

गीतासारम् - gītāsāram

Essence of the Gita



A selection of verses from the Bhagavad Gita

Preface

Bhagavad Gita is known world over as one of the holy books of Hinduism. However, if a typical Hindu is asked what is mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita, the person would mostly say, “I know it says ‘Do your duty without expecting the results’. But, I do not know how it is possible or practical. I do not know what else it says.” This small booklet is aimed to bring the essence of the Bhagavad Gita, so that such people can know more about what it says.

Bhagavad Gita has about 700 verses. It takes about 2 hours to chant the whole Gita. There have been a number of short selections from the Gita that can be used for regular chanting.

This booklet is another such attempt. This selection has about 35 verses. They are rearranged in an order to make a logical flow. Elaborate meanings of the verses are given. In several cases, the meaning given is a combination of several related verses in the same context. So usually, the meaning is much more elaborate than what is directly conveyed in the words of the verse.

Deciphering the meaning of several verses in the Bhagavad Gita is difficult. This is because of three reasons:

1. The Gita presents a gradual development of the human being. Different verses of the Gita are meant for the person in different levels of development. So sometimes, two verses picked from different places can apparently convey opposite ideas. So, before studying a verse, one should first fix the state of the person who is talked about in that verse.
2. The same word is used the Gita to mean different thing in different contexts. For example, the word **ātma** can mean

body, mind, intellect, individual or Consciousness. There are some verses where in the same verse, different occurrences of the word mean different things. Similarly, whenever Krishna says “I” or “me”, it can mean ‘Krishna, the son of Vasudeva and Devaki’, ‘God, the ruler of the world’ or ‘a wise man’. In such cases, one has to be very careful to take the right meaning. The commentators come to our help here to reason out the best possible meaning in the context. However, different commentators differ in the meaning that they take, and that changes the entire message of the Gita.

3. There are a lot of allegories used. The allegories should be cracked to get the meaning. This is almost impossible without the guidance of a traditional teacher, who learnt from his teacher, and so on.

The interpretation in this booklet is very close to that of Swami Paramarthanandaji, whose interpretation is very close to that of Shankara.

This booklet can be used as a primer to get a bird’s eye view of the Gita. This can be a starting point for a deeper study of the Gita. This booklet can also be used for chanting while thinking about its meaning.

I hope this booklet helps people who are interested in the message of the Gita.

Gokulmuthu Narayanaswamy,
April 1st, 2012, Rama Navami.

ध्यान श्लोकाः - dhyāna ślokāḥ - Prayer Verses

प्रपन्नपारिजाताय तोत्रवेत्रैकपाणये ।

ज्ञानमुद्राय कृष्णाय गीतामृतदुहे नमः ॥

prapannapārijātāya totravetraikapāṇaye ।

jñānamudrāya kṛṣṇāya gītāmṛtaduhe namaḥ ॥

Salutations to Sri Krishna, the bestower of boons to His devotees, who holds a whip in one hand (as a charioteer), who shows the jnana mudra on the other hand, who has extracted and given us the Gita nectar.

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपाल नन्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopāla nandanah ।

pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīrbhoktā dugdham gītāmṛtam mahat ॥

All the Upanishads are cows. Arjuna is the calf. Sri Krishna, the son of the cowherd, is the milker. The milk is the great nectar of Gita. Just as a milkman uses the pretext of the calf and extracts the milk from the cow, Sri Krishna has given us the Gita keeping Arjuna as an instrument. All seekers of spiritual wisdom are the enjoyers. Thus the teaching of the Gita is the same as the teaching of the Upanishads, which are the essence of the Vedas.

Background

After a life-long training and preparation as a warrior, Arjuna is called to fight a great battle on the side of righteousness against unrighteousness. He, his brothers and their allies were fighting on the righteous side. His cousins and their allies were fighting on the other side. Unfortunately, Arjuna's revered teacher and beloved grand uncle were fighting for his cousins. Arjuna's attachment to them made him refuse to fight the war, for which he had prepared so much for a long time. The attachment created a great sorrow and depression in him. He forgot the real reason for which the war is being fought – to establish righteousness. He started thinking that the war was being fought to regain his kingdom. This made him confused between right and wrong. Instead of doing his duty as a warrior, he wanted to leave the battlefield and live a life of mendicancy. Krishna takes this opportunity to teach Arjuna the message of the Vedas, by which Arjuna regains his discrimination and does his duty.

This problem of attachment, which creates elation or sorrow, which clouds the discrimination and makes one make wrong decisions, is the main cause of human misery.

Gita's Teaching

Gita's teaching is about how to live in the world without being touched by sorrow.

We cannot avoid possession and action. Bad action gives sorrowful results. Good action gives good results (see the appendix on Law of Karma). But, one has to undergo some

temporary inconvenience to do a good action. Also, nothing gained in this world is permanent. So the good results have to be given up. They also will cause sorrow. In fact, usually the sorrow of losing a convenience that we are used to, is much greater than not having had it at all. Also, however much a person possesses, there will always be scope for more. There will always be someone else who has more. These will cause sorrow in various forms like depression, greed, jealousy and anger. Thus, all possessions and actions are tainted by sorrow.

Wise men do not grieve over the arrival or departure of people, objects and situations in life. The real nature of a person is not the body and the mind. It is pure Consciousness, which is eternal and of the nature of unconditional happiness. A person's sense of security, peace and happiness does not depend on any external entity. He is really free from all emotional dependencies. It is the ignorance of this fact that causes all the sorrow in life. The only permanent solution to sorrow is to gain this knowledge of one's own true nature.

Strong likes and dislikes, attachment to the sense pleasure and uncontrolled mind are hindrances to gaining this knowledge. So he has to first become free from these. Then he should gain the right knowledge from a qualified teacher in a systematic manner. Right understanding and conviction of this truth is the only way to complete and permanent freedom from sorrow.

Gita takes the person from wherever he is, gradually and systematically to this freedom.

श्री भगवान् उवाच -

śrī bhagavān uvāca -

God said:

एकश्लोकी गीता - ekaślokī gītā - Gita in One Verse

योगयुक्तो विशुद्धात्मा विजितात्मा जितेन्द्रियः ।

सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते ॥ ५-७ ॥

yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ ।

sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvannapi na lipyate ॥ 5-7 ॥

These are the stages of development:

1. Doing right actions as offering to God and accept the results as gift from God
2. Becoming free from likes and dislikes, and their effects like greed, anger, jealousy and arrogance
3. Controlling your mind by not perpetuating unwanted thoughts and by entertaining good thoughts
4. Subduing your senses by removing all value attached to enjoyment of sense objects
5. Gaining the right understanding by which you see your own Self in all beings and all beings in your own Self

Having gone through all these stages in sequence, even if you work in this world you will not get tainted by the action.

गीता मार्गम् - gītā mārgam - The Way of the Gita

आरुरुक्षोमुनेर्योगं कर्म कारणमुच्यते ।

योगारूढस्य तस्यैव शमः कारणमुच्यते ॥ ६-३ ॥

ārurukṣormuneryogaṁ karma kāraṇamucyate ।

yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇamucyate ॥ 6-3 ॥

The path to the goal is broadly divided into two parts. The first part is aimed at attaining renunciation, which consists of detachment from the fruits of action, detachment from sense objects, control of the mind and giving up of worldly pursuits. The means to this is Karma yoga (consisting of performance of duty, charity, austerity, devotion and meditation). The second part is aimed at attaining Knowledge and getting established in Knowledge. The means to this is listening to and assimilating the Knowledge revealed by the Upanishads.

कर्म योगः - karma yogaḥ - The Discipline of Action

Karma yoga is “right action with right attitude”. Right action is that which is done as one of the following:

- paying back what has been taken from environment, other living beings, people, parents, teachers, etc.
- one’s duty in the current position in life
- selfless service for the welfare of others
- practices to make oneself a better person with lesser affliction due to psychological defects like anger, jealousy, arrogance, greed, lust, etc.

Karma yoga is a way of life where, “what I am is more important than what I have”, which is implemented as “maximum contribution and minimum consumption.”

Right attitude towards work is as a gift to God. Right attitude towards the results is as a gift from God.

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।

आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुः आत्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥ ६-५ ॥

uddharedātmanātmānaṁ nātmānamavasādayet ।

ātmaiva hyātmano bandhuḥ ātmaiva ripurātmanaḥ

॥ 6-5 ॥

Only you have to develop yourself. Others can only try to help you. Never lower yourself below what you want to be. The body, senses and mind are instruments. Just as any instrument (like knife, fire, electricity, nuclear energy, etc), they will do good to you if they are under your control. They will cause harm to you if they are not under your control. Also, all of them should be aligned towards the same objective.

यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥ १८-५ ॥

yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṁ kāryameva tat ।

yajño dānaṁ tapaścaiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām ॥ 18-5 ॥

The acts of duty, charity and austerity should be always performed because they purify man. You should do your five-fold duty:

- to natural environment – conserve water, do not pollute, etc
- to other creatures – take care of animals and plants, be kind to them, plant more trees, preseve bio-diversity, etc
- to lineage – take care of parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren, pray for their welfare after their death, donate and volunteer to orphanages and old-age homes
- to society – respect all jobs in society, treat people with fairness and kindness, donate and volunteer for social service work, calamity relief, etc.
- to culture – respect teachers and cultured people, learn, develop and propagate science, culture, arts, philosophy, religion, etc

and also the specific duty based on your role in the society.

आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।

सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥ ६-३२ ॥

ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yo'rjuna ।

sukham vā yadi vā duḥkham sa yogī paramo mataḥ

॥ 6-32 ॥

The world is governed by the law of Karma that “as you sow, so shall you reap”. For every action done by you, you have to face the appropriate result in this or future life. So, consider others like yourself. Do to others what you would like others to do to

you. Do not do to others what you would not like others do to you. Judge what is right and what is wrong by the same standards that you would apply to yourself.

दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।

देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ॥ १७-२० ॥

dātavyamiti yaddānaṁ dīyate'nupakāriṇe ।

deśe kāle ca pātre ca taddānaṁ sāttvikam smṛtam

॥ 17-20 ॥

Charity should be given with humility. It should be given to people without expecting back in any form. It should be given at the most needed place and time, to the most needy person. Such charity is considered the noblest.

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञ पूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।

ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शरीरं तप उच्यते ॥ १७-१४ ॥

devadvijaguruprajña pūjanaṁ śaucamārjavam ।

brahmacaryamahimsā ca śārīraṁ tapa ucyaṭe ॥ 17-14 ॥

Bow down before God, cultured people, teachers and wise people. Maintain everything neat and tidy. There should be perfect alignment between your thoughts, words and actions. Maintain decent and appropriate attitude towards people of the other gender. Consider everyone as thinking and feeling people, and not as objects of enjoyment or exploitation. Do not cause any injury to others. These are called physical austerities.

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।

स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥ १७-१५ ॥

anudvegakaram vākyaṁ satyaṁ priyahitaṁ ca yat ।
svādhyāyābhyasanaṁ caiva vāṅmayam tapa ucyate

॥ 17-15 ॥

Speak softly. Speak only what is truthful, pleasant and useful. Maintain a habit of studying good books. These are called verbal austerities.

मनः प्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।

भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत् तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥ १७-१६ ॥

manaḥ prasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunamātmavinigrahaḥ ।
bhāvasaṁśuddhirityetat tapo mānasamucyate ॥ 17-16 ॥

Be free from stress in the form of anxiety about future and brooding over the past. Have pleasant and gentle thoughts. This will keep you calm and cheerful. Be silent for sometime everyday. Do not perpetuate unhealthy thoughts. Nourish good thoughts. Have noble intentions. Do not have any hidden agenda. These are called mental austerities.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूः मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ २-४७ ॥

karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana ।
mā karmaphalaheturbhūḥ mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi

॥ 2-47 ॥

You have control over only your current contribution to the work. The result depends on several other factors also, which are the effects of your past actions. So you do not have full control over the current result. External result should not be your motivating factor. Internal development (freedom from anger, arrogance, jealousy, greed, etc.) should be your motivating factor. Do not shun away from work. If you do not work, there is no chance of success, and you will not develop also.

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ २-४८ ॥

yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya ।
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate

॥ 2-48 ॥

Perform all your work without attachment to the external results. Be balanced in success and failure. Face success with humility and failure with dignity. This evenness of mind is called Yoga. You will be able to achieve this by doing all actions as gift to God, and accepting all the results as gift from God. With this evenness of mind, you will learn from both success and failure, and thus develop internally.

भक्ति योगः - bhakti yogaḥ – The Discipline of Devotion

Bhakti yoga helps the spiritual aspirant to easily go through the entire process of spiritual development in a smooth manner. Instead of considering the Law of Karma as a heartless inviolable dry law, it helps to consider the impartial omniscient compassionate Lord as the bestower of the results of all actions. Instead of considering the whole of existence as dull insentient matter, it helps to consider the whole of existence as God.

God is beyond all forms, attributes and individuality. But for the sake of worship, He can assume all of these for the devotee. The devotee goes through three stages of conception of God:

1. God as an individual having attributes and optionally a form related to the attributes. Here are some of the means by which God can be worshipped thus:
 - deities like Vishnu, Shiva
 - symbols like Shivalinga, Srichakra, Meru
 - places and natural elements like Kashi, Prayag, Ganga
 - incarnations of God like Rama, Krishna
 - devotees and saints like Hanuman, Adi Sankara
 - formless and with attributes like compassion and justice
2. God as the infinite existence manifesting as everything in this world. He is the bestower of the fruits of all action. The entire physical universe is His body. The cosmic order and cosmic mind is His mind. There is nothing that exists apart from Him.

3. God as the formless, attributeless, infinite, partless Consciousness.

Thus gradually, the spiritual aspirant develops through Bhakti yoga. You can see the appendix on God for a more elaborate discussion.

पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामहः ।

वेद्यं पवित्रमोकार ऋक्साम यजुरेव च ॥ ९-१७ ॥

pitāhamasya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ ।

vedyaṁ pavitramoṅkāra ṛksāma yajureva ca ॥ 9-17 ॥

I am the father (intelligent cause, like potter for a pot), mother (material cause, like clay for a pot) and grandfather (first cause) of this Universe. I am the dispenser of the fruits of all action. I am the one to be known. I am the pure and auspicious one. I am the holy word Om. I am the Rik, Saama and Yajur Vedas. (Here, Om represents the Unmanifested Existence, because in Om, all the possible sounds are in their potential form. Rik (poetry), Saama (music) and Yajur (prose) Vedas represent the Manifested Existence in all its diversity.)

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।

तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥ ७-२१ ॥

yo yo yāṁ yāṁ tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitumicchati ।

tasya tasyācalāṁ śraddhāṁ tāmeva vidadhāmyaham

॥ 7-21 ॥

Whoever worships me with devotion in whichever form, based on his faith and understanding, I respond to the devotee through that very form and stabilize the faith of that devotee.

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।

तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥ ९-२६ ॥

patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyaṁ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tadahaṁ bhaktyupahr̥tamaśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ

|| 9-26 ||

With devotion whoever offers Me even a simple offering like a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I accept that devout offering of the pure-minded one. Purity and devotion alone are important. A costlier offering does not make the offering better. Whatever you offer is already mine only. The offering is only a gesture to express your devotion.

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।

यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥ ९-२७ ॥

yatkarōṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat ।

yattapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam || 9-27 ||

By that practice, you should learn to offer everything to Me. Whatever you contribute, offer to Me, who manifests in the form of the world and its living beings. Whatever you consume, offer to Me residing in your own innermost being. Whatever you do as duty, charity or austerity, do that as an offering to Me.

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।

निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥ ३-३० ॥

mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasyādhyātmacetasā ।
nirāśīrnirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ ॥ 3-30 ॥

Offering all actions unto me with a devoted mind, do your duty without worldly expectations, without possessiveness and without anxiety.

शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः ।

संन्यासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि ॥ ९-२८ ॥

śubhāśubhaphalairēvaṁ mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ ।
sannyāsayogayuktātmā vimukto māmupaiṣyasi ॥ 9-28 ॥

Thus you shall be freed from the good and evil bonds of action. With your mind free from all claims of identity, ownership and controllership, you will attain Me.

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥ ९-२२ ॥

ananyāścintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate ।
teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānāṁ yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham

॥ 9-22 ॥

To those who worship Me without expecting any worldly gain, and practice self-control, I personally carry to them all that they need and also maintain whatever they have.

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

मामेवैष्यसि युक्तवैवम् आत्मानं मत्परायणः ॥ ९-३४ ॥

manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru ।
māmevaiṣyasi yuktvaivam ātmānaṁ matparāyaṇaḥ

॥ 9-34 ॥

Think of Me. Love Me. Give up lower pursuits. Bow down to Me. Have Me as your Supreme Goal of life. Having thus united your whole being and life with Me, you will attain Me.

ध्यान योगः - dhyāna yogaḥ – The Discipline of

Meditation

Meditation is a means to calm the mind, deeply think of a particular topic or to assimilate what one has understood intellectually. Meditation helps to assimilate an idea that has been understood by the conscious mind. Meditation converts intellectual understanding into emotional strength.

As meditation enhances the power of the mind, it should be practised only after sufficient purification of the mind. Some extent of freedom from likes and dislikes is essential before starting meditation. Without leading a life of values and sense control, it is not possible to meditate. Without these, even if

some success is achieved in meditation, it will only create more conflicts and problems in life.

Meditation is the flow of similar thoughts without any distraction by unrelated thoughts. There are various ways of meditation like the following:

- Thinking of the actions of manifestations of God through stories of saints and incarnations of God.
- Mentally worshipping God with various items like flowers, incense, light, food offerings, etc.
- Thinking of the form of a saint, deity or incarnation of God.
- Mentally chanting a hymn or a philosophical work like Gita.
- Mentally repeating a particular name of God or a mantra.
- Thinking of the vastness and greatness of this universe and the insignificance of the physical existence of man.
- Recollecting a talk on a spiritual topic.
- Recollecting the contents of a spiritual book.
- Thinking of spiritual teachings.
- Thinking of values like truthfulness, non-violence, etc. and the benefits of following them.
- Thinking of the meaning of some verses from the scriptures.

After understanding the teaching of the scriptures about the true nature of the self as pure Consciousness, meditation helps to assimilate the knowledge so that the knowledge manifests in everyday life.

You can see the appendix on Meditation for instructions of a simple mental worship.

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः ।

मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत् मत्परः ॥ ६-१४ ॥

praśāntātmā vigatabhīrbrahmacārivrate sthitaḥ ।

manaḥ saṁyamya maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ ॥ 6-14 ॥

With a serene mind free from anxiety, free from fear, firm in the vow of sense-control, with the mind under control, sit and meditate on Me, with Me as the Supreme Goal. A sitting posture in which one can remain comfortably for at least twenty minutes is the recommended posture. The back should be straight. Breathing must be free flowing. The seat should be stable. It should neither be too hard to create discomfort nor be too soft to make the back bent. The arms should be gently rested on the lap.

सङ्कल्पप्रभवान्कामांस्त्यक्त्वा सर्वानशेषतः ।

मनसैवेन्द्रियग्रामं विनियम्य समन्ततः ॥ ६-२४ ॥

saṅkalpaprabhavāṅkāmaṁstyaktvā sarvānaśeṣataḥ ।

manasaivendriyagrāmaṁ viniyamya samantataḥ ॥ 6-24 ॥

First give up all desires born out of fancies. Then restrain the group of sense organs from all directions using the mind. Close the eyes gently to keep away visual distractions. Cover with a sheet to avoid distractions from insects, wind, cold, etc. Be in a secluded place to avoid distracting smells and sounds. There are several ways to withdraw the mind from the senses like observing the breathing, mental worship of God in any form, mentally chanting any prayer, mentally repeating a mantra, etc.

शनैः शनैरुपरमेद् बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।

आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥ ६-२५ ॥

śanaīḥ śanairuparamed buddhyā dhṛtigr̥hītayā ।
ātmasamsthaṁ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcidapi cintayet

॥ 6-25 ॥

Withdraw the mind gradually using the intellect, which manifests as will. Focussing the mind on the Self within, do not think of anything else. Keep aside all worldly roles like father, mother, son, daughter, employer, employee, businessman, labourer, etc. Take up spiritual roles like devotee of God, seeker of knowledge of the Self, disciple of a Guru, etc. This is called temporary mental renunciation. This is necessary before any meditation can be attempted. Then disidentify with anything can be an object to the senses or the mind. By rejecting every object of perception and thought, remain as the pure Subject.

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।

ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ ६-२६ ॥

yato yato niścaraṭi manaścañcalamasthiram ।

tatastato niyamyaītaḍātmanyeva vaśaṁ nayet ॥ 6-26 ॥

From every object of distraction towards which the unsteady mind goes, bring it back under the control. It is normal for the mind to get distracted. Whenever you find that the mind is thinking of something else, gently bring back the mind to the

meditation. It is the nature of the mind to wander. It will take a long time to train the mind to remain continuously in meditation even for a short period of time.

प्रशान्तमनसं ह्येनं योगिनं सुखमुत्तमम् ।

उपैति शान्तरजसं ब्रह्मभूतमकल्मषम् ॥ ६-२७ ॥

praśāntamanasaṁ hyenaṁ yoginaṁ sukhamuttamaṁ ।
upaiti śāntarajasaṁ brahmabhūtamakalmaṣam ॥ 6-27 ॥

The person, who has attained the Supreme, whose mind is tranquil, free from impurities and free from agitation enjoys great happiness. Meditation will give the conviction that happiness does not depend on external people, objects or situations. In the absence of attachment to them, the natural state of the mind is to be happy. The knowledge of the Atman will give a strong intellectual foundation to this conviction.

ज्ञान योगः - jñāna yogaḥ - The Discipline of

Knowledge

The goal that every creature is seeking in life is unconditional happiness. No process can lead to this unconditional happiness. What is needed is only to recognize that the happiness has been always with the person as his essential nature. There is no other way to the goal other than this Knowledge of one's own true nature. This Knowledge is beyond the reach of the senses and the mind. The senses and mind are designed only to know about objects. So the only way to this Knowledge is by the words of

the Guru expounding the Vedantic scriptures. All action and meditation serve only to prepare the mind for this Knowledge.

श्रेयान्द्रव्यमयाद्यज्ञाज्ज्ञानयज्ञः परन्तप ।

सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते ॥ ४-३३ ॥

śreyāndravvyamayādyajñājjñānayatjñāḥ parantapa ।
sarvaṁ karmākḥhilaṁ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate

॥ 4-33 ॥

Higher (next) to the way of action (first half of the way) is the way of Knowledge (second half of the way). All actions without exception attain their consummation in Knowledge only. The spiritual journey is incomplete without attainment of Knowledge.

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।

उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ ४-३४ ॥

tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā ।
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñānīnastattvadarśīnaḥ ॥ 4-34 ॥

To get that Knowledge, seek out the wise one, who has realized the Truth. Prostrate to him, serve him and question him. He will instruct you in that Knowledge. The mind does not have the capability to judge the Truth. The Truth has to be accepted as an axiom as revealed by the words of the Guru. To be able to accept the words of the Guru, the disciple should have developed sufficient faith in the Guru. This can be attained only

by moving closely with the Guru and understanding that the Guru is absolutely truthful and is free from all seeking of personal gain.

श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।

ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥ ४-३९ ॥

śraddhāvāṁllabhate jñānaṁ tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ ।
jñānaṁ labdhvā parāṁ śāntimacireṇādhigacchati

॥ 4-39 ॥

The person who is full of faith, dedicated to the attainment of Knowledge and who has subdued the senses only attains the Knowledge. Attainment of the Knowledge is quickly followed by great peace.

तद्बुद्ध्यस्तदात्मानस्तन्निष्ठास्तत्परायणाः ।

गच्छन्त्यपुनरावृत्तिं ज्ञाननिर्धूतकल्मषाः ॥ ५-१७ ॥

tadbuddhayastadātmānastanniṣṭhāstatparāyaṇāḥ ।
gacchantyapunarāvṛttiṁ jñānanirdhūtakalmaṣāḥ ॥ 5-17 ॥

These are the stages of Knowledge:

1. determination that Knowledge is the Supreme Goal
2. attainment of the Knowledge of Brahman
3. identification of oneself with the Brahman
4. establishment in the Knowledge fully
5. destruction of all impurities completely by the Knowledge

The person who has gone through all these stages does not take birth after the death of the body.

ज्ञानम् - jñānam - The Knowledge

Man consists of three broad entities – the physical body, the subtle mind and the pure Consciousness. All sorrow is rooted in identification with the body and mind. First he has to disidentify with the physical body by identifying with the mind. Then finally he has to disidentify with the mind also and identify with the pure Consciousness, which is his true identity. The true nature of the person is as pure partless Conscious Blissful Infinite Existence, which can never be an object of perception to the senses nor be an object of conception of the mind. When a person knows, understands and assimilates this truth about himself, he realizes himself to be free from all limitations, and thus free from sorrow.

द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च ।

क्षरः सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते ॥ १५-१६ ॥

dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaraścākṣara eva ca ।

kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho'kṣara ucyate ॥ 15-16 ॥

All creatures have two parts - the perishable body (made of physical matter) and the imperishable soul (consisting of the inner senses, mind, intellect and ego). The perishable is the physical body of all beings. The imperishable soul is not destroyed when the physical body is destroyed.

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।

तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥ २-१३ ॥

dehino'sminyathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā ।
tathā dehāntaraprāptirdhīrastatra na muhyati ॥ 2-13 ॥

Just as in the perishable body, the imperishable soul passes through childhood, youth and old age, after death of the body, the soul passes into another body.

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्मेत्युधाहृतः ।

यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः ॥ १५-१७ ॥

uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ paramātmetyudhāhṛtaḥ ।
yo lokatrayamāviśya bibhartyavyaya īśvaraḥ ॥ 15-17 ॥

Separate from these two is the Consciousness principle, which is Me, the Supreme Lord, which transcends, pervades and supports the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep.

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥ १०-२० ॥

ahamātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitaḥ ।
ahamādiśca madhyaṁ ca bhūtānāmanta eva ca ॥ 10-20 ॥

I, the Supreme Lord, am the Self, seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the origin, the support and also the end of all

beings. Thus, I am both the immanent and transcendent principle of all creation. I am the material of which the world is made and also I am the Consciousness principle.

यदा भूतपृथग्भावमेकस्थमनुपश्यति ।

तत एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते तदा ॥ १३-३१ ॥

yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvamēkasthamanupaśyati ।

tata eva ca vistāraṁ brahma sampadyate tadā ॥ 13-31 ॥

When the person sees the whole variety of beings as emerging from the One Consciousness and also resting in the Consciousness, then he becomes identified with the Me, the Brahman.

अनादित्वान्निर्गुणत्वात्परमात्मायमव्ययः ।

शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते ॥ १३-३२ ॥

anādītvānīrṅuṇatvātparamātmāyamavyayaḥ ।

śarīrastho'pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate ॥ 13-32 ॥

Being without beginning and devoid of qualities, this changeless Supreme Self, though dwelling in the body, does not identify with any doer-ship and does not get tainted by the results of action.

ज्ञानी लक्षणम् - jñānī lakṣaṇam – Characteristics of the Wise Man

प्रजहाति यदा कामान् सर्वान्पार्थ मनोगतान् ।

आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥ २-५५ ॥

prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvānpārtha manogatān ।
ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñastadocyate ॥ 2-55 ॥

When a man is completely free from all desires of the mind, and is satisfied in the Self by the knowledge, then is he said to be a man of firm wisdom.

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।

वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥ २-५६ ॥

duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigatasprahaḥ ।
vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīrmunirucyate ॥ 2-56 ॥

He, whose mind is not shaken by adversity, and who does not hanker after pleasures in prosperity, who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a man of firm wisdom.

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान् पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥ २-७१ ॥

vihāya kāmānyaḥ sarvān pumānścarati niḥsprahaḥ ।
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntimadhigacchati ॥ 2-71 ॥

The wise man lives an active life free from all desires and without any longing. He does not have any claims of identity or ownership. He enjoys peace.

ध्यान श्लोकः - dhyāna ślokaḥ - Prayer Verse

प्रपन्नपारिजाताय तोत्रवेत्रैकपाणये ।

ज्ञानमुद्राय कृष्णाय गीतामृतदुहे नमः ॥

prapannapārijātāya totravetraikapāṇaye ।

jñānamudrāya kṛṣṇāya gītāmṛtaduhe namaḥ ॥

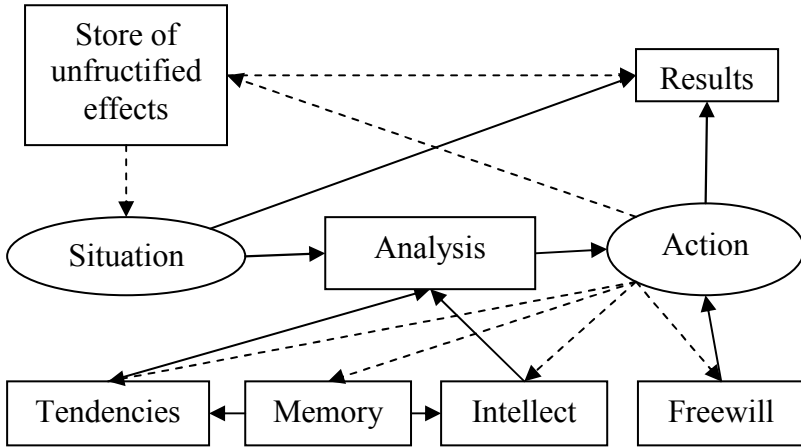
Sri Krishna has extracted from the Vedas and given us this Gita nectar. He has explained the three-staged path to liberation and He helps us at each step of the path.

1. He takes care of the peace and prosperity of His devotees who do everything as an offering to Him and accept everything as gift from Him
2. He holds a stick in one hand to discipline the senses and the mind, and thus helps in controlling the senses and mind of the devotees who meditate on Him
3. He shows the jnana mudra on the other hand to indicate the knowledge that when separated from the three gunas (serenity, activity and dullness), when disidentified with the three bodies (physical, subtle and causal) and when being a witness to the three states (waking, dream and deep sleep), the individual Self and the supreme Self are identical

Salutations to Sri Krishna, the Universal Teacher.

Appendix: Law of Karma

Freewill is the foundation of all actions of man and the possibility of man to improve himself. Exercise of freewill is in the context of a cause-and-effect system in the world. Every result should be appropriate to the action causing it. Otherwise there can be no basis to exercise the freewill.



Any given situation in life is the result of the fructification of the effects of past actions. The situation is analyzed by the intellect as regards to what is right and what is wrong. Past tendencies try to influence the action by proposing what is desirable and what is not. Memory provides input about past similar situations, the action taken and the result attained. Using all these information, the person takes an independent decision on what to do in the current situation.

The result is the effect of the situation, the action and the influence of the effects of the past actions. Not all the current

action fructifies as the current result. A part of it is stored as unfructified effect, which will contribute towards future situations and results.

The individual is the holder of this store, freewill, tendencies, memory and intellect. He continues to exist and play this part across multiple lives. When the body dies, the individual takes on a new body (which is also a situation) and continues. The new body can be of a human being or an animal or a plant. The body can be strong or weak to be able to manifest the various faculties like memory, intellect and tendencies to various degrees.

The freewill becomes stronger if decisions are made more towards the way shown by the intellect as right than towards the way shown by the tendencies as desirable. This is the way to improvement of the individual.

Using this model, Hinduism answers most of the questions that arise about the world that we see like:

- Why do we see good people facing bad situations in life?
- Why are some children born in rich families and some in poor families?
- What will happen to me after death?
- When a person dies, what will happen to all the good and bad things done by a person?
- Why should we be good?
- What is wrong in cheating others and harming others?

This explains only the current link in the chain. Questions like “how did the whole process start?” are not answered by this

model. However, this model is a good working model for all day-to-day activities.

The final goal, however, is to realize that one's own individuality is only a relative one. To drop the individuality and thus to get out of this cycle is the ultimate goal of life. It need not be done immediately. As the person evolves by repeatedly choosing the "good" over the "desirable", he becomes purer and purer. This can take several lifetimes.

At one point of the evolution, he becomes pure enough to start the quest on the real nature of himself. Then he gets the knowledge from the exposition of the scriptures by a teacher. By assimilating the knowledge, he becomes free.

Appendix: God

Each of our bodies consists of innumerable cells, each of which is a living being by itself. Still, we identify it as our body. Similarly, what we call our ideas and thoughts are based on the ideas and thoughts that we have learnt and picked from various sources during our life. Still, we identify it as our mind. Thus, the concept of our individuality is only notional.

Similarly, we have the concepts of groups of people like city, state, country, continent, etc. They all have a physical component, of which each of us is a part, and a mental component, of which each of us is a part. Similarly, the whole of the earth with all its living beings, geological features and oceans can be considered as a single living entity.

When we extend this concept to cover the whole of existence, we come to the idea of God. God is the person to whom, the whole of physical existence is the physical body, and the whole cosmic dynamics is the mind. Thus, there is nothing that exists other than God.

From this idea comes the concept in Hinduism, that whatever we do is an offering to God and whatever results we get is a gift from God. Doing our duty sincerely with this attitude is worship of God. Also, serving the world and the living beings in the world is worship of God.

Also, God is the material cause of the world, just like clay is the material cause of a pot. God, being the sentient being, is also the sentient cause of the world, just like a potter is the sentient cause of a pot.

God creates the world for the benefit of the individuals to take a body so that they can experience and express themselves. This will give them maturity to finally realize their real nature. God is the bestower of the fruits of action. The sum total of all natural laws, including the physical and moral laws is the will of God.

God has knowledge of everything in the world and has the capacity to create and destroy everything in the world. However, the knowledge and power of God is limited by the freewill of individuals. God has control over the situation presented to the individuals, but God does not have control over the freewill of the individuals. Every individual has the freedom to choose to do what he wants, and God gives the result of the action according to the Law of Karma as an impartial judge. Thus,

though God is the bestower of the fruits of action, the individual alone is responsible for his situations and actions.

Thus, God is a formless, genderless, compassionate, impartial, eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, sentient person, to whom the whole of physical existence is the physical body, the whole of cosmic laws is the mind.

As the human mind can only think in terms of forms and names, God can be worshipped through forms and names. As God knows the innermost thoughts and intentions of every individual, God can be worshipped through any form and name. Depending on the taste of the individual, he can choose any form and name that is to his liking.

Prayer is an action. It is in the form of asking God to help in a tough situation, thanking God for favorable situation or asking God for strength to go through all situations in life. This action can fully or partly counter balance any weak undesirable effects of our own past actions.

As time goes by, the Law of Karma becomes sluggish because of accumulation of actions that are yet to be fructified. The time gap between the action and the result increases naturally. This creates a situation where some individuals seem to be living well off even though they do a lot of bad actions. Also, people lose faith in the Law of Karma because they are not able to see the action and the result side by side. At such times, God comes in the garb of an individual into the world and cleans up the system, like a fast-track court being setup by the government for special and serious cases. God speeds up the Law of Karma by clearing of the backlogs personally. Also, God teaches the people about the nature of the individual, world and God, and

about the Law of Karma, to instill back the faith in the system. These special manifestations of God are called incarnations. The incarnations are effective means to worship God through.

God is also the Consciousness that powers the individual. Just as different electrical appliances are powered by the same electricity running through them, God is the light of Consciousness in each individual. Just as depending on the nature of the electrical appliance, it can create wind, heat, light or coolness, depending on the nature, an individual thinks and behaves in his own manner, powered by the same Consciousness, which is God.

Appendix: Meditation

Meditation is an important discipline to develop a personal relationship with God, imbibe a moral value that is understood and to deeply think about the nature of the self.

Though there are several types of meditation, one sequence of steps is presented here for the benefit of the reader. You can spend about 5 to 10 seconds at each step, unless a longer procedure is mentioned. Read through all the steps carefully and understand them before attempting to follow them. Before you start, decide your favorite form of God and the name or mantra that you want to chant.

1. Sit in a comfortable posture, with body and head straight without any strain. Let the hands rest together on the lap.
2. Gently close the eyes.
3. Be aware of the sounds outside.
4. Be aware of the form of your body.

5. Relax all the muscles of the body. Be aware of the different parts of the body and relax them – feet, calf muscles, thigh, hip, abdomen, chest, shoulders, upper arms, lower arms, hands, neck, face, jaw, forehead and ears.
6. Be aware of the movements of the body due to breathing.
7. Be aware of the breathing, without changing the breathing pattern.
8. Mentally wish good to everyone in this world. Forgive everyone for everything bad that they might have done. Thank everyone for everything good that they might have done. Wish everyone in this world with peace and prosperity in life.
9. Mentally detach yourself from all worldly roles like father, son, mother, daughter, brother, sister, student, teacher, employer, employee, neighbor, etc. Take on roles like a devotee of God, disciple of your Guru, aspirant after peace, pursuer of spiritual knowledge, etc.
10. Visualize the forms of your spiritual teachers and thank them for the inspiration, knowledge and guidance that they have given you.
11. Visualize a fully bloomed lotus at the center of your chest. Visualize the infinite all-pervasive God slowly condensing into a golden yellow luminous form of your favorite form of God seated in the lotus.
12. Let the deity slowly turn into live natural color.
13. Offer your salutations to the deity. Visualize the deity to gracefully accept your salutations with a slight compassionate smile.

14. Offer some welcome drink to the deity to refresh Himself/Herself. Enjoy the deity enjoying the taste of the drink.
15. Offer sandal paste on the forehead, hands and legs. Enjoy the deity feeling pleasant by the touch.
16. Offer a garland of flowers. Offer various flowers of different colors, shapes and sizes. Enjoy the deity being happy at the colors and forms.
17. Offer incense of mild sweet fragrance. Enjoy the deity being happy at the nice fragrance.
18. Offer light. As you wave the light in front of the deity watch the beautiful play of shadows on the form of the deity. Enjoy the smile on the face of the deity.
19. Offer various kinds of fruits, sweets and other tasty food items. Enjoy the deity tasting a bit of each of the items.
20. Chant the name of the deity or a short mantra of the deity 108 times or for 10 minutes. Offer each utterance to the deity, being aware that the deity is accepting your gesture of love.
21. Sit for sometime enjoying the peaceful presence of the deity.
22. Mentally prostrate before the deity and offer the fruits of your worship to the deity.
23. Let the form of the deity turn golden yellow light and merge with the infinite world in all directions. Now the whole world is the form of the deity.
24. Be aware of the breathing.
25. Be aware of the form of your body.
26. Be aware of the sounds around.
27. Slowly open your eyes. See your deity in the form of the world, including the various objects, people and creatures.

28. Bow down to the deity and get up slowly. Maintain the worshipful attitude towards the entire world for the rest of the day, and eventually for the rest of your life.

This simple mental worship will help establish a personal relationship with God. It will help improve the willpower to stick to morality and ethics. It will improve the judgment of what is right and what is wrong. It will give forbearance to face the ups and downs of life with poise. It will lead to a more peaceful life.

हरिः ॐ तत् सत् । श्री कृष्णार्पणमस्तु ॥

hariḥ om tat sat | śrī kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu ||

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About the author

I am a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. Most of my understanding of religious, spiritual and philosophical ideas comes from the tradition Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The traditional foundation in Vedanta comes from the tradition of Swami Paramarthanandaji. You can visit the website <http://www.practicalphilosophy.in> for more details.

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