

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

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## The import and significance of the word “मत्परः”

### Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation of the word ‘मत्परः’

The last word of the first line of verse 2.61 of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is the compound word ‘मत्परः’ which forms part of an aphoristic instruction of the Lord – “आसीत् मत्परः”. 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 सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः ।

वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ (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 ‘मत्परः’ has been interpreted by Bhagavatpāda as: “मत्परः अहं वासुदेवः सर्वप्रत्यगात्मा परः यस्य स मत्परः ‘न अन्योऽहं तस्मात्’ इति आसीत् इत्यर्थः ।” (He to whom I, Vāsudeva, the inmost Self of all, am the Supreme is ‘*matparaḥ*’. The idea is he should remain (concentrated) as, “I am not different from Him.”) Incidentally, we have three other instances of ‘मत्परः’ occurring in the *Gītā*. In 6.14, the Lord says: “मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत् मत्परः” and Bhagavatpāda expatiates on ‘मत्परः’ as “अहं परः यस्य सोऽयं मत्परः” In 18.57, the Lord says, “चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः” and Bhagavatpāda’s *bhāṣya* on the word ‘मत्परः’ of this verse is: “अहं वासुदेवः परः यस्य”. There is also another place where the word ‘मत्परः’ appears in its plural form ‘मत्पराः’. “ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः । (12.6) Bhagavatpāda comments upon ‘मत्पराः’ as, “अहं परः येषां ते मत्पराः”. As we can note, in all the above four

instances, the compound word 'मत्परः'/'मत्पराः' 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 अन्योऽहं तस्मात्" which has an obvious advaitic connotation.

### Objections against Bhagavatpāda's advaitic interpretation

The advaitic expatiation of Bhagavatpāda of the word 'मत्परः' viz., "न अन्योऽहं तस्मात् इति आसीत् इत्यर्थः" 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*: 'मत्परः' इत्यद्वैतज्ञानमन्यैर्व्याख्यातम् । तन्नाक्षरानुसारीत्याशयवान् व्याचष्टे – अहमेवेति – ('मत्परः' 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 sādḥaka 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: "यदपि 'तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः' (2.61) इत्यत्र मत्परशब्दस्य जीवपरमात्मैक्यपर इति व्याख्यानम्, तदपि स्थितविपरीतम्। मत्परशब्दो हि अहं परो यस्मादिति विग्रहे उत्कृष्टमद्विशिष्टः स्वभिन्नमत्क इत्येवार्थं गमयेत्। न तु स्वाभिन्नमत्क इति। मदुद्देश्यकः मदासक्त इत्येवमर्थेऽप्यभेदप्रतीतेर्नैवावकाशः। किञ्चात्र 'रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते' इत्युक्तमधस्तात् । अतो रसवशात् इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः इत्युक्त्वा तत्परिहारमार्गं उपदिश्यतेऽत्र । तत्रेन्द्रियक्षोभपरिहारे बुभुत्सिते, इन्द्रियाणि संयम्य जीवपरैक्यभावनं कुरु इति वर्णनं कथं घटताम्। अतः क्षोभपरिहारकमधिकाकर्षकवस्तुध्यानमत्रोपदेष्टव्यम्। अतः मदीयदिव्यमङ्गलविग्रहस्य शुभाश्रयस्य ध्यानं विधायेन्द्रियाशुद्धिं निवार्य ध्यातव्यध्यानपरो भवेत्युपदिशतीति प्रकृते वक्तव्यम् । अतो भवदुक्तोऽर्थः सर्वथैवासंगतः।" (Where the word 'मत्परः' in the verse

‘तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः’ (2.61) has been interpreted as denoting the non-difference between the *jīva* and the *paramātmān*, that (too) is against what is in the text (the *Gītā*). The word ‘मत्परः’ 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 ‘मदुद्देश्यकः’ ‘मदासक्तः’ (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, “रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा 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. 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 Sarasvatī, a famed commentator on the *Gītā*, chooses to interpret the word ‘मत्परः’ as, “मत्पर इति - अहं सर्वात्मा वासुदेव एव पर उत्कृष्ट उपादेयः यस्य स मत्परः । एकान्तमद्भक्तः इत्यर्थः।” (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.)

Sri Dhanapati Sūri, the author of the sub-commentary “*Bhāṣyotkarṣa-dīpikā*” who usually makes it a point to critically analyse the writings of Sri Madhusudana Saraswati or Sri Nīlakaṇṭha 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 Gītā 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 'मत्परः' 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 'मत्परः' by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins**

Rāmānujācārya, in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, does not specifically expatiate on the word 'मत्परः'. However, he does talk about the role of 'मत्परत्व' in good detail. “विषयानुरागयुक्ततया दुर्जयानीन्द्रियाणि संयम्य चेतसः शुभाश्रयभूते मयि मनः अवस्थाप्य समाहितः आसीत्। मनसि मद्विषये सति निर्दग्धाशेषकल्मषतया निर्मलीकृतं विषयानुरागरहितं मन इन्द्रियाणि स्ववशानि करोति । ततो वश्येन्द्रियं 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 Rāmānujācārya has taken the word-ordering of the first line of verse 2.61 as it is found in the original text- “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः”. From the commentary, it is also clear that Rāmānujācārya takes ‘मत्परत्व’ 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 *Tātparyā-candrikā*, a sub-commentary on Rāmānujācārya’s *Gītā-bhāṣya* interprets the words “शुभाश्रयभूते मयि” as follows: “मत्पर इत्यत्र वक्तुविग्रहवैशिष्ट्य-विवक्षया सिद्धं शुभाश्रयविग्रहविशेषत्वं चेतस इत्यादिना विवृतम् ।” 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 “मत्परः” and that is what has been explained by Rāmānujācārya 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: “यत्तु मत्परः चेतसश्शुभाश्रये मयि मनोऽवस्थाप्येति रामानुजः तन्मन्दम् – स्थितप्रज्ञस्य साङ्ख्यस्य योगिविद्वानधारणाऽसम्भवात् – नहि सच्चिदानन्दब्रह्मात्मतत्त्ववित्थितप्रज्ञः कश्चिदाकारमात्मनि प्रकल्प्य ध्यायति – कल्पितस्य मिथ्यात्वात्, कल्पनस्य क्लेशावहत्वात्, चिरकालावस्थानाभावेन कल्पितस्य क्षणिकत्वात्ततो दुःखहेतुत्वाच्च ।” (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 sāmkhya, 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, Rāmānujācārya's explanation of 'मत्परत्व' 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 कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते । (5.7)

नैव किञ्चित्करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित् ।

पश्यञ्-शृण्वन्-स्पृशन्-जिघ्रन्-अश्नन्-गच्छन्-स्वपन्-श्वसन् । (5.8)

प्रलपन्-विसृजन्-गृह्णन्-उन्मिषन्-निमिषन्नपि

इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन् ॥ (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 *Brahmaviṭ*? In the *Anuśāsanīka-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 *dīkṣā* (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 Kuntī, 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 Brahnavits could and did mediate 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 *Anuśāsanīka-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 *brahmavī*?

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 Viśiṣṭādvaitin 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 Veeraraghvachariyar’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 Rāmānujācārya and the sub-commentary of Sri Vedāntadeśika, clarifies the position of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, while counter-attacking the rebuttal of Sri Rāmarāya. He writes, “यदपि ‘तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः’ (2.61) इत्यत्र मत्परशब्दस्य जीवपरमात्मैक्यपर इति व्याख्यानम्, तदपि स्थितविपरीतम्। मत्परशब्दो हि अहं परो यस्मादिति विग्रहे उत्कृष्टमद्विशिष्टः स्वभिन्नमत्क इत्येवार्थं गमयेत्। न तु स्वाभिन्नमत्क इति। मदुद्देश्यकः मदासक्त इत्येवमर्थेऽप्यभेदप्रतीतेर्नैवावकाशः। किञ्चात्र ‘रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते’ इत्युक्तमधस्तात् । अतो रसवशात् इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः इत्युक्त्वा तत्परिहारमार्गं उपदिश्यतेऽत्र । तत्रेन्द्रियक्षोभपरिहारे बुभुत्सिते, इन्द्रियाणि संयम्य जीवपरैक्यभावनं कुरु इति वर्णनं कथं घटताम्। अतः क्षोभपरिहारकमधिकाकर्षकवस्तुध्यानमत्रोपदेष्टव्यम्। अतः मदीयदिव्यमङ्गलविग्रहस्य शुभाश्रयस्य ध्यानं विधायेन्द्रियाशुद्धिं निवार्य ध्यातव्यध्यानपरो भवेत्युपदिशतीति प्रकृते वक्तव्यम् । अतो भवदुक्तोऽर्थः सर्वथैवासंगतः।” (Where the word ‘मत्परः’ in the verse ‘तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः’ (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 ‘मत्परः’ 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 'मदुद्देश्यकः' 'मदासक्तः' (He who is intent on me, 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, "रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा 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 "मत्परः" by Rāmānujācārya**

Rāmānujācārya seems to think that there is a major reason why 'इन्द्रियनिग्रहं' 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 *sthitaprajñalakṣhaṇas* is:

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्पार्थ मनोगतान् ।  
आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥ (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 संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः ।  
इन्द्रियाणिन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ (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.)  
विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।

रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा 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.

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।

इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं 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, Rāmānujācārya argues: “एवम् इन्द्रियजय आत्मदर्शनाधीन आत्मदर्शनम् इन्द्रियजयाधीनम् इति ज्ञाननिष्ठा दुष्प्राप्या ॥ (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 Rāmānujācārya solves this problem of the aforesaid mutual dependence. In his commentary for this verse which we have already seen, Rāmānujācārya says: सर्वस्य दोषस्य परिजिहीर्षया विषयानुरागयुक्ततया दुर्जयानीन्द्रियाणि संयम्य चेतसःशुभाश्रयभूते मयि मनः अवस्थाप्य समाहितः आसीत् । मनसि मद्दिष्ये सति निर्दग्धाशेषकल्मषतया निर्मलीकृतं विषयानुरागरहितं मन इन्द्रियाणि स्ववशानि करोति । ततो वश्येन्द्रियं 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 'मत्परत्व' 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 'मत्परः' 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 'मत्परः' 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 'मत्परः', 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 'मत्परः'. As for the words 'युक्तः' or 'आसीत्', they do not specify on whom or what the focus should be. 'युक्तः' merely means, "being integrated or absorbed". Even when the words 'मत्परः' and 'युक्त आसीत्' are read together, they do not directly specify what Rāmānujācārya says. Thus, Rāmānujācārya's interpretation of the first line of the śloka, "चेतसः शुभाश्रयभूते मयि मनः अवस्थाप्य मनसि मद्विषये सति निर्दग्धाशेषकल्मषतया निर्मलीकृतं विषयानुरागरहितं मन इन्द्रियाणि स्ववशानि करोति । ततो वश्येन्द्रियं मन आत्मदर्शनाय प्रभवति" as well as Sri Vedāntadeśika's additional comment 'दिव्यमङ्गलविग्रहे' 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



*divyamaṅgalavīgraha* of the Lord and that the meditation prescribed for one who has had *ātma-sākṣātkāra* is on the *divya-ātma-svrūpa* of Bhagavān. How is one supposed to understand from “मत्परः” that the *divya-maṅgala-vīgraha* and not the *divya-ātma-svrūpa* 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 ‘मयि’ 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 ‘मत्परः.’ A further question that arises is whether Bhagavān would stop with a not-so-specific ‘मत्परः’ 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, “मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय।” (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 ‘मत्परः’ to advise the *sādhaka* to focus on Him. Let us consider the following verse:

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः ।

बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव ॥ 18.57

(Mentally surrendering all actions to Me (चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य) and accepting Me as the Supreme (मत्परः) ever remain as (सततं भव) someone whose mind is fixed on Me (मच्चित्तः) by resorting to *buddhiyoga* (बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य). Here, Bhagavān does not require us to supply a ‘मयि’ before ‘संन्यस्य’ just because there is already a ‘मत्परः.’ In other words, Bhagavān does not stop with saying “मत्परस्सन् चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि संन्यस्य ।” He employs the word ‘मयि’ also. Further, He

does not seem to think that the word ‘मत्परः’ itself is sufficient to ask a *sādhaka* to concentrate on Him but that some other specific advice ‘मच्चित्तः भव’ is required to make the devotee think of Him. If according to Rāmānujācārya, however, ‘मत्परः’ itself is sufficient to prescribe the focusing of one’s mind or thoughts on Bhagavān, the word “मच्चित्तः” occurring in tandem along with ‘मत्परः’ 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 *sādhaka* 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 *jivātman* one should meditate on the form of Bhagavān for the purpose of effecting control over one’s senses.

The words, per se, of the “तानि सर्वाणि...” 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 “मत्परः”. It is perhaps with this in mind that Rāmānujācārya argues that “इन्द्रियजय आत्मदर्शनाधीन आत्मदर्शनम् इन्द्रियजयाधीनम् इति ज्ञाननिष्ठा दुष्प्राप्या ॥ (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 *sādhaka* to meditate on Him. Thus, the word ‘मत्परः’ in the “तानि सर्वाणि...” 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 “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य...”**

Bhagavān's words are: “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः”. 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, “तानि 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, Vedāntadeśika offers a diluted interpretation for the word 'संयम्य'. He interprets 'संयम्य' as: “संयम्येति विषयस्पर्शनिवारणमात्रमत्रोच्यते” (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:

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।

रसवर्जं रसोप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा 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 *jīvātman*, according to Rāmānujācārya) is realized. Having seen this in just the previous verse, how can the Viśiṣṭādvaitins claim that 'संयम्य' 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 संयम्य...", 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 "युक्त आसीत् मत्परः" (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 'विषयस्पर्शननिवारणमात्रम्' mentioned by Sri Vedantadeśika as indicating a decent level of इन्द्रियनिग्रह 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 विनिवर्तन्ते..." 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 'मत्परः' 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 “रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा 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: “रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते”? Let us briefly discuss this. Rāmānujācārya has said, “चेतसः शुभाश्रयभूते मयि मनः अवस्थाप्य मनसि मद्विषये सति निर्दग्धाशेषकल्मषतया निर्मलीकृतं विषयानुरागरहितं मन इन्द्रियाणि स्ववशानि करोति । ततो वश्येन्द्रियं मन आत्मदर्शनाय प्रभवति” – Let us look at the word 'विषयानुरागरहितं'. If the meditation on Bhagavān's form is what makes the mind pure and free from the *rāga* for objects (विषयरागरहित्यं), then the statement of Bhagavān, “रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते” gets disregarded, isn't it? Because Rāmānujācārya has said that the focus on *śubhāśraya* makes the mind pure which, in turn, makes the mind get rid of 'राग'. He himself equates 'रसः' with 'रागः' when he comments on the 'रसवर्जम्' verse: “रसः रागः । विषयरागो न निवर्तत इत्यर्थः। रागोऽप्यात्मस्वरूपं विषयेभ्यः परं सुखतरं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते । Thus, Bhagavān's categorical statement “रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते” gets disregarded.

Notwithstanding Rāmānujācārya's above interpretation, if the Viśiṣṭādvaitins would say that it is not the ultimate sense-control, राग(रस)जयं 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 “रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा 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-dhyana* to culminate in the *sākṣātkāra* of the Supreme.

To sum up the entire argument, if meditation on Bhagavān's *divyamaṅgalavighraha* 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 *Gītā*, then the open averment of the Lord, "परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते", 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 'परदर्शनं' 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, 'परदर्शनं' 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 *Gītā* (अश्रुत-कल्पन) and disregarding what is explicitly stated by Bhagavān (श्रुत-परित्याग)?

## Now 'तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य' is Rendered Meaningless!

One important view-point of Rāmānujācārya 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 Rāmānujācārya's interpretation of 'मत्परत्व' for sense-control makes the first pāda of the verse, 'तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य' meaningless. Rāmānujācārya categorically says this in His commentary on the following verse of the second chapter:

नास्ति बुद्धिरयुक्तस्य न चायुक्तस्य भावना ।

न चाभावयतः शान्तिरशान्तस्य कुतः 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?)

Rāmānujācārya writes: “मयि संन्यस्तमनोरहितस्य स्वयत्नेन इन्द्रियदमने प्रवृत्तस्य कदाचिदपि विविक्तात्मविषया बुद्धिः न सेत्स्यति । अत एव तस्य तद्भावना 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 Viśiṣṭādvaitins how this verse gives rise to the above interpretation of Rāmānujācārya. Be that as it may. In any case, this becomes another evidence to show that the Viśiṣṭādvaitins are disagreeing with the words “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य” of the Lord as Rāmānujācārya says one should never try to control his senses by oneself!

## The 'mutual-dependence problem' does not need Rāmānujācārya's solution

We saw while stating the viewpoint of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins that Rāmānujācārya argues that there is a major reason why इन्द्रियनिग्रह can be had only by meditation on Bhagavān. We saw him aver thus: “एवम् इन्द्रियजय आत्मदर्शनाधीन

आत्मदर्शनम् इन्द्रियजयाधीनम् इति ज्ञाननिष्ठा दुष्प्राप्या ॥ (Thus, 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 *sādhaka* to meditate on Him first. In his commentary for the “तानि सर्वाणि” verse, Rāmānujācārya says सर्वस्य दोषस्य परिजिहीर्षया विषयानुरागयुक्तया दुर्जयानीन्द्रियाणि संयम्य चेतसःशुभाश्रयभूते मयि मनः अवस्थाप्य समाहितः आसीत् । मनसि मद्विषये सति निर्दग्धाशेषकल्मषतया निर्मलीकृतं विषयानुरागरहितं मन इन्द्रियाणि स्ववशानि करोति । ततो वश्येन्द्रियं 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.)

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 *bhāshya*, raises this very same objection and rebuts it as under: ननु सम्यग्ज्ञानमन्तरेण रागो नापगच्छति चेत्तदपगमादृते रागवतः सम्यग्ज्ञानोदयायोगादितरेतराश्रयतेति नेत्याह, इन्द्रियाणां विषयपारवश्ये विवेकद्वारा परिहृते स्थूलो रागो व्यावर्तते, ततश्च सम्यग्ज्ञानोत्पत्त्या सूक्ष्मस्यापि रागस्य सर्वात्मना निवृत्त्युपपत्तेर्नेतरेतराश्रयतेत्यर्थः ।

(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 Rāmānujācārya 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 आत्मानात्मविवेकजा प्रज्ञा, 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 *sakṣātkāra* 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 'मत्परः'] 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 *Īśvara's* form?**

There is a major question that would remain to be answered if the words of the Lord, "तानि सर्वाणी 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 *saguṇa* object viz., the *divyamaṅgala* vigraha of Bhagavān? Does not "चेतसःशुभाश्रयभूते मयि मनः अवस्थाप्य समाहितः आसीत्" (Focusing the mind on Me who am the only auspicious object for meditation, let him remain steadfast) advocated by Rāmānujācārya 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 Viśiṣṭādvaitin 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 "रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते" purposeless.

### **An accomplished *karma-yogin* would have perfected his *dhyāna* on *saguṇa-īśvara***

If the Viśiṣṭādvaitins 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 Viśiṣṭādvaitins do say that meditating on the *divyamaṅgalavighraha* 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": क्षोभपरिहारकमधिकाकर्षकवस्तुध्यानमत्रोपदेष्टव्यम्। अतः मदीयदिव्यमङ्गलविग्रहस्य शुभाश्रयस्य ध्यानं विधायेन्द्रियाशुद्धिं निवार्य ध्यातव्यध्यानपरो भवेत्युपदिशतीति 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 *sāmkhya-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 *upāsana*. Thus, the *sāmkhya-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 'मत्परः' 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:

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीः ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः ।

मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत् मत्परः ॥ (6.14)

(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.)

युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगी नियतमानसः ।

शान्तिं निर्वाणपरमां मत्संस्थामधिगच्छति ॥ (6.15)

(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, Rāmānujācārya says: “एवमात्मयोगमारभमाणस्य मनोनैर्मल्यहेतुभूतां मनसो भगवति शुभाश्रये स्थितिमभिधाय अन्यदपि योगोपकरणमाह । (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 “युञ्जन्नेवं सदा...” according to Rāmānujācārya is ‘निर्वाणकाष्ठ’ 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 *divyamaṅgalavighraha* of Bhagavān for *jīvātma-dhyāna*. Thus, Rāmānujācārya’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 *divyamaṅgalavighraha* of the Lord is to be meditated upon. (In his notes, Uttamur Viraraghavachariar says that the meditation recommended for a person who begins *ātma-dhyāna* is on the *divyamaṅgalavighraha* of the Lord and that the meditation prescribed for one who has had *ātma-sākṣātkāra* is on the *divyātmasvrūpa* of Bhagavān. Where is it mentioned in 6.14 that the *divyamangalavighraha* 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 आसीत् मत्परः" ; Rāmānujācārya's commentary also acknowledges this.

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीः ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः

मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत् मत्परः ॥ (6.14)

The import of the second line of this verse that is pertinent to our discussion is as follows: "Having controlled the mind (मनः संयम्य), with the mind fixed on Me (मच्चित्तो), becoming concentrated (युक्तः) and having me as the Supreme Goal (मत्परः) let him remain seated (आसीत्). Rāmānujācārya says, "मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तः युक्तः अवहितो मत्पर आसीत्, मामेव चिन्तयन् आसीत्". "Holding the mind in check, remain concentrated and intent on Me only."

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

युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगी नियतमानसः ।

शान्तिं निर्वाणपरमां मत्संस्थामधिगच्छति ॥ (6.15)

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

तत्रैकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः ।

उपविश्यासने युञ्ज्याद्योगमात्मविशुद्धये ॥ (6.12)

(Meaning as per the commentary of Rāmānujācārya: 'एकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा', making the mind one pointed by withdrawing it from all objects and 'यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः' keeping the actions of the mind and senses under control, He should concentrate his mind for the purification of the self (ending his bondage).) Thus, even according to Rāmānujācārya, the *yogin* should sit in meditation after having controlled the senses as well as the mind. In fact 'यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः' has been commented upon by Rāmānujācārya himself as 'सर्वात्मना यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः' – 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 Viśiṣṭādvaitins 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 “एकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा” and ‘यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः’ 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:

सङ्कल्पप्रभवान्कामांस्त्यक्त्वा सर्वानशेषतः ।

मनसैवेन्द्रियग्रामं विनियम्य समन्ततः ॥ 6.24

शनैः शनैरुपरमेद्बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।

आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥ 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 “प्रजहाति यदा कामान् ...” of Chapter 2 would be obvious to any discerning reader of the *Gītā*. In his commentary to these verses, Rāmānujācārya writes: “स्पर्शजाः सङ्कल्पजाश्च इति द्विविधाः कामाः स्पर्शजाः शीतोष्णादयः सङ्कल्पजाः पुत्रपौत्रक्षेत्रादयः तत्र सङ्कल्पप्रभवाः स्वरूपेण एव त्यक्तुं शक्याः, तान् सर्वान् मनसा एव तदनन्वयानुसन्धानेन त्यक्त्वा स्पर्शजेषु अवर्जनीयेषु तन्निमित्तहर्षोद्विगौ त्यक्त्वा समन्ततः सर्वस्माद् विषयात् सर्वम् इन्द्रियग्रामं विनियम्य शनैः शनैः धृतिगृहीतया विवेकविषयया बुद्ध्या सर्वस्मादात्मव्यतिरिक्तात् उपरम्य आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥ (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 Rāmānujācārya 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 निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरं ।

ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव 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. Rāmānujācārya comments upon this verse as follows: “चलस्वभावतया आत्मनि अस्थिरं मनः यतो यतो विषयप्रावण्यहेतोः बहिः निश्चरति ततः ततो यत्नेन मनो नियम्य आत्मनि एव अतिशयितसुखभावनया 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 sādḥaka 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 18<sup>th</sup> chapter where Bhagavān Himself says He is summarizing the steps that lead to *naiṣkarmya-siddhi* or *jñāna-niṣṭhā* on Brahman-*Ātman*, we do not find any reference to *bhagavad-dhyāna* for sense control / purity of mind at the beginning of *yoga*.

बुद्ध्या विशुद्धया युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च ।

शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च ॥ (18.51)

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

विविक्तसेवी लघ्वाशी यतवाक्कायमानसः ।

ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः ॥ (18.52)

(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. Rāmānujācārya too requires a sādḥaka 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 निर्दग्धाशेषकल्मषतया निर्मलीकृतं विषयानुरागरहितं मन इन्द्रियाणि स्ववशानि करोति। ततो वश्येन्द्रियं मन आत्मदर्शनाय प्रभवति ॥" Thus, he talks about controlling the mind for restraining the senses as also for the subsequent focus of the mind for आत्मदर्शनम्. 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:-

योऽयं योगस्त्वया प्रोक्तः साम्येन मधुसूदन ।

एतस्याहं न पश्यामि चञ्चलत्वात् स्थितिं स्थिराम् ॥ (6.33)

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद्दृढम् ।

तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥ (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 दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।

अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥ (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 *Īvara'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-sāstra* and *indriya-nigraha*

Though the *Yoga-sāstra* 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*, Rāmānujācārya classifies the *sthitaprajñas* into four types and says that the four verses starting from “प्रजहाति यदा कामान्...” upto “यदा संहरते चायं...” correspond to each of these types in the descending order. Sri Vedāntadeśika clarifies that the four types, in the ascending order, relate to the वशीकार, एकेन्द्रिय, व्यतिरेक and the यतमान types of dispassion defined in the *Yoga-sāstra*. He even cites the *yoga-sūtra*: “दृष्टानुश्राविकविषयवितृष्णस्य वशीकारसंज्ञा वैराग्यम् १(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-sāstra* 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-dr̥ṣṭi* is what helps a *sādhaka*.

It may be argued that the *Yoga-sāstra* talks of *īśvara-praṇidhāna* of the form of *praṇava*-based meditation on *Īśvara* that helps one to swiftly reach *asamprajñāta-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-sāstra* 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-maṅgala-vigraha* of the Lord, for it is easier to meditate on a form that is attractive to the mind. Again, the purpose of *īśvara-praṇidhāna* characterized

by meditation on *Īśvara* commencing with the chanting of *praṇava* 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*. “स्वस्वविषयासंप्रयोगे चित्तस्वरूपानुकार इवेन्द्रियाणां प्रत्याहारः” (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 सर्वाणि संयम्य” of the Lord’s verse under discussion.

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

The verse “तानि सर्वाणि ...” is the only one in the set of verses dealing with the *sthitaprajña-lakṣaṇa*, that instructs a *sādhaka* how he should engage himself in *nididhyāsana*. If this verse containing an instruction about how a striving (यतिः) *yogin* must sit (आसीत्), 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 *saguṇa-īśvara* to *nirguṇa-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.

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम् ।

अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छामुम् धनंजय ॥ (12.9)

(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? Rāmānujācārya clarifies: अथ सहसा एव मयि स्थिरं चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि, ततः अभ्यासयोगेन मामामुमिच्छ । स्वाभाविकानवधिकातिशय सौन्दर्यसौशील्य-सौहार्दवात्सल्यमाधुर्यगाम्भीर्यौदार्यवीर्यपराक्रमसर्वज्ञत्वसत्यकामत्वसत्यसङ्कल्पत्वसर्वेश्वरत्वसकलकारणत्वाद्य-सङ्ख्येयकल्याणगुणसागरे निखिलहेयप्रत्यनीके मयि निरतिशयप्रेमगर्भ-स्मृत्यभ्यासयोगेन... । (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 Rāmānujācārya, 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 ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्धानं विशिष्यते ।

ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागास्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥ (12.12)

(The overall meaning of this verse, according to the commentary of Rāmānujācārya, 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 Rāmānujācārya's commentary pertinent to our discussion is as follows: "अत्यर्थप्रीतिविरहात् कर्कशरूपात् स्मृत्यभ्यासादक्षरयाथात्म्यानुसंधानपूर्वकं तदापरोक्षज्ञानं एव आत्महितत्वे विशिष्यते। आत्मापरोक्षज्ञानादपि अनिष्पन्नरूपात् तदुपायभूतात्मध्यानमेव आत्महितत्वे विशिष्यते, तद्धानात्

अपि अनिष्पन्नरूपात् तदुपायभूतं फलत्यागेन अनुष्ठितं कर्म एव विशिष्यते ...॥” (More than the practice of remembrance (of the Lord) which is difficult in the absence of love for the Lord, the direct knowledge of the self, arising from the contemplation of the imperishable self (akṣara) is conducive to the well being of one. Better than the imperfect knowledge of the self is perfect meditation on the self as it is more conducive to the well-being of one. More conducive than imperfect meditation that is meditation unaccompanied with renunciation is the activity performed with renunciation of fruits. )

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 divyamaṅgalavighraha of the Lord, the ‘शुभाश्रयः’, 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 सर्वाणि...” verse.

यथाग्निरुद्धतशिखः कक्षं दहति सानिलः ।

तथा चित्तस्थितो विष्णुर्योगीनां सर्वकिल्बिषम् ॥ (6.7.74)

(Just as fire, blazing in the wind, burns dry grass, so does Vishnú, 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 *saṃsāra*, the cycle of birth and death. This is the 74<sup>th</sup> verse in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of the sixth *adhyāya* of the *Viṣṇu-purāna*. Keśidhvaja's advice starts from the 27<sup>th</sup> 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:

ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसां च सत्यास्तेयापरिग्रहान् ।

सेवेत योगी निष्कामो योग्यतां स्वमनो नयन् ॥ (6.7.36)

स्वाध्यायशौचसंतोषतपांसि नियतात्मवान् ।

कुर्वीत ब्रह्मणि तथा परस्मिन्प्रवणान्मनः ॥ (6.7.37)

एते यमास्सनियमाः पञ्चपञ्च च कीर्तितः ।

विशिष्टफलदाः काम्या निष्कामानां विमुक्तिदः । (6.7.38)

एकं भद्रसनादीनां समास्थाय गुणैर्युतः । (6.7.39)

प्राणाख्यमनिलं वश्यमभ्यासात्कुरुते तु यत् ।

प्राणायामस्सविज्ञेयस्सबीजोऽबीज एव हि ॥ (6.7.40)

परस्परेणाभिभवं प्राणापानौ यथानिलौ ।

कुरुतस्सिद्धिधानेन तृतीयसंयमात्तयोः ॥ (6.7.41)

तस्य चालम्बनवतः स्थूलरूपं द्विजोत्तम ।

आलम्बनमनन्तस्य योगिनोऽभ्यसतः स्मृतम् ॥ (6.7.42)

शब्दादिष्वनुरक्तानि निगृह्याक्षाणी योगवित् ।

कुर्याच्चित्तानुकारीणि प्रत्याहारपरायणः ॥ (6.7.43)

वश्यता परमा तेन जायेतेति चलात्मनाम् ।

इन्द्रियाणामवश्यैस्तैर्न योगी योगसाधकः ॥ (6.7.44)

प्राणायामेन पवने प्रत्याहारेण चेन्द्रिये ।

वशीकृते ततः कुर्यात्स्थितं चेतः शुभाश्रये ॥ (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 *bhadrāsana* 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 *Yogin*, 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 be able to keep his mind (चेतः) steady in its perfect asylum, the शुभाश्रयः.")

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

कथ्यतां मे महभाग चेतसो यः शुभाश्रयः ।

यदाधारमशेषं तद्धन्ति दोषमलोद्भवम् ॥ (6.7.46)

आश्रयश्चेतसो ब्रह्म द्विधा तच्च स्वभावतः ।

भूप मूर्तामूर्तं च परं चापरमेव च ॥ (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 sādḥaka who has no impediments in the form of some left-out karma that obstructs the dawn of sākṣhātḥkara attains liberation quickly.

यस्य योगः स वै योगी मुमुक्षुरभिधीयते । (6.7.32)

योगयुक् प्रथमं योगी युञ्जानो ह्यभिधीयते ।

विनिष्पन्नसमाधिस्तु परं ब्रह्मोपलब्धिमान् ॥ (6.7.33)

यद्यन्तरायदोषेन दूष्यते चास्य मानसं ।

जन्मान्तरैरभ्यसतो मुक्तिः पूर्वस्य जायते ॥ (6.7.34)

विनिष्पन्नसमाधिस्तु मुक्तिं तत्रैव जन्मनि ॥

प्राप्नोति योगी योगाग्निदग्धकर्मचयोऽचिरात् ॥ (6.7.35)

(The sage, or *yogin*, when first applying himself to contemplative devotion is called the novice or practitioner (*yoga-yu*); 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.)

प्रत्यस्मितभेदं यत्सत्तामात्रमगोचरम् ।

वचसामात्मसंवेद्यं तज्ज्ञानं ब्रह्मसंज्ञितम् ॥ (6.7.53)

तच्च विष्णोः परं रूपमरूपाख्यमनुत्तमं ।

विश्वस्वरूपवैरूप्यलक्षणं परमात्मनः ॥ (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 Vishnú 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 तद्योगयुजा शक्यं नृपा चिन्तयितुं यतः ।

ततः स्थूलं हरे रूपं चिन्तयेद्विश्वगोचरम् ॥ (6.7.55)

तद्रूपं विश्वरूपस्य तस्य योगयुजा नृप ।

चिन्तयामात्मविशुद्ध्यर्थं सर्वकिल्बिषनाशनम् ॥ (6.7.73)

यथाग्निरुद्धतशिखः कक्षं दहति सानिलः ।

तथा चित्तस्थितो विष्णुर्योगिनां सर्वकिल्बिषम् ॥ (6.7.74)

तस्मात्समस्तशक्तीनामाधारे तत्र चेतसः ।

कुर्वीत संस्थितं सा तु विज्ञेया शुद्धधारणा ॥ (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 'शुभाश्रय' 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 *nididhyāsana* 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 *nididhyāsana* 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 'स्थितप्रज्ञलक्षणं' 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 *nididhyāsana* 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 *sākṣātkāra*. That the Lord is only speaking about a man of knowledge but not some novice or a fresher is patent from His usage 'विपश्चितः पुरुषस्य' in the following verse:

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।

इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥ (2.60)

(For O son of Kuntī, 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, “रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते” we can understand what the Lord is having in mind. He drives home the point that until one accomplishes *sākṣātkāra* and becomes a *jivānmukta*, one has to be absolutely careful about the senses. This is all.

- d) Rāmānujācārya cited the verse concerned of the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* after saying that one must focus one’s mind on the ‘शुभाश्रय’. Vedāntadeśika explained ‘शुभाश्रय’ as the *divyamaṅgala-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 Rāmānujācārya has cited in support of his theory. If it be argued that the universal form of Viṣṇu is what Rāmānujācārya 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) Rāmānujācārya said that the focus recommended on the ‘शुभाश्रय’ 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 बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।

योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वात्मशुद्धये ॥ (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 “नास्ति बुद्धिरयुक्तस्य...”, Rāmānujācārya 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 ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः” verse that the Lord is having in mind a person who has already got the right knowledge of the *Ātman*. In the light of Rāmānujācārya'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 'विपश्चितः') his mind is already pure! Of course, he is yet to get established in the Self. The word “विपश्चितः” denotes a person who has *atma-anatma viveka*, for the context is *sāṃkhya-yoga* which is related to the knowledge of the *Ātman*. Vedāntadeśika says 'विपश्चितत्वं' means 'शास्त्रजन्यहेयोपादेयविवेकवत्त्वं' (the knowledge born of scriptures about discriminating what is to be taken and what is to be discarded). This dilution of 'विपश्चितत्वं' 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 Viṣṇu-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 ‘शुभाश्रय’ given in the Viṣṇu-purāṇa is ‘the Supreme self devoid of qualities’. I wonder if this is the best place for the Viśiṣṭādvaitins 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 Viṣṇu-purāṇa.

### **Conclusion of the objections against the Viśiṣṭādvaitins’ view of ‘मत्परः’**

In the light of what has been seen so far, it is patent that the theory of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins that the word “युक्त आसीत् मत्परः” advised in śloka 2.61 prescribes focus on the divyamaṅgala-vigraha of the Lord for the purpose of ‘इन्द्रिय-जयः’ 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 Bhagavān anywhere in the Gita.

### Interpretation of 'मत्परः' by the followers of the Dvaita school:

Madhvācārya is said to have commented upon just over half the total number of verses of the *Gītā*. 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 Srinivāsātīrtha and Srī Rāghavendra's commentary on the *Gītā*, the '*Gītārthasaṅgraha*', 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.

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः

रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥ (2.59)

Madhvācārya comments upon this verse as follows: नचैतल्लक्षणं ज्ञानमयत्नतो भवतीत्याहोत्तरैः श्लोकैः । निराहारत्वेन विषयभोगसामर्थ्याभाव एव भवति । इतरविषयाकाङ्क्षाभावो वा । रसाकाङ्क्षादिर्न निवर्तते । स त्वपरोक्षज्ञानादेव निवर्तत इत्याह विषया इति ।... (The next three verses elucidate how *aparoksha-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 Sri Śrīnivāsātīrtha, is this:

“...निराहारत्वेन पञ्चानामपि बाह्येन्द्रियाणां स्वस्वविषयभोगशक्तिक्षय एव भवति । विषयपञ्चकविषयक-मानसिकरागक्षयस्त्वपरोक्षज्ञानेनैवेत्येकः प्रकारः । तथा चतुर्णामेव बाह्येन्द्रियाणां तत्तद्विषयभोगशक्तेर्विषयविषयचतुष्टयविषयकमानसिकरागस्य च क्षयो निराहारत्वेन भवति । रसनेन्द्रियस्य रसभोगशक्तिरूपः रसविषयमानसिकरागक्षयश्चापरोक्षज्ञानेनेत्यपरः । ...” 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 (विषयभोगशक्तिक्षयः). However, the mental taste (रस or आकाङ्क्षा) 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 *aparokṣa-jñāna* of the Supreme.

Now we move on to the next verse.

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।

इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः । (2.60)

The commentary of Madhvācārya for this verse is as follows: अपरोक्षज्ञानरहितज्ञानिनोऽपि साधारणयत्नवतोऽपि मनो हरन्तीन्द्रियाणि । पुरुषस्य शरीराभिमानिनः । को दोषस्ततः? प्रमाथीनि प्रमथनशीलानि । पुरुषस्य ॥ (The senses lead the mind of even a knower possessed of mediate knowledge or even one who puts in standard effort (साधारणयत्नवान्) 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 'मत्परः'**

Now comes here the verse under discussion:

तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः ।



वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ (2.61)

The commentary of Madhvācārya is as follows: “तर्ह्यशक्यान्येवेत्यत आह तानीति । बहुप्रयत्नतः शक्यानि । अतो यत्नं कुर्यादित्याशयः । युक्तो मयि मनोयुक्तः । अहमेव परः सर्वस्मादुत्कृष्टो यस्य स मत्परः । फलमाह वशे हीति ।” (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 युक्तः means ‘with the mind being integrated in Me.’ ‘मत्परः’ refers to one who deems Me, Brahman, as the Supreme of all. He declares the fruit – वशे हि... ) Here, बहुयत्नं has been elaborated upon by Sri Jayatīrtha as “यद्यपि न परोक्तं साधनमस्मदुक्तं च शक्यं । तथाऽपि तत्प्रतिनिधिना महता प्रयत्नेन जय्यानीत्यर्थः” (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 sādhana that ‘we’ advocate? Sri Śrīnivāsātīrtha elaborates on the sub-commentary of Sri Jayatīrtha: “परोक्तम् – प्रत्याहारविवेकविज्ञानरूपम्, अस्मदुक्तम् – निराहारत्वब्रह्मसाक्षात्काररूपम्” (Sādhana mentioned by others is ‘pratyāhāra’ and the like (found in the *Yogaśāstra* etc.) The means prescribed by us are ‘निराहारत्व’ which is fasting and ‘ब्रह्मसाक्षात्कारं’, 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 Śrīnivāsātīrtha says: “देहावस्थानासम्भवान्योन्याश्रयाभ्यामशक्यमित्यर्थः” - The import of this sentence is that fasting is not the means for ‘इन्द्रियजय’ 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 – “इन्द्रियजयसाध्यस्य ब्रह्मापरोक्षज्ञानस्येन्द्रियजयं प्रति साधनत्वाङ्गीकारे इन्द्रियजये

सत्यपरोक्षज्ञानं, तस्मिन् सतीन्द्रियजय इत्यन्योन्याश्रयः स्यादित्यर्थः” - If *aprokṣa-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 *aprokṣa-jñāna*, and only when *aprokṣa-jñāna* is there, there will arise *indriya-jaya* would result. Thus, *aprokṣa-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 Jayatīrtha says: “तथाऽपि तत्रतिनिधिना महता प्रयत्नेन जय्यानीत्यर्थः” (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 Jayatīrtha has explicitly said what that ‘great effort’ is, Sri Śrīnivāsātīrtha clarifies: “निरन्तरं भगवत्त्वेव मनोयोजनरूपेण महता प्रयत्नेन” (‘With great effort’ means ‘by constantly focusing one’s mind on Bhagavān only’.)

As already seen, the word ‘मत्परः’ in the “तानि सर्वाणि...” verse, according to Madhvācārya , means: “अहमेव परः सर्वस्मादुत्कृष्टो यस्य स मत्परः” – (one who deems that Bhagavān is the greatest.) Sri Rāghavendratīrtha in his commentary says: “भगवानेव उत्कृष्टः इति ज्ञात्वा...”. (Having known that Bhagavān is the greatest...) Sri Jayatīrtha writes: “।”मत्परः इत्यद्वैतज्ञानमन्यैर्व्याख्यातम् । तन्नाक्षरानुसारीत्याशयवान् व्याचष्टे – अहमेवेति । भगवानेव सर्वस्मादुत्कृष्ट इति ज्ञात्वा तस्मिन्नेव निरन्तरं मनसो योजनमिन्द्रियजये परं साधनमिति भावः ।” (The interpretation done by the others (advaitins) of ‘मत्परः’ 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 ‘मत्परः’ of the “तानि सर्वाणि” 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 'मत्परः'**

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 “विषया 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 'इन्द्रियजय' 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 Jayatīrtha justifies this writing off saying: “निराहारत्वादिकं तु वस्तुगतिप्रदर्शनार्थमेवोक्तमिति 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 sādḥaka. Is it not a pity that the Dvaitins have made a whole verse go purposeless just because Madhvācārya had interpreted 'निराहारत्व' as abstinence from food!

### **“तानि सर्वाणि ...” verse incomprehensive, 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*. Śloka starting from 'विषया विनिवर्तन्ते ...'(2.59) upto 'तानि सर्वाणि ... '(2.61) are supposed to tell us how *aparokṣa-jñāna* cannot be achieved without 'mighty' effort. The “तानि सर्वाणि...” verse, according the Dvaitins, specifically advises a *sādḥaka* 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 सर्वाणि...” verse teaches us that a person’s wisdom is steadfast when his senses have been controlled. – “वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता.” If according to the Dvaitins, the import of the word ‘मत्परः’ in the “तानि सर्वाणि...” verse relates only to ‘इन्द्रियजय’ and not any other *sādhana* towards *aparokṣa-jñāna* in the verse, then ‘इन्द्रियजय’ 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 *aparokṣa-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 ‘प्रजहाति यदा कामान्...’ and expounded by the Dvaitins.

Sri Raghavendra, however, hastens to offer a remedy. He suggests that when Bhagavān says, “वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता”, the Lord does not really mean that Knowledge (प्रज्ञा) is the direct fruit of इन्द्रिय-वशीकरणं. Sri Rāghavendra writes this in his commentary for the तानि सर्वाणि verse: “यस्य वशे इन्द्रियाणि वर्तन्ते तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठितेति ... अत्रोक्तमिन्द्रियजयस्य ज्ञानरूपं फलं न साक्षादिति ‘रागद्वेषवियुक्तै’रित्यादौ व्यक्तीभविष्यतीति 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 “रागद्वेषवियुक्तैः...” (2.64) etc.” In his commentary for the verse “रागद्वेषवियुक्तैः...”, Sri Raghavendra says that “तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता” occurring in the “तानि सर्वाणि...” verse only means “मनःप्रसादद्वारा – तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता” (The wisdom of a person who has controlled his senses becomes steadfast through ‘मनःप्रसादः’ ). Thus, Sri Rāghavendra seems to suggest that the Lord’s wordings of the second line are not optimal in as much as words like ‘मनःप्रसादद्वारा’ and the like need to

be added before the statement ‘तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता’ 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 (तस्माद्यस्य महाबाहो...) is pertinent to study at this juncture. He writes: “प्रजहातीत्यादिनोक्तज्ञानिलक्षणस्यासंभवनिरासाय ज्ञानस्य महाप्रयत्नसाध्येन्द्रियनिग्रहसाध्यत्वं ‘विषया विनिवर्तन्त’ इत्यादिना यदुक्तं तदुपसंहरति: - तस्मादिति । यस्मादेवं निगृहीतेन्द्रियस्यैवोक्तरूपः प्रसादः, प्रसादवत एव चित्तनिरोधरूपा युक्तिः युक्तिमत एव श्रवणमनने, ताभ्यां तत्त्वनिश्चयः तत्त्वनिश्चयवत एवापरोक्षसाधनं ध्यानम् ...”. (In order to dispel the notion that the characteristics of a *jñānin* delineated in the verses starting from ‘प्रजहाति...’ are impossible to achieve, it was clarified through the verses “विषया विनिवर्तन्ते” 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 *sādhana* 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 *bhāvanā* 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 ‘मत्परः’, non-dual knowledge is being imparted to the *sādhaka*. Remember, this chapter is titled “*Sāṅkhya*-

*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 ‘मत्परः’. According to Madhvācārya, “अहमेव परः सर्वस्मादुत्कृष्टो यस्य स मत्परः” – “He to whom I am the the Supreme and the greatest of all is ‘matpara:’. Sri Raghavendra writes: मत्परः - अहमेव भगवान्कृष्ण एव परः सर्वोत्कृष्टः यस्य स मत्परः । भगवानेव सर्वोत्तम इति ज्ञात्वा । ... तत्र भगवतः सर्वोत्तमत्वज्ञानपूर्वं तस्मिन्नेव निरन्तरं मनोयोजनमिन्द्रियजये मुख्यं साधनम् ।” (He to whom Me, the Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme, the greatest of all, is matpara:. – (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-darṣana or aprokṣa-jñāna. And that is the reason they have dismissed the विषया विनिवर्तन्ते verse itself as impracticable. Now, in their interpretation of मत्परः, 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 नैरन्तर्य-मनो-योजनं - constant meditation on Bhagavān recommended for ‘इन्द्रिय-जयम्’ 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 (निरन्तरम्) 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 सर्वाणि” verse in the portion “युक्त आसीत् मत्परः”. 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: “इन्द्रियसंयमाद्यूनभावेऽत्युपासकस्यापि देवी नातिप्रसादमेति । देवस्तु तानि साधनानि भक्तिमतः स्वयमेव प्रयत्नेन ददातीति सौकर्यमिति भक्तानां 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 Rāghavendratīrtha writes for the very same verse: “अतीवेन्द्रियनियमनादिकं मत्प्रसादे नापेक्षितमिति न क्लेश इति सूचितं ...तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता भवामीत्यनेनेन्द्रियसंयमाद्यूनभावेऽपि देवीवहेवो नोपेक्षते

किंतु तानि साधनानि भक्तिमतः स्वयमेवाप्रयत्नेन ददातीति चातिसौकर्यं भक्तानां भगवदुपासने इति भावः।” (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 *paramātmā-upāsana* aimed at for *aparokṣa-jñāna* and faulted Bhagavān’s advice as involving *anyonya-āśraya*. Here, in the 12<sup>th</sup> 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 Rāghavendratīrtha’s commentary of verse 12.9 would be also pertinent to our discussion. The verse concerned is as under:

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम् ।

अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छाप्तुं धनञ्जय ॥

(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 Rāghavendratīrtha writes: “स्थिरं यथा तथा मयि चित्तम् समाधातुं न शक्नोषि। ततो मनःसमाधानाशक्तत्वात्पुनः पुनः प्रत्याहारेण भगवन्मनःसमाधानरूपाभ्यासलक्षणोपायेन मामाप्तुमिच्छ ॥” “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 ‘मत्परः’ 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 आसीत् मत्परः.” The Advaitins are said to be guilty of distorting the meaning of a single word, मत्परः whereas the Dvaitins seem to be happily doctoring the meaning of the entire verse! Again, where does “अहमेव” follow from मत्परः? In fact, their interpretation of the words ‘आत्मनि’ and ‘आत्मना’ in the “प्रजहाति यदा कामान्...” verse as ‘परमात्मनि’ and ‘परमात्मना’ is contentious. After all, the *jivātman* 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 स्थितप्रज्ञलक्षणम्. 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 *Gītā*, and the Dvaitins seem to contradict their own view in their exposition of the verses found elsewhere in the *Gītā*.

### **Interpretation of Madhusūdana Sarasvati, a post-Bhagavatpāda advaitic commentator**

Let us now see how Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvati interprets the “तानि सर्वाणि” verse in his commentary ‘Gudhaarthadipikaa’. A portion of his commentary pertaining to the word ‘matparaḥ’ is as follows: प्रमाथीनां कथं स्ववशिकरणमिति चेत्तत्राह - मत्पर इति - अहं सर्वात्मा वासुदेव एव पर उत्कृष्ट उपादेयः यस्य स मत्परः । एकान्तमद्भक्तः इत्यर्थः । तथा चोक्तम् ‘न वासुदेवभक्तानामशुभं विद्यते क्वचित्’ इति । यथा हि लोके बलवन्तं राजानमाश्रित्य दस्यवो निगृह्यन्ते राजाश्रितोऽयमिति ज्ञात्वा च ते स्वयमेव तद्वश्या भवन्ति, तथैव भगवन्तं सर्वान्तर्यामिणमाश्रित्य तत्प्रभावेनैव दुष्टानीन्द्रियाणि निग्राह्याणि । पुनश्च भगवदाश्रितोऽयमिति मत्वा तानि तद्वशान्येव भवन्तीति भावः ।

(If it is asked “How are the turbulent ones, (the organs) to be brought under ones’ control?”, to that He says, “matparaḥ”, 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 Sarasvatī interprets the verse as, “Having controlled the senses by being supremely devoted, one should remain concentrated....”. Thus, Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī finds utility for the word ‘मत्परः’ 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 ‘मत्परः’ is useful to answer Arjuna’s unasked question as to how the turbulent sense organs should be brought under one’s control. Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says in His introduction to the verse, “यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय...” as under: तत्र प्रज्ञास्थैर्ये बाह्येन्द्रियनिग्रहो मनोनिग्रहश्चासाधारणं कारणं तदुभयाभावे प्रज्ञानाशदर्शनादिति वक्तुम् बाह्येन्द्रियनिग्रहाभावे प्रथमं दोषमाह । (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 ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।

इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥

(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 Sarasvatī gives an example; He says: प्रसिद्धो ह्ययमर्थो लोके यथा प्रमाथिनो दस्यवः प्रसभमेव धनिनं धनरक्षकं चभिभूय तयोः पश्यतोरेव धनं हरन्ति तथेन्द्रियाण्यपि विषयसंनिधाने मनो हरन्तीति ॥ (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 तर्हि तत्र कः 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 ‘मत्परः’ 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 :

निगृहीतबाह्येन्द्रियस्यापि युक्तत्वाभावे सर्वानर्थप्राप्तिमाह ।

(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 śloka:

ध्यायतो विषयान् पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।

सङ्गात् संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥ २.६२

क्रोधाद्भवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।

स्मृतिभ्रमश्चाद्बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥ 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, “यस्मादेवं मनसो निग्रहाभावे निगृहीतबाह्येन्द्रियस्यापि परमानर्थप्राप्तिः तस्मान्महता प्रयत्नेन मनो निगृहीयात्। अतो युक्तमुक्तं ‘तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत्...’ ” (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 “एकान्तभक्ति” or absolute devotion while he should control his mind by himself. This is because, in His interpretation, the Lord has talked about “मत्परत्व” for controlling the senses only.

## A critical analysis of the interpretation of Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī

If control of the senses alone is achieved through 'मत्परत्व' 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 'मत्परः' to play a role in mind-control also? Unfortunately, the wording of the verse is such that Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī cannot link the word 'मत्परः' for the concentration portion also (i.e. युक्त आसीत्... 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 सर्वाणि" (all of them, the indriyas) and "युक्त आसीत्". Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī can take the word-order either as "मत्परः (सन) तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् ।" or "तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य मत्परस्सन् युक्त आसीत्: ।" or "मत्परः (सन) युक्तः (सन) तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य आसीत् ।" 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 'मत्परत्व' can help the sādḥaka 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 "मत्परत्व" is interpreted as "एकान्तभक्ति" towards God for controlling merely one's senses.

Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī goes a step further; In his introduction to verse 2.64 (रागद्वेषवियुक्तैः...) he says, "मनसि निगृहीते तु बाह्येन्द्रियनिग्रहाभावेऽपि न दोष इति वदन् किम् ब्रजेतेत्यस्योत्तरमाहाष्टभिः..." (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 मत्परत्व / एकान्तभक्ति in a devotee to control his senses? So much for the utility of एकान्तभक्ति! 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 sthitaprajña 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 'समाधिस्थस्य'. Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī further says that the following śloka is the Lord's answer to this question:

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्पार्थ मनोगतान् ।

आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥

(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 चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः ।

इन्द्रियाणिन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ (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.)

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।

रसवर्जं रसोप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा 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.)

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।

इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं 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.)

तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः ।

वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ 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.)

ध्यायतो विषयान् पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।

सङ्गात् संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥ 2.62

क्रोधाद्भवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।

स्मृतिभ्रमश्चाद्बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥ 2.63

(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:

“प्रारब्धकर्मवशाद्बुत्थानेन विक्षिप्तानीन्द्रियाणि पुनरुपसंहृत्य समाध्यर्थमेव स्थितप्रज्ञस्योपवेशनमिति दर्शयितुमाह” (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 samādhista to control his indriyas and that he requires मत्परत्वं (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 *sāṃkhya-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 Sarasvatī's interpretation of the 'मत्परत्वं' as 'एकान्तभक्ति' 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 'मत्परः' by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, Dvaitins and an independent post-Bhagavatpāda advaitin, let us now take stock of the situation. As the compound word 'मत्परः' occurring in the verse concerned should have some utility, the commentators whose viewpoints we saw, have tried to associate 'मत्परत्वं' 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 'मत्परः', cannot denote focus on Bhagavān by a person



engaged in *ātma-darśana* or *nididhyāsana* 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 मत्परः**

As was seen at the beginning of this essay, Bhagavatpāda interprets 'मत्परः' as "अहं वासुदेवः सर्वप्रत्यगात्मा परः यस्य स मत्परः 'न अन्योहं तस्मात्' इति आसीत् इत्यर्थः" We also saw that the additional advaitic interpretation of Bhagavatpāda "न अन्योहं तस्मात्' इति आसीत् इत्यर्थः" 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 'मत्परः' that Bhagavatpāda has provided the additional advaitic remark. For instance, in 18.57, the Lord says: "चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः ।" and the bhāṣya for the word 'मत्परः' of this verse is: "अहं वासुदेवः परः यस्य तव सः त्वं मत्परः." 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 *ślokas* 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 *nididhyāsana*. The context of 2.61, however, is

jñāna-niṣṭhā which is about *nididhyāsana* or focus on the Self with the conviction born out of the scriptural teachings like “तत्त्वमसि”, (Thou art That) that *Īsvara* and one’s own *Ātman*, in their intrinsic nature, are one and the same. Hence, the additional comment of Bhagavatpāda “‘न अन्योऽहं तस्मात्’ इति आसीत्” is highly pertinent to the context.

### Practical considerations

Now let us see the practical considerations that would have warranted Bhagavatpāda to interpret the word ‘मत्परः’ as “ ‘न अन्योऽहं तस्मात्’ इति आसीत्”. When Bhagavān advises Arjuna with the words, “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः”, 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, “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य”. The next step is about keeping the mind integrated which is explicit in the words “युक्तः”. Now arises the question “कथं आसीत्?” – 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 ‘मयि’ in the verse!

In the case of the Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the Dvaitins, even though there is no specific word such as ‘मयि’ 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 *samādhistaḥ*. In fact, his set of questions about स्थितप्रज्ञत्वं itself stemmed from the very words of what Bhagavān spoke in the following verse:

श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला ।

समाधावचला बुद्धिस्तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि ॥ (2.53)

("When your mind that has become bewildered by hearing will become unshakeable and steadfast in the Self then you will attain *samādhi* characterised by the wisdom of discrimination.") Thus it is unambiguous to Him that the context is establishment in the Self. In fact, even according to the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, the context is 'आत्मावलोकनम्' (vide Rāmānujācārya's commentary on this verse). The case is not different in the case of the Dvaitins too. As far as an advaitin is concerned, Bhagavān need not have to repeat that the object of focus is the *Ātman* when he instructs the steps involved in one's journey from knowledge (प्रज्ञा) to stable knowledge (स्थितप्रज्ञा) in verse 2.61. In fact, the absence of any word like 'मयि' or 'ईश्वरे' or 'भगवति' in the verse makes it even clearer that the focus on the *Ātman* is the context.

### Teaching for nididhyāsana

The answer to the question "कथं आसीत्" is given succinctly by Bhagavān as 'मत्परः'. By uttering 'मत्परः आसीत्'. He teaches Arjuna with what *prajñā* or knowledge, based on which the *sādhaka* should engage in the *nididhyāsana* 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 *nididhyāsana* and the realization of which alone can bring about liberation. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says that the *Ātman* should be contemplated upon according to the scriptures only. "मनसैवानुद्रष्टव्यम्" (4.4.19) (Brahman should be realized in accordance with the teaching of the *Guru* through the mind alone.) The

*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* teaches: “आत्मानमनुविद्य मनुते” (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 *prāṇas* 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 ‘मत्परः’ uttered by Bhagavān is representative of the Upaniṣadic wisdom while Bhagavān Himself is the *Sadguru*.

Now let us see why Bhagavatpāda’s exposition of ‘मत्परः’ alone is what is appropriate in view of practical considerations. Bhagavatpāda has expanded ‘मत्परः’ as “न अन्योऽहं तस्मात् इति आसीत्”. The word ‘मत्परः’ when translated literally, means “the one who deems Me, Vāsudeva, as the Supreme.” Now, if this much alone were the import of the word मत्परः 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 बुद्धिः”, 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 *upāśya*), who is deemed as different from the meditator (the *upāśaka*). 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 ‘मत्परः’ 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 ‘मत्परः’ is understood as an instruction from the Lord which requires the sādḥaka 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, *nididhyāsana* 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 अन्योऽहं तस्मात् इति आसीत्” is the only way out. Thus, the interpretation of मत्परः by Bhagavatpāda not only fits the context perfectly but also addresses the practical requirements of *nididhyāsana*.

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

Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation of ‘मत्परः’ may be based on practical considerations for *nididhyāsana* as far as 2.61 is concerned, but just as the Viśiṣṭādvaitins’ recommendation of meditation on the divine form of Bhagavān for इन्द्रिय-राग-जयं was fraught with conflicts with the Lord’s words “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य” and “परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते”, Bhagavatpāda’s interpretation may also be conflicting with the import of the other verses prior to and that follow the “तानि सर्वाणि...” verse. For example, the very first verse (2.55) in the set of advices of Bhagavān describes the man of steady wisdom as: “आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः” (one who is satisfied in the Self alone by his mind – आत्मनि एव आत्मना मनसा - Rāmānujācārya.) Thus, the focus is only on the individual self and not on the Self that is non-different from *Īśvara* 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 सर्वाणि..." verse, especially, the verse starting with "प्रजहाति 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:- "रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते". If in the context of the "प्रजहाति 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 *sākṣātkāra* 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 *sākṣātkāra* of 'परं' the Supreme Brahman and the going away of one's taste for the senses on such *sākṣātkāra* happen? Hence, if the Lord's statement "रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते" has to be meaningful, "मत्परत्व" 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 brāhmī-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*, “आत्मन्येवात्मनि तुष्टः” 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: आत्मनि एव प्रत्यगात्मस्वरूपे एव ... परमार्थदर्शनामृतरसलाभेन अन्यस्मात् अलंप्रत्ययवान् स्थितप्रज्ञः ...” (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 ‘मत्परः’ does not contradict the words ‘आत्मन्येवात्मनि’ or any other verse in the set of verses concerned; on the other hand, His interpretation of ‘मत्परः’ 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, स्थितप्रज्ञः, as per the very first definition of Bhagavān is one who remains satisfied in the Self alone by himself – “आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः”. What does this statement ‘He remains satisfied in the Self alone by himself’ mean? Bhagavatpāda clarifies: “आत्मन्येव प्रत्यगात्मस्वरूप एव आत्मना, स्वेनैव, बाह्यलाभनिरपेक्षः तुष्टः परमार्थदर्शनामृतरसलाभेनान्यस्मादलं प्रत्ययवान् स्थितप्रज्ञः” ( 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 “मत्परत्वेन आसनं” 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 ‘स्थितप्रज्ञः’ as ‘आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः’ (which means non-dependence on anything else for one’s satisfaction) would not be appropriate. The sādḥaka 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 'मत्परः' would certainly make 'आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः' meaningless. Thus, Bhagavatpāda's interpretation is strictly in accordance with the teaching of the Lord prior to and after the "तानि सर्वाणि..." 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 परं 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 'परः' purely in comparison with the objects! Perhaps they had realized that if they interpreted 'परं' as Brahman they would have helped the cause of the advaitins and non-duality. We saw earlier that the Sri Vedāntadeśika's interpretation of परं as jīva gave rise to many a problem. In lighter vein, it could be said that the Advaitins would not mind this dilution of 'परं' in the context of 'मत्परः'. This is because, the resultant meaning would only be "अहं वासुदेवः जीवः 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 brāhmī-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 सर्वाणि" 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 'मत्परः' 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 'मत्परः' should be split. Actually, it is not as if the compound 'मत्परः' should be interpreted only according to the first option given by Sri Veeraraghavachariyar - "मत्परशब्दो हि अहं परो यस्मात्". As we saw earlier, Bhagavatpāda expands 'मत्परः' as, "मत्परः अहं वासुदेवः सर्वप्रत्यगात्मा परः यस्य स मत्परः". As far as the *vigraha-vākya* of the compound 'मत्परः', Bhagavatpāda's expansion is quite in order. The split could very well employ *ṣaṣṭhī-vibhakti* as done by Bhagavatpāda. 'मत्परः' is a common *bahuvrīhi* compound of the type 'द्विपदबहुव्रीहिः'. It is governed by the Pāṇinī sūtra "अनेकमन्यपदार्थे (2.2.024)." The example given in the *Siddhānta-kaumudī* is "पीताम्बरः हरिः" where the *vigraha-vākya* of the compound पीताम्बरः is पीतम् अंबरं यस्य सः (He whose garment is yellow.) Thus, Bhagavatpāda's interpretation "मत्परः अहं वासुदेवः परः यस्य स मत्परः" 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 *Gītā*, Rāmānujācārya himself has expanded a similar compound 'मत्परमः' (11.55) using *ṣaṣṭhī-vibhakti* as, "अहमेव परमोद्देश्यः यस्य स मत्परमः" (He who looks upon Me as the highest ...is *matparamaḥ*). Madhvācārya uses a similar *vigraha-vākya* for the word 'मत्परः' of 2.61 itself:- "अहमेव परः सर्वस्मादुत्कृष्टो यस्य स मत्परः" 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 - “मत्परशब्दो हि अहं परो यस्मात्” is also grammatically valid, it is contextually less meaningful. What is the earthly use of ‘मत्परः’ 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 Viśiṣṭādvaitins!

As we saw in the early part of this write-up, the second interpretation of Uttamur Sri Veeraraghavachariar of the word ‘मत्परः’ goes like this: “मदुद्देश्यकः मदासक्त इत्येवमर्थेऽप्यभेदप्रतीतेर्नैवावकाशः। (Even in the meanings like ‘मदुद्देश्यकः’ ‘मदासक्तः’ (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 ‘मदुद्देश्यकः’ would be split as “अहं उद्देश्यः यस्य सः” and ‘मदासक्तः’ would be expanded as, “मयि आसक्तिः यस्य सः”. Both these meanings could be derived from the word ‘मत्परः’ and there is no direct non-dualistic sense in both of them. For that matter, we do not deny that the compound word ‘मत्परः’ even when expanded as “अहं परः 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 ‘मत्परः’, 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 sādḥaka who has known the Self but is yet to get established in it). Hence the interpretation

of Sri Veeraraghavachariar under consideration is straightaway 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 bahuvrīhi 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 तस्मात्” इति आसीत् . Actually, it is only a logical consequence of accepting *Īśvara* as the innermost Self of all. Since the Lord is the ‘सर्वप्रत्यगात्मा’ or the inmost Self of all, “न अन्योऽहं तस्मात्” – “I the self, am non-different from *Īśvara*” 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.

### **Bhagavatpada 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 ‘मत्परः’ 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 *Īśvara* and the indwelling-self (*jīva*) in the *Gītā*. 1)“अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः।”(10.20) (O Guḍākeśa, I am the Self residing in the hearts of all beings.) 2)“क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु 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 *Īśvara*, the Supreme and also some that point to everything being rooted in one Self. a)“भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम्। सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति॥”(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 पश्यति सर्वत्र ...”(6.30) (One who sees Me in everything ... c)“सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः।”(6.31) (That *yogin* being established in unity adores me as existing in all things...) d)“अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् । जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते 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)“बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान् मां प्रपद्यते । वासुदेवस्सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥”(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)“उपद्रष्टाऽनुमन्ता कर्ता भोक्ता महेश्वरः। परमात्मेति चाप्युक्तो देहेऽस्मिन् पुरुषः 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 भूतपृथग्भावमेकस्थमनुपश्यति । तत एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते 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) “ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः ...”(15.7) (It is verily a portion of

mine which becoming the eternal individual soul in the region of living beings...) i)“ईश्वरस्सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति । भ्रामयन् सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥”(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 त्वात्मैव मे मतम् । आस्थितः स हि युक्तात्मा मामेवानुत्तमां गतिम्” (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 sādḥaka 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 ‘मत्परः’ 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 establishes that the *Ātman* is just one, be it the Jivā’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 त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः ।

न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः 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, “एवं च सर्वे वयमतोऽस्माद्देहविनाशात्परं उत्तरकालेऽपि त्रिष्वपि कालेषु नित्या आत्मस्वरूपेण।” (“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 Viśiṣṭādvaitins and the Dvaitins have interpreted this verse differently is not surprising. Incidentally, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins’ 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 *Gīta* 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: “देहभेदानुवृत्त्या बहुवचनं नात्मभेदाभिप्रायेण।” (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 विद्यते भावो...), a clincher, Bhagavān teaches Arjuna the मिथ्यात्व or falsity of everything other than the one substratum, the *Ātman*. Bhagavān shows the falsity of the beings in many verses. (Eg. अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि ... (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. (तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हसि । - 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 मोहकलिलम्...” (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 sādḥaka will attain the *yoga* of supreme reality. This, indeed, characterizes fruitful *nididhyāsana*. Bhagavān points out this in the verse “श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते... योगमवाप्स्यसि” । (2.53)

Thus, there is enough and more ammunition in the second chapter of the *Gītā* – that too prior to the “तानि सर्वाणि...” 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 ‘मत्परः’ 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 “मत्परः’. In the compound-word ‘मत्परः’ 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 *sarvapratyagātmā*, the inmost Self of all. That Self is now equated with “परम्” or the Supreme Self in the compound ‘मत्परः’. 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 त्वेवाहं जातु नासम्...”. In the light of what we have seen up to now, the interpretation of ‘मत्परः’ 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 “मत्परः” 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 *sākṣātkara* 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 “तानि सर्वाणि...” verse itself that He is the ‘*sarvapratyagātman*’ 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:

न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा ।

इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न 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 *pratyagātman* 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 *pratyagātman* 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: “एवम् अन्यः

अपि मां आत्मत्वेन अभिजानाति “‘नाहं कर्ता न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा’ इति सः कर्मभिर्न बध्यते तस्यापि न देहाद्यारम्भकाणि कर्माणि भवन्ति इत्यर्थः॥” (Any one else too who knows Me thus as his own Self and knows, “I am not a doer. I have no hankering for the results of actions, he does not become bound by actions.) Thus, it is not a lacuna that Bhagavān has not specifically declared in the “तानि सर्वाणि...” verse that He is the *sarvapratyagātman!*

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 ‘मत्परः’? The answer is simple. As we already saw in the “तानि सर्वाणि...” verse, Bhagavān compassionately summarises the whole procedure for *nididhyāsana* which is supposed to take one from ‘प्रज्ञा’ to ‘स्थितप्रज्ञा’. The first step is ‘इन्द्रिय-संयमनम्’। The next step is ‘चित्त-एकग्र्यं’. The ‘प्रज्ञा’ with which one engages in *nididhyāsana* is advised in ‘मत्परः’ 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 ‘मत्परः’?**

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 ‘मत्परः’ to instruct non-difference between the *Ātman*, *Īśvara* and Brahman? Had He done so, He would have possibly averted varying interpretations by followers of different schools.” The answer is that ‘मत्परः’ 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 ब्रह्मास्मि” (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 mahāvākya, “तत्त्वमसि”, in lieu of ‘मत्परः’, 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 “अतत्त्वमसि” or “That Ātman, thou art not.” Had Bhagavān used the mahāvākya “अहं ब्रह्मास्मि” Rāmānujācārya would have interpreted it as “मदन्यत् ब्रह्म नास्ति” (There is no Brahman other than Me) and Madhvācārya would have interpreted it as “अहेयं ब्रह्मास्मि” (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 mahāvākya per se, would have been spared by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins or the Dvaitins.

### Equation of Ātman, Īśvara and Brahman in one shot

On the other hand, the compound ‘मत्परः’ 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 *Gītā* is none other than Bhagavān Vāsudeva, who is *Īśvara*, 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 ‘मत्परः’ 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, Īśvara 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 Brhadāraṇyaka Upanishad, condemning the view of those who deem the Jīva,

*Īsvara* and Brahman to be different.: “अविद्याकामकर्मविशिष्टकार्यकरणोपाधिरात्मा संसारी जीवः उच्यते । नित्यनिरतिशयज्ञानशक्त्युपाधिरात्मा-ऽन्तर्यामीश्वरः उच्यते । स एव निरुपाधिः केवलः शुद्धः स्वेन स्वभावेनाक्षरं पर उच्यते । ... तथा “एष ते आत्मा”(Br. Up. 3.4.1,2), “एष सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा”(Mu. Up.2.1.4), “एष सर्वेषु गूढः”(Ka. Up. 3.12) “तत्त्वमसि” (Ch. Up. 6.8.7), “अहमेवेदं सर्वम्” (Ch. Up. 7.25.1), “आत्मैवेदं सर्व”, (Br. Up. 3.5.1) “नान्योऽतोऽस्ति द्रष्टा” (3.7.23) इत्यादिश्रुतयो न विरुद्ध्यन्ते । कल्पनान्तरेष्वेताः श्रुतयः न गच्छन्ति। तस्मादुपाधिभेदेनैवैषां भेदो नान्यथैकमेवाद्वितीयमित्यवधारणात्सर्वोपनिषत्सु ।”(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 *Īsvara*. 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, “मत्परः” as interpreted by Bhagavatpāda is highly significant.

### Unity of Jiva, *Īsvara* and Brahman declared in the *Gītā*

Here we could take up an objection: “Has Bhagavān explicitly indicated the unity of *jīva*, *Īsvara* and Brahman anywhere in the *Gītā*?”. The answer is: Yes, He has - not in just one, but in many verses. For instance, consider the following verse: “उपद्रष्टा अनुमन्ता कर्ता भोक्ता महेश्वरः । परमात्मेति चाप्युक्तः देहेस्मिन् पुरुषः परः।(13.22)” (He who is the witness, the Permitter, the Sustainer, the Experiencer, 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:

एको देवः सर्वभूतेषु गूढः सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ।

कर्माध्यक्षः सर्वभूताधिवासः साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च ॥ (6.11)

(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 मत्परः' with the Upaniṣadic teaching "आत्मेत्येवोपासीत"

The sūtra-type advice of the Lord in the form of 'मत्परः' reminds us of the vidyā-sūtra of the Brhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad –“आत्मेत्येवोपासीत” - The Self alone is to be meditated upon. The import of the upaniṣadic word 'उपासीत' is discernible from the words of the *Gītā*: 'युक्त आसीत - समाहितस्सन् आसीत'. The Upaniṣadic instruction 'आत्मेत्येव' could be linked with 'मत्परः'. Just like the vidyā-sūtra, 'मत्परत्व' 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 upasanā, 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) “नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन” (There is no diversity at all here) or, in this case, मत्परत्व (the wisdom, “I am non-different from Vāsudeva, the Supreme”). The sādḥaka 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 “आत्मेत्येवोपासीत” is nicely brought about by Bhagavān in this verse. Similar to the Upaniṣadic advice “आत्मेत्येवोपासीत”, in “आसीत मत्परः” too, the wording is such that the *Ātman* is not objectified as an (उपास्य) object of meditation. Instead of saying “आत्मानमुपासीत”

the Upaniṣad said “आत्मेत्येवोपासीत”. Similarly, in the *Gītā* too we do not find Bhagavān saying “मां परत्वेन उपासीत”; instead He only uttered the compound word “मत्परः”.

Here a question may arise as to why Bhagavān has stopped with merely saying “आसीत मत्परः” and has not instructed any further steps such as continuous remembrance of the non-dual Truth for attaining स्थितप्रज्ञत्वं; after all, the sādḥaka’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 Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad passage “आत्मेत्येवोपासीत”(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, “आत्मेत्येवोपासीत”, Bhagavatpāda writes, “यदैवाऽऽत्मप्रतिपादकवाक्यश्रवणादात्मविषयं विज्ञानमुत्पद्यते तदैव तदुत्पद्यमानं तद्विषयं मिथ्याज्ञानं निवर्तयदेवोत्पद्यते ।... तस्मादनात्मविज्ञानस्मृतीनामात्मावगतेरभावप्राप्तिः। पारिशेष्यादात्मैकत्वविज्ञानस्मृति-सन्तरेरर्थत एव भावान्न विधेयत्वम्” (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 मत्परः” also. When a sādḥaka 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 *anātmā-vāsanā* creeping in; in course of time, Brahman-Ātman is realized in all Its glory. Thus, all that the *sādḥaka* needs to just follow the instruction “आसीत मत्परः” and do nothing else!

**Comparison of the words “एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः” with a śruti passage**

Another Upaniṣadic passage that comes to our mind at this juncture is the following: “तस्मादेवंवित् शान्तो दान्त उपरतस्तिक्षुः समाहितो भूत्वात्मन्येवात्मानं पश्यति । सर्वमात्मानं पश्यति । । ...विपापो विरजोऽविचिकित्सो ब्राह्मणो भवति... एष ब्रह्मलोकः ...।”(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 भूत्वा” which are interpreted by Bhagavatpāda as “इन्द्रियान्तःकरणचलनरूपाद्यावृत्त्यैकाग्ररूपेण समाहितो भूत्वा” (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 “मत्परः”-, “अहं वासुदेवः सर्वप्रत्यगात्मा” Not only this, the last portion of the mantra that we read just now - “विपापो विरजोऽविचिकित्सो ब्राह्मणो भवति... एष ब्रह्मलोकः” (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, “एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति” – (2.72) (This steadfastness is the Brāhmī-sthitiḥ O Pārtha, one does not become deluded after attaining this.) Thus, Bhagavatpāda’s advaitic interpretation of the compound word “मत्परः” 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 'मत्परः' in the light of Bhagavatpāda's bhāṣya let us now turn to the significance of Bhagavatpāda's words in the bhāṣya. Bhagavatpāda writes, "मत्परः अहं वासुदेवः सर्वप्रत्यगात्मा परः यस्य स मत्परः 'न अन्योऽहं तस्मात्' इति आसीत् 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 'मत्परः'. 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 Mokṣadharmā of the Mahābhārata, the Lord Himself says:

छादयामि जगद्विश्वं भूत्या सूर्य इवांशुभिः ।

सर्वभूताधिवासश्च वासुदेवस्ततः स्मृतः ॥ (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.)

वसनात्सर्वभूतानां वसुत्वाद्देवयोनितः

वासुदेवस्ततो ज्ञेयो योगिभिस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥ (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:

सर्वत्रासौ समस्तं च वसत्यत्रेति वै यतः ।

ततः स वासुदेवेति विद्वद्भिः परिपठ्यते ॥ (1.2.12)

(As He resides everywhere, and in all things, He is termed Vāsudeva by the wise.)

सर्वाणि तत्र भूतानि वसन्ति परमात्मनि ।

भूतेषु च सर्वात्मा वासुदेवस्ततः स्मृतः ॥ (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.)

सकलमिदमहं च वासुदेवः ... (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 *Gīta* itself: “वासुदेवस्सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥” (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 ‘मत्परः’ 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 ‘इन्द्रियवशीकरणम्’ for sākṣātkāra and ‘रसनिवृत्ति’ when sākṣātkāra is attained involves a vicious circle and so ‘मत्परत्व’, 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 ‘मत्परः’ as the remedy.

When we look at the so called ‘vicious circle’ we find that the situation in the *Gītā* 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 *sāṃkhya-yogin*, by the repeated practice of *doṣa-dṛṣṭi* 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 *sakṣātkara* 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 in this regard: “एवम् आसीनस्य यतेः वशे हि यस्य इन्द्रियाणि वर्तन्ते अभ्यासबलात् तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥” (The wisdom of the one, the samnyāsin, 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”, Bhagavatpādā 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-dṛṣṭi* (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.

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः ।

आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांति तिक्षस्व भारत ॥ (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 विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।

उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥ (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:

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हसि ॥ (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: “अन्तवन्त इमे देहाः” (2.18) (The bodies have an end.) Thus, अनित्यत्वं and मिथ्यात्वं of the bodies have already been spoken of by Bhagavān. Hence, Bhagavatpāda has every reason to believe that the

instruction “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य...” can be implemented by one who has strong dispassion, prior to sitting in *nididhyāsana*.

Let us see what the *Kātha Upaniṣad* teaches regarding the control of senses:

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।

अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ॥ (2.3.11)

(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: “अप्रमत्तः प्रमादवर्जितः समाधानं प्रति नित्यं यत्नवांस्तदा तस्मिन्काले यदैव प्रवृत्तयोगो भवतीति सामर्थ्यादवगम्यते। न हि बुद्ध्यादिचेष्टाभावे प्रमादसम्भवोऽस्ति । तस्मात्प्रागेव बुद्ध्यादिचेष्टोपरमादप्रमादो विधीयते । ...अतः अपायपरिहारायाप्रमादः कर्तव्य इत्यभिप्रायः” (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 Upaniṣad 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:

पराचः कामाननुयन्ति बालास्ते मृत्योर्यन्ति विततस्य पाशम् ।

अथ धीरा अमृतत्वं विदित्वा ध्रुवमध्रुवेष्विह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥ (2.1.3)

(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.)

इन्द्रियाणां पृथक्भावमुदयास्तमयौ च यत् ।

पृथगुत्पद्यमानानां मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ (2.3.8)

(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 'इन्द्रिय-वशीकार' (indicated in "वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥")? Bhagavatpāda says that it is accomplished by practice. His words are: "एवं आसीनस्य यतेः वशे हि यस्य इन्द्रियाणि वर्तन्ते अभ्यासबलात् तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥"(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 नाहमन्योऽस्मीति प्रागुक्तानुसंधानस्यादरेण नैरन्तर्यदीर्घकालानुष्ठानसामर्थ्यादित्यर्थः । अथवा विषयेषु दोषदर्शनाभ्याससामर्थ्यादिन्द्रियाणि संयतानीत्यर्थः ।"(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 "अभ्यासबलात्" is very important. Actually, the first option suggested by Sri Anandagiri, 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, “अभ्यासबलात्”, has the support of Bhagavān. We have already seen that the combination of dispassion and practice (अभ्यास and वैराग्य) has been prescribed by Bhagavān Himself in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter in response to Arjuna’s statement about the fickleness of the mind.

असंशयं महबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।

अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥ (6.35)

(The blessed Lord said: O mighty-armed one, undoubtedly the mind is untraceable and restless. But O son of Kuntī, it is brought under control through practice and detachment.)

Now let us consider another pertinent verse:

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।

ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ (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: “तत्रैवं आत्मसंस्थं मनः कर्तुं प्रवृत्तो योगी यत इति। यतो यतो यस्माद्यस्माच्छब्दादेर्निमित्तान्निश्चरति निर्गच्छति स्वाभाविकदोषात् मनश्चञ्चलमत्यर्थं चलमत एवास्थितम् । ततस्तस्मात्तस्माच्छब्दादेर्निमित्तान्निग्रह्य तत्तन्निमित्तयाथात्म्यनिरूपणेनाभावीकृत्य वैराग्यभावनया चैतन्मनः आत्मन्येव नयेत् आत्मवश्यातामापादयेत् । एवं योगाभ्यासबलात् योगिनः आत्मन्येव प्रशाम्यति मनः ॥

(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 'नित्यानित्यविवेक' and that the objects are unreal) to restrain the senses (as in "तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य") and the power of repeated practice of *yoga* to completely conquer the senses ( as in "वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि") as the **two necessary and sufficient tools to control the mind (for controlling the senses )** in His commentary on the "तानि सर्वाणि..." 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 "प्रजहाति यदा..." verse, they cite the *yoga-sūtra*, "दृष्टानुश्रविकविषयवितृष्णस्य वशीकारसंज्ञा वैराग्यम् । (1.16). It is only a few sūtras before this one that we find the prescription of "अभ्यास" 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 *sākṣātkāra*.

### **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 *vṛttis* of the mind. "अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः" (1.12) (The five kinds of mental modifications are restrained by practice and by dispassion.) The *abhyāsa* referred to here is specified as follows: "तत्र स्थितौ यत्नोऽभ्यासः ।" (1.13) (Among the two means, practice is the persistent effort to secure restraint. "स तु

दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारासेवितो दृढभूमिः“ (1.14) (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: “दृष्टानुश्रविकविषयदोषदर्शी विरक्तः पुरुषदर्शनाभ्यासात् तच्छुद्धिप्रविवेकाप्यायितबुद्धिर्गुणेभ्यो व्यक्ताव्यक्तधर्मकेभ्यः विरक्त 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-vaiśāradī*, on the *Yoga-sūtra-bhāṣya* explains the compound-word, “पुरुषदर्शनाभ्यासात्” of the *bhāṣya* as follows – “आगमानुमानाचार्योपदेशसमधिगतस्य पुरुषस्य यदर्शनं तस्याभ्यासः पौनःपुन्येन 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 “अभ्यासबलात्” 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 ‘मत्परः’ as indicative of meditation on Bhagavān’s form for conquering one’s senses like other commentators – the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, the Dvaitins and even Sri Madhusūdana Sarasvatī - 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 *sākṣātkāra*. Let us see one such instance from His commentary on verse 39 of the Second Chapter of the *Gītā*: “कर्मबन्धं ... प्रहास्यसि ईश्वरप्रसादनिमित्तज्ञानप्राप्त्या एव इत्यभिप्रायः” – (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 *Gītā*, Bhagavatpāda writes: “अभ्युदयार्थोऽपि यः प्रवृत्तिलक्षणो धर्मः वर्णान् आश्रमांश्च उद्दिश्य



विहितः सः देवतादिस्थानप्राप्तिहेतुरपि सन् ईश्वरार्पणबुद्ध्या अनुष्ठीयमानः सत्त्वशुद्धये भवति फलाभिसन्धिवर्जितः। शुद्धसत्त्वस्य च ज्ञाननिष्ठायोग्यताप्राप्तिद्वारेण ज्ञानोत्पत्तिहेतुत्वेन च निःश्रेयसहेतुत्वमपि प्रतिपद्यते ।” (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: यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम्। स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति 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 ‘सिद्धिं’ of the verse as “ज्ञानयोगनिष्ठा लक्षणां सिद्धिं” (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. “सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे । समासेनैव कौन्तेय निष्ठा 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: “सिद्धिं प्राप्तः स्वकर्मणा ईश्वरं समभ्यर्च्य तत्प्रसादजां कायेन्द्रियाणां ज्ञाननिष्ठायोग्यतालक्षणां सिद्धिं प्राप्तः ...यथा येन प्रकारेण ज्ञाननिष्ठारूपेण ब्रह्म परमात्मानं आप्नोति, तथा तं प्रकारं ज्ञाननिष्ठाप्राप्तिक्रमं मे मम वचनात् निबोध त्वं निश्चयेन अवधारय इत्येतत् ।” (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 Ívara, in the form of fitness of the body and organs for steadfastness in Knowledge - ... that process in the form of steadfastness in Knowledge (ज्ञाननिष्ठा), by which he attains Brahman, the Supreme.) Thus, Bhagavatpāda understands from the Lord Himself the

sequence – *karma-yoga*, *sattva-śuddhi*, *īśvara-praśādanita-jñāna-prāptiḥ-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 *saguṇa* 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 *sāmādhi* on Bhagavān. This point has already been stated in our discussion.

Bhagavān says:

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः ।

अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त 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 सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि ईश्वरे संन्यस्य मत्पराः अहं परो येषां ते मत्पराः सन्तः अनन्येनैव अविद्यमानं अन्यत् आलम्बनं विश्वरूपं देवं आत्मानं मुक्त्वा यस्य सोऽनन्यः तेन अनन्येनैव । केन? योगेन समाधिना मां ध्यायन्तः चिन्तयन्तः” (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 *saguṇa-īśvara* prior to his embarking on *nirguṇa-nididhyāsana*. And therefore, the point that Sri Uttamur Veeraraghavachariyar made, i.e, it is easier to concentrate on the divyamaṅgalavighraha 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 “आसीत् मत्परः”

Finally, we get a question as to why Bhagavān chose to speak so cryptically – He merely said “मत्परः” - 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 *Sāṅkhya-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, ‘मत्परः’, 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 ‘मत्परः’ 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 “मत्परः” to that of the upaniṣadic mantra “आत्मेत्येवोपासीत्”. As for the latter, Bhagavatpāda, in His commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-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 “मत्परः आसीत्” being sūtra-like is not a defect; on the contrary it is wonderful and is highly pregnant with import.

It is said about a ṣūtra:

अल्पाक्षरमसन्दिग्धं सारवद्विश्वतोमुखम् ।

अस्तोभमनवद्यच्च सूत्रं सूत्रविदो विदुः ॥

(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 “आसीत् मत्परः” of the Lord? In fact, the compound word ‘मत्परः’ has less number of letters when compared to that of even the compact *mahāvākya*, ‘तत्त्वमसि”. As for unambiguousness, no one has differed in the basic meaning of the word “मत्परः” and so, it can be said to be unambiguous. **Even the other words of the verse are equally so. “तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य” denotes control of the senses, ‘युक्तः’ indicates control of the mind, ‘मत्परः’ points to the wisdom born of the scriptures and the *Guru* and ‘आसीत्’ 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, ‘मत्परः’, are unambiguous in their import.

The compound-word ‘मत्परः’ is ‘सारवत्’ too because it is profound and powerful; it teaches the unity of *jīva*, *Īśvara* and Brahman, the entire purport of the Upaniṣads. The wording cannot be bettered. It is multifaceted because Bhagavān Himself shows that the word ‘मत्परः’ 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 *Gītā*, “चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः” (18.57)

Bhagavatpāda explains 'मत्परः' merely as: "अहं वासुदेवः 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 'मत्परः' 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 *nididhyāsana* 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 *sākṣātkāra* of the *Ātman*-Brahman. Thus, Bhagavatpāda's interpretation of 'मत्परः' is what represents the heart of Bhagavān.

॥ सद्गुरुचरणारविन्दार्पणमस्तु ॥