The import and significance of the word “मत्तपः” in verse 2.61 of the Bhagavad-gītā
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The import and significance of the word “मत्तरः”

**Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation of the word ‘मत्तरः’**

The last word of the first line of verse 2.61 of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is the compound word ‘मत्तरः’ which forms part of an aphoristic instruction of the Lord – “आसीत मत्तरः”. This write-up is an attempt in the direction of understanding the heart of Bhagavān as to the import of this succinct, yet profound advice. The verse under consideration occurs in the set of verses that comprises Bhagavān’s detailed response to Arjuna’s queries about what the marks of a *sthitaprajña*, a man of steady wisdom, are, how he speaks, sits and moves about. Here is the verse:

तानि स्वार्णिण संवृय युक्त आसीत मत्तरः।
कव्ये हि यस्मेऽन्त्रां तस्म प्रेषा प्रतिद्विता।। (2.61)

(Controlling all of them, one should remain concentrated on Me as the Supreme. For the wisdom of one whose organs are under control becomes steadfast.)

The word ‘मत्तरः’ has been interpreted by Bhagavatpāda as: “मत्तरः: अहं वासुदेव: स्वर्गस्त्रगत्वा पर: यस्म स मत्तरः: ’न अन्यांहेत तत्समात्’ इति आसीत इत्यथः।” (He to whom I, Vāsudeva, the inmost Self of all, am the Supreme is ‘matparah’. The idea is he should remain (concentrated) as, “I am not different from Him.”) Incidentally, we have three other instances of ‘मत्तरः’ occurring in the *Gītā*. In 6.14, the Lord says: “मन: संयोग्य मनितो युक्त आसीत मत्तरः:” and Bhagavatpāda expatiates on ‘मत्तरः’ as “आहं पर: यस्म सोदर्य मत्तरः:” In 18.57, the Lord says, “चेतसा स्वर्गस्त्रगतिः मथि संवृयत्व मत्तरः:” and Bhagavatpāda’s *bhāṣya* on the word ‘मत्तरः’ of this verse is: “आहं बायुदेवः पर: यस्म”. There is also another place where the word ‘मत्तरः’ appears in its plural form ‘मत्तरः:’. “यें तु स्वार्णिण कर्माणि मथि संवृयत्व मत्तरः:।(12.6) Bhagavatpāda comments upon ‘मत्तरः:’ as, “आहं पर: चेष्ट ते मत्तरः:”. As we can note, in all the above four...
instances, the compound word ‘मतरः’/‘मत्यरः’ has been interpreted uniformly by Bhagavatpāda excepting that, in His commentary on verse 2.61, He has deemed it fit to insert a sentence “न अन्याः तस्मात्” which has an obvious advaitic connotation.

**Objections against Bhagavatpāda’s advaitic interpretation**

The advaitic expatiation of Bhagavatpāda of the word ‘मतरः’ viz., “न अन्याः तस्मात्” is not agreeable to the Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the Dvaitins as is evident from their writings. For instance, Sri Jayatīrtha, a reputed sub-commentator on the works of Madhvācārya writes in his sub-commentary on the Gītā: ‘मतरः’ इत्यद्वितः ज्ञानमन्येवैव्यायतम | तथाश्च नासरीतियास्यवान् व्याप्तेः – अहंमेवेति | (‘मतरः’ has been interpreted as non-dual knowledge by the others (advaitins). It is not valid. Deeming that such an interpretation does not follow the letters of the text (Gītā) it has been commented upon (by Madhvācārya) as “Me alone…”. The idea is that the sādhaka should deem that, “I, Bhagavān alone, am the highest of all.”

While Rāmānujācārya and Sri Vedantadeśika do not convey their disagreement with Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation in so many words, Uttamur Veeraghavachariar, a staunch Viśiṣṭādvaitin and an author of many Viśiṣṭādvaitic works, says in his “भूमिका” to the commentary of Rāmānujācārya: “यदि ‘तानि सर्वाणि संयम युक्त आसीत मतरः’ (2.61) इत्यत मतपरशाद्य जीवप्रमादैवैथर इति व्यायामम, तदपि स्थितिविषमतम। मतपरशाद्य हि अहं परो यस्माद्विति विभिन्न हुतुक्रममहिषिष्ठेष: स्वभवमत्क इत्येवार्थ गमयेत। न तु स्वाभिभ्रममत्क इति। मदेदशक: मदासत इत्येवमयेर्यभेदमहिषिष्ठेतेवावकाशः किंवा रस्वरजः रसोःस्य परं द्रष्टा निविद्यते इत्युक्तमयस्तात। अतो रसवशाल इतिवाचाप्रामणं हर्नित प्रसंस मन: इतुक्तता तत्तितहार्मार्गेऽपि वदिमवते। तताद्विजोश्वैवपरिहारे कुपुरितस्ते, इतिवाचाप्रामणं संयम जीवप्रशर्मपावन कुरु इति वर्णनं कथं घटतात। अत: शोभपरिहारक्रमविकार्यकवध्वनिमत्यानमोपदेशत्वम्। अत: मदीपदिव्यमयाक्रमविध्वस्तु शुभाश्चायस्य व्याप्यविविधवशुद्धि निवार्य व्यायायवानां भवेतुपदिविद्विद्वातैं प्रकृते वक्तव्यम्। अतो भवेतुकोश्च: सर्वगोवास्यत।” (Where the word ‘मतरः’” in the verse
‘तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आशीर्मत्येऽ’ (2.61) has been interpreted as denoting the non-difference between the *jīva* and the *paramātman*, that (too) is against what is in the text (*the Gītā*). The word ‘मत्यर्:’ when expanded as “He in relation to whom I am Superior” can only denote a person who is different from the superior ‘Me’, i.e., one different from ‘Me’. It does not refer to someone who is non-different from Me. Even in the meanings like ‘मदासत्कः:’ ‘मदात्मसत्कः:’ (He whose goal is Myself, He who is attached to Me) etc., there is no room for the notion of non-difference. Moreover, it was only in the previous verse it was uttered by the Lord, “रसवजगतरसोऽपरंपरंते।” Therefore, the Lord, having said that being under the sway of the taste, the sense organs forcefully draw the mind away now advises Arjuna the remedy. There, when Arjuna is desirous of knowing how to control the agitating senses, how is this explanation, “Having controlled the senses, meditate with the idea of non-difference between the *Jīva* and the Supreme”, appropriate? Therefore, for controlling the agitation of the senses, meditation on something that captivates one’s heart is to be prescribed. That is why it is to be interpreted here that the Lord advises a *sādhaka*, “Meditating on My divinely auspicious form, eradicating the impurities in the senses, be intent on what is to be meditated upon”.

Even a staunch advaitin like Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvati, a famed commentator on the *Gītā*, chooses to interpret the word ‘मत्यर्:’ as, “मत्यर् इति - अहं सर्वात्मां बायुदेव
एव पर उवकृष्ट पापदेवः यस्य स मत्यरः। एकात्ममद्रः: इत्यथः।” (He is called *matparah* to whom I, Vāsudeva, alone, the Self of all, am the Supreme, the most excellent goal to be attained. That is to say, he should be absolutely devoted to Me.)

Sri Dhanapati Sūri, the author of the sub-commentary “*Bhāsyotkarṣa-dipikā*” who usually makes it a point to critically analyse the writings of Sri Madhusudana Saraswati or Sri Nilakanṭha whenever they make statements that are radically different from that of Bhagavatpāda’s, keeps silent on this
occasion for reasons known only to him; nor does He try to justify the bhāṣya or bring out its excellence. He merely restates the bhāṣya passage!

Thus, when none of the independent commentators of the Gitā we have considered here share Bhagavatpāda’s view and even the sub-commentators of Bhagavatpāda do not defend or praise His interpretation but only re-state His words, one gets curious to understand why Bhagavatpāda chose to interpret the verse in the way He did. Moreover, it is not in all the four instances of the occurrence of the word ‘मन्वरः’ that Bhagavatpāda has provided the additional advaitic remark. As seen earlier, for verse 18.57, we do not find His additional advaitic explanation. In view of this, an opponent of the Advaita school could even opine that Bhagavatpāda is inserting advaitic flavour into the verse. Thus, a thorough analysis of the various interpretations seems necessary for us to appreciate how Bhagavatpāda’s commentary alone represents the heart of Bhagavān.

**Interpretation of the word ‘मन्वरः’ by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins**

Rāmānujācārya, in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, does not specifically expatiate on the word ‘मन्वरः’. However, he does talk about the role of ‘मन्वरः’ in good detail. “विष्णुनारायणकुक्तया हृदियांनीन्द्रियाणि संयमय चेतन: शुभास्वयमभूते मधि मन: अवस्थाय समाहित: आसीत। मनसि मद्दुष्ये सति निरदेशकृत्तियासंकल्पतया निमंत्रलक्ष्मण विष्णुनारायणिः मन इन्द्रियाणि स्वऽक्षानि करोति। ततो वर्षयिन्द्रियेन मन आत्मदर्शनाय प्रभवति॥” (One has to conquer the senses which are difficult to subdue on account of their attachment to sense objects. So, focusing the mind on Me who am the only auspicious object for meditation, let him remain steadfast. When the mind is focused on Me as its object, then such a mind, purified by the burning away of all impurities and devoid of attachment to the senses, is able to control the senses. Then the mind, with the senses under control, will be able to experience the Self.)
From the commentary, it is clear that Rāmānujacārya has taken the word-ordering of the first line of verse 2.61 as it is found in the original text—“तांन स्वर्णिम संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्तर:”. From the commentary, it is also clear that Rāmānujacārya takes ‘मत्तर’ to mean focusing of one’s mind on the Lord in order for it to be cleansed of impurities; a purified mind is what can control the senses completely. Vedāntadeśika, the reputed author of Tātparya-candrikā, a sub-commentary on Rāmānujacārya’s Gitā-bhāṣya interprets the words “शुभाश्रयाभ्यूष्ठ मथि” as follows: “मत्तर इत्यय वक्ष्यविनिविविश्वणिविविश्वस्य सिद्ध शुभाश्रयाश्रयश्रयत्व चेतत्स इन्दिना विभूतम्।” Sri Vedāntadeśika clarifies that the greatness of the auspicious form of the Lord is what is intended to be conveyed by Bhagavān when He says ‘मत्तर;’ and that is what has been explained by Rāmānujacārya as ‘…focusing the mind on Me who am the only auspicious object for meditation, let him remain steadfast.’

Bellamkonda Sri Ramaraya, a staunch advaitic writer, in his sub-commentary Bhāṣyārkaprakāśa on Bhagavatpāda’s bhāṣya, attacks the position of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins: “तत्र मत्तर: चेतत्स शुभाश्रये मथि मनोविनिविनिविविश्वणिविविश्वस्य सिद्ध शुभाश्रयाश्रयश्रयत्व चेतत्स इन्दिना विभूतम्।” (Rāmānuja’s explanation of ‘matparaḥ’ as “…focusing the mind on Me who am the only auspicious object for meditation...” is stupid because there is no possibility of the sāṁkhya, a man of stable wisdom, being engaged in dhāraṇā or dhyāna just like a yogin. Moreover, the man of stable wisdom, who is a knower of Brahman of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, does not specially imagine some form on the Self and meditate on it, for what is imagined is only false, imagination involves strain and there will also be misery because the imagined form does not remain for long on account of its momentary nature.)
Possible objections against Sri Rāmarāya’s rebuttal of Rāmanujacārya’s view

Sri Rāmarāya’s position is that a man of stable wisdom will not meditate on Īśvara with form and so, Rāmanujacārya’s explanation of ‘मन्त्रल’ is flawed. Unfortunately, however, even to an advaitin, this reason, advanced by Sri Rāmarāya to attack the view of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, may not seem sufficient for the purpose. Besides, a person who has not understood the idea behind Sri Rāmarāya’s words can object as follows: If a man of stable wisdom, while embodied, can continue to remain in the world of names and forms, sit, talk, move about and give advices to his disciples, heavens will not fall if he were to engage in the worship of Īśvara with form. In the question of Arjuna itself, we find him asking the Lord as to how a sthitaprajña would sit, talk and go about. Many are the verses in the Gītā instructing us as to how a man of wisdom will conduct himself in the world. After all, all the transactions of a jīvanmukta pertain to the gamut of ‘कल्पित -imagined’ as he does not act at all, in reality. Here are some verses from the Gītā itself that would vouch for this:

सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा कुर्वन्द्रपि न रिप्याते । (5.7)  नैव किष्किषकोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्चितित ।
पदयन-श्रवन-स्मरण-जिज्ञास-अभ्य-गच्छन-स्वपन-धसन । (5.8)  प्रत्ययन-बिसुजन-गँगा-उमियान-निमित्तयापि
इन्द्रियार्णीन्द्रियाधिष्ठित वर्तन्त इति धारयन ॥ (5.9)

(The Self of all beings does not become tainted even while performing actions. Remaining absorbed in the Self, the knower of Reality should think, “I certainly do not do anything’, even while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, speaking, releasing, holding, opening and closing the eyes – remembering that the organs function in relation to the objects of the organs. )

Did not Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Gītācārya, Himself, engage in severe penance to propitiate Lord Śiva and obtain His divine sight? Can any one say that Lord
Kṛṣṇa was not a Brahmat. In the Anuśāsanika-parvan of the Mahābhārata, the Lord Himself explains His penance: (I liked the description of the tapas and the darśan of Lord Śiva in the words of Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself and so I am including this wordy narrative. This portion, which is enclosed in square brackets and runs to a full page, could be skipped while reading, as it is not required for the analysis on hand.) [“Eight days, O Bhārata, passed there like an hour, all of us being thus occupied with talk on Mahādeva. On the eighth day, I underwent the dikṣā (initiation) according to due rites, at the hands of that brāhmaṇa and received the staff from his hands. I underwent the prescribed shave. I took up a quantity of kuśa blades in my hand. I wore rags for my vestments. I rubbed my person with ghee. I encircled a cord of muñjā grass round my loins. For one month I lived on fruits. The second month I subsisted upon water. The third, the fourth and the fifth months I passed, living upon air alone. I stood all the while, supporting Myself upon one foot and with my arms also raised upwards, and foregoing sleep all the while. I then beheld, O Bhārata, in the firmament, an effulgence that seemed to be as dazzling as that of a thousand Suns combined together. Towards the centre of that effulgence, O son of Pāṇḍu, I saw a cloud looking like a mass of blue hills, adorned with rows of cranes, embellished with many a grand rainbow, with flashes of lightning and the thunder-fire looking like eyes set on it. Within that cloud was the puissant Mahādeva Himself of dazzling splendour, accompanied by his spouse Umā. Verily, the great Deity seemed to shine with his penances, energy, beauty, effulgence and His dear spouse by His side. The puissant Maheśvara, with His spouse by His side, shone in the midst of that cloud. The appearance seemed to be like that of the Sun in the midst of racking clouds with the Moon by His side. The hair on my body, O son of Kunti, stood on its end, and my eyes expanded with wonder upon beholding Hara, the refuge of all the deities and the dispeller of all their grief. Mahādeva was adorned with a diadem on his head. He was armed with his śūla. He was clad
in a tiger-skin, had matted locks on His head, and bore the staff of the hermits in one of His hands. He was armed with His *pināka* and the thunderbolt. His teeth were sharp-pointed. He was decked with an excellent bracelet for the upper arm. His sacred thread was constituted by a snake. He wore an excellent garland of diversified colours on His bosom that hung down to His toes. Verily, I beheld Him like the exceedingly bright moon of an autumnal evening.” Lord Kṛṣṇa, the world teacher Himself, who had mediated on Lord Shiva for months together, describes thus how the fruit of His penance, the divine sight of the Lord was.]

Instances such as these could be culled from the *Itihāsas* and the *Purāṇas* as also from the lives of saints who were knowers of Brahman to show that Brahmavīts could and did meditate on the Lord with form. It is not something ‘impossible’ in their case. Of course, in lighter vein, it could be said that the Viśiṣṭādvaitins would not have cited this incident from the *Anuśāsanika-parvan* to rebut the view of Sri Rāmarāya as this episode portrays Lord Viṣṇu as propitiating Lord Śiva. Be that as it may.

In the *Mahābhārata* itself, we read an incident where Bhishma’s mind was intently fixed on the Lord while he was on the bed of arrows. One morning, Dharmarāja went to Kṛṣṇa in order to pay homage. He found Kṛṣṇa seated in the *padmāsana* (lotus seat) pose, meditating deeply, with teardrops rolling over His cheeks. Dharmarāja wondered whom He was meditating upon. At last, when Kṛṣṇa opened His eyes, he dared ask Him the question and Kṛṣṇa replied that He was exulting over the devotion of a great soul towards Him. He said that it was no other than Bhīṣma, whose mind was intently fixed on Him even while he was on the bed of arrows. Was not Bhīṣma a *brahmavit*?
There is another argument to repudiate the reason advanced by Sri Bellankonda Ramaraya. The verse under discussion, “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य…” is not about a man of stable wisdom, a sthitaprajña, but pertains to a sādhaka who is endowed with the knowledge of the Self and is marching on his way to become a sthitaprajña. Otherwise, the advice in the form of specific instructions of the Lord, “Controlling all these (sense organs)…” etc., would be purposeless. On that count, a Viṣistadvaitin may be justified in asking Sri Rāmarāya why a sādhaka should not meditate on the Lord with form in order to control his senses and become fit to engage himself in the meditation of the Ātman. We will see more of this in the sequel.

Sri Uttamur Veeraraghavachariyar’s rebuttal of Sri Rāmarāya’s view

We have already seen that Sri Uttamur Veeraraghavachariyar, in his भूमिका to the book containing the commentary of Rāmānujićārya and the sub-commentary of Sri Vedāntadesākika, clarifies the position of the Viṣistadvaitins, while counter-attacking the rebuttal of Sri Rāmarāya. He writes, “यदिप ‘तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्तर्’ (2.61) इत्यत्र मत्तरशास्त्रस्य जीवपरमात्मकक्यं इत्य व्याख्याम, तदिप विश्लेषितम्। मत्तरशास्त्रो न अहं परो यथार्थितम विमर्शे उन्तकृष्ठमद्विशिष्टं: स्वभिषेकम् इत्येवांग गमयेत्। न तु स्वभिषेकम् इति। तडुनेष्यकः: मदाकल्य इत्येवमथ्येवभद्मल्लिततेनैवावकाः। किंचत् ‘सर्वसः रसोध्यम्य परं द्रुष्य निवर्तेन’ इत्युत्क्रमस्तात्। अतो रसवशात् इत्यद्वाणि प्रमाधीनि हर्षिति प्रसंस्य मन: इत्युक्ता तत्परिहारं उपदिवस्ततेऽः। तत्रत्रत्रशोभिनिहरे बुद्धिस्तते, इत्यद्वाणि संयम्य जीवपरमात्माबावन ‘कु रु’ इति वर्णनं कर्तं घटतम्। अत: शेषपरिहारकथितक्षेत्रकोशुस्यामघरस्यविधिबंधुद्विषयों् वा इति। तत: मद्यरित्वामज्जातव्रिष्णुस्य शुभाभ्यमयस्य व्याप्तिकृत्वेदिवदेशितानन्तर्यामयप्रकारस्यविधिवेदिशि… (Where the word ‘मत्तर्’ in the verse ‘तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्तर्’ (2.61) has been interpreted as denoting the non-difference between the jīva and the paramātman, that (too) is against what is in the text (the Gītā). The word ‘मत्तर्’ when expanded as “He in relation to whom I am Superior” can only denote a person who is different from the superior ‘Me’, i.e, one different from ‘Me’. It does not refer to someone who is non-different from Me.
Even in the meanings like ‘मदासकः’ (He who is attached to Me) etc., there is no room for the notion of non-difference. Moreover, it was only in the previous verse it was uttered by the Lord, “रसवजनयोगस्य परं द्वपा निवर्तते।”. Therefore, the Lord, having said that being under the sway of the taste, the sense organs forcefully draw the mind away now advises Arjuna the remedy. As such, when Arjuna is desirous of knowing how to control the agitating senses, how is this explanation, “Having controlled the senses, meditate with the idea of non-difference between the Jīva and the Supreme”, appropriate? Therefore, for controlling the agitation of the senses, meditation on something that captivates one’s heart is to be prescribed. That is why it is to be interpreted here that the Lord advises a sādhaka, “Meditating on My divinely auspicious form, eradicating the impurities in the senses, be intent on what is to be meditated upon”.

A major reason behind the interpretation of “मत्स्यः” by Rāmānujaśārya

Rāmānujaśārya seems to think that there is a major reason why ‘इियिनमहं’ can be had only through meditation on Bhagavān. Let us read the pertinent verses and then revisit his view on the matter. The first verse in the set of verses dealing with the sthitaprajñalakṣaṇas is:

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्तवधापायो मनोगताः।
आत्मन्येवात्मना तु: स्थितप्रजात्मद्विव्यति॥ (2.55)

(O Partha, when one fully renounces all the desires that have entered the mind, and remains satisfied in the Self alone by the self, then, he is called a man of steady wisdom.)

यदा संहराते चावरे कृमीऽजानीव सवर्धः।
इन्द्रयाग्निनिन्दयायेयस्य सवर्धः प्रात्मिति॥ (2.58)

(And when this one fully withdraws the senses from the objects of the senses as a tortoise wholly (withdraws) the limbs, then his wisdom remains established.)
रसवं रसोऽपस्य परं द्रव्य निवर्तते ॥

(2.59)

The objects recede from an abstinent man, with the exception of the taste (for them). Even the taste of this person falls away after realizing the Absolute.

यत्तथः कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः

इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाधीनि हर्न्ति प्रसभ्य मनः ॥

(2.60)

(As is well-known, O son of Kunti, the turbulent organs violently snatch away the mind of an intelligent person even when he is striving diligently.)

In His commentary on the above verse, Rāmānuja ārya argues: "एवम् इन्द्रियजय आत्मदर्शनाधीन आत्मदर्शनम् इन्द्रियजयाधीनम् इति ज्ञाननिध्य दुःखाया॥ (Thus, the subduing of the senses depends on the vision of the Self and the vision of the Self depends on the subduing of the senses. Consequently, i.e, because of the mutual dependence, firm devotion to knowledge is difficult to achieve.)

The next verse, the one under our discussion (तानि सर्वाणि…), is what according to Rāmānuja ārya solves this problem of the aforesaid mutual dependence. In his commentary for this verse which we have already seen, Rāmānuja ārya says: सवस्त्य दोषस्य परिजीविश्वा विषयायायागुच्छत्वा हुज्जायानीन्द्रियाणि संयंत्य चेतसः.शुभाश्रये भूते मनः अस्त्याय समाहितः. आत्मितः मनसि मन्द्रिष्ये सति निरंतरारोहकत्वत्वा निरंतरस्वते विषयायानुगारहितः मन इन्द्रियाणि स्ववशानि करोति।ततो वद्येन्द्रियं मन आत्मदर्शनाय प्रभवति॥" (With a desire to overcome this mutual dependence (between the subduing of the senses and vision of the self), one has to conquer the senses which are difficult to subdue on account of their attachment to sense objects. So, focusing the mind on Me who am the only auspicious object for meditation, let him remain steadfast. When the mind is focused on Me as its object, then such a mind, purified by the burning away of all impurities and devoid of attachment to the senses, is able to control the senses. Then the mind with the senses under control will be able to experience the self.) Thus, the mutual dependence in the advice of the Lord makes it mandatory for one to resort to the Lord for sense control.
To sum up the position of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins up to this, it could be said that they take ‘मरः’ to mean focusing of one’s mind on the divinely auspicious form of the Lord in order for the mind to be cleansed of impurities; a purified mind is what can control the senses completely and then engage in ātma-dhyāna for the vision of the self. Thus, a sādhaka engaged in nididhyāsana on the Ātman should first resort to meditation on Bhagavān for restraining his senses.

A Critical Analysis of the View of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins

The following analysis is attempted at without questioning the position of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins that ‘मरः’ is not about non-difference between the jīva and the Paramātman. The idea is to ascertain whether the interpretation proposed by them is consistent within their own framework and does not conflict with the teachings of Bhagavān.

The very first impression one gets even at a superficial glance of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins’ viewpoint that ‘मरः’ indicates meditation on the auspicious form of the Lord for the control of the senses is that the idea does not flow directly from the words of Bhagavān. One could be a ‘मरः’, i.e., a person who regards Bhagavān as the Supreme, but it does not mean he would be meditating on Bhagavān just because he is a ‘मरः’. As for the words ‘युः’ or ‘आसीत’, they do not specify on whom or what the focus should be. ‘युः’ merely means, “being integrated or absorbed”. Even when the words ‘मरः’ and ‘युः आसीत’ are read together, they do not directly specify what Rāmānujaścārya says. Thus, Rāmānujaścārya’s interpretation of the first line of the śloka,“चेतस: शुभायो भवेति मध्य मनः: अवस्थाय विद्याय मद्यकपे सति निद्दर्शोपकल्पतया सति समेतीकृत विषयानुरुगागिति मन इन्द्रियाणि स्ववशानि करोति। ततो वशयन्त्रं मन आत्मद्वाराय प्रभवति” as well as Sri Vedāntadesiṣṭa’s additional comment ‘दिव्यमहाजिविनि’ appear to be forced ones. In his notes, Sri Uttamur Viraraghavacharya says that the meditation recommended for a person who begins ātma-dhyāna is on the
divyamaṅgalavigraha of the Lord and that the meditation prescribed for one who has had ātma-sāksātkāra is on the divya-ātma-svṛūpa of Bhagavān. How is one supposed to understand from “मियः” that the divya-mangala-vigaraḥ and not the divya-ātma-svṛūpa of Bhagavān has to be meditated on?

Bhagavān does not specify that the meditation prescribed is on His form

The Viśiṣṭādvaitins may argue that even though there is no specific word ‘मियः’ to indicate the object of meditation, it can be inferred from the context. The answer is that the context is meditation on the Ātman, which the Viśiṣṭādvaitins too accept, and hence, one cannot arrive at an arbitrary conclusion that the Lord has currently changed the object of meditation from Ātman to the divine form of Himself just because there is the word ‘मियः’. A further question that arises is whether Bhagavān would stop with a not-so-specific ‘मियः’ type of indirect upadeśa, if He wanted to impart an advice such as “Meditate on Me”, when the context is meditation on the Ātman. The answer is ‘No’, for we see in the Gītā that whenever Bhagavān wants the devotee to keep his mind focused on Him, He has not shied away from specifically saying so. Do we not come across the Lord’s advice, “मच्छमः मनसंविश्वासमय।” (B.G.12.8) (Fix the mind on Me alone; in Me alone rest the intellect)? So, it is very unlikely that He would have merely said ‘मियः’ to advise the sādhaka to focus on Him. Let us consider the following verse:

चेतसा सर्वक्माणि मयिसंन्यासमय मियः |
बुद्धियोगमुपायमयिः सततं भव || 18.57

(Mentally surrendering all actions to Me (चेतसा सर्वक्माणि मयिसंन्यासमय) and accepting Me as the Supreme (मियः) ever remain as (सततं भव) someone whose mind is fixed on Me (मयिः) by resorting to buddhiyoga (बुद्धियोगमुपायमयिः). Here, Bhagavān does not require us to supply a ‘मियः’ before ‘संन्यासमय’ just because there is already a ‘मियः.’ In other words, Bhagavān does not stop with saying “मत्यभस्म् चेतसा सर्वक्माणि संन्यासमय।” He employs the word ‘मियः’ also. Further, He
does not seem to think that the word ‘मरः’ itself is sufficient to ask a śādhaka to concentrate on Him but that some other specific advice ‘मिति: भव’ is required to make the devotee think of Him. If according to Rāmānujācārya, however, ‘मरः’ itself is sufficient to prescribe the focusing of one’s mind or thoughts on Bhagavān, the word “मिति:” occurring in tandem along with ‘मरः’ in this verse would be an instance of tautology on the part of Bhagavān. Thus, as Bhagavān, whenever He wants the devotee to meditate on Him, clearly specifies it, He would have done so in verse 2.61 also, if only His intention was to ask the śādhaka to meditate on His form. Hence, it could be concluded that as far as words of the verse 2.61 are concerned, Bhagavān’s intention does not seem to recommend to the devotee to meditate on His holy form. However, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins aver that before meditating on the jīvātmā one should meditate on the form of Bhagavān for the purpose of effecting control over one’s senses.

The words, per se, of the “तां स्वाणिः...” verse need not directly lead one to the interpretation of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, but if their theory is immaculate, fits the context and is in consonance with the words of Bhagavān, they would be justified in adding a word or two when interpreting the verse. After all, any commentator’s job is to interpret the words of the original text in some perspective. Taking this stance, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins may add a word or two to interpret “मरः:”. It is perhaps with this in mind that Rāmānujācārya argues that “इन्द्रियज्ञ आत्मद्विनाधीन आत्मद्वस्यम्, इन्द्रियज्ञाधीनम् इति ज्ञाननिधा दुष्पाया ॥ (The subduing of the senses depends on the vision of the self and the vision of the self depends of the senses. Consequently, i.e, because of the mutual dependence, firm devotion to knowledge is difficult to achieve.) Rāmānujācārya says that this problem of mutual dependence is what prompted the Lord to ask the śādhaka to meditate on Him. Thus, the word ‘मरः’ in the “तां स्वाणिः...” verse must be interpreted as pointing to the meditation on the
Lord’s form in order to solve the problem that the sādhaka is facing. Let us see whether this explanation is tenable.

**Dilution of the meaning of the words “तांति सर्वाणि संयम्य…”**

Bhagavān’s words are: “तांति सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्तपर:”. The direct meaning of the words that one gets is that a sādhaka should first control his senses before he sits for meditation. Note the presence of the word ‘संयम्य’ with a ‘lyap’ pratyaya which means what action that is indicated before the ‘lyap’ pratyaya must have happened prior to what follows it. In the verse under consideration, the Lord directs the sādhaka to control his senses first. Unfortunately, therefore, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins’ view that one has to first focus one’s mind exclusively on the divine form of the Lord ‘for the sake of controlling the indriyas’ is contentious. If a person, in accordance with the words, “तांति सर्वाणि संयम्य”, has controlled his senses before meditating on the Ātman, he need not have to meditate on the Lord’s form for controlling his senses once again; that would be purposeless.

Perhaps envisaging the above possible objection, Vedāntadeśīka offers a diluted interpretation for the word ‘संयम्य’. He interprets ‘संयम्य’ as: “संयम्यति विषययागनानविवरणमात्रमोचयते” (Control here refers merely to the restraint of contact with the objects). Thus, he has diluted the scope of the word ‘संयम्य’ to simple avoidance of contact with the objects. Before we proceed to see if this explanation would help the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, let us take a look at the previous verse:

विषयादिविनिवर्तनते निराहारस्य देहिन: ।
रसवज्ञरसोप्यपरं द्वारा निवर्तते॥ (2.59)

(The objects recede from an abstinent embodied being, with the exception of the taste (for them). Even the taste of this person falls away after realizing the Absolute.)
Here, the Lord does not seem to consider objects receding from anyone, whosoever it is, a big deal as He Himself has said that even a person merely engaged in some austerity is able to abstain from objects. Actually, the taste, ‘रस’ or hankering for the objects must go - that is what is important - and that, He says, happens when the self (the ātman, according to Rāmānujācārya) is realized. Having seen this in just the previous verse, how can the Viśiṣṭādvaitins claim that ‘संयोग’ means merely avoiding contact with objects, the effort needed for which seems to be trivial even when compared to the effort put in by a निराहारदेहिनः?

In any case, if “तानि सर्वाणि संयोग...”, means mere avoidance of contact with objects, the Lord need not even have made a mention of it for it is automatically implemented by any one who wants to engage in meditation. It is just stating the obvious. Thus, Bhagavān could have avoided these three words and simply said “चुँब आसीत मत्स्य:” (Sit integrated, deeming Me the Supreme). After all, when one’s mind is supposed to be focused on the Lord’s form (or for that matter, any form), one need not be told that he should not simultaneously be enjoying music. Thus, the explanation of Vedāntadeśika renders the first pāda of the verse absolutely trivial and useless!

The Viśiṣṭādvaitins might wish to interpret ‘विष्यत्याविनिवारणामात्रम्’ mentioned by Sri Vedantadeśika as indicating a decent level of इन्द्रियनियत्र, and not mere avoidance of sense objects. Even then, the situation does not get any better for them. Because the sādhaka can straightaway go and meditate on the Ātman instead of engaging in some intermediary meditation the purpose of which is to make him fit for the meditation on the Ātman. Also, has not the Lord said in the “विषया विनिवर्तने...” verse that the hankering, the राग, goes away once the Ātmān is seen? If some good sense-control is accomplished by the sādhaka himself and the final control, namely the removal of the ‘taste’ is achieved by
(jīva)ātma-darśana, any intermediary meditation on the Lord’s form for controlling the senses becomes irrelevant. Thus, the word ‘तत्त्वः’ would become meaningless for the Viśiṣṭādvaitins. Also, does not the theory of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins degrade the meditation on the Lord’s form as they make it useless by their own logic?

The declaration “रसवजल रसोऽऽपरं द्रष्टा निवर्तते” rendered useless!

If on the other hand, if it is held that the final ‘विषयरागजय’ can be obtained by meditation on the form of Lord only, what is the value that the Viśiṣṭādvaitins attach to the Lord’s categorical averment: “रसवजल रसोऽऽपरं द्रष्टा निवर्तते”? Let us briefly discuss this. Rāmānuja has said, “ततो क्षयेन्द्रयं मन आत्मदर्शनाय प्रभवति” – Let us look at the word ‘विषयरागराहितं’. If the meditation on Bhagavān’s form is what makes the mind pure and free from the rāga for objects (विषयरागराहितं), then the statement of Bhagavān, “रसवजल रसोऽऽपरं द्रष्टा निवर्तते” gets disregarded, isn’t it? Because Rāmānuja has said that the focus on शुभाश्रय makes the mind pure which, in turn, makes the mind get rid of ‘राग’. He himself equates ‘रस’ with ‘रागः’ when he comments on the ‘रसवजल’ verse: “रस: रागः। विषयरागो न निवर्तति इत्यथः। रागोऽऽपरं द्रष्टा निवर्तते।” Thus, Bhagavān’s categorical statement “रसवजल रसोऽऽपरं द्रष्टा निवर्तते” gets disregarded.

Notwithstanding Rāmānuja’s above interpretation, if the Viśiṣṭādvaitins would say that it is not the ultimate sense-control, रागः(रस)नर्वं but some intermediary sense-control is what is facilitated by the meditation on the divine-form of the Lord, and therefore, they are not disregarding the statement of the Lord “रसोऽऽपरं द्रष्टा निवर्तते”, then the following situation would arise. An example would make it simple to appreciate. Let us suppose that a clerk earning a monthly salary of Rs 5000 works hard and pleases his top boss, the
Managing Director, and gets rewarded with an increase in the salary to the tune of Rs. 500 per month. Subsequent to this promotion, he continues to work hard, but this time around, he pleases his immediate boss and gets promoted to the position of a Vice President with a salary of Rs 1,00,000 p.m. Outlandish, is it not? Similar is the situation when a sādhaka meditates on Bhagavān’s divinely auspicious form and earns a lower reward called ‘sense-control’ and when the very same person meditates on the jīvātman and realizes him, he gets the highest and most coveted award, namely ‘removal of hankering’. Is this not an oddity? This is because the Viśiṣṭādvaitins dilute the meaning of the word ‘परं’ as jīvātman just because they would not want ātma-dhyāna to culminate in the sākṣātkāra of the Supreme.

To sum up the entire argument, if meditation on Bhagavān’s divyamangala-vigraha itself / only will remove ‘विषयराग’, which is something that Bhagavān has never spoken in the set of verses under consideration or anywhere else in the Gitā, then the open averment of the Lord, “परं दशन निवलेते”, becomes meaningless and useless. If meditation on the Lord is going to result in some intermediary sense-control, which is much less than what ātma-dhyāna can result in, it should not be acceptable to the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, as the situation depicts meditation on the Lord’s form in poor light. Again when ‘परदशनं’ is going to remove ‘विषयराग’, an intermediate meditation on Bhagavān for removing ‘विषयराग’ is irrelevant. To say that meditation on the Lord’s form removes ‘विषयराग’ and, subsequently, ‘परदशनं’ also will remove ‘विषयराग’ is absurd. Is it not patent that the Viśiṣṭādvaitins are not helping their cause by taking what is not in the Gitā (अश्रुत-कल्पन) and disregarding what is explicitly stated by Bhagavān (श्रुत-परित्याग)?
Now ‘तािन सवािण संय’ is Rendered Meaningless!

One important view-point of Rāmānujaśīva is that a person should focus his mind on the Lord in order to conquer his senses and that there will be danger if he exerts himself towards sense control, sans dhyāna on the Lord’s form. On this count, we could unhesitatingly say that Rāmānujaśīva’s interpretation of ‘मत्यर्थ’ for sense-control makes the first pāda of the verse, ‘तािन सवािण संय’ meaningless. Rāmānujaśīva categorically says this in His commentary on the following verse of the second chapter:

नाि बुिरयु न चायु भावना।
न चाभावयतः: शान्तिरशान्तत्त्व कुत्: सुखम्॥ (2.66)

(There is no wisdom for the unintegrated, and there is no meditation for the unsteady man. And for an unmeditative man there is no peace. How can there be happiness for one without peace?)

Rāmānujaśīva writes: "मिय संमनोरिहत इियदमने कदािचदिप बुि न सेित। अत एव तस्य तद्द्रावना च न सम्भवति ... (In him who does not focus on Me but is engaged in the control of senses by his own exertion, the buddhi or the right disposition that is considered the pure (different from body) self never arises. Therefore, meditation on the self is not attained by him.) Of course, one cannot help asking the Viśīṣṭādvaitins how this verse gives rise to the above interpretation of Rāmānujaśīva. Be that as it may. In any case, this becomes another evidence to show that the Viśīṣṭādvaitins are disagreeing with the words “तािन सवािण संय” of the Lord as Rāmānujaśīva says one should never try to control his senses by oneself!

The ‘mutual-dependence problem’ does not need Rāmānujaśīva’s solution

We saw while stating the viewpoint of the Viśīṣṭādvaitins that Rāmānujaśīva argues that there is a major reason why इियिनमह can be had only by meditation on Bhagavān. We saw him aver thus: “एवम् इियजय आत्मदर्शनाधीन
Thus, the subduing of the senses depends on the vision of the self and the vision of the self depends on the senses. Consequently, i.e., because of the mutual dependence, firm devotion to knowledge is difficult to achieve. Rāmānujācārya says that this problem of mutual dependence is what prompted the Lord to ask the sādhaka to meditate on Him first. In his commentary for the “तांति संबंधिणि” verse, Rāmānujācārya says: संबंधित भवः परमात्मा सिद्धिहीन, तत्त्वज्ञान योगिनानि न संबंधित, ज्ञानिनी दर्शते। (With a desire to overcome this mutual dependence, between the subduing of the senses and vision of the self,) one has to conquer the senses which are difficult to subdue on account of their attachment to sense objects. So, focusing the mind on Me who am the only auspicious object for meditation, let him remain steadfast. When the mind is focused on Me as its object, then such a mind, purified by the burning away of all impurities and devoid of attachment to the senses, is able to control the senses. Then the mind with the senses under control will be able to experience the self.)

At first blush, the argument of Rāmānujācārya may seem difficult to tackle. However it is not the case. Interestingly, Sri Anandagiri, the sub-commentator on Bhagavatpāda’s bhāṣya, raises this very same objection and rebuts it as under:

ननु सम्यङ्गमनस्तरेण गानो नाप्रभूतति चेत्तदपमात्रेतः गानवत: सम्यङ्गानोदयांगाौऽवरस्त्राब्रूतितात्मकत्वस्तात: नेत्र, इन्द्रियाणां विषयपरस्परवशे विवेकतथा परिहर्ते स्थूलो गानो व्यावती, तत्तथ सम्यङ्गानोदयां सुमस्याय परमात्म स्वरूपेनात्मकितार्थपरिहतयाय:।

(If it be held that attachment cannot be eliminated without the knowledge of Brahman and at the same time, that the knowledge of Brahman cannot arise for a person with attachment, there arises a vicious circle. No, (what is meant here is that) the gross attachments are eliminated through discrimination which restrains the senses from being overpowered by objects. And the full
knowledge arising thereof eliminates the subtle inclinations as well. Hence, there is no vicious circle involved.)

The point to be noted here is that there is actually no vicious cycle as pointed out by Rāmānujacārya which can be solved only by bringing in the focus of the mind on the Lord’s form; in fact, there are many problems associated with such an interpretation. As Sri Ānandagiri says, a sādhaka, thanks to his ātmanātmavivekajña praha, would first control his gross attachments by himself to the extent that they do not drag the mind towards sense objects and then could engage his mind in nididhyāsana; with more and more practice in meditation he achieves complete mastery over the senses and finally he wins the saktākāra of the Self. It is then that even the hankering or the seed of desires also goes away and his indriyas are said to be in total control. [We will see this in greater detail when discussing Bhagavatpāda’s commentary for ‘मन्त्रः’] Thus, the vicious-circle problem could even be solved in the way Sri Ānandagiri has done and, in it, there are no complications that would have arisen had the Viśiṣṭādvaitins’s contention that the verse 2.61 is suggestive of meditation on the Lord’s form for one to control his senses been accepted. We will dwell on this issue when we discuss the commentary of Bhagavatpāda.

Is no sense-control required for meditating on Iśvara’s form?

There is a major question that would remain to be answered if the words of the Lord, “तानि सवैणी संयम्य” are disregarded. Is meditation so easy? Should not control of the senses decidedly precede any steadfast meditation even though it may be on a saguna object viz., the divyamaṅgala vigraha of Bhagavān? Does not “चेतसः-शुभाशयभूते मथि मनः: अवस्थायः समाहित: आसीत” (Focusing the mind on Me who am the only auspicious object for meditation, let him remain steadfast) advocated by Rāmānujacārya require some decent sense-control as a prerequisite? If focusing one’s mind on God, which results in one conquering
the senses, is easily achieved sans any decent sense-control, would not
meditation become as easy as pie? If that be the case, who will spend time on
śama or dama? If, on the other hand, meditation requires sense-control as a
pre-requisite, then, do we not end up in an infinite regress without being able
to decide on which is to be accomplished first - meditation or sense-control?
Thus, knowingly or unknowingly, Rāmānujācārya manages to have succeeded
in creating a new vicious circle when trying to solve a circle which he claimed
the Lord’s words have created!

In the light of what we saw, if the Viśiśṭādvaitin does not accept any
reasonable sense-control before meditation on the Lord’s form, the first pāda of
the verse would be rendered useless; their insistence on meditation on the Lord
to get ‘विषयरागजय’ renders the “रसवजरसोऽपरं निनवतते” purposeless.

An accomplished karma-yogin would have perfected his dhyāna on
saguṇa-Īśvara

If the Viśiśṭādvaitins would say that it is not for control of the mind and senses
but only for aiding ātma-dhyāna that they are asking the sādhaka to focus on
Bhagavān’s form, even then it would not help their cause. The Viśiśṭādvaitins
do say that meditating on the divyamaṅgalavigraha of the Lord captivates the
mind more than does the formless Self and so one should first try to meditate
on the Lord’s form in order that his subsequent efforts to see the formless Self
bear fruit. Indeed, this is what Sri Uttamur Veeraraghavachariyar says in his
“भूमिका”: “शोभपरिहारकधिनार्कधिनार्कवस्तुव्याख्यातमन्त्रोपेतव्ययम।
अत: मदीपविविविविविहतविविषयवेशयम् शुभाश्रयस्य
ध्यानं विधायनित्यवायुष्निविनवाय ध्यात्वध्यायनरो भवेतनुपदिष्टलीलतिः प्रकृते वक्तव्यम्”।

It is a truism that one would do well to practice meditation on an attractive,
divine form first. What else can be the most attractive form for meditation than
that of Īśvara or one’s Sadguru, who is God-incarnate? However, Sri Uttamur
Veeraraghavachariyar’s statement that such a focus is prescribed for a śāṁkhya-yogin, at the start of ātma-dhyāna, for conquering the senses, is what is contentious. For that matter, it is not as if ‘सगुणोपासन’ is a taboo for advaitins. In fact, it is possible, in most cases, that prior to embarking on the path of jnana-yoga, a sādhaka could very well have attained even samādhi on Īśvara with form during his journey in the path of karma-yoga coupled with upāsanā. Thus, the śāṁkhya-yogin who is the subject matter of the present discussion would even have perfected his meditation on saguṇa-Īśvara before starting his meditation on the Self. Therefore, the advaitins cannot be accused of looking down upon meditation on God’s form or considering it unnecessary to meditate on His form. Actually, it is only the interpretation of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins in the context of ‘मत्तरः’ that trivialises the meditation on the Lord’s form, as they seem to treat it as some stop-gap sādhana before ātma-dhyāna.

**Control of the mind & senses spoken of by Bhagavān sans intermediate Bhagavad-dhyāna**

In support of their view that a ‘beginner’ trying to realize the self, the jīvātman, should first focus on the Lord’s divine form, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins cite an instance from the chapter ‘Dhyāna-yoga’ of the Bhagavad-gītā where there is a similar statement of the Lord with at least three words of the verse under discussion repeated verbatim. Let us take a look at the verses concerned:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{प्रशान्ततात्मा विगतभी:} & \quad \text{ब्रह्मचारिवने स्थित:} \\
\text{मन: संयम गच्छितो युक्त आसीत मत्तरः} & \quad (6.14)
\end{align*}
\]

(He should remain seated with a placid mind, free from fear, firm in the vow of a celibate, and with the mind fixed on Me by controlling it through concentration, having Me as the Supreme goal.)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{युक्तस्मे सदान्त्यं स्त्रान्तं बोगी नियतमा:} & \\
\text{शाप्तिं निर्बन्धप्रमाणं मत्तस्यथामधिगच्छति} & \quad (6.15)
\end{align*}
\]
(Concentrating the mind thus for ever, the yogin of controlled mind achieves the Peace which culminates in nirvāṇa and which abides in Me.)

In his introduction to the verses that follow this verse, Rāmānujaçārya says: “एवमायोगमारभमाणाः मनोनिमल्येहतुभूति मनसे भगवति शुभान्त्रेये स्थितिमन्नियाः अन्यदपि योगपकरणमाह। (For the person who commences yoga of the self, Sri Kṛṣṇa, after thus teaching focus of the mind on the Lord, the holy and auspicious object of meditation, which is the cause of the purification of the mind, proceeds to speak of the other aids for yoga.)

When the above verses are interpreted as specifying meditation on Bhagavān for the purpose of accomplishing mental purity prior to one meditating on the self (jīvātman), the following problems arise: a) The fruit of “युेवं सदा…” according to Rāmānujaçārya is ‘निर्वाणकाशा’ the attainment of supreme peace or the summit of beatitude which abides in Bhagavān. Thus, these verses seem to address the fruit of meditation on Bhagavān and do not seem to discuss any intermediate, preparatory meditation of divyamaṅgalavigraha of Bhagavān for jīvātma-dhyāna. Thus, Rāmānujaçārya’s introductory sentence cited above is questionable. b) The meaning of the Lord’s word “सदा” would get diluted if according to the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, the intention of Bhagavān is to convey that bhagavad-dhyāna is to be resorted to at the beginning of ātma-dhyāna till one’s mind gets purified. c) At any rate, there are no such words in the verses that give room to the Viśiṣṭādvaitins’ interpretation that the divyamaṅgalavigraha of the Lord is to be meditated upon. (In his notes, Uttamur Viraraghavachariar says that the meditation recommended for a person who begins atma-dhyāna is on the divyamaṅgalavigraha of the Lord and that the meditation prescribed for one who has had ātma-sākṣātkāra is on the divyatmasvrūpa of Bhagavān. Where is it mentioned in 6.14 that the divyamangalavigaraha and not the divyatmasvrūpa of Bhagavān has to be meditated on?) d) On the other hand,
the Lord seems to say in this verse and the verses that occur earlier that one should first control one’s mind before He says “युक्त आसीत मत्याः” ; Rāmānujācārya’s commentary also acknowledges this.

The import of the second line of this verse that is pertinent to our discussion is as follows: “Having controlled the mind (मन: संयम्य), with the mind fixed on Me (मि:यो युक्त:), becoming concentrated (युक्तः) and having me as the Supreme Goal (मरः आसीत:) let him remain seated (आसीत). Rāmānujācārya says, “मन: संयम्य मियो युक्तः अवहितो मत्याः आसीत, मामेव चिन्तनयो आसीत”. “Holding the mind in check, remain concentrated and intent on Me only.”

Unless one’s mind is pure, how can it be checked?

(Concentrating the mind thus for ever, the yogin of controlled mind achieves the Peace which culminates in Liberation and which abides Me.)

Thus, even according to Rāmānujācārya, the yogin should sit in meditation after having controlled the senses as well as the mind. In fact ‘यतिचिंड्रकियः’ has been commented upon by Rāmānujācārya himself as ‘सर्वत्मना यतिचिंड्रकियः’ – this only supports the contrary view that the yogin intent on meditating on the Self is one who has already controlled his senses and the mind. So, how can the Viṣṇūvādvaṣṭins use the “प्रशान्तात्मा…” verse to say that only by bhagavad-dhyāna one can get purified and control his senses and cite
this verse to support their interpretation of the “तानि सर्वाणि...” verse of the second chapter?

Thus, the words “एकामं मन: कृत्या” and ‘यतीष्ठेनदेण्डथकिय:’ specified by Bhagavān have been glossed over by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins who simply maintain their theory that the sādhaka first becomes pure by meditating on the form of the Lord. Had Bhagavān wanted to specify dhyāna on His divyamaṅgala-rūpa for a yogin sitting for ātma-darśana-dhyāna, he would have definitely said it in so many words. Look at the following verses that teach us how the yogin should steady his mind:

सहृदयप्रभवान्कामोपसत्यत्त्रां सर्वानशेषपत: 
मनश्विदेण्डियां विनियम्य समन्त: ll 6.24

शनेन: शनेनपरमेशु चूतिगृहीतया 
आत्मसर्वप शन: कृत्या न कियिदियप चतत्वेत: ll 6.25

(By totally eschewing all desires which arise from thoughts, and restraining with the mind itself all the organs from every side; One should gradually withdraw the intellect, being endowed with steadiness. Making the mind fixed in the Self, one should not think of anything whatsoever.)

That these verses have unmistakable semblance to the verse “प्रज्ज्वलित यद्य कामान्...” of Chapter 2 would be obvious to any discerning reader of the Gītā. In his commentary to these verses, Rāmānujācārya writes: “स्योऽजाः: सहृदयपाठ इति व्हिय: कामाः: स्योऽजाः: शीर्षोषेषादय: सहृदयाः: पुरुषोपथंत्त्रं: ततोऽरहण्याः स्योऽरहण्याः शाक्य:; तान् सर्वाः मनसा एव तदनन्त्यानुस्मांनस्यत्त्रत्वा स्योऽरहण्याः अर्थोत्तम्यात् तदिन्त्रिवित्तित्वम्मोऽस्त्रत्वा समन्त: सर्वस्मातु विष्ठातुः सर्वम् इत्न्द्रयां विनियम्य शाने: शाने: चूतिगृहीतया वविवेकित्वम्या बुधासर्वस्मादान्त्याविद्धित्वम् उपयोग्य आत्मस्थोः मन: कृत्या न कियिदियप चतत्वेत: ll (There are two kinds of desires:1) those born of contact between the senses and objects like heat cold, etc. 2) those generated by our mind like that for sons, land etc. Of these, the latter type of desires is by its own nature relinquishable.
Relinquishing all these by the mind through contemplation on their lack of association with the self; having relinquished the ideas of pleasure and pain in respect of unavoidable desires resulting from contact; restraining all the senses on all sides i.e. from contact with all their objects— one should think of nothing else i.e., other than the self. Little by little, with the help of intellect controlled by firm resolution, i.e., by the power of discrimination, one should think of nothing else, having fixed the mind on the self. 

It is significant to note that, even here, there is not a single word suggestive of *bhagavad-dhyāna* as a requirement for beginners of *ātma-dhyāna* for attaining purity of their mind in order to control their senses. This is why, perhaps, both Rāmānujacārya as well as Vedāntadeśika do not utter a word about the role of *Bhagavad-dhyāna* when commenting upon these two verses.

There is another pertinent verse in Chapter 6, perhaps the clincher! It is as follows:

यतो यतो निश्चयति मनःधातुमस्थिरं।
तत्ततो निमयमेतदत्तमन्येव वशं नयेत्॥

(The yogin should bring this mind under the subjugation of the Ātman Itself, by restraining it from all those causes whatever due to which the restless, unsteady mind wanders away.)

The causes spoken of by the Lord are, obviously, the senses. Rāmānujacārya comments upon this verse as follows: “चतुष्क्तमावर्तया आत्मनि अस्तित्रेऽमनि यतो यतो विषयप्राप्यमेव वशं नयेत्”

(Wherever the mind, on account of its fickle and unsteady nature, wanders because of its proclivity to sense objects, he should, subduing the mind everywhere with effort, bring it under control in order to remain in the self alone by contemplating on the incomparable bliss therein.) If, according to the Viśiṣṭādvaitins., a sādhaka is supposed to meditate on Bhagavān’s form first, he would have conquered even the ‘राग’ for the sense-objects. Then where is the
question of his mind going hither and thither following the senses and why should the sādhaka concerned bring it back to the self alone by contemplating on the incomparable bliss therein? Such being the case, the “यतो यतो…” verse and the commentary thereof of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins would not support their theory! If the Viśiṣṭādvaitins would hasten to say that the effect of meditating on the divyamangala-vigraha is temporary and hence, one can technically face problems during one’s meditation on the Ātman, wonderful would be their theory! Even in such a case, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins should answer why the Lord does not advise a sādhaka endowed with a mind wandering after the senses to go back to the basics and meditate on His form first rather than keep focusing on the Ātman!

Leave alone this chapter, even in the 18th chapter where Bhagavān Himself says He is summarizing the steps that lead to naiṣkarmya-siddhi or jñāna-nisthā on Brahman-Ātman, we do not find any reference to bhagavad-dhyāna for sense control / purity of mind at the beginning of yoga.

(Being endowed with a pure intellect, and controlling oneself with fortitude, rejecting the objects – beginning from sound, and eliminating attachment and hatred;

(One who resorts to solitude, eats sparingly, has speech, body and mind under control, to whom dhyāna and yoga are ever the highest duty and who is possessed of dispassion.) The point to be noted here is that Rāmānujācārya too interprets dhyāna and yoga here as pertaining to meditation on the Self (or rather self) while there is not a single word in these verses about divya-
**maṅgala-vigraha-based meditation** supposed to be suggested by the Lord for the beginners of ātma-dhyāna.

The two aids prescribed by the Lord for controlling the mind

Controlling the senses invariably involves the role of the mind; after all the senses, per se, do not have the power of discrimination. That is why the śruti compares the senses to the horses and the mind to the reins. Rāmānujacārya too requires a sādhaka to mediate on the Lord’s form in order for him to first cleanse his mind so that his senses can be controlled: “मनसि मद्विषये सति निद्राभाषोक्तमपतया निर्मातृक्तं विषयानुरुगारहितं मन इन्द्रियाणि स्ववशानि करोति। ततो वशेन्द्रेण मन आत्मदर्शनाय प्रभवित।” Thus, he talks about controlling the mind for restraining the senses as also for the subsequent focus of the mind for ātmadarśanam. Now let us see what tip Bhagavān Himself gives Arjuna, in response to the latter’s averment about the difficulty in controlling the mind.

अर्जुन उवाच:-

यो योगमया सम亚军 मधुसूदन।
पदयमि चबल्लवात स्थिरति स्थिराम॥ (6.33)

तत्स्यां निप्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुतुष्करम॥ (6.34)

(Arjuna said: O Madhusūdana, this yoga that has been spoken of by you as sameness, I do not see its steady continuance, owing to the restlessness (of the mind). For O Kṛṣṇa, the mind is unsteady, turbulent, strong and obstinate. I consider its control to be as greatly difficult as of the wind.)

श्रीभगवानुवाच:-

असंशयं महबाहो मनो दुर्मिथं चल्लम॥
अम्भासेन तु कौन्तेय वेषर्येण च गुह्यते॥ (6.35)

(The blessed Lord said: O mighty-armed one, undoubtedly the mind is untractable and restless. But O son of Kuntī, it is brought about under control through practice and detachment.)
As one can observe, the context of these verses is the same as that of Chapter 2 – Meditation on the Self (or the individual self according to the Viśiṣṭādvaitins.) If the interpretation of Viśiṣṭādvaitins for verse 2.61 was what Bhagavān had had in mind when He uttered the verse concerned, He should have here also advised Arjuna to first focus on His form so that his mind will achieve the necessary purity to control itself and meditate on the Self subsequently. However, He does not say so. What more evidence is required to rebut the theory of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins that a person endowed with the discrimination of the Self and is striving to stabilize his wisdom needs to meditate on the divya-mangala-vigraha of Bhagavān first?

There is a question the Viśiṣṭādvaitins need to answer at this juncture. What stage or duration up to which one should be engaged in the meditation on Īśvara’s form in order for a sādhaka to achieve control over his senses? Is it that one has to be in meditation till such time one gets the vision of the Lord or for some arbitrary duration irrespective of any such vision? In other words, how will one know that one’s mastery over his senses is sufficient enough to meditate on the Ātman? Is it by trial and error method that one has to decide the culmination of his meditation? On the other hand, in the case of the meditation on the Ātman, the limit is prescribed by Bhagavān Himself. The sādhaka has to keep meditating till the sāksātkāra of the परं and that is the time at which one’s taste for senses also goes away. If the Viśiṣṭādvaitins were to specify to us the time limit / stage up to which one should engage on the meditation on the Lord’s form, it would only be their conjecture and not a prescription from the Lord. After all, Bhagavān has not spoken a word about meditation on Himself for controlling the senses.
The Yoga-śāstra and indriya-nigraha

Though the Yoga-śāstra cannot be cited as an authority to rebut the Viśiṣṭādvaitins’ viewpoint of the Gītā verse, I just wanted to find out if there is any support for them in the yoga-sūtras; after all, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins happily cite as pramāṇa the yoga-sūtras on various occasions. For instance, in his commentary for the Second Chapter of the Gītā, Rāmānujacārya classifies the sthitaprajñas into four types and says that the four verses starting from “प्रज्ञालित यदा कामान…” upto “यदा संहरते चाच्य…” correspond to each of these types in the descending order. Sri Vedāntadesīka clarifies that the four types, in the ascending order, relate to the वशीकार, एकेत्रिय, व्यतित्रि and the यतमान types of dispassion defined in the Yoga-śāstra. He even cites the yoga-sūtra: “श्वानुश्रवितिविषयवितुष्णस्य वशीकारसंहः बेलाप्यम्।(पा. सू. १.१६)।” Even though this interpretation is contentious, it is not going to be discussed here as it is beyond the scope of the subject matter. All that needs to be understood here is that the Yoga-śāstra does not suggest that any of these types of dispassion arises through the meditation on the Lord’s divya-maṅgala-vigraha. On the other hand, they declare that even in the case of the third level of dispassion, ekendriya, doṣa-द्रष्ठि is what helps a sādhaka.

It may be argued that the Yoga-śāstra talks of Īśvara-praṇidhāna of the form of praṇava-based meditation on Īśvara that helps one to swiftly reach asaṃprajñāta-samādhi on the Ātman and hence, the view-point of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins is valid. This argument can be rebutted by saying that the meditation specified in the Yoga-śāstra is certainly not on Īśvara as possessed of any form but as the nature of all pervading consciousness. On the other hand, we saw that the Viśiṣṭādvaitins talk here of the meditation on the divya-mangala-vigraha of the Lord, for it is easier to meditate on a form that is attractive to the mind. Again, the purpose of Īśvara-pranidhāna characterized
by meditation on Īśvara commencing with the chanting of pranava is not for the control of the senses but as an aid to quickly focus on the Ātman.

In any case, the yoga-sūtras talk of pratyāhāra as an important rung in the ladder of the eight-fold-yoga before one ascends the steps – dhāraṇa, dhyāna and samādhi. “स्वस्वविषयासंसंयोगे पित्तलब्धयंनुकार इवेनिन्द्रयाणां प्रत्याहार्.” (2.54) (Pratyāhāra is the apparent following of the mind by the senses without their being in contact with their respective objects.) Thus, even to meditate on Īśvara, a certain amount of sense-control is vital whereas we saw that the Viśiṣṭādvaitins have dismissed as null and void the portion “तानि स्वार्णि संयम्य” of the Lord’s verse under discussion.

**Is the Lord’s advice incomprehensive?**

The verse “तानि स्वार्णि ...” is the only one in the set of verses dealing with the sthitaprajña-laksana, that instructs a sādhaka how he should engage himself in nididhyāsana. If this verse containing an instruction about how a striving (यित:) yogin must sit (आसीत), should end with the meditation on Īśvara with form, in the absence of any subsequent verse specifically instructing the yogin as to how he should proceed from the meditation of Īśvara with form to the meditation on the formless Ātman, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins are only subjecting Bhagavān to the charge that He is not comprehensively covering what He undertook to teach – establishment in the Ātman. Bhagavān would thus be guilty of leaving out the portion how the yogin should proceed from saguna-īśvara to nirguna-ātman, thanks to the interpretation of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins.

**A new vicious circle in the making!**

In Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad-gītā where Bhagavān describes the steps in realizing Him, Rāmānujācārya’s commentary for a few verses is worth considering at this juncture.
(If now you are unable to focus your mind on Me, then seek to reach Me, O Arjuna, by the practice of repetition.)

What is this abhyāsa or repetition? RāmānujaŚāṅkara clarifies: 

अथ सहस्य एव मध्य रिथरं चिर्म समाधातुं न शकोष, तत: अभ्यासोगेन मामाशुमिच्छ। स्वामाविकानविकानतिश्य सौन्दर्यसौष्ठीत्य-सोइहार्द्वातत्त्वमायुर्गामीर्यद्विर्यपराकस्मविकस्वात्त्वकामत्त्वसहुत्त्ववर्तनकल्लकारणवाच-सह्याक्षत्वाण्यमुणसागरे निविक्षिंद्रघ्नात्वनीके मध्य निरितिश्य्रोममात्म-स्वस्याश्योगेन...

(If you are unable to focus your mind immediately on Me in deep meditation, then seek to reach Me by the ‘practice of repetition.’ By the repeated practice of remembrance filled with immense love of the ocean of manifold attributes innate to Me like, beauty, affability, friendliness, affection, compassion, sweetness, majesty, magnanimity, heroism, valour, might, omniscience, freedom from wants, unfailing resolves, sovereignty over all, being the cause of all etc., and being antagonistic to all that is evil …) Thus, we understand that according to RāmānujaŚāṅkara, abhyāsa means the remembrance of the supreme qualities of the Lord with deep love which is the means to focus on the Lord in deep meditation. With this background, let us now turn to another verse of this chapter.

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ञानाध्यायन विशिष्टते।

व्यानतंत्रपक्षात्त्वाग्नाच्छादनानित्वननसरम्॥ (12.12)

(The overall meaning of this verse, according to the commentary of RāmānujaŚāṅkara, is as follows: Far better is the knowledge of the self (jīva) than the repeated practice of remembrance of the Lord. Better is meditation of the self than this knowledge. Better is renunciation of fruits of action than meditation. From such renunciation, peace ensues.) The portion of RāmānujaŚāṅkara’s commentary pertinent to our discussion is as follows: 

"अत्यथ्रितिविधानं कर्कश्रृङ्खलात् स्मृत्यासाधस्तरयाध्यात्माननुसर्यूपेऽकं तदापरोऽधावं एव आत्महितं विष्णुते। आत्मोपरोक्षश्चात्मानं अनिष्क्रृपातं तदापूर्वत्तमात्मानमवेव आत्महितं विष्णुते, तथानात्"
Thus, for someone who is not able to keep remembering the great qualities of the Lord because he lacks true love, according to Rāmānujācārya, Bhagavān recommends ātma-aparokṣa-jñāna. He then says that if that person’s knowledge is imperfect, he should take recourse to perfect meditation on the Ātman. Let us now go back to Rāmānujācārya’s commentary on verse 2.61. In order to engage in dhyāna of the Ātman, he should first control his senses which cannot be achieved without that person sitting in the dhyāna on the Lord. Now how is this person who is not even capable of remembering the great qualities of the Lord thanks to his lack of true love for Him, now going to engage in one-pointed focus on His form? The Viśiṣṭādvaitins themselves are creating a vicious circle. So much for the consistency of their theory!

The Viṣṇu-Purāṇa does not help the cause of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins

We saw Rāmānujācārya’s view that in order for the mind to be made fit to behold the self, one should focus one’s mind on the divyamaṅgalavigraha of the Lord, the ‘शुभाौय’, and that one should not exert himself on his own in any other way in pursuit of sense control, for, that would only be counterproductive. In the same context, he has also cited the following verse from the Viṣṇu-purāṇa in his commentary on the “तानि स्वर्णा…” verse.
(Just as fire, blazing in the wind, burns dry grass, so does Vishnu, seated in the heart, consumes the sins of the yogin.)

This verse occurs in the discourse given by Keśidhvaja to Khāṇḍikya in response to the latter's request to teach him the yoga that leads to liberation from samsara, the cycle of birth and death. This is the 74th verse in the 7th chapter of the sixth adhyāya of the Viṣṇu-purāṇa. Keśidhvaja's advice starts from the 27th verse itself. From verse 36 to verse 45, we find Keśidhvaja advising Khāṇḍikya as to what are all the steps one must undergo before embarking on dhyāna. Here are they:

1. सेवेत्योगिः निभायाय योग्यतं स्वमनो नयनः. (6.7.36)
2. कुर्बित व्रहणः तथा परस्यम्प्रवणानमः. (6.7.37)
3. एते यमास्सनिम्यमः पवपव च कौशितः. (6.7.38)
4. प्राणायामसम्बिभ्यस्वीकृतोऽवृष्टि एव हि. (6.7.39)
5. परस्येवारमिव त्रायानाया वधानिति. (6.7.40)
6. कुर्बितस्यनिम्येता सुस्विष्ठायत्तथायोः. (6.7.41)
7. कुर्बितात्मनकोऽवृष्टि तत्स्वेत्यमृताय. (6.7.42)
8. शाश्वदिवंतत्त्वलयनरत्न निम्मायासारूप योगारवित. (6.7.43)
9. कुर्बितात्मनातिकारणिः प्रत्याहारपरायणः. (6.7.44)
10. व्रहणत्तर्पया तेन जाधवाति चक्तानामार. (6.7.45)
(The sage who would bring his mind into a fit state for the performance of devout contemplation, must be devoid of desire, and observe invariably continence, compassion, truth, honesty, and disinterestedness: he must fix his mind intently on the supreme Brahman practising holy study, purification, contentment, penance, and self-control. These virtues, respectively termed the five acts of restraint (yama), and five of obligation (niyama), bestow excellent rewards of eternal liberation when they are not prompted by desire of transient benefits. Endowed with these merits, the self-restrained sage should sit in one of the postures like bhadrasana and engage in contemplation. Bringing his vital airs, called prāṇāḥ, under subjection, by frequent repetition, is, thence called prāṇāyāma. ... which is, as it were, a seed without a seed. In this, the breath of expiration and that of inspiration are alternately obstructed, constituting the act twofold; and the suppression of both (modes of breathing) produces a third. The exercise of the Yogan, whilst endeavouring to bring before his thoughts the gross form of the eternal, is denominated Alambana. He is then to perform the pratyāhāra, which consists in restraining his organs of sense from susceptibility to outward impressions, and directing them entirely to mental perceptions. By these means the entire subjugation of the unsteady senses is effected; and if they are not controlled, the sage will not accomplish yoga. When by the prāṇāyāma the vital airs are restrained, and the senses are subjugated by the pratyāhāra, then the sage will he able to keep his mind (चेतः) steady in its perfect asylum, the शुभाश्चयः:"

After hearing the advice of Keśidhvaja, Khāṇḍikya proceeds to ask the former about what the perfect asylum (शुभाश्चयः) is on which the yogan should meditate.

कथ्यतं में महाभाग चेतनसो च: शुभाश्चयः ।
वदाधारम्श्चे तदन्त्विद्योषमलोकत्रथम् ॥
आध्यक्षेपसो ब्रह्म द्विधा तत्र स्वभावतः ।
भूप मूर्तिमूः च परं चापरमेव च ॥

(6.7.46)

(6.7.47)
Khāṇḍikya then said to Keśidhvaja, "Illustrious sage, inform me what is that perfect asylum of the mind, resting on which it destroys all the products of (human) infirmity." To this, Keśidhvaja replied, "The asylum of mind is the Supreme Brahman, which of its own nature is twofold, as being with or without form; and each of these is supreme and secondary.)

Then Keśidhvaja goes on to say that an advanced sādhaka who has no impediments in the form of some left-out karma that obstructs the dawn of sākṣhātkara attains liberation quickly.

(6.7.32)

(6.7.33)

(6.7.34)

(6.7.35)

(The sage, or yogin, when first applying himself to contemplative devotion is called the novice or practitioner (yoga-yuj); when he has attained spiritual union he is termed the adept, or he whose meditations are accomplished. Should the thoughts of the former be unvitiated by any obstructing imperfection, he will obtain freedom, after practising devotion through several lives. The latter speedily obtains liberation in that existence (in which he reaches perfection), all his acts being consumed by the fire of contemplative devotion.)

(6.7.53)

(6.7.54)
(That is called knowledge of Brahman in which all distinctions have sublated, which is of the nature of existence alone, which is indefinable by words, and is to be discovered in one's own Self. That is the supreme, unborn, imperishable form of the formless, Supreme Vishnu and is different from the universal form.)

In the case of less-advanced aspirants it may not be possible for them to focus on the formless Supreme in the beginning stages. So, Keśidhvaja recommends that a less advanced aspirant should first concentrate on the Universal form of the Lord. Let us see the pertinent verses of the Viṣṇu-purāṇa:

न तद्योग्युजा शक्यं नृपा चिन्तयितुं यतः ।
tat: स्थूलं हरे रूपं चिन्तयेद्विश्वगोचरम् ॥ (6.7.55)

तदूर्ण विश्वज्यम तत्स्व योग्युजा नृप ।
चिन्तयामात्मविश्वर्थं सर्वकिल्लिधवनाशनम् ॥ (6.7.73)

यथाप्रभुवतत्शिशां कशं दृष्टि सानिलसः ।
तथा चिन्तितस्यो विष्णुयोगिनां सर्वकिल्लिधयः ॥ (6.7.74)

तस्मात्समस्तेनालक्षणापरं तत्र चेतसः ।
कुःवित स्थितं सा तु विज्ञेया शुद्ध्वारणः ॥ (6.7.75)

(Since Brahman cannot be contemplated by sages in their early stages of sadhanā, they must therefore direct their minds to the gross form of Hari, which is of universal perceptibility. This universal form of Hari is to be meditated upon by the sage for the purpose of purification, as it destroys all sin. In the same manner as fire, blazing in the wind, burns dry grass, so Viṣṇu, seated in the heart, consumes the sins of the yogin; and therefore let him resolutely effect the fixation of his mind upon that receptacle of all energies (Viṣṇu), for that is the operation of the mind which is called perfect dhāranā.)
The points that are patent even from a casual reading of the Viṣṇu-purāṇa verses seen above are as follows:

a) The ślokas that occur prior to the one cited by Rāmānujācārya specify that indriya-nigraha is a must for keeping one’s mind on the ‘शुभाौय’ and it is not the other way round.

b) It is clear beyond doubt that those who are capable of meditating on the formless Brahman can indeed do so and accomplish liberation in the very same birth in which they engage in nīdīhyāsana on the Self. It is only those that are not advanced in the path of yoga who have been advised to resort to the form of Viṣṇu with qualities. There is no reason why one should assume that the yogin in the context of Chapter 2 of the Bhagavad-gītā who has sat for nīdīhyāsana on the Self (for stabilising his Knowledge of the Self) is not fit to meditate on the Self and so he should first resort to focusing on the Lord with form and qualities.

c) It might be argued that the Lord has elaborately spoken about sense-control in the set of slokas connected with ‘स्थिरत्वप्रदत्तक्षणं’ and so, the sādhaka in the context of chapter 2 should be deemed as a person who has no control over his senses at all, is a novice in the path of meditation, and is unfit for nīdīhyāsana on the Self. This argument does not have any basis. On the other hand, without making assumptions of any kind, one can easily discern that Bhagavān is only cautioning the sāṁkhya-yogin, a man of discrimination. Just because he is a sāṁkhya-yogin, he cannot afford to be complacent with regard to the control of senses as he can fall prey to the indriyas if he is not highly vigilant. It is in this context that the Lord elaborately speaks about sense-control. Thus, he is specifically having in mind a man who is treading the path of self-knowledge but is yet to get sāksātkāra. That the Lord is only speaking about a man of knowledge but not some novice or a fresher is patent from His usage ‘विपरित: पुरुषस्य’ in the following verse:
(For O son of Kunti, the turbulent organs violently snatch away the mind of an intelligent person even when he is striving diligently.)

When we read the above verse along with the averment of the Lord, “रसवजस रसोऽखपरं द्रष्टा निवर्तते” we can understand what the Lord is having in mind. He drives home the point that until one accomplishes sākṣātkāra and becomes a jivānmuṭa, one has to be absolutely careful about the senses. This is all.

d) Rāmānujaśārya cited the verse concerned of the Viṣṇu-purāṇa after saying that one must focus one’s mind on the ‘शुभाभ्य’. Vedāntadeśika explained ‘शुभाभ्य’ as the divyamangala-vigraha of the Lord. Uttamur Viraraghavacariyar added that the heart-captivating form of the Lord is what is easier to meditate than the formless Ātman. The verse of Viṣṇu-purāṇa, (6.7.73) however, speaks about the universal form of the Lord as the object of meditation for less-advanced yogins for cleansing the impurities in their minds. And it is the very next verse (6.7.74) that Rāmānujaśārya has cited in support of his theory. If it be argued that the universal form of Viṣṇu is what Rāmānujaśārya also recommends for meditation by a sāmkhya-yogin, a question would arise whether it is going to get any easier for one to meditate on the universal form of the Lord if the sādhaka’s mind is full of impurities and he has only superficial sense-control. In any case, we have already seen that the Viṣṇu-purāṇa prescribes meditation only for a person who has indriya-nigraha, irrespective what the object of focus is.

e) Rāmānujaśārya said that the focus recommended on the ‘शुभाभ्य’ is for the purpose of cleansing one’s impurities of the mind and enable it to eradicate its attachment towards the senses. We saw that the Lord has
not explicitly spoken on these lines in the Gītā. In fact, Bhagavān hints at a different method, the karmayoga, for one to cleanse one’s mind:

कायेन मनसा किंस्य केवलैिरियैरिप ।
योिगन: कम कुवि सं ाशुये ॥ (5.11)
(By giving up attachment, the yogins undertake work merely through the body, mind, intellect and even the organs, for the purification of themselves.) Thus, proper karma-yoga itself can and does remove the impurities of the mind, according to the Lord Himself.

In his commentary on verse 2.66 “नाि बुिरयु …”, Rāmānujacārya has said, “ In him who does not focus his mind on Me but is engaged only in the control of senses by his own exertion, the right disposition that is concerned with the pure self never arises…” This does not seem to be correct. It is patent from the “यततो द्रशि कौेय पुष िवपित:” verse that the Lord is having in mind a person who has already got the right knowledge of the Ātman. In the light of Rāmānujacārya’s statement stated above, it would only mean that since the yogin of chapter 2 has already got the right disposition concerned with the pure Self (thanks to the word ‘विपितः:’) his mind is already pure! Of course, he is yet to get established in the Self. The word “विपितः:” denotes a person who has atma-anatma viveka, for the context is sāmkhyā-yoga which is related to the knowledge of the Ātman. Vedāntadeśika says ‘विपितःतत्व’ means ‘शा्म्जन्येयोपायदिविचकत्वः’ (the knowledge born of scriptures about discriminating what is to be taken and what is to be discarded). This dilution of ‘विपितःतत्व’ would, obviously, take away the svārasya of what the Lord intends to say. In other words, the statement, “Though a person has the clear discrimination about the Self and the non-self, that the Ātman is nitya while the anātman like the deha, indriyas etc., are transient and so on, yet, the organs have the ability to confound even such a person and snatch his mind away” is what is very forceful. For
example, we could talk about a certain person, “Even though he is a consummate scholar in Sanskrit, his compositions are invariably flawed”, and that would make sense. What sense would it make if we say, “Even though he is great musician, he makes mistakes in Sanskrit grammar”? Therefore, from Rāmānujācārya’s averment itself, one could say that the sāṁkhya-yogin in question would definitely have had the purity of mind for the rise of the clear Knowledge of the Self and there is no need for him to meditate on Bhagavān’s form to purify his mind yet again.

h) The set of Viśṇu-purāṇa verses seen above decidedly declares the unity of Brahman with the individual self and that all distinctions disappear in the state of Knowledge. In fact, the very first meaning of the word ‘शुभाौय’ given in the Viśṇu-purāṇa is ‘the Supreme self devoid of qualities’. I wonder if this is the best place for the Viśṣṭādvaitins to quote from. Of course, when you can indulge in text torture, any text can be made to support you!

Thus, it could be concluded that the view of Rāmānujācārya that a sāṁkhya-yogin should first resort to focus on the Lord to remove his mental impurities, then control his senses and then sit for meditating on the Self seems to draw no support from the Viśṇu-purāṇa.

**Conclusion of the objections against the Viśṣṭādvaitins’ view of ‘मनस्’**

In the light of what has been seen so far, it is patent that the theory of the Viśṣṭādvaitins that the word “युक्त आसीत मनस्:” advised in śloka 2.61 prescribes focus on the divyamaṅgala-vigraha of the Lord for the purpose of ‘इन्द्रिय-ज्ञ:’ is not at all tenable. On the other hand, the interpretation suffers from many defects - it appears far-fetched, renders many words of the verse concerned as
well as other verses of the Lord purposeless, results in undesirable implications in their own theory, makes a mockery of the meditation on God’s form apart from drawing absolutely no support from Bhagavân anywhere in the Gita.

**Interpretation of ‘मनुष्य’ by the followers of the Dvaita school:**

Madhvācārya is said to have commented upon just over half the total number of verses of the *Gitā*. Even wherever he has commented, his exposition is terse and does not cover all the words of the original text. In view of this, the sub-commentary of Sri Jayatīrtha, ‘*Prameyadīpikā*’, along with the gloss, ‘*Bhāvadīpikā*’, authored by Sri Srinivāsatīrtha and Sri Rāghavendra’s commentary on the *Gitā*, the ‘*Gitārthaśaṅgaraḥ*’, have been referred to here for understanding the position of the Dvaitins for the purpose of the current discussion.

**The view of Madhvācārya and his followers on ‘निराहारत्व’**

As for the “तानि सर्वाणि” verse, the position of the Dvaitins would be understood better if their expositions of the two verses that precede that verse are also studied.

Viṣṇu विश्वार्थ निराहारस्य देहिनः

रसवज्जरसोऽपरं ते द्व्रा निवर्तेते॥ (2.59)

Madhvācārya comments upon this verse as follows: नचैतन्त्रस्य ज्ञानमयवलोकनं भवतीत्त्वादृत्त: श्रेष्ठे: । निराहारत्वेऽविश्वार्थभोगसामस्यामायभवं एव भवति । इतरविश्वार्थकामायो वा । रसाकायादिनं निवर्तेते । स त्यत्वश्चादानात्र निवर्तति इत्यादि विश्वार्थ इति ।… (The next three verses elucidate how *aparokṣa-jñāna* which has the characteristics elucidated (in the earlier verses) cannot be achieved without mighty effort. By abstaining from food, the capacity for enjoyment of sense objects is stifled along with the desire for the objects in respect of the other senses except the sense of taste. But the mental relish does not go away. That burns away only at the dawn of *aparokṣa-jñāna*.)
The sub-commentators have elaborated upon Madhvācārya’s commentary and the understanding, as per Śrī Śrīnivāsatīrtha, is this:

“...निराहारलेन पद्धानामित्रि वाहोन्दिवयणां स्वस्ववियम्भोगशाक्तिक्षयं पुर्व भवति। विषयवस्तुविषयक-मानसिकरागशक्त्यपरोपशाणेनेवतेवकः प्रकारः। तथा चतुर्णमिव वाहोन्दिवयणों तत्तद्वियम्भोगेकरियविषयवचतुद्वियविषयकमानसिकरागस्य च। क्षयो निराहारलेन भवति। रसान्द्रियस्य रसभोगशाक्तिक्रुपः। स्ववियम्भानिसिकरागशक्त्यपरोपशाणेनेवतं।।...” There are two ways in which the control of the senses happens. According to the first way, through निराहारत्वम् or fasting, one can control the power of enjoyment of the five senses (विषयम्भोगशाक्तिक्षयं). However, the mental taste (रस or आकाश) of the senses towards their respective sense objects gets eradicated only through aparokṣa-jñāna. In the next way, fasting burns away the power of enjoyment as well as the mental taste of the four senses other than the sense of taste. As for the sense of taste, both the power of enjoyment and the mental taste vanish only on the dawn of aparokṣha-jñāna of the Supreme.

Now we move on to the next verse.

यततो चार्या कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विषयां।
इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाधीनि हर्षति प्रसभेम मनः।। (2.60)

The commentary of Madhvācārya for this verse is as follows:

अपरोपशाणेन हर्षति इन्द्रियाणि शरीरभमाननि।। को दोषस्तरः? प्रमाधीनिः प्रयथमन्वीणानि।। पुरुषस्य॥ (The senses lead the mind of even a knower possessed of mediate knowledge or even one who puts in standard effort (साधारणयशवर्ता) as they have attachment to the body. What is the consequence if they do so? (The answer is: -) They distract him.)

The view of Madhvācārya and his followers on ‘मतरः’

Now comes here the verse under discussion:

तानि सर्वांि न संयम्य युक्त आसीत मतरः।।
The commentary of Madhvacarya is as follows: “तािन इित। बहुमयत: शकाणि। अतो यल्ल कुयोदित्याशय:। युुिो मषय मनोयुकृ।। अहमेव पर: सनमाूस्य यस्य स मत्तर:। फल्राह बशे हीत।।” (In that case, they (the senses) would become uncontrollable and hence, the Lord says तानि इति. Controlling them is possible with mighty effort. Therefore the idea is that one should put in effort. The word युुि: means ‘with the mind being integrated in Me.’ मत्तर: refers to one who deems Me, Brahman, as the Supreme of all. He declares the fruit – बशे हिः… )

Here, बहुमयतः has been elaborated upon by Sri Jayatirtha as “यथापि न परोक्ष साधनमस्तुक्तः। शशयः। तथापि तत्तत्ततिनिधिना महत्त प्रयः जयानीति।” (Even though what has been mentioned by others is not the means (for sense control) and what has been prescribed by us is not possible to accomplish, they (the senses) can be controlled) by one by his taking recourse to ‘great effort’ in lieu of the other means cited earlier.)

What are the means suggested by the ‘others’ and what is the sådhana that ‘we’ advocate? Sri Śrīnivāsatirtha elaborates on the sub-commentary of Sri Jayatirtha: “परोक्ष: – प्रत्याहारविवेकविज्ञानरूपम्, अस्तमुक्तम् – निराहारत्वब्रह्माश्रयकारूपम्” (Sādhana mentioned by others is ‘pratyāḥāra’ and the like (found in the Yoga-śāstra etc.) The means prescribed by us are ‘निराहार्त्व’ which is fasting and ‘ब्रह्माश्रयकारूपम्’, direct realization of the Supreme.) As we saw earlier, according to Madhvācārya, the means mentioned by ‘others’ will not help one in conquering one’s senses – they come under the category of ‘standard’ effort. What about fasting (which comes under the category of mighty effort) and aparokṣa-jñāna prescribed by ‘us’? Sri Śrīnivāsatirtha says: “देह्वस्थयासमभवात्यांश्यायाभ्याय-मशक्तिमत्थः” - The import of this sentence is that fasting is not the means for ‘इत्यज्ज्व’ since the very subsistence of the body will not be possible without taking food. Aparokṣa-jñāna cannot also be the means because there is this vicious circle – “इत्यज्ज्वसाध्व ब्रह्मापरोश्चाश्चायाभ्याय-निद्रायर्थूति साधनाञीकारे इत्यज्ज्वे।”
If aproksa-jñāna caused by indriya-jaya is accepted as the means for indriya-jaya, then the vicious circle that only when indriya-jaya is there, there will arise aproksa-jñāna, and only when aproksa-jñāna is there, there will arise indriya-jaya would result. Thus, aproksa-jñāna can also not be the cause for 'इन्द्रिय-जय'.

Now what is to be done to control the senses? Based on the commentary of Madhvācārya, Sri Jayatirtha says: “तथापि तत्त्वतिनिधिन महत प्रयोग ज्ञानीत्वयः” (Still, they (the senses) can be controlled) by one by his taking recourse to ‘great effort’ in lieu of the other means cited earlier.) While neither Madhvācārya nor Sri Jayatirtha has explicitly said what that ‘great effort’ is, Sri Śrīnivāsatirtha clarifies: “निरत्त भगवनेव मनोयोजनस्थलम्युण महत प्रयोग” (‘With great effort’ means ‘by constantly focusing one’s mind on Bhagavān only’.)

As already seen, the word ‘मत्तर:’ in the “तािन सवाणिं…” verse, according to Madhvācārya, means: “अहमेव पर: सर्वस्मातुक्रृतो यस्य स मत्तर:” – (one who deems that Bhagavān is the greatest.) Sri Rāghavendraṭirtha in his commentary says: “भगवानेव उत्कृष्ट: इति झालवा…” (Having known that Bhagavān is the greatest…) Sri Jayatirtha writes: “।मत्तर: इत्यत्त्वाङ्गामन्त्र्यांवश्यालम। तत्त्वाश्रयानुसारीत्याश्रयानु व्याप्ते। अहमेवति। भगवानेव सर्वस्मातुक्रृत: इति झालवा तत्स्मातेव निरत्त र मनसो योजनमिन्द्रकयचे परं साधनमिति भाव: औ।” (The interpretation done by the others (advaitins) of ‘मत्तर:’ as non-dual knowledge is not alright. Deeming that such an interpretation does not follow from the letters of the text (Gītā) it has been commented upon (by Madhvācārya) as “Me alone…”’. The idea is that the sādhaka should deem that, “I, Bhagavān alone am the highest of all.”

Thus, the Dvaitins opine that the word ‘मत्तर:’ of the “तािन सवाणिं” verse indicates that constant engagement or focus of the mind on Bhagavān with the
knowledge that He is the highest of all is the prime means for conquering the senses.

**A critical analysis of the Dvaitins’ interpretation of ‘मत्तर:’**

Most of the objections raised against the viewpoint of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins would hold good for the interpretation of the Dvaitins too. In addition, the following points are also worthy of consideration.

**Dismissal of a complete verse of Bhagavan**

Having said in the commentary on the “विषय विनिवर्तन्ते…” verse that fasting and direct knowledge help in the control of the senses, the Dvaitins seem to write off this very verse of Bhagavān labeling it impracticable; they aver that fasting is not the means for ‘इियजय’ since the very subsistence of one’s body will not be possible without taking food and aparokṣa-jñāna too cannot be the means because of the vicious circle involved! Sri Jayatirtha justifies this writing off saying: “निराहारत्वादिके तु वस्तुसत्तप्रदश्नायमेवोक्तमिति मन्तव्यम्।” (Fasting etc., were mentioned (by Bhagavān) only to show the mode of acting of things) – Shorn of euphemism, the Dvaitins have effectively declared the inapplicability and uselessness of this verse for a sādhaka. Is it not a pity that the Dvaitins have made a whole verse go purposeless just because Madhvacārya had interpreted ‘निराहारत्व’ as abstinence from food!

**“तानि स्वर्णि …” verse incomprehensible, say the Dvaitins**

According to the Dvaitins, Arjuna’s question (2.53) and Bhagavān’s replies (from 2.54 upto 2.58) are about the characteristics of an aparokṣa-jñānin. Ślokas starting from ‘विषय विनिवर्तन्ते…”(2.59) upto ‘तानि स्वर्णि …”(2.61) are supposed to tell us how aparokṣa-jñāna cannot be achieved without ‘mighty’ effort. The “तानि स्वर्णि…” verse, according the Dvaitins, specifically advises a sādhaka to deem the Lord to be the highest of all and fix his mind on Him. This constitutes
the ‘mighty effort’ spoken of earlier by Madhvācārya to control the senses. The second line of the “तानि स्वार्णिणि...” verse teaches us that a person’s wisdom is steadfast when his senses have been controlled. – “वचोऽ हि वस्त्रेद्रामणि तत्स्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिशिष्टा.” If according to the Dvaitins, the import of the word ‘मस्तयः’ in the “तानि स्वार्णिणि...” verse relates only to ‘इन्द्रयज्ञ’ and not any other sādhanā towards aparokṣa-jñāna in the verse, then ‘इन्द्रयज्ञ’ itself should constitute aparokṣajñānam because the Lord Himself has categorically said so in the second line of the verse. For it would appear that no effort needs to be put in by the sādhaka for aparokṣa-jñāna other than merely controlling the senses. Thus, the definition of an apraokṣa-jñānin gets diluted and the blame for it would go to Bhagavān. This is contradictory to the Lord’s own elaborate description of an aparokṣa-jñānin found in the first four verses starting from the ‘प्रज्ञाहति यदा कामान...’ and expounded by the Dvaitins.

Sri Raghavendra, however, hastens to offer a remedy. He suggests that when Bhagavān says, “वचोऽ हि वस्त्रेद्रामणि तत्स्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिशिष्टा”, the Lord does not really mean that Knowledge (प्रज्ञा) is the direct fruit of इन्द्रय-वशीकरण. Sri Rāghavendra writes this in his commentary for the तानि स्वार्णिणि verse: “तस्य कथो इन्द्रियाणि वर्तन्ते तत्स्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिशिष्टिति ... अनुज्ञातमिन्द्रयज्ञस्य ज्ञानारूपं फलं न साक्षादिति ‘राग्धेरिवियुक्तं रित्यादौ व्यक्तिमभविष्यतीति ज्ञेयम्’” (‘His wisdom is steadfast whose senses are in his control’):- That the jñāna, spoken of as the fruit of sense-control in this sentence is not direct knowledge (aparaokṣa-jñāna) will become clear when the Lord will utter the verse “राग्धेरिवियुक्तं...” (2.64) etc.” In his commentary for the verse “राग्धेरिवियुक्तं...”, Sri Raghavendra says that “तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिशिष्टि” occurring in the “तानि स्वार्णिणि...” verse only means “मन:प्रसादद्वारा – तत्स्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिशिष्टि” (The wisdom of a person who has controlled his senses becomes steadfast through ‘मन:प्रसादः’). Thus, Sri Rāghavendra seems to suggest that the Lord’s wordings of the second line are not optimal in as much as words like ‘मन:प्रसादद्वारा’ and the like need to
be added before the statement ‘तत्त्व प्रहा प्रतिनिधित्वा’ of the Lord. In contrast to this, we see that the advaitins find this verse as complete and comprehensive.

Sri Rāghavendra’s remark while commenting upon verse 2.68 (तत्सादायस्य महावाहो...) is pertinent to study at this juncture. He writes: “प्रज्ञातीत्यत्यदिक्षितं नित्यत्वं संस्कृति अवृत्तसंस्कृतिः ज्ञानस्य महामयज्ञावेदिन्द्रियमिद्द्वारसाच्यतवं विषया विनिवर्तनं इत्यादिनां। यदृच्छ तत्त्वसंस्कृतिः - तत्सादायस्य यस्मात्वं निरंतिरितिः। तत्सादायस्य तत्सापूर्ववेदिरुप्तः। प्रसादः, प्रसादवत्त एव चिन्तनिरोधरूप्या युक्तः। युक्तिः एव अवंत्तनो, ताभ्यं तत्त्वत्त्वग्निश्चयं। तत्त्वत्त्वग्निश्चयं प्रसादः। चिन्तनिरोधमाध्यमम्। यथानम्...”. (In order to dispel the notion that the characteristics of a jñānī delineated in the verses starting from ‘प्रज्ञाति...’ are impossible to achieve, it was clarified through the verses “विषया विनिवर्तनन्तः” and the like that Knowledge is possible through the mighty effort of sense-control. This topic is being concluded here. It is through the control of the senses that one attains serenity. Through serenity only arises yukti in the form of control of the mind. Śravaṇa and manana are only for a man with control of mind. Through śravaṇa and manana arises the conviction about the Reality. Only for a person who has such conviction, meditation becomes the means for direct knowledge...).

If the sequence of the sādhanā mentioned by Bhagavān is “indriya-nigraha, prasāda, chittanirodha or yukti, bhāvana (or dhyāna) and, finally, jñāna”, why do they assume another ‘bhāvana’ before indriya-nigraha? This additional bhāvana does not seem to figure anywhere in Bhagavān’s teaching throughout the Gītā.

In any case, the Lord does not at all impart the knowledge required for the dvaita-based aparokṣa-jñāna - that the Paramātman is the bimba and the jīvātman is the pratibimba and so on in any of these verses, whereas the advaitins are able to show that by the word ‘मल्लक’, non-dual knowledge is being imparted to the sādhaka. Remember, this chapter is titled “Sāmkhya-
“yoga” and it would be pretty odd if Bhagavān does not spell out what the knowledge of the sāmkhya-yogins is.

Dvaitins create a new vicious circle!

Now we move on to the interpretation of the Dvaitins with respect to the key word ‘मतपरः’. According to Madhvācārya, “अहमेव परः सर्वत्मातुक्ष्ठो वस्तु स मतपरः:” – “He to whom I am the Supreme and the greatest of all is ‘matparaː’. Sri Raghavendra writes: मतपरः - अहमेव महावानकृत्य एव परः सर्वकृष्ण: यस्य स मतपरः:। भगवानेव सर्वात्म इति ज्ञातवः। … तत्र भगवत: सर्वत्मलक्ष्म्यनं निर्मित्येव निर्मित्यं महोदयभिन्निष्ठयोजयेय मुद्यं साधनम।। (He to whom Me, the Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme, the greatest of all, is matparaː: – (This means) knowing that Bhagavān is the highest of all … The permanent engagement of one’s mind in Bhagavān with the prior knowledge that He is the greatest, is the prime discipline for controlling one’s senses.)

The objection is this. The Dvaitins deem that there is the defect of mutual dependence in Bhagavān’s statement about aprokṣa-jñāna being caused by indriya-jaya and indriya-jaya happening as a result of para-darsana or aprokṣa-jñāna. And that is the reason they have dismissed the विषयविनिवर्तने verse itself as impracticable. Now, in their interpretation of मतपरः, they say that one has to constantly focus one’s mind on Bhagavān with the knowledge that ‘He is the highest’ in order to control one’s senses. They say that they have overcome the vicious-circle problem by resorting to focusing the mind on Bhagavān. The question now is whether the नैर्विषय-मनो-योजनं - constant meditation on Bhagavān recommended for ‘इन्द्रप-जयम’ is easier than the meditation towards aparokṣa-jñāna of Bhagavān Hari, the Supreme? After all, according to the Dvaitins, Bhagavān Hari who is considered the Supreme Brahman, is not nirguna or formless; He is full of good qualities and has a divine form. Hence, if the intermediary meditation is going to be as easy or difficult as the final meditation on the Supreme, why not directly meditate upon the Supreme?
Brahman, Hari for aparokṣa-jñāna itself? Why this intermediary meditation that too on a (निरत्तरस) continuous basis merely for controlling the senses? If on the other hand, success in the intermediary meditation on Bhagavān too requires indriya-jayam, will there not arise another vicious circle, created afresh by the Dvaitins? It may be recalled that a similar - if not identical - question was raised against the Viśiṣṭādvaitins also.

Dhyāna on Bhagavān for aparokṣa-jñāna does not require much indriya-nigraha—Dvaitins

We saw earlier that the Dvaitins are in a tight spot with regard to the conquest of the senses as they find Bhagavān’s advice about indriya-nigraha involving anyonya-āśraya (mutual dependence) between indriya-jaya and aparokṣajñāna; for, according to them the Lord has said that there is no aparokṣa-jñāna without indriya-jaya and vice versa. It is for this reason that Madhvācārya said it requires mahat-prayatna (mighty effort) in the form of continuous meditation on the Lord and this is what is indicated in the “तानि स्वाभिनी” verse in the portion “युत्तारसीति मद्वारां”. Now it will be interesting to see their own reversal of this stance in their exposition of a subsequent chapter of the Bhagavad-gītā which says that the dhyāna on Bhagavān aimed at aparokṣa-jñāna does not require much indriya-nigraha at all. On the other hand it is only the avyakta-upāsanā (Śrītattva-upāsanā) that requires stringent indriya-nigraha. In his commentary on verse 12.5 Madhvācārya says: “इद्धियांयमयादि०जवादवेदवादययायप्रयोगक्षणीयपुरुषनातिप्रभयति। देवस्तु तानि साधनानि सक्षममितः स्वयमेव प्रयोग ददाती भवानि भगवदुपासने॥ (There is the risk of Śrītattva not being pleased with an aspirant if there be any deficiency in respect of auxiliary requisites of sense control and the like. The Lord’s devotee, on the other hand, has this advantage of the fulfillment of the auxiliary conditions being rendered easy for him by the Lord’s own effort.) Sri Rāghavendratirtha writes for the very same verse: “अत्तिद्विन्द्रययमयादि०जवादवेदवादययायप्रयोगक्षणीयपुरुषनातिप्रभयति। न केवल इति सुचितं …तैयामहि समुद्वलो भवात्मनेत्रनिद्धिसंयमयादि०जवादवेदवादययायपुरुषनातिप्रभयति। देवतादेशो नोपल्लेते
(Excessive restraint of the senses and the like are not pre-requisites in the case of pleasing Me and thus there is no strain involved. … From the words, “I become their redeemer” it can be inferred that even though the devotees may lack sense control etc., Bhagavān does not mind it unlike Devī. On the other hand, He Himself bestows them upon the devotee such traits without any effort from the latter. Thus, there is much ease in the contemplation of Bhagavān.) Is this not a ‘U’ turn in their stance? In Chapter 2, the Dvaitins claimed that mighty effort was required to be put in to control the indriyas in the paramātma-upāsana aimed at for aparokṣa-jñāna and faulted Bhagavān’s advice as involving anyonya-āśraya. Here, in the 12th Chapter they argue that according to Bhagavān, there is not much sense control required in bhagavad-dhyāna for aparokṣa-jñāna and that it is only in the Śrī-tattva-upāsana that one requires complete restraint of the senses and other restrictions. What consistency!

No anyonya-āśraya when it comes to their own theory!

Sri Rāghavendratirtha’s commentary of verse 12.9 would be also pertinent to our discussion. The verse concerned is as under:

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्योषि मध्य धिष्ठयः
अन्यायायोऽगतं ततो मामवच्छातुं धनन्ययः

(If, however, you are unable to establish the mind steadily on Me, then O Dhananjaya, seek to attain Me through the yoga of practice.)

Here Sri Rāghavendratirtha writes: “स्थिरं यथा तथा मध्य चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्योषि। ततो मनःसमाधानाशक्तिवच्छातुः पुनः प्रत्याहारं भगवनमःसमाधानरूपमं भगवदयोक्ष्योपायेन मामवच्छातुः” “If you cannot establish the mind steadily on Me on account of your inability to do so, seek to attain me by repeatedly withdrawing from other objects and concentrating on My form.” Bhagavān should be thankful to the Dvaitins for they do not find fault with Bhagavān, yet again, saying “How can He advise a
person who is not able to fix his mind on Him to do so by repeated practice?”

Incidentally, this very verse along with its interpretation could be cited to rebut the Dvaitins’ own theory about focusing on the Lord for achieving sense control; what we see in this verse is the converse!

As we saw in an earlier paragraph, the Dvaitins claim that the Advaitic interpretation of the word ‘ममार्’ is a forced one as it does not naturally flow from the words of the Lord. We would, of course, look into this criticism in detail when we study the commentary of Bhagavatpāda. As for the view of the Dvaitins, it is not at all convincing that their idea of constant meditation on Bhagavān for conquering the senses follows from the words “युक्त आत्मेत ममार्.”

The Advaitins are said to be guilty of distorting the meaning of a single word, ममार्: whereas the Dvaitins seem to be happily doctoring the meaning of the entire verse! Again, where does “अहमेव” follow from ममार्?: In fact, their interpretation of the words ‘आत्मनः’ and ‘आत्मना’ in the “प्रजाहाति यदा कामान…” verse as ‘परमात्मनः’ and ‘परमात्मना’ is contentious. After all, the jīvātman and the Paramātman are totally distinct in their philosophy. Perhaps an Advaitin would be justified in interchangeably using आत्मा and परमात्मा to denote the Self as there is only one Self in Advaita philosophy but certainly not a Dvaitin.

Thus, it could even be said that the Dvaitins are guilty of distorting the import of the entire set of the verses concerning ितप्रकाश्यणम्. However, a discussion on those verses would constitute a deviation from the topic under discussion and hence not taken up. Also, this is not a discussion or a comparative study of the various philosophies.

In the light of the above, the interpretation of the Dvaitins suffers from many a flaw: They disregard an entire verse of the Lord as inconsequential. Their interpretation of many words of the Lord seems to be far-fetched. Specific meditation on Bhagavān for the conquest of the senses for a person engaged in
meditation for the purpose of aparokṣa-jñāna has not at all been prescribed by the Lord anywhere in the Gitā, and the Dvaitins seem to contradict their own view in their exposition of the verses found elsewhere in the Gitā.

Interpretation of Madhusūdana Sarasvati, a post-Bhagavatpāda advaitic commentator

Let us now see how Sri Madhusūdana Saraswati interprets the “तानि स्वार्णि” verse in his commentary ‘Gudhaarthadipikaa’. A portion of his commentary pertaining to the word ‘matparah’ is as follows: प्रज्ञातीनां कथं स्ववशिष्करणेऽणिति चेतत्राह - मतपर इति - अहं स्वामि वासुदेव एव पर उल्कुष उपादेय: यथ्य स मतपर:। एकान्तमद्दक्क: इत्यथः। तथा चोकम ‘न वासुदेवभानामशुभं बीचते कष्ट्ते’ इति। यथा हि दोषके बलवन्तं राजान्माध्यत्य दस्योऽनि निगुण्तने राजातितोऽयमिति झाला च ते स्वयं विनं तदवस्त्रा भवति, ततेव भगववल्तं स्वार्णायक्षविभाष्ट्रव्यत्त तदभावेवे दुष्यनीदिवाणि निग्राहाणि। पुनः भगवदशितोऽयमिति मतवा तानि तदभावेव भवतीति भावः। (If it is asked “How are the turbulent ones, (the organs) to be brought under ones’ control?”, to that He says, “matparah”, by accepting Me as the Supreme. He is called matparaḥ to whom I, Vāsudeva, alone the Self of all, am the supreme, the most excellent, goal to be attained. That is to say, he should be absolutely devoted to Me. So it has been said, “For those devoted to Vāsudeva, there is no evil anywhere”. Indeed in the world, as robbers are subdued by someone by taking shelter under a powerful king and they also voluntarily submit to him after knowing that he is under the king’s protection, in a very similar way, by taking shelter under the Lord, the inner controller of all, the wicked organs are to be kept under control through His power itself, and again, understanding that ‘this person is under the protection of the Lord’ they certainly come under his control. This is the idea.)

While Bhagavatpāda reads the śloka as conveying that having controlled the senses, one should remain concentrated, keeping the notion “I am that Supreme Vasudeva who is the innermost Self and none other than Him”, Sri
Madhusūdana Sarasvati interprets the verse as, “Having controlled the senses by being supremely devoted, one should remain concentrated...”. Thus, Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvati finds utility for the word ‘मरः’ to explain the role of supreme devotion to the Lord which is what brings about control of the senses.

In Madhusūdana’s view, the word ‘मरः’ is useful to answer Arjuna’s unasked question as to how the turbulent sense organs should be brought under one’s control. Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvati says in His introduction to the verse, “यततो व्रष्टि कौन्तेय...” as under: तत्र प्रज्ञायें बाणिज्यनिनिधयो मनोविनिधशासाधारण कारण तद्भवामाय प्रज्ञानावर्तात्मातियति कर्तुम् बाणिज्यनिनिधायावे प्रथम दृष्टमाह । (The control of external organs and the control of the mind are the specific means to the steadiness of wisdom for it is seen that in the absence of these wisdom gets destroyed. In order to state this, He speaks of the first defect in the absence of sense control of the organs).

यततो व्रष्टि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपक्षितः ।
इन्द्रयापि प्रमाधीनि हर्नित प्रसभ मन: ॥

(As is well known, O son of Kunti, the turbulent organs violently snatch away the mind of an intelligent person even when he is striving diligently.) When commenting upon this verse Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvati gives an example; He says: प्रसिद्धो धर्ममयैः लोके यथा प्रमाधिनो दृष्टयः प्रसभमेव धनिन्न धनसङ्क ज्ञानम् तथो: पद्यतौरेऽधन धनः हर्नित तथोद्निष्ठयापि विषयसचिवाम् मनो हर्निती ॥ (The fact is indeed well known in the world that, just as powerful robbers violently overpowering a rich man and the guard of his wealth steal the wealth before their very eyes, similarly the organs also carry away the mind when in the proximity of objects.) एवं तद्यते तत्र क्र प्रतीकारः

इत्यत आह । (If this is so, then what is the remedy for it?) asks Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī.

Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī opines that the word ‘मरः’ of the next verse of the Lord comes in handy here. We have already seen his commentary on this verse.
Thus, Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says that devotion to the Lord in the form of matparatvam enables one to completely tame the senses. As for the control of the mind which also is a sine qua non for the steadiness of the wisdom Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says:

निगृहीतवायुयस्यापि चुक्तज्ञावाच सर्वनाश्यास्माह ।
(In the absence of concentration, even a man who has controlled his external organs gets all evils.) These are his words in the introduction of his commentary for the following ślokas:

ध्यायतो विषयं दृष्टस्मलवपुजायते ।
सञ्जय संजायते काम: कामाकोषापमवजायते ॥ २.६२
कोधात्रवंति समोह: समोहात्म्यतिविभम: ।
स्मृतिभ्रमणामुद्विज्ञानो वृद्धिवात्यादृश्यति ॥ २.६३
(In the case of a person who dwells on objects, there arises attachment for them. From attachment grows hankering. From hankering springs anger. From anger follows delusion; from delusion, failure of memory; from failure of memory, loss of understanding; from loss of understanding, he perishes.)

Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī further says, “यस्मादेव मनसो निगृहामावे निगृहीतवायुयस्यापि परमावर्यास्मि: तस्मान्महतं प्रतिलोक मनो निगृहीयताः। अतो युक्तमुक्ते ‘ताति सन्याणि संयथ्य चुक्त आनीत…’।” (Since, thus, even for one who has controlled the external organs there comes great grief in the absence of control of the mind, therefore one should control the mind with great effort. Therefore it has been aptly said, ‘Controlling all of them and becoming concentrated, one should remain seated.’) Effectively, Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī seems to say that one should control his senses through “एकान्तार्थिक” or absolute devotion while he should control his mind by himself. This is because, in His interpretation, the Lord has talked about“मत्पर्व” for controlling the senses only.
A critical analysis of the interpretation of Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī

If control of the senses alone is achieved through ‘मत्तर्त्व’ and not yoga (control of the mind), a question arises why Bhagavān merely takes care of the relatively easier task of sense-control of His devotee while He leaves the uphill task of mind-control to the devotee; obviously, controlling the mind requires great effort even according to Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. Moreover, the role of the mind is vital even with regard to the control of the senses. So, why not take ‘मत्तर्’ to play a role in mind-control also? Unfortunately, the wording of the verse is such that Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī cannot link the word ‘मत्तर्’ for the concentration portion also (i.e युः आसीत... remain concentrated) of the Lord’s advice because there is the word संयम्य (having controlled), a word with a ‘lyap’ pratyaya, that occurs between “तानि स्वाभिः” (all of them, the indriyas) and “युः आसीत”. Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī can take the word-order either as “मत्तर्: (सन्त) तानि स्वाभिः संयम्य युः आसीत ।” or “तानि स्वाभिः संयम्य मत्तरसन्त युः आसीत: ।” or “मत्तर्: (सन्त) युः: (सन्त) तानि स्वाभिः संयम्य आसीत ।” The third one is a bit odd because one is always supposed to control the senses first before one takes on the mind. Thus, in Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s interpretation ‘मत्तर्त्व’ can help the sādhaka either in sense-control or mind-control but not both. From the context of the “यततो...” verse, Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī seems to like the first option and says that the devotee’s senses are first controlled by the power of the Lord, and after that, he has to strive to control his mind, by himself. This oddity arises when “मत्तर्त्व” is interpreted as “एकान्तमर्पिन्” towards God for controlling merely one’s senses.

Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī goes a step further; In his introduction to verse 2.64 (रागद्विययुः...) he says, “मनसं निरूपते न वाह्यनिरूपितं यहामध्यवेदि न दोष इति वदन् किम् ब्रजतेत्त्वयोत्तमायेऽपि...” (Saying that when the mind is controlled, no harm can accrue even if there be absence of control over the external organs, He (Bhagavān) gives the answer to the question, “How does he (a man of stable
wisdom) move about’ in the next eight verses…”. Does not this statement simply defeat the entire hullabaloo made about control of the senses and the requirement of मनोगति / एकान्तमभिक्षिण in a devotee to control his senses? So much for the utility of एकान्तमभिक्षिण! Of course, it is completely another thing whether Bhagavān says that control of mind alone would do and no harm would accrue even if there be absence of control over the external organs? Be that as it may.

We are aware that Arjuna asked a set of questions about the sthitaprajñā such as what his marks are, how he meditates, how he converses, how he sits and how he moves about. The very first question in the set, according to Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, is about the marks of a man of steady wisdom who is established in samādhi, thanks to the word ‘समाधिः’. Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī further says that the following śloka is the Lord’s answer to this question:

प्रज्ञाहति यदा कामान्तर्वायायर्थ मनोगतान्।
आत्मन्येवात्माना तुष्यत: स्थित्यमभावप्राप्तोऽविष्कृते॥

(O Partha, when one fully renounces all the desires that have entered the mind, and remains satisfied in the Self alone by the self, then he is called a man of steady wisdom.)

Then Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says that the other three questions of Arjuna, namely, “How does the man of steady wisdom speak?”, “How does he sit?” and “How does he move about” pertain to the man of steady wisdom who has come out of Samadhi. Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says that the following six verses form the answers to the question “How does the man of steady wisdom sit?”

यदा संहरते चावर्य कृममोमात्राय सर्वः।
इन्द्रियाणिन्द्रियाध्याधमस्तस्तय प्रक्षा प्रतिपित्ता॥ (2.58)
(And when this one fully withdraws the senses from the objects of the senses as a tortoise wholly (withdraws) the limbs, then his wisdom remains established.)

The objects recede from an abstinent man, with the exception of the taste (for them). Even the taste of this person falls away after realizing the Absolute.

(As is well known, O son of Kunti, the turbulent organs violently snatch away the mind of an intelligent person even when he is striving diligently.)

(Controlling all of them, one should remain concentrated on Me as the Supreme. For the wisdom of one whose organs are under control becomes steadfast.)

In the case of a person who dwells on objects, there arises attachment for them. From attachment grows hankering. From hankering springs anger. From anger follows delusion; from delusion, failure of memory; from failure of memory, loss of understanding; from loss of understanding, he perishes.)

Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī introduces the set of verses beginning from verse 2.58 as follows:

"With a view to showing that the ‘sitting’ of the man of steady wisdom is verily for Samadhi – by withdrawing again the organs that have..."
become distracted as a result of emerging from samādhi owing to the effect of prarabdha-karma …)

If the context is about a man of wisdom who has come out of samādhi and is seated now for the sake of entering it again, why should there be so much struggle for him, who is already a samādhistha to control his indriyas and that he requires मत्तर्थ (absolute devotion towards God) in order to control his senses from objects when it comes to śloka 2.61? Does Sri Madhusūdana recommend that an advanced sāṁkhyā-yogin who has had the experience of the highest samādhi on the Ātman-Brahman, alternate between samādhi on Ātman with the notion of non-difference between Himself and the Supreme sometimes, and, at other times, practise devotion towards Bhagavān entertaining duality, the latter purely for the purpose of controlling the senses? This question seems unavoidable, if Sri Madhusūdana’s interpretation is to be accepted.

In view of all this, Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvati’s interpretation of the ‘मत्तर्थ’ as ‘एकान्तमष्टिनि’ towards Lord, for the purpose of controlling the senses, seems to suffer from many flaws and it seems very unlikely that the master-exponent, Bhagavān, would have advised Arjuna so ambiguously.

Having seen the interpretation of the word ‘मत्तर्’ by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, Dvaitins and an independent post-Bhagavatpāda advaitin, let us now take stock of the situation. As the compound word ‘मत्तर्’ occurring in the verse concerned should have some utility, the commentators whose viewpoints we saw, have tried to associate ‘मत्तर्थ’ as an aid for indriya-nigraha and also to solve the so-called mutual dependence problem concerning indriya-nigraha and aparokṣa-jñāna in Bhagavān’s advice. Unfortunately, however, we have observed that the word ‘मत्तर्’, cannot denote focus on Bhagavān by a person
engaged in ātma-darśana or nidadhyāsana for aparokṣa-jñāna for the purpose of controlling his senses. With this background let us go forward.

An analysis of the commentary of Bhagavatpāda for the word मल्लर:

As was seen at the beginning of this essay, Bhagavatpāda interprets ‘मल्लर:’ as “आहं वासुदेव: सर्वप्रत्यगत्म पर: यत्य स मल्लर: ‘न अन्योहं तस्मात’ इति आसीत इत्यथ:.” We also saw that the additional advaitic interpretation of Bhagavatpāda “‘न अन्योहं तस्मात’ इति आसीत इत्यथ:.” is what is contentious to the Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the Dvaitins. So, a question arises whether Bhagavatpāda’s commentary also suffers from the flaw of forced interpretation like that of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, Dvaitins and even Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. Moreover, it is not in all the four instances of the occurrence of the word ‘मल्लर:’ that Bhagavatpāda has provided the additional advaitic remark. For instance, in 18.57, the Lord says: “चेतसा सर्वप्रत्यगत्म मव्य संवि मल्लरः।”and the bhāṣya for the word ‘मल्लर:’ of this verse is: “आहं वासुदेव: पर: यत्य तव सः लें मल्लरः.” Here, we do not find the additional advaitic explanation. Thus, a doubt can arise whether Bhagavatpāda has introduced advaitic flavour in the verse without any justification.

Let us begin our response to the objections. Firstly, as a commentator, Bhagavatpāda’s job is to put the slokas in perspective, throw additional light wherever required on the subtle points found in the original text, while ensuring that the Lord’s ideas are not misrepresented. As far as verse 2.61 is concerned, Bhagavatpāda finds it pertinent to offer a non-dualistic explanation because a) the context warrants such an interpretation and b) without such an understanding, one will run into problems when one implements the teaching concerned. As for verse 18.57, the context is karma-yoga. As a performer of karma-yoga, a person is supposed to deem Īśvara to be the highest and serve him like a devoted servant and not consider himself as non-different from Īśvara and perform non-dual nidadhyāsana. The context of 2.61, however, is
jñāna-niṣṭhā which is about nīḍīdhyāsana or focus on the Self with the conviction born out of the scriptural teachings like “तत्वभस्य”, (Thou art That) that Īśvara and one’s own Ātman, in their intrinsic nature, are one and the same. Hence, the additional comment of Bhagavatpāda “‘न अन्योऽहं तस्मात्’ इति आसीत” is highly pertinent to the context.

Practical considerations

Now let us see the practical considerations that would have warranted Bhagavatpāda to interpret the word ‘मियः’ as “‘न अन्योऽहं तस्मात्’ इति आसीत”. When Bhagavān advises Arjuna with the words, “तािनसवा्णसंयु” it is quite obvious that He is compassionately instructing Arjuna the steps involved in the establishment of oneself in the Self towards achieving stability of wisdom. The first step involves the arresting of the senses that take the mind away from the object of the meditation, towards the sense-objects. This is conveyed by the words, “तािनसवाणसंयु”. The next step is about keeping the mind integrated which is explicit in the words “यु”. Now arises the question “कथं आसीत?” – How does or with what knowledge should one sit? Or what should be the conviction of the sādhaka, a sāmkhya-yogin, who is supposed to sit integrated, after controlling his senses?

Bhagavatpāda does not require a ‘मियः’ in the verse!

In the case of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the Dvaitins, even though there is no specific word such as ‘मियः’ to indicate meditation on Bhagavān, we saw that they assume its presence and proceed with their explanation. This, however, is not the case with Bhagavatpāda for it is crystal clear to Him that the context is establishment in the Ātman. How did He know this? Because, Arjuna’s very question is about a man who is established in the Ātman, a samādhisthāḥ. In fact, his set of questions about स्थितत्तत्त्वलत्त्व itself stemmed from the very words of what Bhagavān spoke in the following verse:
Teaching for nidadhyāsana

The answer to the question “कथं आसीत्” is given succinctly by Bhagavān as ‘मनसैवानुिूम ्’ By uttering ‘मनसैवानुिूम ्:’. He teaches Arjuna with what prajñā or knowledge, based on which the sādhaka should engage in the nidadhyāsana on the Ātman.

As we saw in the last paragraph, this verse is not meant by Bhagavān for listing the characteristics of a sthitaprajñā but intended by Him for advising a sādhaka as to how he should proceed from the discrimination or प्रज्ञा that he has obtained from the analysis of Ātman and the anātman to reach the state of a sthitaprajñā. Therefore, the sādhaka must be imparted by the Guru, the Upaniṣadic Truth, which should be the basis of the nidadhyāsana and the realization of which alone can bring about liberation. The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad says that the Ātman should be contemplated upon according to the scriptures only. “मनसैवानुिूम ्” (4.4.19) (Brahman should be realized in accordance with the teaching of the Guru through the mind alone.) The
Chāndogya Upaniṣad teaches: “आत्माननुविच अत्मस्तः” (8.5.2) (Having known the Ātman in the light of the teaching of the scripture and the Guru, he contemplates upon it.) But for such a direct instruction, the disciple may end up realizing mistakenly non-selves like the senses, the prānas or even the mind as the Self. Or he may stop with realizing his individual Self as is the case with the practitioners of the Yoga-school. The realization of any of these is not the realization for liberation spoken of in the Upanishads. Thus, the disciple is required to keep in mind the scriptural teaching received from His preceptor rooted in tradition about the nature of the Ātman when he sits for nididhyāsana. In the context, the word ‘मत्तरः’ uttered by Bhagavān is representative of the Upaniṣadic wisdom while Bhagavān Himself is the Sadguru.

Now let us see why Bhagavatpāda’s exposition of ‘मत्तरः’ alone is what is appropriate in view of practical considerations. Bhagavatpāda has expanded ‘मत्तरः’ as “न अन्योऽहं तस्मात इति आसीत”. The word ‘मत्तरः’ when translated literally, means “the one who deems Me, Vāsudeva, as the Supreme.” Now, if this much alone were the import of the word मत्तरः in the given context, it would be confusing to any sādhaka; the context of Bhagavān’s teaching is focus on the Ātman – recall the words “समाधौ अचला बुिञ्जः”, the very starting point of Arjuna’s questions. If he has to sit focussing his mind on the Ātmān, how can he simultaneously entertain the attitude, “Vāsudeva, my Lord, is the Supreme?”

If a karma-yogin were to meditate on Īśvara, he will sit with the conviction that Īśvara is the absolute, Supreme Being and meditate on Him; here the object of meditation (the upāsanā), is Bhagavān (the upāsya), who is deemed as different from the meditator (the upāsaka). On the other hand, nididhyāsana on one’s own Ātman, is not an upāsanā. Here one should sit with the knowledge born of the teachings of the Upaniṣads and the Guru, “I am Supreme Brahman of the
nature of existence, consciousness and bliss; nothing else exists apart from me.”
Thus, these two are different notions employed in respect of two different absorptions. As said earlier, if ‘मद्यः’ were to mean simply, “Deeming Me, Vasudeva, as the Supreme” in the context, one would only get confused in the given context. If, however, the import of ‘मद्यः’ is understood as an instruction from the Lord which requires the sādhaka to hold on to the idea “Vasudeva, the innermost Self of all is the Supreme, He is verily my Self and so, I am non-different from the Supreme” then, nīdidhyāsana would only be on one’s own Self. It is only the Self which is to be realised as non-different from Vāsudeva, who is the Supreme; there would be no confusion with such a notion. If one has to practically follow the Lord’s advice in 2.61 in the context of ātma-dhyāna, the explanation of Bhagavatpāda, “न अन्योध्यतमात् इति आसीत” is the only way out. Thus, the interpretation of मद्यः by Bhagavatpāda not only fits the context perfectly but also addresses the practical requirements of nīdidhyāsana.

Does Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation contradict Bhagavan’s words found elsewhere in the Gītā?

Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation of ‘मद्यः’ may be based on practical considerations for nīdidhyāsana as far as 2.61 is concerned, but just as the Viśiśṭādvaitins’ recommendation of meditation on the divine form of Bhagavān for इन्द्रिय-राग-ज्ञेय was fraught with conflicts with the Lord’s words “तानि सर्वार्थ संयम्य” and “परं देवा निबृत्तेन”, Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation may also be conflicting with the import of the other verses prior to and that follow the “तानि सर्वार्थ…” verse. For example, the very first verse (2.55) in the set of advices of Bhagavān describes the man of steady wisdom as: “आत्मनंत्वात्मनः तु:” (one who is satisfied in the Self alone by his mind – आत्मनि पुर्व आत्मना मनसा - Rāmānujācārya.)Thus, the focus is only on the individual self and not on the Self that is non-different from Iśvara or Brahman. Thus, it needs to be established that Bhagavatpāda’s
advaitic interpretation does not contradict any statement of Bhagavān in the context.

The response to this objection is that Bhagavatpāda’s commentary does not contradict the advice of the Lord in the verses that occur prior to or after the “तानि सम्बांणि…” verse, especially, the verse starting with “प्रज्ञाति यदा”. We have already seen that the topic is nididhyāsana on the Self. Now let us consider an averment of the Lord in the context:- “रसवजयृसोध्यम्य परं द्वारा निवर्तते”. If in the context of the “प्रज्ञाति यदा” verse, a person meditates merely on his own self (or jīvātman, as the Viśiṣṭādvaitins make it out to be) why should Bhagavān speak subsequently about such a person accomplishing the sāksātkāra of परं, the Supreme Self, during the course of his nididhyāsana? If a person achieves success in meditating on the form of a particular devatā, he would get the vision of that devatā but not some one else. Similarly, unless the individual self, in reality, is non-different from the Supreme Self and unless the sādhaka has a firm conviction about this Truth at the time of his sitting for nididhyāsana, how will the sāksātkāra of ‘परं’ the Supreme Brahman and the going away of one’s taste for the senses on such sāksātkāra happen? Hence, if the Lord’s statement “रसवजयृसोध्यम्य परं द्वारा निवर्तते” has to be meaningful, “मत्तर्य” has invariably to be understood in the way Bhagavatpāda has interpreted it. Not only this. The Lord declares at the end of the chapter that such a person’s state is the state of Brahmanhood, the brāhma-sthitiḥ.

The whole idea is this: A person, who, out of ignorance, had initially considered himself a jīva and a samsārin; his mind became pure consequent to his avoidance of desire-prompted karma and desireless performance of obligatory duties in the form of dedication to the Lord; when he grasps without doubt the scripture-based instruction of his Guru about the non-duality of the Ātman-Brahman and engages himself in steadfast nididhyāsana on the Self, he
accomplishes the sākṣātkāra or full realisation of the परं, the Supreme Brahman. His avidyā goes away and He attains the brāhmīsthiti as mentioned by Bhagavān. So, the very first words of Bhagavān describing a sthitaprajña, “आत्मन्येवात्मनितुद्:” relates to establishment on one’s Self that is non-different from the Supreme. It is for this very reason that Bhagavatpāda appropriately comments here: आत्मनित्वस्त्रूपे एव ... परमार्थेश्वरभाग्यस्तिहें अन्यस्मात् अन्तङ्गत्वयाव्यान्तित्प्रज्ञां: ...” (in the Self alone, in the very nature of the inmost Self ... and satiated with everything else on account of having attained the nectar of realization of the Supreme Goal., he is called a man of steady wisdom...). That is why Bhagavatpāda’s expansion of ‘मार्तप्’ does not contradict the words ‘आत्मन्येवात्मनितु’ or any other verse in the set of verses concerned; on the other hand, His interpretation of ‘मार्तप्’ is highly appropriate and vital to understand what Bhagavān has been saying. How wonderful is Bhagavān’s teaching and how brilliantly appropriate the expatiation of Bhagavatpāda is!

There is another way in which we can appreciate the interpretation of Bhagavatpāda. A man of stable wisdom, स्थितप्रज्ञा:, as per the very first definition of Bhagavān is one who remains satisfied in the Self alone by himself – “आत्मन्येवात्मनितुद्.”: What does this statement ‘He remains satisfied in the Self alone by himself’ mean? Bhagavatpāda clarifies: “आत्मन्येव प्रत्यगात्मस्त्रूपे एव आत्मना, स्वेतश्रेणान्तर्गतस्तिहें अन्यस्मात् परमार्थेश्वरस्तिहें प्रत्ययवान्तित्प्रज्ञां:’ (He, the man of stable wisdom, remains satisfied in the very nature of the inmost Self – by himself - without depending on any external gains.) Now, if “मार्तप्रत्ययवान्तित्मानं” were to mean any other contemplation involving duality and not remaining in one’s inmost Self in its true nature (which is non-difference from the innermost Self of all, Vāsudeva, the Supreme), the Lord’s very first definition of a ‘स्थितप्रज्ञा’ as ‘आत्मन्येवात्मनितुद्:’ (which means non-dependence on anything else for one’s satisfaction) would not be appropriate. The sādhaka here does not depend on anybody - not even Īśvara - for the latter has been
realised by him as his very Self and so non-different from himself. Thus, any dualistic interpretation of ’मत्तर’ would certainly make ’आत्मन्येवात्मना तुट्ट’ meaningless. Thus, Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation is strictly in accordance with the teaching of the Lord prior to and after the “तानि स्वाभाविण…” verse. Any other interpretation will only go contrary to the heart of the Lord.

Of course, it is another thing that the Viśiṣṭādvaitins downplay the word पर्य ं used by the Lord by interpreting it as the individual self and not Brahman, the Supreme, and the reason they give is that the individual self is more pleasurable than the objects and so he is called ‘पर्य’ purely in comparison with the objects! Perhaps they had realized that if they interpreted ‘पर्य’ as Brahman they would have helped the cause of the advaitins and non-duality. We saw earlier that the Sri Vedāntadeśika’s interpretation of पर्य as jīva gave rise to many a problem. In lighter vein, it could be said that the Advaitins would not mind this dilution of ‘पर्य’ in the context of ‘मत्तर’. This is because, the resultant meaning would only be “अहं वासुदेव: जीव: यस्य” (to whom I, Vāsudeva, is the Jīva). Obviously, an interpretation such as this will not be palatable to the Viśiṣṭādvaitins. Next, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins downplay brāhmi-sthiti as the state of performing disinterested work which is preceded by the knowledge of the eternal self, the jīva, but not the Supreme Brahman. Does one need more proof for the text-torture resorted to by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins? Incidentally, even the Dvaitins do not seem to be happy with this dilution by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins. Be that as it may.

Notwithstanding practical considerations and the compatibility with the words of Bhagavān prior to and after the “तानि स्वाभाविण…” verse that may favour the stance of Bhagavatpāda, yet, the words of the very verse of Bhagavān may not naturally give rise to the interpretation that Bhagavatpāda has vouchsafed us with. It may be recalled that the commentary of Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the
Dvaitins had been attacked earlier on the ground that their interpretation of the word ‘मर:’ as denoting concentration on Bhagavān’s form by a person desirous of engaging in ātma-dhyāna / aparokṣa-jñāna for conquering the senses did not naturally flow from the words of Bhagavān. The question that we are going to take up now is whether Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation suffers from the flaw of text torture as alleged by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the Dvaitins.

Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation is grammatically flawless

Firstly, let us take up the point of Sri Uttamur Veeraraghavachariyar about the way the compound word ‘मर:’ should be split. Actually, it is not as if the compound ‘मर:’ should be interpreted only according to the first option given by Sri Veeraraghavachariyar - “मरः हि अहं परिस्मात”. As we saw earlier, Bhagavatpāda expands ‘मर:’ as, “मरः अहं वासुदेवः सर्वप्रत्ययमात्मा परः यस्य स मरः.” As far as the vigraha-vākya of the compound ‘मर:’, Bhagavatpāda’s expansion is quite in order. The split could very well employ şaṣṭhī-vibhakti as done by Bhagavatpāda. ‘मर:’ is a common bahuvrīhi compound of the type ‘द्विपदवृहीहि:’ It is governed by the Pāṇinī sūtra “अनेकमान्यपदश्चाच (2.2.024).” The example given in the Siddhānta-kaumudī is “पीता: हिर:” where the vigraha-vākya of the compound पीतामर: is पीतम: अंबरम: (He whose garment is yellow.) Thus, Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation “मरः अहं वासुदेवः परः यस्य स मरः:” is grammatically flawless.

Even without getting into the details of Sanskrit-grammar to prove this point, we could say the Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the Dvaitins cannot object to this vigraha-vākya, for, in his commentary of the Gitā, Rāmānujācārya himself has expanded a similar compound ‘मरसमः’ (11.55) using šaṣṭi-vibhakti as, “अहमेव परमादित्वस्तः यस्य स मरसमः” (He who looks upon Me as the highest …is matparamah). Madhvācārya uses a similar vigraha-vākya for the word ‘मर:’ of 2.61 itself:- “अहमेव परः सर्वप्रत्ययक्ष्यो यस्य स मरः:” Thus, the meaning given by
Bhagavatpāda, “Deeming Me, Vāsudeva, the innermost Self of all, as the Supreme Brahman” cannot be objected to by anyone as grammatically flawed.

Though the first vigraha-vākya presented by Sri Uttamur Viraraghavachariyar using pañcamī-vibhakti - “मत्त्रशङ्को हि अहं परो वर्मात्” is also grammatically valid, it is contextually less meaningful. What is the earthly use of ‘मत्तर:’ referring simply to a person compared to whom Īśvara is greater! The śloka when translated with the vigraha-vākya preferred by Sri Uttamur Viraraghavachariyar is: “Controlling all of them (the sense objects), let him, in comparison with whom I am greater, remain concentrated. For the wisdom of one whose organs are under control becomes steadfast.” I wonder of what use this interpretation would be to the Viṣistādvaitins!

As we saw in the early part of this write-up, the second interpretation of Uttamur Sri Veeraraghavachariar of the word ‘मत्तर:’ goes like this: “मदासकः मदासकः इत्येवमथमदासकांत्वमावकाशः। (Even in the meanings like ‘मदासकः:’ ‘मदासकः:)’ (He whose goal is Myself, He who is attached to Me) etc., there is no room for the notion of non-difference.) The compound word ‘मदासकः:’ would be split as “आहं उदेश्यः यस्य सः:” and ‘मदासकः:)’ would be expanded as, “मयि आसक्ति: यस्य सः:”. Both these meanings could be derived from the word ‘मत्तर:’ and there is no direct non-dualistic sense in both of them. For that matter, we do not deny that the compound word ‘मत्तर:’ even when expanded as “आहं पर: यस्य सः:” can be interpreted in a dualistic way. And we have observed that Bhagavatpāda Himself resorts to such an interpretation when the context warrants it. However, as for verse 2.61, we have already established that the non-dualistic interpretation of the compound ‘मत्तर:’, advanced by Bhagavatpāda, is perfectly justified and that, it is what that suits the context and facilitates the implementation of the nididhyāsana taught by Bhagavan (by a sādha who has known the Self but is yet to get established in it). Hence the interpretation
of Sri Veeraraghavachariar under consideration is straightway not tenable. In any case, Sri Veeraraghavachariyar’s explanation does not establish what Rāmānujācārya has said in the context.

No wonder, those versed in Sanskrit grammar aver that even though the bahuvrihi compound can give rise to multiple vigraha-vākyas, the one that is more meaningful and ideally suits the context is what is to be accepted as the appropriate one.

**Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation is not forced**

Now we move on to Bhagavatpāda’s additional succinct explanation, “न अन्योऽहं तस्मात” इति आसीत. Actually, it is only a logical consequence of accepting Iśvara as the innermost Self of all. Since the Lord is the ‘स्वप्रात्यगत्स्वरूप’ or the inmost Self of all, “न अन्योऽहं तस्मात” – “I the self, am non-different from Iśvara’ is the reality. Hence, Bhagavatpāda’s comment cannot be labeled as a forced interpretation at all. If Bhagavān is accepted as the Self of all, how can there be any difference between Him and the indwelling jīvātman? Thus, the charge that Bhagavatpāda has introduced His own non-dualistic idea into the verse is baseless.

**Bhagavatpāda has only echoed the Lord’s views**

Now comes the major question as to on what authority Bhagavatpāda writes that Bhagavān is the pratyagātmā, the indwelling Self of all. Has Bhagavān said so? It may be recalled here that the interpretation of the word ‘मन्त्रस्य’ of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins that the one who has sat in meditation in order to establish oneself in the Self should first concentrate on the divyamaṅgalavigraha of the Lord was dismissed also on the ground that such an interpretation does not have the support of the Lord anywhere in the Gita. Does Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation too suffer from the same defect? No. Numerous instances can be
cited from the *Gītā* in support of the view that there is only one Ātman in all the beings and that Bhagavān declares Himself to be the inmost Ātman.

Let us first see two direct, significant statements of the Lord that unequivocally declare the unity of the *Īsvara* and the indwelling-self (*jīva*) in the *Gītā*.

1) “अहमाः गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयतः।” (10.20) (O Guḍākeśa, I am the Self residing in the hearts of all beings.) 2) “रश्वेन चापि मां बिन्दु सर्वंक्रेत्रं भारत।” (13.2) (And, O scion of the Bharata dynasty, understand Me to be the ‘Knower of the field’ in all the fields.) Let us see a few more verses of the *Gītā* that point to the non-difference of *jīva* from *Īsvara*, the Supreme and also some that point to everything being rooted in one Self.

a)”भोकारे पदार्थस्य सब्ज्ञटिसमहस्त्वम्। सुदूरं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमुच्यति॥” (5.29) (One attains liberation by knowing Me who as the great Lord of all the worlds, am the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities (and) who am the friend of all creatures.)

b) “यो मां पदार्थस्य सव密切关注。 “(6.30) (One who sees Me in everything …)

c) “सर्वभूतस्य यो मां भजन्तेन्द्रमार्गितः॥” (6.31) (That yogin being established in unity adores me as existing in all things…)

d)”अपेक्षाकृतस्वयं प्रकृति विन्द्र मे परम। जीवभूतों महावाहो यथेतदे ध्यायते जगत्।” (7.5) (O mighty armed one, this is the inferior (prakṛti). Know the other prakṛti of Mine which, however, is higher than this, which has taken the form of individual soul, and by which this world is upheld.)

e)”बहुना जननामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मै प्रपञ्चते। वासुदेवस्वर्णयिति स महामाया स्वदेह:॥” (7.19) (At the end of many births, the man of Knowledge attains Me realizing that Vāsudeva is all. Such a high-souled one is very rare.)

f)”उपदश्यानुमन्ति करती भोक्ता महेशः। परमात्मिति चापुकृतो देहस्यसम्वन्धः परः॥” (13.22) (He who is the witness, the permitter, the sustainer, the experiencer, the great Lord, and who is spoken of as the transcendental Self is the Supreme person in this body.

g)”यदा भूतपूर्वभाव्येकस्मनुपवयति। तत् पव च विस्तारं वर्जय सम्पन्नते तदा॥” (13.30) (When a person realizes that the state of diversity of beings is rooted in the one Self, and the diverse origination is from that one alone, then he becomes identified with Brahman.)

h)”ममेव जीवन्तो जीववृत्तं सनातन: … “(15.7) (It is verily a portion of
mine which becoming the eternal individual soul in the region of living beings…) i)”(18.61) (O Arjuna, the Lord resides in the heart region of all creatures, revolving through Māyā all the creatures (as though) mounted on a machine.)

In fact, there is an even stronger statement of the Lord which equates Him with a devotee, who is a knower of the Truth and is resorted to Him. “ज्ञानी त्वाज्ञानें मे मत्म। आरिथ्यत: स हि युक्तात्मा मामेवानुमात्मा गतिं” (The man of Knowledge is the very Self (not different from Me). For with a steadfast mind, he is set on the path of leading to Me alone who am the super-excellent goal.) Thus, the sādhaka is non-different from the Lord while the latter is non-different from the the goal, viz, the Supreme Self. Needless to point out, Bhagavatpāda’s commentary is just this! Perhaps we could say that this verse serves as Bhagavān’s own commentary on the word ‘मतमः’ in 2.61. We can cite many such statements of the Lord but this much would do for the present discussion. Of course, it is understandable that the Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the other opponents of Advaita should downplay the words of many of these verses by interpreting “परमात्मा” as jīvātman and so on!

It may be contended that the references provided so far occur in the chapters that follow the second chapter and so the onus is on the advaitins to show any verse in the second chapter itself, that too, occurring prior to the “तानि सर्वाणि…” verse that establises that the Ātman is just one, be it the Jīvā’s or the Lord’s. Interestingly, verse 2.12, the very first upadeśa of the Lord in the Gītā to Arjuna about the Ātman, convincingly points to the sameness of the Self of the Lord, that of Arjuna and everyone else.

न तेरहं जातु नासं न ते नेमे जनाधियः।
न चैव न भविष्याम्: सर्वं बयमतः परम्॥ (2.12)
(But certainly, it is not a fact that I did not exist at any time; nor you, nor these rulers of men. And surely, it is not that we shall cease to exist after this.)

Here Bhagavatpāda writes, "परं च सर्वं वयमलोकस्मादद्विनाशात्यरं उत्तरकालेऽि विषायि कालेणु नित्या आत्मतःकुर्मेण।" (That being the case, even in all the three times (past, present and future) we are eternal in our nature as the Self.”) That the Viśistadvaitins and the Dvaitins have interpreted this verse differently is not surprising. Incidentally, the Viśistadvaitins’ interpretation of this verse has been summarily rebutted by scholars like Bellamkonda Sri Ramaraya. In any case, a detailed analysis of this verse just now is beyond the scope of this write-up.

Suffice it to understand here that the Lord has certainly talked about the oneness of the Self in His very starting advice to Arjuna while driving home the point that the bodies perish but not the Self. It is pertinent to note here that Bhagavān equates Himself along with Arjuna as well as the others, the kings, when He considers the eternality of all as the ‘Self’. It is noteworthy that neither in the verses that follow this verse nor anywhere in the Gītā has Bhagavān talked about the Self in plural while He always talks about the beings and their bodies in plural. That is why Bhagavatpāda writes here: "देहभेदानुवृत्ताया बहुплन्तं नात्मभेदाभिमायेण।" (The plural number in ‘we’ is used following the diversity of the bodies but not in the sense of the multiplicity of the Selves.) Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that this verse talks of just one Self and that it is common to the Lord as well as the beings.

Bhagavān’s choice of the words, I, you, kings, we etc are strictly in accordance with how we are used to talk in the world. Obviously, He cannot abruptly begin His advice saying, “Ātman is eternal” before he relates it to Arjuna and the context. Being a non-pareil teacher, He first goes from the well-known to the less-known. Arjuna sees the Lord, he sees himself and also the kings in front of him. Now, the Lord tells him that they are all eternal. Obviously, they cannot be eternal as their bodies; they are so only as the Self.
• Having indicated the oneness of the Self in His very first verse, Bhagavān goes on to describe the Ātman’s true, eternal, omnipresent, indestructible and indeterminable nature in a set of verses, up to verse 2.30.

• In verse 2.16, (नासतो विचयते भावो…), a clincher, Bhagavān teaches Arjuna the मिथ्यात् or falsity of everything other than the one substratum, the Ātman. Bhagavān shows the falsity of the beings in many verses. (Eg. अवकल्पदीनि भूलानि … (2.28). Thus, Bhagavān clearly establishes that there is naught but Brahman-Ātman.

• One can understand from verse 2.25 that the knowledge of the Ātman comprehended in the fashion taught by the Lord will enable one to overcome one’s sorrow. (तत्सादेव विदित्वेन नानुनाशितुमहि। - Therefore having known thus, you ought not to grieve.) This verse can be taken as a reference to fruitful śravaṇa and manana which, though productive only of mediate knowledge, can still result in the disappearance of one’s sorrow, just as in the story of the ten fools, the mere statement of a wise, dependable man that there does exist the tenth man removes the misery of the fools who were imagining that one among them had drowned in the river.

• When one’s mind goes beyond all delusion which confounds one’s understanding about the distinction between the Self and the non-Self he will acquire dispassion. Then the mind will no more be bewildered by doubts. This is what the Lord states in the verse “यदा ते मोहकिललम्…” (2.52). Then the mind becomes pure and is fit to focus on the Self with one pointed concentration.

• When the mind becomes unshakeable and steadfast in the Self, the sādghaka will attain the yoga of supreme reality. This, indeed, characterizes fruitful nididhyāsana. Bhagavān points out this in the verse “श्रुतिब्रजिततप्रत्येकं योगमवा योगमवायुपयसि”। (2.53)
Thus, there is enough and more ammunition in the second chapter of the Gitā – that too prior to the “तानि स्वायःणिः...” verse itself - for the advaitin to theorise without any inconsistency that the Lord has indeed declared the Ātman to be non-dual and has also elaborated on the process of establishment in It. It is another thing, of course, that the interpretation of dualists differs from the explanations of Bhagavatpāda; however, any discerning reader of Bhagavatpāda’s commentary would be able to appreciate the fact that His interpretations are faithful to the words of the Lord and are consistent. The purpose of this write-up is not to demonstrate the appropriateness of Bhagavatpāda’s commentary for the entire second chapter; suffice it to understand here that the non-dualistic interpretation of ‘मरः’ of Bhagavatpāda is in no way flawed, forced or inconsistent with the teaching imparted by Bhagavān in the context.

Having seen that Bhagavān has determined the Self to be one and that It pervades everything – that is, the Self is the (self) or substratum of all, let us get back to the formation of the compound “मरः”. In the compound-word ‘मरः’ uttered by Bhagavān, the ‘अहम्’ in the ‘मत्’ obviously, refers to Himself (the Supreme Self). From what we have seen so far, He or the Supreme Self is the sarvapratyātma, the inmost Self of all. That Self is now equated with “परम्” or the Supreme Self in the compound ‘मरः’. When the Lord says that His Ātman (Himself) is param, there being one and only Ātman, it goes without saying that, the ‘sādhaka’s’Self is non-different from the Lord, which, in turn, is non-different from the Supreme Self. The Lord thus sees no distinction in Ātman – this is what was pointed out by Him in His very first advice about the Self in the verse “न तेवाहाय जातु नासम्...”. In the light of what we have seen up to now, the interpretation of ‘मरः’ by Bhagavatpāda is indisputably legitimate as it is based on the Lord’s own words. Those like us that are not able to instantaneously appreciate what “मरः” denotes when reading the verse which
has it, can, thanks to Bhagavatpāda, clearly understand that the compound word employed by Bhagavān is very important as it stands for the wisdom to be had by the person who sits for nididhyāsana whose result is sāksātkara of para or the Supreme.

That is Bhagavān’s style and we cannot question it!

One might still feel that the interpretation of Bhagavatpāda would have been absolutely unobjectionable had only the Lord specifically said in the “नानि सवाणि…” verse itself that He is the ‘sarvapratyagaśatman’ and had there been no need to infer the sense from the other verses that occur prior to this verse and later. This is true but this situation is not something unique in the Gītā. There are several instances in the Gītā where we find that the Lord does not say in so many words that He is the Self of all but it is patent that He means it. Let us consider the following verse of Bhagavān from the fourth chapter:

\[
\text{न मां कर्माणि ठिम्मन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्यूहः।}
\text{इति मां योधमिज्जानाति कर्मभिन्नं स बध्यते॥ (4.14)}
\]

(Actions do not taint Me. For me there is no hankering for the results of actions. One who knows thus, does not become bound by the actions.)

Indeed, this is a strange statement from the Lord! How does a person not become bound by his actions if he merely knows that the Lord’s actions do not taint Him and that the Lord has no concerns with their results? A discerning reader of the Gītā, however, will not find anything puzzling in the statement of the Lord. He would have realized from the declarations found elsewhere in the Gītā that Bhagavān Himself is the Self of all. So, if a person has the realization that the Lord is his pratyagaśatman and so he neither acts nor craves for the results of action, he too gets liberated from all actions. While Bhagavān does not repeat verse after verse that He is the pratyagaśatman of all, the import of Bhagavān’s teaching of the present verse can be understood and appreciated with that notion only. That is why Bhagavatpāda would write here: “प्रत्याग अन्यः
A minor yet pertinent question: If Bhagavān has already taught the True nature of the Self as non-dual in the course of His discourse prior to his taking up the question of Arjuna about a sthitaprajña, why should He again talk about it in ‘मत्तरः’? The answer is simple. As we already saw in the “तानि सवाणि…” verse, Bhagavān compassionately summarises the whole procedure for nidadhyāsana which is supposed to take one from ‘प्रज्ञा’ to ‘सिद्धतप्रज्ञा’. The first step is ‘इन्द्रिय-संयमनम्’।The next step is ‘चिच्चत-सवाणि’।The ‘प्रज्ञा’ with which one engages in nidadhyāsana is advised in ‘मत्तरः’ i.e the conviction “I am non-different from the Lord Vāsudeva who is the Supreme – परः” Thus, there is no problem at all.

**Why not a stronger wording to impart non-duality than a simple ‘मत्तरः’?**

Another doubt that may arise in our minds is as follows: “Could not have Bhagavān employed a more powerful and direct wording in 2.61 such as one of the mahāvākyas itself rather than the compound ‘मत्तरः’ to instruct non-difference between the Ātman, Iśvara and Brahman? Had He done so, He would have possibly averted varying interpretations by followers of different schools.” The answer is that ‘मत्तरः’ itself is a very powerful word; it not only serves the purpose ideally but is such a beautiful word that it would be hard to find a better alternative to it in the context. Not only that. Though the mahāvākyas or the great sentences such as “अहं कृष्णिस्वरूपिः” (I am Brahman) of the Upaniṣads unambiguously instruct the unity of the individual soul with Brahman, unfortunately, however, even they are not interpreted in a uniform
way by all schools of philosophies. For example, had Bhagavān uttered the popular mahāvākyā, “तत्त्वमसि”, in lieu of ‘मन्तरः’, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins would have interpreted it as: “O Sādhaka! You are the body/mode of the Brahman who is the cause of the universe and has got the entire universe as his body” and Madhvācārya would have interpreted the sentence as “अत्त्वमसि” or “That Ātman, thou art not.” Had Bhagavān used the mahāvākyā “अहं ब्रह्मस्व” Rāmānujācārya would have interpreted it as “मदन्तत्, व्रह्मा नारिका” (There is no Brahman other than Me) and Madhvācārya would have interpreted it as “अहेयं ब्रह्मस्व” (That Perfect Being who cannot be avoided (by anyone ever), is the very essence of being (for myself and for everyone else). Thus, it is not as if some alternative wording, even it be the upaniṣadic mahāvākyā per se, would have been spared by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins or the Dvaitins.

**Equation of Ātman, Īṣvara and Brahman in one shot**

On the other hand, the compound ‘मन्तरः’ seems to be an ideal choice in the context. The situation here is so unique that the teacher who imparts the non-dualistic Brahman-Ātman in the Gitā is none other than Bhagavān Vāsudeva, who is Īṣvara, the very embodiment of Brahman. Any advice of the Lord to Arjuna about the unity of the individual Self with the Supreme Brahman must ideally envelop the unity of Himself also along with the other two. The statement ‘मन्तरः’ is thus powerful as it equates, in one shot, the Ātman, Vāsudeva and the परं, the Supreme as one.

What is the need for such an equation? It is because this is the Upaniṣadic teaching. If any difference is seen between the Ātman, Īṣvara and the Supreme, then it would contradict all the hundreds of śruti passages that teach non-difference. It is pertinent to recall here what Bhagavatpāda says while commenting upon the mantras of the antaryāmi-brāhmaṇa of the Brhadāranyaka Upanishad, condemning the view of those who deem the Jiva,
Iśvara and Brahman to be different: “अविद्याकामक्षिणिशिवायपानिद्रायतमा संसारी जीवः
उच्छते | निद्धिशिवायपानिद्रायतमा-अन्तर्यमीमाश्च उच्छते | स एव मनोभावः: केवलः श्रद्धा: तथेन
स्वभावादिकार्यं पर उच्छते | … तथा “एष ते आत्मा”(Br. Up. 3.4.1,2), “एष सर्वभूतान्तरत्मा”(Mu.
Up.2.1.4), “एष सर्वेणु गृहः”(Ka. Up. 3.12) “तत्त्वमातिः” (Ch. Up. 6.8.7), “अहमेषेवं सर्वम्” (Ch.
Up. 7.25.1), “आत्मेषेवं सर्वः”, (Br. Up. 3.5.1) “नन्योषोत्सितं द्रष्टा” (3.7.23) इत्यादिशुमयो न
बिरूखते | कल्यनात्सर्वेते: श्रुतयः: न गच्छति। तत्मातुनिवाचिनेनेवं भंनेत्रो नान्यथेक्षेत्यित्यित्यमत्य-गारणात्स्त्रोपणितस्तु ।”(Ch. Up. 6.2.1) (When It has the limiting adjuncts of the body
and organs, which are characterized by ignorance, desire and work, It is called
the transmigrating individual self; and when the Self has the limiting adjunct of
eternal and unlimited knowledge and power, It is called the Internal Ruler and
Iśvara. The same Self, as by Its nature bereft of limiting adjuncts, absolute and
pure, is called the Immutable and Supreme Self. … In this light alone the texts
as, “This is your self (that is within all)”, “He is the inner Self of all beings”,
“This (self) being hidden in all beings”, “Thou art That”, “I Myself am all this”,
“All this is but the Self”, and “there is no other witness but Him”, do not prove
contradictory.; but, in any other view, they cannot be harmonized. Therefore,
the above entities differ only because of their limiting adjuncts, but not
otherwise, for all the Upaniṣads conclude: “One only without a second”. Thus,
“मन्त्रयः”as interpreted by Bhagavatpāda is highly significant.

Unity of Jiva, Iśvara and Brahman declared in the Gitā

Here we could take up an objection: “Has Bhagavān explicitly indicated the
unity of jīva, Iśvara and Brahman anywhere in the Gitā?”. The answer is: Yes,
He has - not in just one, but in many verses. For instance, consider the
following verse: “उपद्रष्टा अनुभवता कर्त्ता भोक्ता महेश्वरः: । परमात्मेति चाण्यूः: देहस्वति पुरुषः:
पर:1(13.22)” (He who is the witness, the Permitter, the Sustainer, the
Expereiencer, the great Lord and who is also spoken of as the transcendental
Self is the Supreme Person in the body.) At this juncture, we cannot help
recalling the oft quoted passage from the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad:
The one divine being is hidden in all beings; He is omnipresent, the indwelling Self of all beings, the supervisor of actions, the refuge of all beings, the witness, the one who imparts consciousness, unconditioned and without qualities.)

Comparison of ‘आसीत मत्तरः with the Upaniṣadic teaching “आत्मेयोपासीत”

The sūtra-type advice of the Lord in the form of ‘मत्तरः’ reminds us of the vidyā-sūtra of the Brhadāranyaka-upanisad –“आत्मेयोपासीत” - The Self alone is to be meditated upon. The import of the upaniṣadic word ‘उपासीत’ is discernible from the words of the Gitā: ‘युक्त आसीत - समाहितस्या आसीत’. The Upaniṣadic instruction ‘आत्मे येव’ could be linked with ‘मत्तरः’. Just like the vidyā-sūtra, ‘मत्तरः’ too is not an upāsana or contemplation but denotes knowledge. Bhagavān’s use of the word ‘आसीत’ instead of ‘उपासीत’ precludes the possibility of any one wrongly understanding the advice as involving contemplation on the Ātman similar to the contemplations on devatās at the time of offering oblations in certain sacrifices. If it were an upāsanā, it would have involved the three factors किम्, केन and कथं. However, in the case of the knowledge of the Self all curiosity ends as soon as one knows the meaning of the sentences like “अयमात्मा ब्रह्म” (This Ātman is Brahman) etc, “एकमेवाद्वितीयम्” (Brahman is one only without a second) “नेन नानास्य किलन” (There is no diversity at all here) or, in this case, मत्तरः (the wisdom, “I am non-different from Vāsudeva, the Supreme”). The sādhaka has nothing to do other than remain as the Self – because there is nothing else apart from Brahman. The word “आसीत” which simply means ‘sit’ or ‘let him remain’ is indicative of that. The knower remains satisfied in His Self by himself. Thus we are able to appreciate that the upaniṣadic teaching “आत्मेयोपासीत” is nicely brought about by Bhagavān in this verse. Similar to the Upaniṣadic advice “आत्मेयोपासीत”, in “आसीत मत्तरः” too, the wording is such that the Ātman is not objectified as an (उपास्य) object of meditation. Instead of saying “आत्मानमुपासीत”
the Upaniṣad said “आत्मेत्वेऽपासीत”. Similarly, in the Gītā too we do not find Bhagavān saying “मा परवेन उपासीत”; instead He only uttered the compound word “मत्यप:”.

Here a question may arise as to why Bhagavān has stopped with merely saying “आसीत मत्यपः” and has not instructed any further steps such as continuous remembrance of the non-dual Truth for attaining स्थितमेधात्म; after all, the sādhaka’s aim is to get established in the Truth and so this much alone may be grossly insufficient. We find the answer to this query in Bhagavatpāda’s commentary on the Brhadāranyaka Upanisad passage “आत्मेत्वेऽपासीत”(1.4.7) itself. To a question as to why a continuous train of remembrance of the Truth has not been prescribed in the śruti, “आत्मेत्वेऽपासीत”, Bhagavatpāda writes, “यदैवाऽऽूितपादकवाौवणादाौवषयं िवमुिते तदैव तददूमानं तदनायं भिवाजान निवर्येदेवोितपाते ।…तस्मादात्माेशातिविज्ञानात्मामीतां भावावशति। पारिशोधातात्माेशातिन्तात्मामितिसन्ततेर्यतप एव भावावश विशेषत्यम्” (When the knowledge of the Self arises in consequence of hearing a dictum delineating It, then it does so by eradicating the false notion about It. …Therefore the recollections of notions about the non-self die out when the Self is known. As the only alternative left, the train of remembrance of the knowledge that the Self is one which comes automatically is not to be enjoined.) The situation is no different in the case of the instruction in the Gītā, “आसीत मत्यपः” also. When a sādhaka whose senses are under control, whose mind is serene and integrated, and who is seated with the clear knowledge that he is non-different from Brahman and that there is nothing that exists apart from It, there is no question of any anātma-vāsanā creeping in; in course of time, Brahman-Ātman is realized in all Its glory. Thus, all that the sādhaka needs to just follow the instruction “आसीत मत्यपः” and do nothing else!

Comparison of the words “एषा श्राही स्थिति:” with a śruti passage
Another Upaniṣadic passage that comes to our mind at this juncture is the following: “तत्सादेवति शान्तो द्राक्ष उपरतस्तततिधुः समाहितो भूवातम्ये वात्मानं पदयति। सर्वं मात्मानं पदयति। इति। …विपायो विरजोद्विचिकित्सो ब्रह्मणो भवति। एष अथातोक: …।” (Brihadaranyaka 4.4.23) (Therefore, he who knows it as such becomes self controlled, calm, withdrawn into himself, enduring and concentrated and sees the Self in his own self; he sees all as the Self…He becomes sinless, taintless, free from doubts and a knower of Brahman…This is the world of Brahman…). We have already seen that Bhagavatpāda explains the word ‘युक्तः’ in the “तानि सर्वाणि…” verse as ‘समाहितः’. In the mantra cited above, there are the words “समाहितो भूवा” which are interpreted by Bhagavatpāda as “इन्द्रयान्तःकरणचतुष्टयायाभूवद्यक्यक्रमोपयो समाहितो भूवा” (attaining one pointed concentration through dissociation from the movements of the organs and the mind.) Incidentally, it could be observed that the Upaniṣad also does not recommend a knower to meditate on Īsvara’s form for controlling one’s senses. After attaining one-pointed concentration, the person sees the Self in himself– not his own individual self as a restricted entity – but the Self as everything, says the Upaniṣad. This reminds us all of Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation for the compound “मरःअहंवासुदेव: सवूगाना” Not only this, the last portion of the mantra that we read just now - “विपायो विरजोद्विचिकित्सो ब्रह्मणो भवति। एष अथातोक:” (He becomes sinless, taintless, free from doubts and a knower of Brahman…This is the world of Brahman…) bears unmistakable semblance to Bhagavān’s concluding declaration in the last verse of this chapter, “एष ब्रह्म स्थितिः पाथं नेना प्राप्य विमुक्तिः” – (2.72) (This steadfastness is the Brāhmi-sthitiḥ O Pārtha, one does not become deluded after attaining this.) Thus, Bhagavatpāda’s advaitic interpretation of the compound word “मरः” is compatible not only with Bhagavān’s own statements in the Gītā but also with the Upaniṣadic utterances.
The significance of the name ‘Vāsudeva’

Having seen the beauty of the word ‘मरः’ in the light of Bhagavatpāda’s bhāṣya let us now turn to the significance of Bhagavatpāda’s words in the bhāṣya. Bhagavatpāda writes, “मा: अहं वासुदेवः सर्वप्रत्यगात्मा पर: कस्य स मा: ‘न अन्योऽहं तस्मात्’ इति आसीत इत्यर्थः.” His usage of the name ‘Vāsudeva’ to denote the Lord instead of the other names such as Kṛṣṇa, Madhusūdana etc., has a lot of significance and is tightly linked with the meaning that He arrives at for the word ‘मरः’. The name ‘Vāsudeva’ has a wonderful import and is replete with excellent meanings as is brought by texts like Mahābhārata and the Viṣṇu-purāṇa. For instance, in the Mokṣadharma of the Mahābhārata, the Lord Himself says:

छादयां जगिमेव सूर्य उपर्योगिभि:।
सर्वभूताभासतः वासुदेवस्तत: स्मृत:। (12.328.36)
(Like the sun with its rays, I cover the entire universe with My glory. Also, I reside in all Beings. Hence I am known as Vāsudeva.)

वसना: वासुदेवतो तत: सवा: विबद्धिः।
वासुदेवकर्त: जगरित विद्विष:। (5.68.3)
(As I permeate all beings, as I exist (in all things) and as I am the origin of Gods, I am known as Vāsudeva.)

In the Viṣṇu-purāṇa, we have:

सर्ववासी समस्त: च कस्म्यः वै यत:।
तत: स वासुदेवित विनियमित: परिपत:। (1.2.12)
(As He resides everywhere, and in all things, He is termed Vāsudeva by the wise.)

सर्वाणि तत: भूतानि कस्यनि परमात्मनि।
भूतेषु सर्वत्मा वासुदेवस्तत: स्मृत:। (6.8.80)
(All beings abide in the Supreme Ātman and He, the Ātman of all, abides in all beings. Therefore, he is called Vāsudeva.)

सकललिमस्मः च वासुदेव: … (3.7.32)
(All this and I are Vāsudeva...) Why go that far? Bhagavatpāda has for His support the following utterance of the Lord in the *Gīṭa* itself: “वासुदेवस्यन्मिति स महात्मा सुनोऽर्॥” (7.19) ([At the end of many births, the man of knowledge attains Me realizing that] Vāsudeva is all. Such a high-souled one is very rare.) Thus, Bhagavatpāda’s choice of the name Vāsudeva in the context of ‘मत्तर:’ is highly significant.

**No vicious circle in Bhagavān’s advice!**

We saw that the Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the Dvaitins have opined that Bhagavān’s presentation of ‘इियवशीकरणम्’ for sākṣakāra and ‘रसिनवृि’ when sākṣakāra is attained involves a vicious circle and so ‘मत्तर:’, i.e., meditating on Bhagavān, is the only means for conquering the senses. This way, they say, the vicious circle problem is resolved. As far as Bhagavatpāda is concerned, nowhere does He accuse Bhagavān as guilty of giving an advice that involves any ‘vicious circle’. The accusation of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the Dvaitins depicts Bhagavān as a very poor teacher because a) His advice suffers from anyonya-āśraya-doṣa or the fault of a vicious circle and b) having advised so badly, Bhagavān does not even remedy the situation by offering, subsequently at least, an explicit and pragmatic solution for control of the senses; on the contrary, He has only left it to the commentators to manipulate the word ‘मत्तर:’ as the remedy.

When we look at the so called ‘vicious circle’ we find that the situation in the *Gīṭā* is not different from what we experience in our daily life and that the so called ‘vicious circle’ problem is not at all a problem. Consider this example. A person goes to a Doctor and tells him that he lacks stamina to walk on the road carrying weights in his hands even for a short distance. The Doctor examines the person and observes that the man’s muscles are very weak and so he advises the patient to tone up his muscles. How is the patient supposed to build up his muscles? The Doctor asks him to practise lifting weights in a
fitness centre. According to the view of Viśiṣṭādvaitins and Dvaitins, the patient should now wonder, “I told the Doctor that I do not have the stamina to lift weights but the Doctor advises me to practice lifting weights to gain stamina. He must be mad”. But the patient does not think so. On the other hand, he promptly implements the advice given and gradually, he is able to carry weights and walk for long.

Similarly, a sāṁkhya-yogin, by the repeated practice of doṣa-drṣṭi towards the objects of the world, is able to control his senses to the extent that his mind is able to focus on the Self without getting distracted. Gradually, by dint of sheer practice of yoga which is abhyāsa, the senses totally come under his control and he gets the sakṣātka of Brahman and his wisdom becomes steadfast. Thereafter, even the taste for the senses / objects goes away. Is there any vicious circle in this process? Not at all! So why unnecessarily fault Bhagavān? Let us see Bhagavatpāda’s commentary is this regard: “एवम् आसीनस्य यते: वशे हि यव्य इन्द्रियाणि वर्तन्ते अनप्यासवलताः तत्स्य प्रहा प्रतिहिताः॥” (The wisdom of the one, the saṅnyāsin, remaining thus concentrated, whose organs are under control, by dint of practice, is steadfast). Thus, Bhagavatpāda does not accuse Bhagavān of giving advice to Arjuna with a vicious circle in it.

**Restraint of the senses should happen prior to dhyāna**

While the other commentators dilute the sense of the words “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य”, Bhagavatpāda does not do so. He subscribes to the view that the one must necessarily restrain his senses before one sits for nididhyāsana. How does one restrain one’s senses? Even a beginner in the study of Vedānta would know the answer to this question that dispassion or perception of faults in the objects is the means to exercise restraint over the senses. Has Bhagavān indicated this anywhere in the second chapter prior to the “तानि सर्वाणि...” verse? Yes, indeed. He has taught doṣa-drṣṭi (perception of faults) directly. Prior to that, He has
taught ātmānatma-viveka itself; dispassion, unless accompanied by ātmānatma-viveka will only be temporary. We have already seen that Bhagavān teaches this viveka when He talks about Ātman and its intrinsic nature in many verses - starting from 2.12 to 2.30. He describes the nature of impermanence of the non-selves - the bodies etc - in many verses. As regards the senses, He draws Arjuna’s attention to the transient nature of the experiences that arise out of the contact with the senses.

मानसाॅस्तु कौन्तेय श्रीतोष्णसुखदृढः-खदः ।
आयमापायिनोनित्यात्मातितिक्ष्व भरत ॥ (2.14)
(The contact of the organs with the objects is the producer of cold and heat, happiness and sorrow. They have a beginning and an end and are transient. Bear them, O descendant of Bharata.)

In a subsequent verse Bhagavān declares the unreality of everything other than the Ātman.

नासतो विचारे भायो नामायो विचारे सतः ।
उभयोरिप द्योहन्तस्यस्यौत्सत्यदशीभि: ॥ (2.16)
(Of the unreal, there is no being; the real has no non-existence. But the nature of both these has been realized by the seers of Truth.)

What more is required for one to get dispassion towards the world than the conviction about the falsity of the world? The Lord describes what is real in the next verse:

अनिवार्ये तु तद्देव येन सर्विन्देव तत्तम ।
विनाशमायस्यस्य न कृष्णस्तम्भमहसि ॥ (2.17)
(But know That (Ātman) to be indestructible by which all this (universe) is pervaded. None can bring about the destruction of the Immutable.)

What about the unreal? The Lord says: “अन्तःवन्त इमें देहः” (2.18) (The bodies have an end.) Thus, अनित्यत्वं and भिन्यत्वं of the bodies have already been spoken of by Bhagavān. Hence, Bhagavatpāda has every reason to believe that the
instruction “ताँति कर्मणि संयम्…” can be implemented by one who has strong
dispassion, prior to sitting in nidadhyāsana.

Let us see what the Katha Upanisad teaches regarding the control of senses:

They deem, as ‘yoga’ the steady control of the external senses and the mind.
At that time, one becomes, vigilant, since, ‘yoga’, is subject to development and
loss.) In His commentary Bhagavatpāda explains the import of this mantra:

(One should become unerring – ever
careful – about the concentration of mind at the very time one commences yoga
which meaning follows from the implication of the context; for when the
intellect etc., cease to function, there can be no possibility of carelessness.
Therefore, the text enjoins vigilance even prior to the cessation of the activity of
the intellect, mind and senses, in samādhi. ... Thus, vigilance should be
resorted to, to prevent the decay of yoga.) Needless to mention, the Upanisad
teaches that control of the senses should be practiced even before one
commences dhyāna.

How does control of the senses come about even before one sits for dhyāna? It
is through the discrimination of what is permanent and what is not:

(The unintelligent people follow the external desires. They get entangled in the
snares of the wide-spread death. Therefore, the discriminating people, having
known what true immortality is in the midst of impermanent things, do not
pray for anything here.)
(Having known the dissimilarity of the senses (from the nature of the Self that is extremely pure, absolute and consciousness alone) that originate separately, as also their rising and setting, the intelligent man does not grieve.)

Thus, the means for restraining the senses is dispassion arising out of discrimination between the permanent Self and the impermanent non-selves and characterized by perception of faults in the non-selves. Therefore, Bhagavatpāda has every reason to say that restraining the senses before dhyāna is not only possible but also ought to be done.

What about complete ‘इन्द्रय-वशीकार’ (indicated in “वशे हि यस्यः इन्द्रयाणि तत्स्य प्रज्ञा प्रतितिहिता॥”)? Bhagavatpāda says that it is accomplished by practice. His words are: “एवं आसीन्यः यते: वशे हि यस्य इन्द्रयाणि वतत्त्वे अभ्यासवलयत तत्स्य प्रज्ञा प्रतितिहिता॥“(The wisdom of the samnyāsin remaining thus concentrated, whose organs are under control by dint of practice, becomes steadfast.) Sri Anandagiri clarifies what practice means: “परस्मादात्मनो नाहमन्योपस्मीति प्रागुक्तानुसंधानयादं मैरत्वदीयं-कालानुसारसाम्यान्तिदित्यः। अथवा विषय्येवं दोषदर्शनायासाम्यान्तिदित्यः संपन्नान्तियः॥”(The organs come under control either by constantly thinking of oneself as non-different from the Self, or by constantly being mindful of the evils that result from objects.) Thus, Bhagavatpāda’s reasoning “अभ्यासवलय” is very important.

Actually, the first option suggested by Sri Ānandagiri, i.e., the practice of keeping in mind the non-dual Truth ascertained without doubt from the teaching of the scripture and the Guru is ‘nididhyāsana’ indeed. And this option is more impressive than the other.
The role of practice and dispassion in controlling the mind

Let us now take up the question whether this reasoning, “अथ्यासबलात्”, has the support of Bhagavān. We have already seen that the combination of dispassion and practice (अन्याय and वैराग्य) has been prescribed by Bhagavān Himself in the 6th chapter in response to Arjuna’s statement about the fickleness of the mind.

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दृष्टिमेह चतुम्।
अन्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येन च मूहते॥ (6.35)
(The blessed Lord said: O mighty-armed one, undoubtedly the mind is untraceable and restless. But O son of Kunti, it is brought under control through practice and detachment.)

Now let us consider another pertinent verse:

यतो यतो निरर्थेत मनन्तरमितरमस्थरम्।
तत्ततो नियम्येतात्मन्येव वर्ष नेत्॥ (6.26)
(The yogin should bring (this mind) under the subjugation of the Self Itself, by restraining it from all those causes (objects) whatever due to which the restless unsteady mind wanders away.)

One can easily appreciate that Bhagavatpāda is justified in commenting upon this verse as follows in the light of what the Lord says in 6.35, notwithstanding the order in which the verses occur: “तत्रैव आत्मस्थ्य मनः कतु प्रवृत्तो योगी यत् इति। यतो यतो समाध्यायाः दोषों निरर्थता निरमणितात्मक मनस्तत्तत्त्वमेव हनुमत वेदाध्याय। तत्तत्त्वत्तमस्मात्म दोषों निरर्थतात्मिकायाः तत्तत्त्वमित्तादित्तमत्तप्रमाणाभाविकृत्य बैराग्यभावतथा चैतन्य: आत्मन्येव नेत् आत्मविद्यात्मापदेव॥ परं योगान्यासबलात् योगिन: आत्मन्येव प्रवृत्तात्मरित मन:॥ (In the beginning, the yogin who is thus engaged in making the mind established in the Self, should bring this (mind) under the subjugation of the Self Itself, by restraining it from all those causes whatever, viz., sound etc., - due to which - due to whatever objects like sound etc - the restless, -very restless and therefore - unsteady mind wanders away, goes out due to inherent defects. (It should be restrained) by ascertaining through discrimination those causes (objects) to be mere appearances (falsity) and with an attitude of
detachment. Thus, through the power of practice of yoga, the mind of the yogin merges in the Self itself.) The *bhāṣya* is so lucid that it does not require any explanation.

Suffice it to say that Bhagavatpāda has brilliantly brought in dispassion (that arises on account of the wisdom ‘नित्यावित्वविवेक’ and that the objects are unreal) to restrain the senses (as in “तानि स्वार्णिन संयम्य”) and the power of repeated practice of *yoga* to completely conquer the senses (as in “वदे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि”) as the two necessary and sufficient tools to control the mind (for controlling the senses) in His commentary on the “तानि स्वार्णिन...” verse – the very same ones that Bhagavān Himself has recommended later in the sixth chapter. We have already noted that, at any rate, Bhagavān has never said anywhere in the *Gītā*, “Meditate on My ‘saguṇa’ form to achieve mastery over your senses”.

While analysing the viewpoint of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, we saw that, in connection with the ‘four types of sthitaprajñas’ that they think the Lord has referred to in the four verses starting from the “प्रज्ञाति यदा...” verse, they cite the *yoga-sūtra*, “द्विनाद्वितिविविद्वितुविन्यासस्त्रयूद्धिकारसंज्जा वेयायम्। (1.16). It is only a few sūtras before this one that we find the prescription of “अब्यास” as a means for controlling the mind. It is another thing that the Viśiṣṭādvaitins have ignored this ‘abhyāsa’ aspect completely and have put the blame on the Lord for speaking in circular logic as regards the conquest of the senses and sākṣātκāra.

The role of practice and dispassion for mind-control in the Yoga school

Let us now see how the Yoga school talks of ‘abhyāsa’ as the means to control the various *vrittis* of the mind. “अन्यायात्वेवराम्याः तत्त्वारंध:” (1.12) (The five kinds of mental modifications are restrained by practice and by dispassion.) The *abhyāsa* referred to here is specified as follows: “तत् स्थितो योन्द्रोऽयाः।” (1.13) (Among the two means, practice is the persistent effort to secure restraint. ”स नू
It however, becomes firmly rooted, when cultivated, for a long time, without interruptions and with earnest attention.

Sri Vyāsa’s *Yoga-sūtra-bhāṣya* on this *yoga-sūtra* commences with the clarification: “द्वानुष्टिकारिकसप्तदशर्तः विरर्कः पुष्पदर्शनाभ्यासः तत् चुज्जूज्यि विवेकायायितुदितिषु गोप्यो व्यक्तिव्रतप्रकृतेऽवरेयितरेवे सात्तुरगुणाशः विरर्कः इति” (He who sees defects in seen and heard of objects, becomes dispassionate towards them. Then, by the practice of the cultivation of the knowledge of the Self, his mind becomes, through the purity of knowledge, satiated with discriminative insight, and he becomes thoroughly detached, with regard to *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, both manifest and not manifest.) The gloss, *Tattva-vaisāradī*, on the *Yoga-sūtra-bhāṣya* explains the compound-word, “पुष्पदर्शनाभ्यासः” of the *bhāṣya* as follows – “आगमानुमानाभ्यायतदेशसमिधगतत्सय पुरुषस्य दशर्तः तत्याभ्यासः पीनः पुनः निषेवणम्।” (It is the practice, that is, it is repeated recourse to the knowledge of the Ātman that has been clearly had from the scripture, inference and the teaching of the Guru.) Thus, what Bhagavatpāda has stated as “अभ्यासवातः” has the support of the Yoga school too.

**Grace of God is sine qua non for the rise of knowledge - Bhagavatpāda**

Just because Bhagavatpāda does not deem ‘मन्त्रः’ as indicative of meditation on Bhagavān’s form for conquering one’s senses like other commentators – the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, the Dvaitins and even Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvati - it is not as if Bhagavatpāda deems grace of Īśvara as some thing that can be dispensed with. As a matter of fact, Bhagavatpāda repeatedly stresses the need for the grace of Bhagavān for the rise of knowledge in one and up to its fruition in the form of sākṣātākāra. Let us see one such instance from His commentary on verse 39 of the Second Chapter of the *Gitā*: “कर्मचर्यं … प्रहस्यसि इश्वरः पादानिष्ठस्य ज्ञानाय पव इत्यभिधायः।” – (You will get rid of that bondage of karma by the attainment of Knowledge through God’s grace.) Even in His introduction to His commentary on *Gitā*, Bhagavatpāda writes: “अभ्युद्यायमनिडय य: प्रवृत्त्विस्थित्वाऽय धर्मः वर्णः आत्मां आत्मां उद्देश्य
That dharma, characterized by action and enjoined for different castes and stages of life, even though it is meant for achieving prosperity and attaining heaven etc., yet, when performed with the attitude of dedication to God and without hankering for results, leads to the purification of the mind. And in the case of a person with a purified mind, it becomes the means for the attainment of fitness for steady adherence to Knowledge and the cause for the rise of Knowledge.

Bhagavatpāda says all this on the authority of the Lord’s words themselves. For instance, we find in the eighteenth chapter the statement of the Lord: 

यत: प्रवृतस्न्यानां येन सबमि ततम। स्वकर्मणा तत्मयच्य सिद्धि विन्दृति मानवः।

(18.46) (A human being achieves success by adoring through his own duties Him from whom is the origin of the creatures, and by whom is all this pervaded.) Bhagavatpāda expatiates upon the word ‘सिद्धि’ of the verse as “ज्ञानेनिधातत्त्वकारणां सिद्धिः” (Success in the form of ability for steadfastness in Knowledge). This is because this ‘सिद्धि’ is not the ultimate success. This we understand when Bhagavān Himself has stipulated subsequently what a person who has attained such ‘सिद्धि’ should do.

“सिद्धि प्रासो यथा ब्रह्म तत्प्राप्ति निबोधेऽ म। समासेव कौन्तेय निद्रा ज्ञानस्य या परा॥” (18.50) (Understand for certain from Me, in brief, indeed, O Son of Kuntī, that process by which one who has achieved success attains Brahman, which is the consummation of Knowledge.) Here Bhagavatpāda writes: “सिद्धिः प्रासः स्वकर्मणा ईशवरं समम्बच्यं तत्त्वरयात्रां कार्येनिधिः ज्ञानेनिधातत्त्वकारणां सिद्धिः प्रासः। …यथा येन प्रवृतस्न्यानां ज्ञानेनिधातत्त्वकारणां मम वर्णनातुपयोगेऽ तत्र निश्चये अवधारय इत्येत॥” (Understand for certain from Me, from My utterance, how one who has achieved success - one who by worshipping God through one’s own duties, has achieved success, born of the grace of Iśvara, in the form of fitness of the body and organs for steadfastness in Knowledge - … that process in the form of steadfastness in Knowledge (ज्ञानेनिधिः), by which he attains Brahman, the Supreme.) Thus, Bhagavatpāda understands from the Lord Himself the
sequence – *karma-yoga, sattva-suddhi, iśvara-praśādajanita-jñāna-prāptih-*
*jñāna-niṣṭha-yogyatā cha, jñāna-niṣṭhā, sākṣātkāra*. Bhagavatpāda categorically
avers that if the knowledge of non-duality has to arise in a person, it cannot do
so without the grace of God. And so, Bhagavatpāda cannot be faulted by
saying He does not support the role of Bhagavān’s grace. His conviction is that
one will not be able to sit for *nididhyāsana* for *sthitaprajñatva* without the
grace of Lord in the first place.

**Karmayogin and *saguna* meditation**

As for meditation on *Īśvara* with form, Bhagavatpāda believes that a *sādhaka,*
as a *karma-yogin,* could / would have resorted to meditation, why, even
*sāmadhi* on Bhagavān. This point has already been stated in our discussion.
Bhagavān says:

> ये तु सब्याणि कर्माणि मधि संन्यवस्य मत्त्रः।
> अन्नवेत्व योगेन मां ध्यायत उपासते॥ (12.6)

(As for those who having dedicated all actions to Me and accepted Me as the
Supreme, meditate by thinking of Me with single minded concentration…)

Bhagavatpāda comments on this verse as follows: “ये तु सब्याणि कर्माणि मधि ईश्वरे
संन्यवस्य मत्त्रः। अहं परो येषां ते मत्त्रः। सत्त्वः अन्नवेत्त अविद्यामान अन्यत्ते आलम्बनं विशिष्टः
देवं आलम्बनं मुक्ता यस्य सोपन्नः। तेन अन्नवेत्तः । केन? योगेन समाधिना मां ध्यायत:। चिन्तयतः।”

(As for those having dedicated all actions to Me who am God, and accepted Me as the
Supreme meditate by thinking of Me with single-minded concentration only –
That *yoga* is single-minded which has no other object than the Cosmic Deity,
Myself.) Thus, it is clear from this that Bhagavatpāda deems that a *karma-yogin*
could very well have accomplished even samādhi on *saguna-īśvara* prior to his
embarking on *nirguna-nididhyāsana*. And therefore, the point that Sri Uttamur
Veeraraghavachariyar made, i.e, it is easier to concentrate on the
divyamangalavigraha of the Lord first prior to one enmarking on the focus on
formless Ātman is very well taken care of in the scheme of Bhagavatpāda.
One possible reason for Bhagavān cryptically teaching “आसीत मतः”

Finally, we get a question as to why Bhagavān chose to speak so cryptically – He merely said “मतः” - when His intention, was to preach the profound non-dual knowledge itself! The answer is simple. It can be observed that Bhagavān’s core teaching of the Bhagavad-gītā is covered in just two chapters itself – the Sāṁkhya-yoga and the Karma-yoga - the second and third chapters respectively of the Gītā. It is only to clarify the doubts of Arjuna that Bhagavān compassionately expounds His own teaching in the form of the subsequent chapters. For example, Bhagavān has not explained how dhyāna is to be practiced in the Second Chapter though He talks about absorption of the mind in Ātman, the samādhi itself, in the Second Chapter. However, we observe that subsequently, Bhagavān dedicates a whole chapter, Dhyāna-yoga, the sixth Chapter, to delineate the procedures starting from nitty-gritties – such as what are all the materials that one should use to sit for dhyāna – all the way up to the attainment of Brahman in samādhi. Thus, there is nothing odd about this brief, aphoristic advice, ‘मतः’, representative of the profound non-dual knowledge. In any case, we have already seen how, in view of Bhagavān’s own words prior to the verse under consideration, the word ‘मतः’ can easily be understood as how Bhagavatpāda has interpreted, without forcing its import. Thus, it is not a flaw on the part of Bhagavān to have crisply stated what He wanted us to understand; on the contrary, His brevity is what adds to the beauty and power of His style of upadesha.

We compared the Lord’s advice “मतः” to that of the upaniṣadic mantra “आत्मेन्योपासीत”. As for the latter, Bhagavatpāda, in His commentary on the Brhadāranyaka-upaniṣad mantra concerned, says that the entire Upaniṣad forms the explanation of this very mantra. That explains how it is not only not a fault of the Veda to speak aphoristically but is an alankāra for it. Similarly the
instruction “मत्तर: आसीत” being sūtra-like is not a defect; on the contrary it is wonderful and is highly pregnant with import.

It is said about a sūtra:

अन्त्यःश्रमसंस्कृतां सारवद्विष्ठान्तोमुखः।
स्त्रोधसमन्यदृश सूत्रन्विदे विषु:॥

(Those who are knowledgeable about the sūtras say that a sūtra should consist of a minimum number of letters, be unambiguous, give the essence of the subject-matter, be all-encompassing (multifaceted), be free from repetition and faultless.)

Do we not find all the characteristics of a sūtra in the advice “आसीत मत्तर:” of the Lord? In fact, the compound word ‘मत्तर:’ has less number of letters when compared to that of even the compact mahāvākya, ‘तत्त्वमिसि’. As for unambiguousness, no one has differed in the basic meaning of the word “मत्तर:” and so, it can be said to be unambiguous. Even the other words of the verse are equally so. “तानि सर्वांणि संयम्य” denotes control of the senses, ‘चुकः’ indicates control of the mind, ‘मत्तरः’ points to the wisdom born of the scriptures and the Guru and ‘आसीत’ suggests that the sādhaka should just remain established in that wisdom. What happens then? By the dint of practice of this discipline, he not only accomplishes sākṣātkara of the Supreme but also complete mastery over his senses. Thus, the verse and, in particular, the aphoristic advice, ‘मत्तरः’, are unambiguous in their import.

The compound-word ‘मत्तरः’ is ‘सारवत’ too because it is profound and powerful; it teaches the unity of ātma, Īśvara and Brahman, the entire purport of the Upaniṣads. The wording cannot be bettered. It is multifaceted because Bhagavān Himself shows that the word ‘मत्तरः’ can mean merely “deeming Me Bhagavān as the Supreme” when it comes to karma-yoga. That is why when the Lord says elsewhere in the Gitā, “चेतसा सर्वकर्मांणि मथि संन्यस्य मत्तरः” (18.57)
Bhagavatpāda explains ‘मत्तरः’ merely as: “अहं वासुदेव: परः यस्य”. Here, there is no non-dualistic interpretation possible since the context is *karma-yoga*.

**Conclusion**

In the light of what we have seen so far, it is clear that Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation of the Lord’s utterance ‘मत्तरः’ a) is a legitimate one that the word itself can give rise to, b) is grammatically perfect, c) ideally fits the context, d) is necessary for the implementation of the Lord’s instructions about *nīdīdhyāsana* on the Ātman, d) does not contradict any of the verses of the Lord that occur before or after the verse under consideration, e) does not result in any internal inconsistency, f) has the support of the Lord in many verses of the *Gītā*, g) does not render the words of this verse or the other verses of the *Gītā* useless, g) does not dilute or trivialise the meanings of any of the words of the Lord, h) helps to bring out the important Upaniṣadic teaching, i) has the support of the Upaniṣads and j) makes us understand the verse of the Lord as comprehensive for a *sāṅkhya-yogin* to accomplish *sāksātkāra* of the Ātman-Brahman. Thus, Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation of ‘मत्तरः’ is what represents the heart of Bhagavān.

॥ सदृशचारणार्बिन्दापाण्यमस्तु ॥