose requires us to note is the spirit of persistent realism that underlies it, not its scientific correctness. The question will readily occur as to how dreams are to be accounted for. There at least we seem to have experience without corresponding objects existing at the time. The explanation once again is arbitrary and it is stated, now on the authority of the Upaniṣads,² that objects like the elephant seen in a dream are not subjective but are present there at the time. ‘They are created by the supreme Person (parama-puruṣa),’ says Rāmānuja,³ and adds that the reason for creating such unique things is the same as in the case of objects of the waking state, viz. the providing of suitable means for the individual to experience pain or pleasure according to his past karma. ‘He creates these objects, which are special to each jīva and last only as long as they are experienced, in order that it may reap the fruits appropriate to the extremely minor deeds of virtue and vice it has done.’⁴

It is instructive to find out the significance of this twofold explanation. The yellow-conch and the dream-elephant are objects solely of individual experience; and though not unreal they last only as long as the illusion lasts and can, in the nature of the case, be testified to only by the person that sees them. The illusion of the mirage or the shell-silver also in a sense has reference to particular individuals; but the water and the silver perceived there by one, because they by hypothesis persist even after the illusion is over as actual parts of what is presented, are verifiable by all. This shows that Rāmānuja distinguishes two classes of objects—one which is cognized by all or many and may

¹ The analogy is here adduced of a small bird soaring in the sky which he, that has followed its course from the moment it began to fly, is able to spot easily but not others.
² Br. Up. IV. iii. 10.
³ SB. III. ii. 3.
⁴ SB. III. ii. 5.
therefore be called 'public,' and the other, special to single persons and may therefore be termed 'private.' But it must be distinctly understood that such a classification does not mean that he admits different types of reality—an admission which would place his doctrine epistemologically on the same footing as Śaṅkara’s Advaita (p. 350). In fact, it is in denying that there is such a distinction that he formulates the doctrine of sat-khyāti. In point of reality, private and public objects differ in no way. Both alike are outside and independent of knowledge, and both are absolutely real. A thing’s being private does not take away from its reality. Our pains and pleasures are personal to each one of us, but they are not the less real on that account.

However diverse the explanation in the two cases and whatever we may think of its scientific value, it is clear that the aim of sat-khyāti is to show that jñāna, including the so-called illusion, never deviates from reality and that even in the case of objects whose existence can be vouched for only by individuals, there is no ideal or purely subjective element. If all knowledge be equally valid, it may be asked how the distinction between truth (pramā) and error (bhṛma), which is universally recognized, is to be explained. It may appear to us from the examples cited above that error here is incomplete knowing. Thus in the case of the yellow conch, it is caused by our failure to comprehend its whiteness or, more strictly by our overlooking the fact that it is obscured. The omission and the consequent error are clearer still in the case of another example given—the ‘firebrand-circle’ (alāta-cakra) where a point of light, owing to its rapid movement, is mistaken for its locus, because while the fact that it occupies every point on the circumference is apprehended, the other fact that the occupation takes place successively and not simultaneously is altogether lost sight of. But we must remember that there may be elements of omission, according to the doctrine, even in truth. When for instance we perceive shell as shell, there is by hypothesis present in it silver, but it is ignored quite as much as the shell aspect is when the same object is mistaken for silver.

*SB. p. 187.*
Similarly in the case of the desert when we cognize it as such, our mind lets slip the element of ap supposed to be contained in it. The fact is that while sat-khyāti postulates that only what is given is known, it does not admit that all that is given is known. Knowledge, no doubt, is always of the given and of nothing but the given; but it need not be of the whole of what is given. It would not, therefore, be right to conclude that error in general is incomplete knowing. Since completeness like validity fails to differentiate truth from error, Rāmānuja enunciates a new principle, viz. that for knowledge to be true in its commonly accepted sense it should, in addition to agreeing with outside reality, be serviceable in life. When the mirage and the shell-silver are described as false, what we have to understand is not that water and silver are not present there, for in that case we could not have become conscious of them at all, but that they are not such as can be put to practical use. The distinction between truth and error comes thus to be significant only from the practical standpoint; from the theoretical one, it does not exist. All knowledge without exception is valid and necessarily so, but such validity need not guarantee that what is known is adequate to satisfy a practical need. A geologist may correctly adjudge a piece of ore as golden; but it does not mean that a bracelet (say) can be made out of the metal in it. This is the significance of including in the definition of truth not only yathārtha or ‘agreeing with outside reality,’ but also vyavahārānuguna or ‘adapted to the practical interests of life.’ If knowledge should conform to vyavahāra, it should satisfy two conditions. It must, in the first place, refer to objects of common or collective experience. It is deficiency in this respect that makes the yellow-conch and the dream-elephant false. Because their being private to a particular individual is overlooked at the time, they

1 The peculiar view upheld in sat-khyāti, however, makes one thing certain. There can be no errors of commission. Here is a point of agreement between Rāmānuja’s sat-khyāti and Prabhākara’s akhyāti. The two are not, however, identical. Compare Vedānta Deśika’s description of the former as akhyāti-samvalita-yathārthakaḥyāti in SAS. pp. 403–7. Yatindra-mata-dipikā, p. 3.
are confounded with the corresponding objects of the waking state; and this deficiency when discovered exposes their falsity. In the second place, it should comprehend the preponderating element in the object presented. The object we call shell may contain silver, but the shell part predominates in it; and it is this predominance that explains its being put to use as the one and not as the other. The silver, though certainly present, does not count practically on account of its slightness (alpatva); and this feature when discovered reveals the erroneous character of the knowledge in question. Pramāṇa not only apprehends rightly so far as it goes, but also goes far enough to be of service in life. Bhrama also is right so far as it goes; but it does not go far enough and therefore fails to help us in the manner in which we expect it to do. So when erroneous knowledge disappears and truth comes to be known, as Rāmānuja’s commentator says, the object (artha) is not negated but only activity (pravṛtti) is arrested.¹ The discovery of error, as we said in connection with Prabhākara’s view (p. 317), affects the reactive side of consciousness, not its receptive side.

Two important corollaries follow from such a view. The practical activities of life do not require a complete knowledge of our surroundings. It is enough if we know them approximately fully. In other words, purposive thought is selective, not exhaustive; and partial or imperfect knowledge is not necessarily a hindrance to the attainment of the common ends of life. The doctrine also recognizes a social or inter-subjective side to knowledge. So far as theoretic certainty is concerned, there is no need to appeal from the individual to common consciousness; for, as we have more than once remarked, it is in the very nature of knowledge without reference to its being peculiar to one or common to many to point to reality; but its serviceability depends upon the general though tacit testimony of society—upon the ‘common’ sense of mankind. These observations are sure to suggest a likeness between the doctrine of sat-khyāti and what is now known as Pragmatism. Both recognize the instrumental character of knowledge and adopt practical

¹ Jñāna-phala-bhūta-pravṛtti-bādhyatvam: SB. (com.) p. 185.
utility as the criterion of truth. But there is one important
difference. Rāmānuja admits the cognitive value of know-
ledge apart from the practical, whereas Pragmatism in its
familiar form makes no such distinction. Even in error,
there is some revelation of reality so that in adopting
the pragmatic attitude he does not relinquish the logical. In
fact, knowledge according to him has not one but two
functions to perform—to reveal reality and to serve the
purposes of practical life. Both are equally important; and if
either is to be emphasized more than the other, it would
undoubtedly be the former. In other words, Rāmānuja,
unlike the pragmatist, is interested in truth for its own sake
and values knowledge 'more for the light it brings than for
the fruits it bears.'

The theory which we have so far sketched very much
alters the nature of the epistemological problem. The question
to be decided about knowledge is not whether it is logically
valid or not—for by deficiency in this respect knowledge
would lose its very title to that name—but whether it has or
has not a bearing upon practical life. In other words, it is
not quality that varies in knowledge but relevancy. If we
take this along with what was stated above, viz. that even
truth commonly reveals reality only incompletely, we see
that the sat-khyāti doctrine contains the suggestion of an
ideal form of knowledge which is not only valid and has
practical value but is also complete or all-comprehensive.
This ideal of perfect knowledge, which we may deduce from
the premises of sat-khyāti, is actually recognized by Rāma-
uja as characterizing the jīva in mokṣa. Throughout
sāṃsāra, jñāna operates under limitations for defects of one
kind or another interfere with its free activity. Consequently
common knowledge, including pramā or truth, only half
reveals reality. Its full revelation is possible only in mokṣa
when all deficiencies are overcome and all possibility of
'error' is removed. Man's vision then becomes extended to the
maximum. 'It blossoms to the full,' enabling the liberated to
know everything fully and as it is.¹

As regards pramāṇas, Rāmānuja recognizes only three:

¹ Compare the kevala-jñāna of Jainism (p. 159).
perception, inference and verbal testimony. His conception of the first from the psychological as well as the logical standpoint has already been explained, and there is nothing of importance to be noted about the second. In regard to verbal testimony, Rāmānuja follows the Mīmāṁsakas in general and holds that its subject-matter is special to it—what never falls within the range of the other two pramāṇas. In agreement with the other Vedāntins he also maintains logical validity for assertive equally with injunctive propositions. Though resembling Śaṅkara in his views so far, he differs from him in other respects. It will suffice to refer to two of them here. The Veda, we know, is in two sections, which seem to contradict each other in what they teach; and, since both alike are looked upon as revealed, it becomes necessary for every school of Vedānta to explain their mutual relation in some manner. According to Śaṅkara, the two are really antithetical, and he gets over the antithesis between them by assuming that they are addressed to different classes of persons (adhikārin). The karma-kāṇḍa is intended for one who is still under the spell of avidyā and the jñāna-kāṇḍa, for one that has seen the hollowness of the activities it commends and is striving to transcend them. What is desirable and true from a lower standpoint is thus undesirable and not altogether true from the higher. Such a gradation of the teaching is permissible according to the Advaita with its belief in the relativity of pramāṇya (p. 359). Rāmānuja does not admit any such antithesis, and maintains that the two portions of the Veda together form but a single teaching intended for the same class of persons. They are complementary to each other in the sense that the uttara-kāṇḍa dwells upon the nature of God and the pūrva-kāṇḍa upon the modes of worshipping him. But such a co-ordination of the two sections, it must be added, presupposes that the pūrva-kāṇḍa is to be understood in the spirit of the Gītā teaching and that the various karmas taught in it are to be performed not for obtaining their respective fruits but for securing God’s grace. In thus attaching equal logical value to the two sections of the Veda, he differs not only from

1 *Yatindra-mata-dipikā*, p. 27.

2 See Note 2 on p. 332.
Śāṅkara but also from the Mīmāṃsaka who subordinates (p. 299) the Upaniṣads to the Brāhmaṇa portions (karma-kāṇḍa) of the Veda. The exact bearing of this view on the practical discipline prescribed in the Viśiṣṭādvaita for the attainment of mokṣa, we shall consider later. The second point of difference is that Rāmānuja reckons not only the Veda as revealed but also the Pāñcarātrāgama regarding the whole of it, unlike Śāṅkara, as eventually going back to a Vedic or some equally untainted source. The āgamas deal, generally speaking, with the worship of idols, particularly in temples; and the Pāñcarātrāgama, as distinguished from the Śaivāgama, is devoted to establishing the supremacy of Viṣṇu.

III

Rāmānuja recognizes as ultimate and real the three factors (tattva-traya) of matter (acīt), soul (cit) and God (Īśvara). Though equally ultimate, the first two are absolutely dependent upon the last, the dependence being conceived as that of the body upon the soul. Whatever is, is thus the body of God and he is the soul not only of inorganic nature but also of souls or jīvas. It is in this connection that Rāmānuja formulates the relation, so important in his system, of aprthak-siddhi or 'inseparability' which obtains between

1 To all appearance, Bādarāyana is against āgama. Compare Śāṅkara on VS. II. ii. 42–5.
2 This is known as the Ekāyana-śākhā. See SB. (com.) p. 559 (Madras Edn.).
3 The Vaikhānasāgama, which also upholds the supremacy of Viṣṇu, seems to exhibit closer kinship with the Veda.
4 Since according to Rāmānuja inorganic matter also is ensouled, God is its self only mediatly through the jīva (see VAS. pp. 30–1). Yet he is sometimes spoken of as being so directly. Cf. Rahasya-traya-sāra, iii. pp. 121–2 (Bangalore Edn.).
5 The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika postulates the relation of samavāya between things that are inseparable. The Viśiṣṭādvaita discards this relation as superfluous and views inseparability itself, which it regards as the nature (svarūpa) of the two relata, as aprthak-siddhi. Strictly it is not therefore a relation (see SB. II. ii. 12); but it is still sometimes spoken of as a sambandha. (Cf. SAS. p. 590.)
substance and attribute and may be found between one substance and another. It may be described as the pivot on which his whole philosophy turns. It is parallel to, but not identical with, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika samavāya. The two agree in so far as the relata which they bring together are regarded as quite distinct and real; but while samavāya (p. 235) is an external relation, the conception of aprṭhak-siddhi is that of an internal one. The example given in illustration of it, viz. the relation between body and soul, brings out clearly its intimate character. The body is defined by Rāmānuja as that which a soul controls, supports and utilizes for its own ends. Matter and souls, being the body of God, are to be regarded as directed and sustained by him and as existing entirely for him. The inseparable unity of matter, souls and God—the first two being entirely subject to the restraint of the third in all their forms—is the Brahman or Absolute of Rāmānuja. Since Rāmānuja identifies the relation here involved with that between the body and the soul, his conception of the Absolute may be described as that of an organic unity in which, as in a living organism, one element predominates over and controls the rest. The subordinate elements are termed višeṣaṇās and the predominant one, višeṣya. Because the višeṣaṇās cannot by hypothesis exist by themselves or separately, the complex whole (viṣīṣṭa) in which they are included is described as a unity. Hence the name ‘Viṣīṣṭādvaīta.’

This conception of unity may be illustrated by taking a common example like a ‘blue lotus.’ Here the blueness is quite distinct from the lotus, for a quality cannot be the same as a substance. But at the same time the blueness as a quality depends for its very being upon a substance—the lotus here, and cannot therefore be regarded as external to it. The complex whole of the flower in question is, in this sense of necessarily including within itself the quality of blueness, spoken of as a unity. It will help us to understand this view well if we contrast it with those of some other

1 SB. II. i. 9. This intimacy of relation is expressed thus—niyamena ādheyatvam, niyamena vidheyatvam, niyamena śeṣatvam.
2 Cf. SB. p. 132 (com.): Viṣīṣṭāntarbhāva eva aikyam.
schools. Rāmānuja recognizes a real distinction between the quality of blueness and the substance of lotus. Hence his view differs from the Advaita for which all distinctions are alike only apparent. It differs likewise from the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika though maintaining a real distinction between the two entities, because it regards that they are not external to each other. But this should not lead us to think that Rāmānuja, like Kumārila (p. 323), advocates the bhedābheda view for he does not admit identity of any kind whatsoever between the entities supposed to be distinct, the unity affirmed being only of the complex whole. The term 'Viśiṣṭādvaita' is more usually explained in a somewhat different manner—especially in interpreting verbal statements affirming unity like Tat tvam asī. But the idea underlying it is the same. If we take the proposition 'The lotus is blue,' the quality of 'blueness' according to this explanation, because of its attributive character, points necessarily to some substance to which it belongs. This blue substance is a complex whole. The lotus also may similarly be looked upon as a complex whole, comprising the attributive element of 'lotus-ness' and a substance which it characterizes. The identity that is expressed by the proposition is of these two complexes. Or, in other words, the two terms—'blue' and 'lotus'—have distinct meanings but refer to the same substance (prakāryadvaita). What is signified is not therefore a bare identity which excludes the viśeṣāṇas. It includes them and it is their difference that calls for an affirmation of identity in the above sense. Otherwise we may be misled into thinking that the two complexes are distinct. In the example that we have taken, there is only one viśeṣāṇa. There may be several, which again may be co-existent or may appear in the viśeṣya successively. When for instance we think of a youth whom we knew as a child, the two viśeṣāṇas due to distinction of age appear one after the other; but they do not lie outside the unity of the individual in question. Such identity is found not only in the case of substance and its attributes as the above examples may suggest but also in that of substance and its modes, e.g. clay and jar. In fact, it obtains wherever we

1 Cf. SB. pp. 75, 204-5; VAS. pp. 50, 97-8.

2 SB. p. 132.
have inseparable correlatives. Of two such entities, the major member is designated prakārin; and the minor, prakāra.

The central point of the teaching of the Upaniṣads, according to Rāmānuja, is the unity of Brahman in this sense; and he, like Śaṅkara, cites in support of his view the two kinds of co-ordinate propositions that occur in them—one, affirming the identity of the soul and Brahman, and the other, that of Brahman and the material world. But he differs totally from him in their interpretation. Before stating his explanation of them, we must briefly refer to another aspect of the doctrine. According to Rāmānuja all things that are, are eventually forms or modes (prakāra) of God. Similarly all names are his names, so that every word becomes a symbol of God and finally points to him. This deeper significance of words, described as vedānta-vyutpatti, is what only the enlightened comprehend. According to it no word ceases to signify after denoting its usual meaning, but extends its function till it reaches the Supreme. In fact, it is only the latter that is conceived as the essential significance of a word. Now let us select for illustrating Rāmānuja’s interpretation the well-known Upaniṣadic maxim—Tat tvam asi. The term tvam in it which commonly stands for the jīva really points to God who is the jīva’s inner self (antaryāmin) and of whom the jīva and, through it, its physical body are alike modes. What the term tat means in it is also the same, but viewed in a different aspect, viz. God as the cause of the universe, as shown by the context in which it occurs in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. The identity meant by Tat tvam asi, according to the explanation of the term viśiṣṭādvaita given above, is of these two complexes—God as the indweller of the jīva and God as the source of the world. The final import of the statement is that though the world and the individual souls are real and distinct, the Absolute in which they are included is one. ‘They are eternal with God but are not external to him.’ In the advaitic interpretation of the same, the distinction due to the viśe-

1 Some exceptions are made. See SB. pp. 205-7.
2 Aparyavasāna-vṛttīḥ śabda-vyāpāraḥ. Cf. VAS. p. 36.
3 SB. pp. 198-9.
shaṇa elements is rejected as but an appearance though, as we have tried to show, no identity as such is taken to be implied by it (p. 374). Here the distinction is not denied; and, at the same time, the organic unity of the whole is affirmed.

This is only a general account of the Viśiṣṭādvaita view of Reality. To state the same now more in detail: Rāmānuja recognizes, as it is clear by now, the distinction between substance and attribute; but the attributes are not further distinguished, as in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, into guṇa, karma, jāti, etc.¹ and are comprehensively termed adravya or 'what is other than substance.' There are thus only two main categories of which the second, adravya, is always and necessarily dependent upon the first, dravya, although neither, in consequence of the unique relation that obtains between them, can be or be thought of apart from the other.² The adravyas are reckoned as ten. Five of them are the qualities of the five bhūtas—sound, etc.—and the next three are the guṇas in the special sense of sattva, rajas and tamas, which are the characteristics of matter (acit) or prakṛti. Three of the adravyas are thus general; and five, specific. Of the remaining two, śakti or 'potency' is that property of a causal substance by virtue of which it produces the effect, e.g. plasticity in clay, attractive power in a magnet, burning capacity in fire. The tenth adravya is saṁyoga, by which is meant as in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika an external relation like that between the floor and a jar.

Not only is adravya distinct from dravya in this system; the dravyas themselves are to be distinguished from one another. But what is a dravya?³ According to the Viśiṣṭādvaita conception, whatever serves as the substratum of change is a dravya. It means that Rāmānuja accepts the pariṇāma-vāda or sat-kārya-vāda. But it is the attributive elements (viṣeṣaṇa) alone that change, for which reason the

¹ Karma or action is explained as mere disjunction and conjunction and therefore as expressible in terms of saṁyoga and its opposite, vibhāga. Jāti, as in Jainism or in the Sāṅkhya-Yoga, is only a certain disposition of the several parts constituting the thing. Abhāva is conceived positively as in the Prābhākara school.
³ SAS. p. 590.
complex whole (viṣiṣṭa) is also spoken of as undergoing modifications. The substantive element (viṣeṣya) in itself is changeless. God viewed as the viṣeṣya is changeless and the soul also is so,¹ but the dharma-bhūta-jñāna which belongs to them changes. Matter, which is entirely a viṣeṣāna, itself changes.² The relation between it and its transformations, say, clay and jar is, as already pointed out, aprthak-siddhi. But if we consider a lump of clay (pīṇḍa) which, and not mere clay (mṛt), is regarded here as the material cause of the jar, the relation between them is stated to be identity (ananyatva, literally, ‘non-difference’). Whatever difference there is between the two is explained away as the material is the very same, though the disposition of its constituent parts in them may differ.³ There are six dravyas answering to this description; and they are divided into two classes—jaḍa and ajaja, as already explained. The jaḍa includes prakṛti and time (kāla); and the ajaja—dharma-bhūta-jñāna, nitya-vibhūti or śuddha-sattva, jiva and Īśvara. We shall now add a few words of explanation regarding each of these:

(1) Prakṛti.—This is the dwelling-place of the soul and, through it, of God himself. Nature is thus alive with God. ‘Earth’s crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God.’ We shall best understand its character as conceived in this system by contrasting it with the Sāṅkhya view of it with which it has much in common. The chief differences are: (i) The three guṇas—sattva, rajas and tamas—are supposed in the Sāṅkhya to be its constituent factors, and prakṛti is merely the complex of them all. Here, on the other hand, the guṇas are conceived as characterizing it so that they are distinct although inseparable from it. (ii) The prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya is infinite, but here it is taken to be limited in one direction, viz. above, by the nitya-vibhūti of which we shall speak presently. (iii) In the Sāṅkhya, prakṛti is theoretically independent of the puruṣa, but here it is entirely under the control of spirit, i.e. jiva or Īśvara. The relation between them is aprthak-siddhi so that neither

¹ Not all viṣeṣānas therefore change, though whatever changes is necessarily a viṣeṣāna. ² SB. III. ii. 21. ³ SB. II. i. 15.
admits of separation from the other. Owing to this difference, Rāmānuja’s conception of prakṛti is much superior to the Sāṅkhya one. The entities evolved out of prakṛti and the order of their evolution are exactly as stated under the Sāṅkhya.

(2) Kāla.—Time is viewed here as real; but it is not outside the sole reality recognized, viz. Brahman or the Absolute, though it does not merge in it. So it does not subsist by itself, as it does according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika (p. 229). Nor is it but a phase of prakṛti as in the Sāṅkhya-Yoga (p. 270). Time also, like prakṛti of which it is the companion, so to speak, admits of change or undergoes pariṇāma; and moments, days, etc., are represented as its evolutes. Unlike time, space is derived from prakṛti and is included only through it in the highest reality. Of prakṛti and time, neither can be said to be prior to the other; but the same cannot be said of space, for prakṛti is prior to it.

(3) Dharma-bhūta-jñāna.—As we have already dealt with this, only a few words need be added now. It characterizes jīvas or Īśvara and is always, as its name indicates, secondary to them, the relation between them being inseparable. It is conceived as both a dravya and a guṇa—a dravya inasmuch as it, through contraction and expansion, is the substrate of change; a guṇa inasmuch as it is necessarily dependent upon a dravya, viz. jīva or Īśvara and cannot be by itself. It is knowable as in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, but by itself and not through another jñāna (p. 251), for it is self-luminous and shows itself though it cannot become self-conscious.

(4) Nitya-vibhūti.—We have seen that prakṛti is characterized by the three guṇas. If of these we leave out rajas and tamas and conceive of it as characterized only by sattva, we get an idea of nitya-vibhūti and see why it is called śuddha or unalloyed sattva. On account of this peculiar character, it ceases to be material (jaḍa) and becomes ‘immaterial’ (ajāda) in the sense already explained. It is sublimated prakṛti, a sort of super-nature. Since, however, the three guṇas are represented here as constant attributes or qualities

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1 The term guṇa here means ‘secondary’ and does not bear the significance which it does in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika.

2 SB. p. 83.
of prakṛti and not as its constituent factors as in the Sāṅkhya, it becomes hard to imagine how any one of them can alone be conceived of as a characteristic when the contrast of the other two is removed. Further, according to the explanation given, prakṛti and nitya-vibhūti possess a common feature, viz. sattva, and therefore prakṛti also to that extent should be non-material. In that case its entire separation from the ajaḍa category would not be quite accurate. These discrepancies are in all probability to be explained as due to the system being eclectic in its details, and have led the later Viśiṣṭādvaitin to differentiate between the two sattvas and declare that they are altogether distinct (vilakṣaṇa). Except in this important respect, nitya-vibhūti is similar to prakṛti. Briefly it is the material out of which the things of the ideal world, and the bodies of God and of the liberated souls are made. It is 'matter without its mutability' and has been described as a fit means to the fulfilment of divine experience. The domain of nitya-vibhūti is limited below by prakṛti but is infinite above. Vaikuṇṭha, the city of God, is supposed to occupy a part of it. Though a sharp demarcation is made between prakṛti and nitya-vibhūti, the latter, it is stated, is found within the region of the former as for instance in the holy idols worshipped in sacred places like Śrīraṅgam, those idols being viewed as permeated through and through by this material. The reverse cannot happen and prakṛti does not encroach upon the region of nitya-vibhūti.

(5) Jīva.—In dealing with dharma-bhūta-jñāna, we have already referred to the nature of the jīva. It is of the essence of spirit and has dharma-bhūta-jñāna always associated with it. In these respects consists its essential affinity with God. The jīva is not here, as in the Advaita, merely the assumed unity of individual experience, but an eternal reality. In its natural condition of mokṣa, its jñāna expands to the maximum, reaching the ends of space, and there is nothing then which it fails to comprehend. In samsāra as a whole the jñāna is more or less contracted, but never absent,

1 See Vedānta Deśika: Rahasya-traya-sāra.
not even in deep sleep where it only ceases to function and does not therefore reveal objects. The jīva itself, apart from its jñāna, is viewed as of atomic size—a mere point of spiritual light, and its functioning in places where it is not, as for example in seeing distant things, is rendered possible by the expansion and contraction of its dharma-bhūta-jñāna. ‘Though monadic in substance it is infinite in intelligence.’

The jīva is not merely sentience; it is also of the essence of bliss. This aspect of the jīva’s nature again will remain more or less obscured in samsāra, becoming fully manifest only when liberation is achieved. The diminution in its capacity to know or to enjoy is temporary; when released, it is restored to its omniscience and eternal happiness. The jīva with its physical body derived from prakṛti and with God for its indweller is the meeting-point, so to speak, of the material and the divine which explains the gulf which often separates man’s ideal aspirations from his actual life. The jīvas are infinite in number, and in addition to those that are on their trial here (baddha) or have already achieved their salvation (mukta), the doctrine recognizes what are described as nitya which have never been in bondage. They are beings like Viśvaksena who have from all time been attending upon God. Each jīva is in reality both a kartā and a bhoktā, i.e. an active and purposeful being. It is also free and God, who is its ‘inner ruler immortal,’ must be supposed to control it without interfering with the freedom that belongs to it.

(6)Īśvara.—The conception of God also in the system has by this time become clear, rendering it unnecessary to say much about it now. Īśvara too is of the nature of spirit or intelligence and is of the essence of unsurpassed bliss. Like the jīva, he also possesses dharma-bhūta-jñāna whose transformations constitute his several psychical states. Owing however, to his omnipresence, there is really no need for such an aid in his case; and its postulation is intended solely to secure constancy to spirit in itself. The term Īśvara is used in a double sense. First, it stands for the entire universe

2 VAS. pp. 139-42.
3 VAS. p. 249.
with all its spiritual and material elements included in it. In this sense, Ṣiva may be thought of in two stages—as cause and as effect. In dissolution (pralaya) he subsists as the cause with the whole of the universe latent in him; in creation (sṛṣṭi), what is latent becomes manifest. Subtle matter becomes gross; and souls, expanding their dharma-bhūta-jñāna, enter into relation with physical bodies appropriate to their past karma. The causal form includes within itself everything that is required for the development signified by creation, so that Ṣiva is the whole and sole cause of it. In other words, God is self-determining and the universe develops from within unassisted by any external agency (p. 82). It is because he grows into this cosmic variety that he is called 'Brahman' (p. 54). That would ascribe change to God which is against the prevalent teaching of the Upaniṣads; but Rāmānuja tries to explain the difficulty away by holding that the change is only to be secondarily understood—as sa-dvāraka. God does not suffer change in himself, but only through the entities comprehended in the whole of which he is the inspiring principle. But it is not easy to see how he can be said to remain changeless when his inseparable attributes are changing. This Ṣiva in himself, regarded as the unchanging centre of the changing universe, is the other meaning of the term. Such an Ṣiva of course does not exist isolated by himself, but it is still legitimate to make the distinction because the viśeṣya element in the Absolute, like the viśeṣaṇas, is real and ultimate. In the former sense, Ṣiva is the Absolute of Rāmānuja; in the latter, he is the antar-yāmin and dwells within whatever is—whether soul or matter.

This absolutist view which is chiefly based upon the Upaniṣads is intertwined in the system with the details of a theistic creed which, historically speaking, goes back to a different source. In that phase, God is conceived as completely personal. He is looked upon as having pity for erring man and as actuated by a desire to show mercy to him. Benevolence, indeed, is one of his essential features. He is known as Nārāyaṇa or Vāsudeva, and the latter designation is a sign of the presence in the doctrine of elements drawn from the
Bhagavata religion. He is also known as Para or the Supreme. In this form he dwells in his own citadel Vaikuṇṭha which, as we said, occupies a corner in the domain of nitya-vibhūti. He manifests himself in various ways to help his devotees: One of the most important is known as vyūha. It is four-fold: Vāsudeva—a differentiation within Para. Vāsudeva and therefore to be distinguished from him—Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. They are all incomplete manifestations, and God appears in them in different garbs. Another way in which the Supreme manifests himself is as avatārs (p. 98) which are well known. They are classed together as vibhava. Still another manifestation is known as the antaryāmin whose presence within is common to all the jivas and who guides them like a friend. It is God incorporate—possessing a rūpa—and should be distinguished from the one referred to above which bears the same name and which, as taught in the Brhadrānyaka Upaniṣad, is the essence (svarūpa) of God. The last of the manifestations, called arcāvatāra, is as holy idols worshipped in sacred places like Śrīraṅgam.

Now as regards the success with which the two teachings have been assimilated here: The attempt, so far as it aims at identifying the ultimate of philosophy with the ultimate of religion, has its undoubted excellences. But it is one thing to think of the two as the same and quite another to try combining a particular philosophic doctrine with a particular religious creed. The theistic creed that finds place in the present synthesis had, as the result of its long history, developed a host of concrete details, not all of which for lack of adequate rational support could fuse with philosophy. The philosophic doctrine included in it was, on the other hand, the result of one of the most daring speculations in the whole field of thought; and its conception of Reality was the least personal. Hence there are some discrepancies in the doctrine resulting from the synthesis, such as those we had occasion to mention in speaking of the notions of antaryāmin and nitya-vibhūti. Another instance of the

1 Yatindra-mata-dīpikā, p. 88.  
2 II. vii.  
same disaccord is found in what we shall point out in the
next section, viz. the retention in the doctrine of the ‘esoteric
restriction’ of the saving knowledge of bhakti by the side
of the popular pathway to release of prapatti. The fact is
that the Vaiṣṇava religion was there in all its completeness
in the time of Rāmānuja. As a practical creed, it had indeed
served human needs in an excellent manner and given rise
within its fold to more than one saint of pre-eminent mystical
power. But it lacked support from the Upaniṣads and this
lack of support should have become the more conspicuous
after Śaṅkara had expounded them in a specific manner.
The attempt made in the Viśiṣṭādvaita was to secure for
Vaiṣṇavism the needed support. It was thus practical
exigency rather than any organic connection between the
two teachings that led to their synthesis. We may illustrate
best the resulting discrepancy by reference to the conception
of the Absolute in the system. Rāmānuja admits several
ultimate entities, but holds at the same time that there is
only one Being—that of the viśeṣya, all the attributive
elements deriving their being from it.\(^1\) If all these entities are
existentially one, it is difficult to see how the distinction
between them can be ultimate. It is just this lack of inde-
dependent being that the Advaitin means when he denies
reality to elements of diversity in the Absolute.\(^2\) If to avoid
the above difficulty we assume that each viśeṣaṇa has its
own separated being, the absoluteness of the Absolute vanishes
and it will be hard to think of it as a unity except in a secon-
dary or figurative sense. The only other alternative is to define
the relation between the several entities constituting the
Absolute as bhedābheda, thus predicating both identity
and difference of them. But such an explanation, even
supposing it is logically sound, is, as already pointed out,
totally unacceptable to Rāmānuja. The notion of aprthak-
siddhi on which the conception is based is as imperfect as
that of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika samavāya which it is intended to
replace. The only difference is that while samavāya tries

\(^1\) Cf. SB. II. ii. 31. See also the discussion of this point by Raṅgara-
mānuja in his com. on Mundaka Up. I. i. 3.
\(^2\) See Note 1 on p. 353.
to unite what are supposed to be distinct, aprthak-siddhi tries to separate what is supposed to be one. Both alike represent efforts to seek what it is not possible to have, viz. a half-way house between inclusion and exclusion. The system, so far as it is based on Vaiṣṇavism, endeavours to secure ultimate reality for the souls as well as matter; but loyalty to the Upaniṣads drives it to modify it, thus rendering the result logically unsatisfactory.

IV

As in the Advaita, the practical discipline here also begins with karma-yoga in the Gītā sense, which purifies the heart and fits a person for knowing the truth; but it is quite different in what follows. The training that is distinctive of the Viśiṣṭādvaita is two-fold:

(1) Jñāna-yoga.—This means meditation upon the jīva after knowing its true character through śravaṇa or study of the scriptures under a proper guru. Those only that have achieved success in karma-yoga can enter upon it. Its object is to realize how the self is different from its several accompaniments like the body, senses and so forth with which man usually identifies it and how attachment to them impedes spiritual progress. When this yoga is carried to fruition, the discipline does not terminate, for according to Rāmānuja, the jīva though an ultimate fact is not the Ultimate. The disciple may have succeeded in realizing his nature in relation to the physical environment; but there yet remains the task of discovering the same in relation to God, the highest fact of the universe. Man cannot, according to Rāmānuja, know himself truly until he knows God. The means prescribed for such knowledge is termed bhakti-yoga.

(2) Bhakti-yoga.—This marks the culminating stage of the discipline. It presupposes a reasoned conviction regarding the nature of God as taught in the Viśiṣṭādvaita, and those alone that have successfully pursued jñāna-yoga in the sense just explained can begin it. Bhakti here is equated with dhyāna and may therefore be taken as upāsana or meditation taught in the Upaniṣads, provided we remember that it
implies also love. It is not a mere austere concentration of
the mind on Reality, but a loving contemplation of a
personal God.¹ There is also another implication in it which
is equally the result of the conception of the jīva character-
istic of the doctrine, viz. the feeling of one's absolute
dependence (śeṣatva) upon God as the sole power in the
universe. Bhakti-yoga also thus consists in meditation like
jñāna-yoga; but it is meditation that is suffused with
feelings of love and dependence. Success in this part of the
discipline results in the attainment of what may be described
as divine vision, actual mokṣa resulting when the soul is
severed from the probation of flesh. This is in accordance
with the ancient ideal of finding release in a life hereafter,
and no jīvan-mukti as such (p. 19) is recognized here as in
Śaṅkara's Advaita.

Another important difference from the Advaita is that the
obligation to perform karma is not a feature of the preparatory
stage only. It continues even when one enters upon bhakti-
yoga, so that the ideal of karma-samnyāsa as known to the
Advaita (p. 339) is rejected here. Man should never abandon
karma of the nitya variety or unconditional duties, for he
will then become sinful and miss salvation on account of
neglecting what is enjoined in the Veda. So far Rāmānuja
agrees with Kumārila. But there is here the positive purpose
that bhakti, which has been described as 'salvation in
becoming,'² might grow through karma and ripen into
intuition. Adherence to karma in this stage is not therefore
for subjective purification as in the earlier one, but for advanc-
ing further and further in the life of the spirit. And karma,
with its purpose thus transformed, will continue till the very
end, for the immediate experience of God is not believed to
arise until the moment before departing this life. The disci-
pline for mokṣa thus consists of both jñāna and karma; yet
it is the former alone that is regarded as the direct cause of
release, the latter being taken to be only an accessory and
not a co-ordinate aid. Hence, though insisting upon the
performance of karma throughout life, the Viśiṣṭādvaita like

¹ Cf. Sneha-pūrvam anudhyānam bhaktih. Quoted in SB. p. 35
(com.).
² IP. vol. ii. p. 705.
the Advaita (p. 379) does not advocate what is known as samuccaya-vāda.¹ Before we close this topic we must draw attention to the widening in its scope which karma undergoes in the system. It includes not only whatever is prescribed in the Veda but also prayer and devotional worship as understood in Vaiṣṇavism (kriyā-yoga).²

As in the other Indian systems, mokṣa is conceived here also as freedom from mundane existence. But over and above this is the idea here of reaching a supra-mundane sphere and there enjoying in the presence of God the highest bliss. The imperfect prākṛtic body of the jīva is then replaced by a perfect one, so that release does not mean here a dis-embodied state as it does in many another doctrine. It is this ideal world—'the Highlands of the blest'—that is constituted out of āttva-sattva. Picturesque descriptions are given of the place. There God is seated on his white throne and is served by his consort Lakṣmī—interceding on behalf of man—and by all the souls of the nitya and mukta variety. It is a place of absolute peace and perfection, and the joy of all there lies in following the will of the Supreme. When a bound soul is liberated, it is led to this region and, welcomed by all there, it is at last received by God as his very own. An account of the triumphal progress of the spiritual pilgrim till he arrives at the throne of the Lord is given in the first chapter of the Kaiṣṭhāki Upaniṣad.

This is the normal or regular means to release. But a person, to follow it, must belong to one or another of the three higher castes of Hindu society; for it is only such that are qualified to receive instruction in the Veda and the Upaniṣads. So the course described heretofore becomes considerably narrowed in its usefulness. The Viśiṣṭādvaita therefore recognizes along with it another pathway to God which any one, irrespective of caste or rank, may follow. That is known as prapatti.³ The word is derived from pra-pad, meaning 'to take refuge with' or 'to piously resign,' and points to a belief that salvation is obtained through free grace. It is described as saranāgati or flinging oneself on God's compassion. It consists in absolute self-surrender,

¹ SB. III. iv. 26. ² Cf. VAS. p. 5. ³ See Gadya-traya, iii.
and signifies a resolve 'to follow the will of God, not to cross his purposes, to believe that he will save, to seek help from him and him alone and to yield up one's spirit to him in all meekness.'¹ In one of its forms described as 'resignation in extreme distress' (ārta-prapatti), it is believed to bring deliverance immediately. A single moment of seriousness and sincerity is considered enough; and this also testifies, in the eyes of the Višiṣṭādvaitin, to its superiority over bhakti which means a long and laborious process of training. The inclusion by Rāmānuja in his doctrine of a means to salvation which is accessible to all, explains the wide popularity it has always commanded; and the social uplift of the lower classes to which it has led is of great value in the history of India. But it is outside our purpose to dwell upon that aspect of the Višiṣṭādvaita at any length. Rāmānuja attaches so much importance to prapatti that he makes it essential to bhakti also in its final stages.² He maintains that it represents a form of knowledge and is not therefore in conflict with the Upaniṣadic view that jñāna alone is the means of release—an explanation rendered necessary by prapatti being the distinctive characteristic of Vaiṣṇavism rather than of the Vedānta. The prominent place given to it in the teaching shows the need for absolute self-suppression whatever course of discipline a person may follow. Though zealously upholding the persistence of personality, Rāmānuja commends the cultivation of an attitude which makes one feel and act as if that personality did not exist. He means thereby that it is not belief in a permanent self but selfishness which is the enemy of true life.

¹ Ānukūlyasya saṁkalpaḥ prātikūlyasya varjanam:
Rakṣīyatīti viśvāsaḥ goptṛtvā-varaṇam tathā:
Ātma-nikṣepa-kārpaṇye śaḍvidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ.
² See com. on BG. xviii. 66.