Essence of the

Bhagavad Gita

For Modern Minds

Gokulmuthu Narayanaswamy

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Prelude

Welcome to the enlightening world of Vedānta and Srimad Bhagavad Gita !!!

Every course on Vedānta starts with the study of a Prakarana Grantha (Primer) like Tattvabodha to introduce the topics in a structured sequence. In this book, we have picked up a sequence of verses of the Gita to serve as a Prakarana Grantha.

After a detailed coverage of the important topics of Vedānta using nine selected verses, running commentaries of chapter 15 (Concepts of Vedānta) and chapter 12 (Practice of Vedānta) are presented for a deeper study into the Gita. Then some important verses related to the four Yogas are presented.

This book is intended to be a textbook for a one semester course with about 24 to 30 lectures on “Essence of Vedānta” or “Essence of the Bhagavad Gita”. The presentation is tuned to resonate with the thinking pattern of students of science. So, modern students and professionals with some familiarity with science, engineering, psychology, management, etc. will find it easy to understand and appreciate the concepts.

It can also be used as the resource book for study circles on Vedānta, and as a book for self-study of Vedānta. After reading the contents from this book, if you have any questions about the topics covered here, please feel free to contact me over email. Address is in my blog at www.practicalphilosphy.in I will be more than happy to answer your questions.

I thank my teachers Swami Paramārthānandaji of Ārsha Vidyā Gurukulam, Swami Paramasukhānandaji of Rāmakrishṇa Math, and a Daśanāmi sannyāsi in the Himālayās who wishes to remain anonymous, for my knowledge of Vedānta. I thank the members of Vivekananda Study Circle at IIT Madras and IISc Bangalore for the deep and incisive discussions, which have helped to shape these ideas in the form presented in this book.

This book is based on a 24-lecture course on “Introduction to Bhagavad Gita” that was delivered to several batches of professionals and post-graduate students.

I thank Young Soldiers of Swamiji channel who ran the first edition of this course. I thank Indica Moksha and Advaita Academy who gave the platform to present different parts of this course in shorter formats. I thank SoulUp for running several batches of this full course on their platform.

I thank Sai Garimella for volunteering to do the transcription of the course given under Shāstra Vidya channel, which is the foundation of this book. I thank Swami Dayātmānandaji, Dr. Prasād Krishṇan, Dr. A. Vedpuriswar, Dr. Sonal Keshwani, Sri Vallabh Kulkarni and several friends for reviewing the book and giving valuable comments.

My prayers to the Lord to bring clarity and conviction in the minds of the readers on these topics.

With praṇāms,

Gokulmuthu Narayanaswamy

1 Introduction

The Bhagavad Gita shows humanity the way to live a peaceful, enthusiastic, cheerful, beneficial, and noble life. It helps us to face the ups and downs of life with resilience. This is done by presenting a model of the Individual Being, the Insentient World, and the Universal Being – **Jiva**, **Jagat**, and **Ishvara**. Based on the model, it shows how a person can go from wherever he is to the state of complete freedom from all sorrow. The Gita teaching starts with the 11th verse of the 2nd chapter where it says *na anuśocanti panditāh* – wise men don't have any sorrow. The Gita teaching ends with the 66th verse of the 18th chapter where it says *mā śucah* – don't worry. There are several descriptions of the **Jivanmukta** – the person who has attained Moksha (freedom) while living. They all point to the same – freedom from sorrow in its various forms and manifestations like desire, anger, greed, anxiety, fear, and jealousy. The Gita has guided thousands of people through centuries all over the world in various cultures and eras to trek through the journey of life, attain this promised freedom, and live a life of peace.

A deep study of the Gita will give us perspectives that will help us to form and refine our own philosophy of life. The message of the Gita has been repackaged and given to people using a language that is relatable to the times. The similes and metaphors, idioms and parables need to be remapped to suit the problems and solutions as the time changes. At several places in the Gita, Krishṇa says that this is not any new knowledge. He says that the same ancient knowledge that is in the Vedas, that has been handed down for generations, is told by him now to Arjuna. He uses

metaphors from the life of society during his time, that can be relatable by Arjuna. As the social environment changes over time, hundreds of commentators, scholars, saints, and leaders like Adi Shankarāchārya, Madhusudana Sarasvati, Sri Rāmānuja, Sri Mādhva, Swāmi Vivekānanda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahātma Gāndhi, Swāmi Chinmayānanda, and Swāmi Ranganāthānanda have expounded the Gita to suit their contemporary society, and to address the problems faced by the people and society of their time. This is a continual necessity.

This work is yet another effort in explaining the message of the Bhagavad Gita to the modern students of science, technology, medicine, psychology, and management. It addresses the students and professionals in various fields to help them to formulate their problems and map them to the concepts in the Gita. This will enable them to derive the solutions and perspectives to their problems in the light of the Gita.

In our school education, we have experienced how a teacher teaches a formula in mathematics or physics. We are first introduced to the formula with an explanation of the terms in the formula. We are shown how to derive the formula from first principles. Then, we are given some numerical problems to become familiar with the formula. Then we are given some statement problems of imaginary or simulated situations where we are trained to restate the problem to map to the entities in the formula and apply the formula to solve the problem. This training enables us to solve real-world problems when we face them during life.

This attempt to explain the Gita follows the same approach. Various concepts and categories are introduced with the

rationale behind them. Then we show how to apply them in everyday situations.

To do this, first we study a selection of nine slokās from the Gita which are like different formulas. We study the concepts behind each of those slokās to understand them thoroughly. Then we study how to reinterpret our life situations based on these concepts. We present some hypothetical situations where we can try applying these concepts. We also show how to design a daily routine to align our life to the Gita's perspective.

The line of argument builds up logically as we progress through the book. So, studying them in sequence will yield maximum benefit.

The second chapter gives the reasons why we should study the Gita and what questions that reader will have answers from the point of view of the Gita by reading this book.

The third chapter introduces the top-down approach followed in this book, in contrast to a full translation or commentary of the Gita.

The fourth chapter gives the list of the slokas that are used to introduce the concepts in this book. This is given for daily chanting. The subsequent chapters in the book are detailed explanations of each sloka in this list.

The fifth chapter is the explanation of the Dhyāna sloka in the selected list of slokas.

The sixth chapter explains the prayer of Arjuna to Sri Krishna that provoked the charioteer to become the

teacher. The seventh chapter explains the first sloka of the Gita teaching, which is an introduction to the Gita.

The eight chapter discusses the Goal of Human Life according to the Gita and Vedānta. Biological evolution and the evolution of the human brain in particular are taken as support to explain the Goal.

The ninth chapter explains the path to achieve the Goal. It explains the roadblocks and the techniques to overcome them. It also explains the gradual development that happens along the way.

The tenth, eleventh and twelfth chapters explain the nature of the Individual, the Impersonal Truth and Personal God. These are the core concepts of Vedānta.

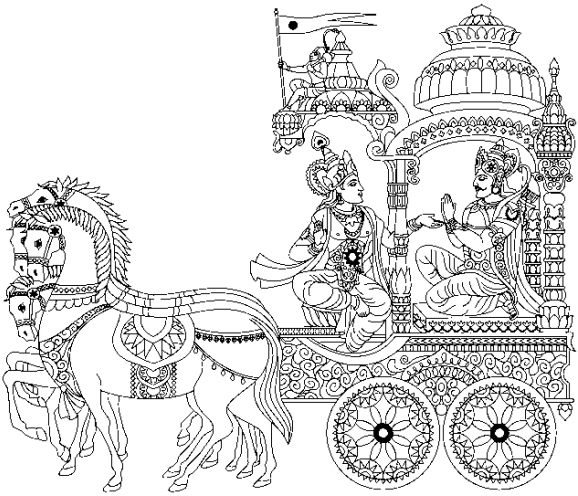
Chapter thirteen is a short review of all the concepts covered so far and how these can be used to address various life situations.

Chapters fourteen, fifteen and sixteen explain Gita's way to the Goal as the path of action and meditation combined with devotion.

Chapters seventeen and eighteen sum up the whole presentation with how to design your life in line with the Gita. This ends the first part of the book.

The rest of the book forms the contents of the advanced course. The slokas of Gita chapters 15 and 12 are discussed in detail. Then there is explanation of ten selected slokas each related to Karma, Dhyāna, Bhakti and Jnāna Yogas.

2 Why Should We Study The Gita?



By listening to different people and by reading different books, we get various perspectives on life. Based on those various perspectives on life, each of us can form our own unique perspective on life. The more exposure we have and given deep thought to, the better our perspective on life will be. The Gita gives a perspective on life. We have the freedom to accept the concepts of the Gita or not accept them. In either case, knowing a new perspective on life is always enriching.

The Gita is a conversation between two successful kings.

Krishṇa was a king maker. He was the prince of the Yādava aristocracy. Even at a young age, he brought order to the Yādava clan when there was a political crisis because of the atrocities of Kamsa. When Jarāsandha, the king of Magadha was troubling the Yādavas, he established a new city at

Dwāraka. Later, he helped Bhima to defeat Jarāsandha. Krishṇa helped the Pāndavās to establish their kingdom in Indraprastha. He was a fierce undefeatable warrior. He was a master diplomat and statesman respected throughout the Bhāratavarsha. He was the last resort for the kings, princes, princesses, and common people of all kingdoms to solve problems which no one else could solve, like defeating Narakāsura.

Arjuna was one of the greatest warriors of his time. He was sought after as son-in-law by many kings. He was the prince charming of his time. He led a campaign all over Bhāratavarsha from Himālayās to the Southern Ocean to get all the kings to agree to Yudhisthira as the independent king of Indraprastha. He was the greatest archer of his time. He possessed several divine weapons that he received after severe penance. He even spent time as the prince in Indraloka ruled by his father Indra.

When Arjuna faced a crisis where he could not decide, he sought the counsel of Krishṇa, his friend, cousin, mentor, well-wisher and senior in the domain. Krishṇa's counseling was therapeutic. At the end of the counselling session, Arjuna was back on his feet with full vigour and enthusiasm. Thus, the Gita is the record of a successful counselling session, which has several useful ideas that will help in many of our life situations. We cannot dig a well when the house is on fire. So, studying the Gita now will help us to face situations in future with maturity.

After a certain level of success in life, every thinking person will be hit with the question, "What next? Why should I continue to work now? What should I aim for next?" Most educated, intelligent, enterprising, and hard-working

middle-class people will reach a certain degree of security and affluence in life midway in their career. When this mid-life crisis hits, there needs to be a new reason to work. A new perspective and purpose to life is needed. Most of the people who don't resolve this crisis waste away the rest of their life as aimless zombies. The knowledge, skill, vigour, and resourcefulness that brought them to where they have reached has no avenue going ahead. They lead a very boring and unfulfilling life, only to regret later that they have not manifested their full potential. This problem is very similar to what Arjuna describes. He tells Krishṇa, "I have seen it all. I don't see any point in anything. I don't see any purpose that this action will achieve. I want to quit." At this juncture, Krishṇa shows Arjuna a new higher purpose to pursue. This guidance and direction are the requirements of many people today.

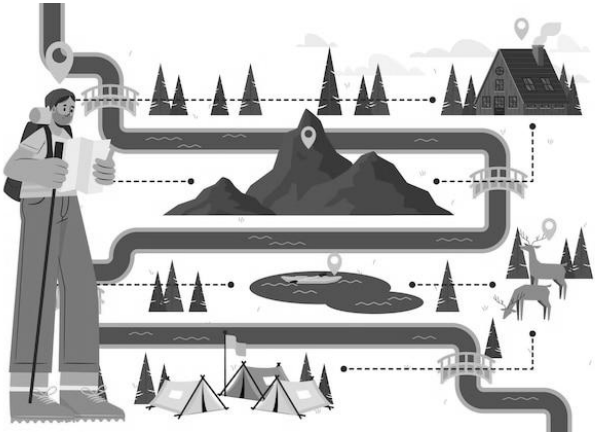
Every thinking person will face several questions like "What is the purpose of life? Is there any absolute standard of morality? Why should a person be honest and kind? What is the purpose of the whole existence? Why do good people face challenges in life? What is the use of being good? Does the individual existence continue beyond death? Why are some people born rich and some are born poor? Isn't it unfair?" The Gita gives a framework, and some reasonable assumptions, based on which all these questions can be answered logically. When a person understands the framework, suddenly everything falls into place. It is up to the person to accept the framework or not. But, knowing that there is a framework with some minimal assumptions that can logically answer all these questions is helpful.

The Gita is a summary of the ideas, concepts and practices that are in the Vedas, of which Upanishads are a part.

Krishṇa himself says in the Gita that what he says is not new. It is the same as what is there in the Vedas and what was taught to the kings and sages in the past. These ideas were already several centuries old at that time. Krishṇa presents the same ideas in the “modern” context of that time. Several centuries have passed since then. Various teachers present the same ideas in the modern context to us, using modern examples, idioms, and metaphors. This framework is the core of Hinduism and Indian culture in general. The festivals, art, architecture, music, dance, drama, literature, places of pilgrimage, common designs used in jewelry, clothing, etc., both classical and folk, are all inspired from the stories and ideas in the Vedas, Puranas, Itihāsās, the Gita, and allied works. To understand, appreciate and practice, or even to critically examine Hinduism and Indian culture, it is necessary to study the Gita.

Using this framework, the Gita reconciles all the various philosophies and ideologies that existed at that time. Using the same framework, Swāmi Vivekānanda reconciled all the modern philosophical systems and religions. He showed how every ideology can be better understood in the context of this Universal framework. Thus, this would help people of every ideology and religion, including atheists and agnostics.

3 Top-Down Approach to Study The Gita



If we want to go on a Chār-Dhām yātra (pilgrimage to the four important places of pilgrimage in the Himalayas), first we need to know the map of the place. We need to understand where we are currently, what is the destination, what are the various routes, what are the milestones on the way and the various means of transport. In the same way, to understand the Gita, a top-down approach is the most efficient.

In traditional study of the Vedas, the student is first introduced to various prakarana granthās (primer books), like tattvabodha, vedānta sāra, ātmabodha, vivekacudāmani, etc. The student develops full familiarity with all the ideas and concepts by the study of these primer texts. After this, the student is taught the source books like the Gita, Upanishads and Brahmasutrās. These source books are studied along with the commentaries and explanations by great teachers of the past.

We will follow the same approach here.

1. Study a small selection of nine slokās as an introduction to the concepts
2. Study the 15th chapter, which is a detailed presentation of the theory of Vedānta in twenty slokās
3. Study the 12th chapter, which is a detailed presentation of the practice of Vedānta in twenty slokās
4. Study a selection of about forty slokās that give more details about various spiritual practices

A good understanding of the categories like caturvida purushārthās (four pursuits), pancakosās (five sheaths), shariratrayam (three bodies), pramānatrayam (three sources of knowledge), gunatrayam (three modes of manifestation), yagna-dāna-tapas (service-charity-austerity), satya-ahimsa-brahmacarya (honesty-kindness-discipline), etc. are needed to interpret the words of the Gita. Some of these will be taken up even before we enter into the slokās of the Gita. Some of them will be introduced along with the slokās.

A humble and curious attitude is needed to understand the Gita. If we come across an idea that we are not able to accept, instead of rejecting the idea, we need to dig deeper. These ideas were acceptable to great intellectuals like Sankarāchārya and Swāmi Vivekānanda. If they were able to accept them and if we are not able to accept them, then it is possible that we have misunderstood, or we have

missed an important logical link. We need to dig deeper to fill the gap in understanding. This will be more beneficial to us than rejecting the idea.

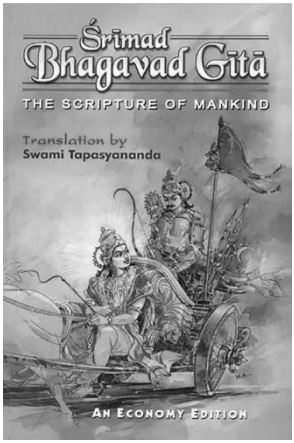
To get a strong connection with the slokās, it is important to read it in the original Sanskrit with word-by-word meaning. Reading merely a translation is like seeing a postcard-size poor black-and-white photocopy of a beautiful painting of Raja Ravi Varma. We may be able to see a woman and a bird. But we cannot see the expressions, the emotions, and so many fine details. Reading the original Sanskrit is like seeing the full-size original painting in bright light. We will be able to emotionally relate to the teaching. Only such a study will give an experience of the slokās that will be transformative. Most of the nouns in Sanskrit are common across all Indian languages. So, anyone who is familiar with any Indian language can directly recognize 60 to 80 percent of the words. Some familiarity with the kārakās (prepositions) will help understand better. In fact, we can learn a lot of Sanskrit by studying the slokās of the Gita with word-by-word meaning. It will also help to know how to chant the slokās loudly with correct pronunciation.

Memorizing the slokās that we are studying will make us more familiar with the meaning. Every slokā has multiple layers of meaning. When we memorize and chant the original Sanskrit slokā with knowledge of the word-by-word meaning, we will find new patterns and correlations with other slokās. By memorizing the slokās, we can push them into the subconscious mind. Then it will keep working on them and try to understand them, even without our notice. Later, when we get back to chanting or study of those slokās, we will get new insights and clarity.

It is recommended that every day you chant the set of slokās given in the next section, which are covered in this course. You can chant all of them or at least the slokās that you have covered in the study so far.

This book will help you start your journey with the Bhagavad Gita. This book does not cover the complete text.

You will be attending more classes and listening to more lectures on the Gita in future. It is good to buy a good hard-bound book with all the slokās with word-by-word meaning. The book that I recommend is by Swāmi Tapasyānanda called "Bhagavad Gita – The Scripture of Mankind". It is published by Rāmakrishṇa Math, Chennai. It gives full summary, chapter summaries, word-by-word meanings, running meaning, and additional notes where needed. You can use this book for chanting and also to take notes as you study and listen to lectures on the Gita from various teachers.



If you want an authoritative traditional commentary in English, you can read Sankara's commentary of the Bhagavad Gita translated by Swami Gambhirananda. It is published by Advaita Ashrama. Sankara raises all possible objections and questions on every concept and provides thorough logical arguments.

The three volume commentary by Swami Ranganathananda gives a very contemporary perspective of the Bhagavad

Gita, with references to latest research and ideas from around the world. This is published by Advaita Ashrama.

English commentaries by Swami Chinmayananda, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Paramarthananda Saraswati, and Swami Ramanacharanatirtha are good.

This book is a logical buildup of ideas. So, please read this book in sequence for maximum benefit. By studying the contents presented here, the reader must be able to answer the following questions, based on the concepts in the Gita:

- What is the purpose of your life?
- What is the difference between animals and human beings?
- What is the purpose of human beings in the Universe?
- Who am I as an individual?
- What are the real things that matter at the end of life?
- How can I decide between right and wrong in various situations?
- Who is Ishvara (God)?
- What is the relationship between Ishvara and the world?
- What is the relationship between Ishvara and the individual?
- Why do good people sometimes face tough situations?
- What does a successful life look and feel like?
- Can I be spiritual but not religious?

4 Essence of the Bhagavad Gita

ॐ श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः हरिः ॐ

oṃ śrī gurubhyo namaḥ harih oṁ

Om Salutations to the Guru

प्रपन्नपारिजाताय तोत्रवेत्रैकपाणये ।
ज्ञानमुद्राय कृष्णाय गीतामृतदुहे नमः ॥

prapannapārijātāya totravetraikapāṇaye ।

jñānamudrāya kṛṣṇāya gītāmṛtaduhe namaḥ ॥

To the devotee's wish-fulfilling tree, to the one with cows-controlling-stick in hand, to the one showing the gesture of knowledge, to Krishṇa, to the giver of the nectar called the Gita, salutations.

1. Prayer

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसम्मूढचेताः ।
यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ॥ २-७॥

kārpaṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvāṃ dharmasammūḍhacetāḥ ।
yacchreyaḥ syānniścitaṃ brūhi tanme śiṣyaste'haṃ śādhi māṃ tvāṃ prapannam ॥ 2-7॥

With my nature overcome by the defect of misery, I am asking You, with the intellect confused between right and wrong, what may be right for sure, tell that to me, I am Your disciple, teach me, I have surrendered to You.

श्रीभगवानुवाच । śrībhagavānuvāca ।

The Lord said:

2. Essence

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।
गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥ २-११॥

aśocyānanvaśocastvaṃ prajñāvādāṃśca bhāṣase ।
gatāsūnagatāsūṃśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ ॥ 2-11॥

You are worrying about what you need not be worried about, but you are saying words of wisdom; about who goes and who stays, a wise person does not grieve. (The Gita shows the way to freedom from all sorrow through right knowledge.)

3. Goal

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥ २-७१॥

vihāya kāmānyaḥ sarvānpumāṃścarati niḥspṛhaḥ ।
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntimadhigacchati ॥ 2-71॥

The person who has abandoned all (selfish and sensory) desires, lives (doing his duties - yagna, serving the world - dāna, and following self-discipline - tapas) without getting attached, is free from sense of "mine" and sense of "I", he attains peace.

4. Path

योगयुक्तो विशुद्धात्मा विजितात्मा जितेन्द्रियः ।
सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते ॥ ५-७॥

yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ ।
sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvannapi na lipyate ॥ 5-7॥

Having attained purity of mind by (through selfless action, Karma Yoga), having attained mastery over senses by control of mind (through meditation, Dhyāna Yoga), seeing himself in the self of all living beings (through Self-Knowledge, Jnāna Yoga), he is not tainted (by action, and by positive and negative results) even when he works.

5. Individual

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥ ६-५॥

uddharedātmanātmānaṃ nātmānamavasādayet ।
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhurātmaiva ripurātmanaḥ ॥ 6-5॥

A person must elevate himself (punya - merits, samskara - character, and Jnāna - knowledge) by (the right use of) his body, mind and intellect (as instruments), he should not lower himself down; the body, mind and intellect (when under control) are one's friend, and they are one's enemy (when uncontrolled). (Be a better person today than you were yesterday.)

6. Impersonal Truth

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।
अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥ १०-२०॥

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

(As sentient cause,) I am the (Pure Conscious) Self residing in the heart of all beings, (as material cause,) I am the beginning, middle and end of all beings. (There is nothing that exists other than Me.)

7. Personal God

भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम् ।
सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥ ५-२९॥

bhoktāraṃ yajñatapasāṃ sarvalokamaheśvaram ।
suhṛdaṃ sarvabhūtānāṃ jñātvā māṃ śāntimṛcchati ॥ 5-29॥

(I, Universal Being, am) the (omnipresent) recipient and beneficiary of all external and internal activities, the (omnipotent) Lord of all the worlds, the (compassionate) friend of all living beings; (a person) attains peace by knowing Me (thus).

8. Gita's Way 1/2

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः ।
अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥ १२-६॥

ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṃnyasya matparāḥ ।
ananyenaiva yogena māṃ dhyāyanta upāsate ॥ 12-6॥

They who offer all (personal, family, professional, social service, religious, spiritual, etc.) actions to Me (as Karma Yoga), having Me as the Goal, worshipping Me and meditating upon Me with single-minded (Dhyāna) Yoga,

9. Gita's Way 2/2

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।
भवामि न चिरात्पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥ १२-७॥

teṣāmahaṃ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṃsārasāgarāt ।
bhavāmi na cirātpārtha mayyāveśitacetasām ॥ 12-7॥

To those who have their mind fixed on Me, I very soon become their Saviour from the ocean of death, desire, and sorrow.

हरिः ॐ तत् सत्
harih om̃ tat sat
God alone Exists.

श्री कृष्णार्पणमस्तु
śrī kṛṣṇārpaṇamastu
This is offered to Sri Krishṇa.

5 Salutation

In his commentary of the Bhagavad Gita, called Gudārtha Dīpika – light on the hidden implied meaning, Sri Madhusudana Saraswati composed nine slokās as Gita Dhyāna Slokās – verses for meditation on the Gita. One of those nine slokās summarizes the important concepts and the path of the Gita very well.

प्रपन्नपारिजाताय तोत्रवेत्रैकपाणये ।
ज्ञानमुद्राय कृष्णाय गीतामृतदुहे नमः ॥

prapannapārijātāya totravetraikapāṇaye |

jñānamudrāya kṛṣṇāya gītāmṛtaduhe namaḥ ||

To the devotee's wish-fulfilling tree, to the one with cows-controlling-stick in hand, to the one showing the gesture of knowledge, to Krishṇa, to the giver of the nectar called the Gita, salutations.

prapanna pārijātāya – Pārijāta is wish-fulfilling tree. We have many desires. Many of them will be weak desires, which are just dreams. Strong desires are those that translate into action. We get the results of our actions. The Ishvara is the Universal Entity in every individual context. In the physical material realm, He has manifested as the entire physical Universe. All life is a manifestation of His life. All laws of the Universe are His manifestations. Ishvara is the karma phala dātā that connects our actions to the results. Every interaction with the Universe is actually a transaction with Him only. This is true for everyone, even a non-devotee. A devotee (prapanna) is one who has understood this relationship between himself and Ishvara. To a devotee, there is only himself and Ishvara. There is no other

entity in existence. So, he does every action as an offering to Ishvara. He is the bestower of the results of all actions. As actions are manifested desires, a devotee acknowledges that He is the fulfiller of all desires. Thus, Ishvara is the wish-fulfilling tree. The attitude of doing every action as a gift to Ishvara is called Ishvara arpana buddhi. The attitude of accepting every result as a gift from Ishvara is called Ishvara prasāda buddhi. This is called **Karma Yoga**. Thus, Karma Yoga is condensed in the first quarter of the slokā. This is the first discipline in spiritual life.

totravetraika pāṇaye – Pāna means hand. Kodandapāni is Rama who holds the bow Kodanda. Pinākapāni is Shiva who holds the Pināka bow. Totravetraika pānaye means to the one holding a stick that is used to control the cows. The cows are our mind and senses. We find it very difficult to control the mind and senses. An easy way to do it is to meditate upon the Lord. This is symbolized by putting the stick in His hands. One of the names of Krishṇa often used in the Gita is Hrishikesha. It means, He is the Lord of the senses. This indicates **Dhyāna Yoga**, which is control of the mind and senses. Thus, Dhyāna Yoga is condensed in the second quarter of the slokā. This is the second discipline in spiritual life.

jñānamudrāya – The hand gesture where the index finger is circled forward away from the last three fingers and kept under the tip of the thumb is called Jnāna Mudra. The last three fingers indicate the three layers of personality – physical, mental, and subconscious. The thumb indicates Pure Consciousness. The index finger indicates our identity. Usually, the index finger is joined with the last three fingers. This is our identification

with the body, mind and subconscious. Our real nature is Pure Consciousness. We need to stop identifying ourselves with the three layers and identify ourselves with Pure Consciousness. This is shown by separating the index finger away from the lower three fingers and uniting it with the thumb. Thus, Jnāna Mudra indicates knowledge. This knowledge is attained by **Jnāna Yoga**. This is the third and final discipline in spiritual life. From a devotional point of view, it indicates surrender of the individual to Ishvara.

kṛṣṇāya – Krishṇa gives us this knowledge in the Gita. Involving the Lord indicates **Bhakti Yoga**, which runs in and through all the disciplines of spiritual life according to the Bhagavad Gita.

gītāmṛta duhe – Mrta is death. Amrta is immortality. That which gives immortality is also called Amrta. The Gita gives us immortality by giving us the knowledge of our real Nature as Pure Consciousness. It makes us drop our identification with this body and mind, which are mortal. It makes us identify with Pure Consciousness, which is immortal. The body dies. But we are not the body. The mind goes through mood swings. But we are not the mind. The Jivātma goes through birth-death-birth-death cycles – "punarapi jananam punarapi maranam". But we are not the Jivātma. We are pratyagātma - Pure Consciousness. The Gita gives us this knowledge and tells us how to prepare for it, attain it, and own it up. Thus, the Gita is the elixir that gives us immortality. So, it is Gitāmrta. Duhe means giver. Krishṇa is the giver of this Gitāmtra.

namaḥ – We start our study of the Gita by bowing down in salutation to Krishṇa.

6 Prayer

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसम्मूढचेताः ।
यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ॥ २-७॥

kārpaṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvāṃ dharmasammūḍhacetāḥ ।
yacchreyaḥ syānniścitaṃ brūhi tanme śiṣyaste'haṃ śādhi māṃ tvāṃ prapannam ॥ 2-7॥

कार्पण्य-दोष-उपहत-स्वभावः पृच्छामि त्वाम् धर्म-सम्मूढ-चेताः ।
यत् श्रेयः स्यात् निश्चितम् ब्रूहि तत् मे शिष्यः ते अहम् शाधि माम् त्वाम् प्रपन्नम् ॥ २-७॥

kārpaṇya-doṣa-upahata-svabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvām dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ ।
yat śreyaḥ syāt niścitam brūhi tat me śiṣyaḥ te aham śādhi mām tvām prapannam ॥ 2-7॥

With my nature overcome by the defect of misery, I am asking You, with the intellect confused between what is right and wrong, what may be right for sure, tell that to me, I am Your disciple, teach me, I have surrendered to You.

Often, we wonder why Krishṇa picked Arjuna to teach the Gita, instead of Yudhishthira the virtuous, or Sahādeva the wise. The simple answer is that Arjuna asked for it. Free advice has no value. Unless a person specifically asks for advice with the right mindset, the advice will have no value. In this slokā, Arjuna explicitly asks Krishṇa for advice. The same happens later with Yudhishthira, where he asks Bhīshma for advice. The great grandfather, wise hero and brave devotee teaches Vishnu Sahasranāma.

This slokā has a lot of points to ponder about. **kārpanya dosha upahata svabhāvah**, Arjuna says that his natural calm state of mind is overwhelmed by misery. This is a very positive approach. He says that the natural state of his mind is to be cheerful and enthusiastic. The current state of sorrow and misery is an aberration. This is the first thing we need to learn. Life will have problems. That is natural. However, the mind need not be gloomy. We must face all problems with a cheerful and enthusiastic attitude. It is only in rare situations that the mind may become sad.

Why? That is mentioned next. **dharma sammoodha cetāh**, When the intellect is confused between what is right and what is wrong, we cannot decide what to do. The capacity to decide between right and wrong is called dharma. This implies that when there is no confusion, we must always do what we understand is right and refrain from what we understand as wrong. If we do not follow that when

everything is clear, we cannot complain when things are not clear. In most life situations, what is right and wrong is quite clear. Most of the time, Arjuna's mind was cheerful and enthusiastic because he was following his convictions all through. Now, he was confused.

If we read the previous slokās, we can find that initially Arjuna is very self-confident. Duryodhana is very afraid. Vyāsa beautifully shows the contrast between Duryodhana and Arjuna. Duryodhana is sure that the Kauravās will lose and is afraid of losing. Arjuna is confident that that the Pāndavās will win and is afraid of the cost of the victory. Arjuna had fought and won over the same Kaurava army with Bhīshma, Drona, Karna, Duryodhana, etc. single handedly with the weakling Uttarakumāra as the charioteer. So, with Krishṇa as the charioteer, this is not an impossible task.

Arjuna asked Krishṇa to place the chariot in a way that he could see who all had come to fight for Duryodhana. If Krishṇa had placed the chariot in front of Dushāsana or Jayadratha, Arjuna would not have had the confusion at that time. Krishṇa knew Arjuna's weak spot. To resolve the potential future problem then and there, Krishṇa placed the chariot in front of Bhīshma and Drona. Both were highly respected and loved by Arjuna. Suddenly, Arjuna stopped seeing the warriors assembled as people fighting on the side of adharma. He started seeing them as cousins, grandfathers, teachers, and nephews. Arjuna got confused about what is right and what is wrong.

Arjuna was a warrior and king. He had been training all through his life to fight. Society had trained him and given him all royal luxuries. Now was the time to do his duty as a

warrior to fight on the side of dharma to repay society. Delusion clouded Arjuna's mind. He did not see this as his duty. He was mistaken that he was fighting to gain kingship for himself. He did not want kingship at the cost of the lives of his relatives. He wanted to quit. Krishṇa scolded Arjuna that it was not right for him to quit at this time. This shook Arjuna up. He realized that something was wrong with his logic, but he was not able to figure it out. He got confused. He asked Krishṇa to help him.

Arjuna was not looking at it from the point of view of his duty to society. He forgot all the investment that society had made in him to make him a warrior. This was not the time to betray society. Arjuna has a duty to society. Arjuna acknowledges that the Kauravās were ātatāyis. An ātatāyi is one who has committed one of the great crimes, namely, poisons the food, sets fire to home, steals or robs wealth, kidnaps wife, or attacks with intention to kill. According to the law of those days, even one of these would invite capital punishment. Kauravās were guilty of all of them. As a king and warrior, it was his duty to ensure that other kings were delivering justice correctly. But still Arjuna was hesitant to do his duty. Krishṇa reminded Arjuna of this perspective. Also, Krishṇa took this opportunity to point out to Arjuna a still higher perspective, by showing him the purpose of life, and in fact the purpose of the whole of creation.

Arjuna was an eager student. He was fully engaged and thought deeply about what Krishṇa said. He asked several questions to which Krishṇa replied patiently. All his doubts were cleared. He got the clarity that he needed. He had several reasons now to do his duty as a warrior. He got on his feet with renewed cheer and enthusiasm. This is the charm of the Gita. It will give us several perspectives from

which we can understand ourselves, assess the situation and make an informed decision about what to do.

The words, "**shishyah te aham**, I am your disciple. **tvām prapannam**, I surrender to you. **pruchāmi tvām**, I am asking you. **shādhi mām**, Please teach me. **yat shreyah syāt nischitam bruhi tat me**, Please tell me what is definitely right for me to do.", triggered Krishṇa to teach the Gita. Arjuna does not ask Krishṇa to do the work for him. Arjuna asks Krishṇa to remove his confusion. Arjuna asks for clarity on what is right and what is wrong. He asks for sreyas, that which is right, and not for preyas, that which is pleasurable. When shown the way, Arjuna is willing to do the work. This is the right way to approach any teacher or God. We can see this in the Gāyatri Mantra also. The Gāyatri mantra says dhīyoyo nah prachodayāt – please enlighten our intellect.

Thus, this slokā has the same meaning as the Gāyatri Mantra. The Gāyatri Mantra addresses God in the form of Sūrya devata. This slokā can be used to pray to our Ishtha devata to give us knowledge.

Knowledge Check:

1. Why did Krishṇa choose Arjuna over others to give the knowledge of the Gita?
2. What were the accomplishments of Arjuna before the Mahabharata war?
3. Who is an ātatāyi?
4. What is Arjuna's prayer to Krishṇa?
5. What is preyas and sreyas?
6. What is the meaning of the Gāyatri Mantra?

7 Essence

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
śrībhagavānuvāca ।
श्रीभगवान् उवाच ।
śrībhagavān uvāca ।
The Lord said:

At desperate moments in life, we want God to tell us what to do. Often, we talk to God in our minds and are frustrated that God does not talk back. The truth is, God has spoken these words. His instructions have always been with us. When we did not care to know what God has already told, it is unjust for us to expect God to answer when we ask. The creator of the Universe has told us the design based on which the Universe is created and is being operated. If we understand the design, we will see that many things in life make sense.

For example, we wonder why there is so much suffering in the world. If we had studied the Gita, we would know that freedom from suffering is not the ideal or goal. The goal is the wisdom that we are not the body, mind, and intellect. Sometimes, to push us towards that goal, some suffering is needed. The world is not designed to give pleasure to everyone at all times. The world is designed to wake us up to wisdom and proceed towards manifesting it.

We celebrate the fact that God has spoken to mankind. God has explained the purpose and principles based on which the world and life has been designed. God has given the “User Manual” for life.

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।
गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥ २-११॥
aśocyānanvaśocastvaṃ prajñāvādāṃśca bhāṣase ।
gatāsūnagatāsūṃśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ ॥ 2-11॥
अशोच्यान् अन्वशोचः त्वम् प्रज्ञा-वादान् च भाषसे ।
गतासून् अगतासून् च न अनुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥ २-११॥
aśocyān anvaśocaḥ tvam prajñā-vādān ca bhāṣase ।
gatāsūn agatāsūn ca na anuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ ॥ 2-11॥
You are worrying about what you need not be worried about, but you are saying words of wisdom; about who goes and who stays, a wise person does not grieve. (The Gita shows the way to freedom from all sorrow through right knowledge.)

This is the slokā where the Gita teaching starts. The previous slokās set the context. Thus, this is effectively the first slokā of the Gita.

In our tradition, every book must start with **अनुबंध चतुष्टय** *anubandha catustaya* – four topics that give an overview of the book.

- **अधिकारी adhikāri** – target audience
- **प्रयोजन prayojana** – expected result
- **विषय vishaya** – essential message
- **संबन्ध sambandha** – relationship between Vishaya and Prayojana

For example, if it is a book about yogāsanās, these may be the anubandha chatustaya.

- Adhikāri – A person who is reasonably healthy and who wants to improve health and become free from chronic diseases.
- Prayojana – A healthy and resilient body, calm and cheerful mind capable of focusing on positive thing.
- Vishaya – A recommended diet, series of postures, breathing techniques, chantings, meditations, etc.
- Sambandha – Reading or knowing is not enough. The aspirant must practice what is advised every day for a few months.

For the Gita, this slokā gives the anubandha chatustaya.

- Adhikāri – Krishṇa says, **aśocyān anvaśocah tvam** - "you are worrying about people who don't need to be worried about". Thus, the eligible student is one who seeks the welfare of everyone, even the wrongdoers. Arjuna expresses his confusion about what is his duty, what is right and what is wrong, what is the purpose of life, etc. The student of the Gita is one who is seeking these. **prajnā vādānsca bhāsase** – "talking words of scholarship". Arjuna tries to bring in all his previous knowledge and experience, and tries to solve the problem. He is not able to. Thus, the student must have done homework. The student must have already tried to solve the problem with all available resources. Such a person is the audience that the Gita addresses.
- Prayojana – This slokā says **gatāsoon agatāsoonsca na anuśocanti** – "does not grieve about people who go or stay". Freedom from sorrow is the expected result. This slokā is where the Gita teaching starts. The 66th slokā of the 18th chapter is where the Gita teaching ends. The ending slokā, "sarva dharmān

parityajya" ends with "mā sucaha" – "don't worry". According to Indian hermeneutics called mimāmsa sāstra, there are six indicators (shad lingāh) to ascertain the purport of a book. One of them is the message in the beginning and end. We can see that template being followed here too. Thus, the expected outcome of the Gita is freedom from sorrow. The Gita has a beautiful series of slokās called "sthita pragnya lakshanāh" – "marks of a person of steady wisdom". The expected outcome is elaborated in that series.

- Vishaya – The essential message is **panditāh** – "wise people", indicating wisdom. "na anusochanti panditāh" means "wise people don't grieve". Thus, wisdom is given as the way to freedom from sorrow. What is wisdom? The right knowledge of "Who am I?", "What is my relationship with this world and other people?", "What is the purpose of life?", "What is real progress in life?", "What is worth pursuing?", "What is right and what is wrong?", etc. This clarity is called wisdom. I am not this body or mind. I am a spiritual entity beyond these. Realizing this is the purpose of life. This realization will free me from all sorrow.
- Sambandha – Arjuna speaks words of wisdom. Still, he is sad. If Arjuna is really wise, he will not have sorrow. So, there is something more needed. The wisdom must manifest. Thus, mere knowledge is not enough. It must change attitude and behaviour. The wisdom must be assimilated.

Thus, "na anuśocanti panditāh" - "wise people don't grieve" is the Gita in a nutshell. **The Gita shows us the way to be completely free from all sorrow even amidst the ups and**

downs of life, through the right understanding of "Who am I?" and "What is the purpose of life?" That is the central message. Thus, this slokā gives the anubandha catustaya of the Bhagavad Gita.

Knowledge Check:

1. What is anubandha catustaya?
2. What are the four components of anubandha catustaya?
3. Who is the intended audience for the Gita?
4. What is the expected outcome of studying and following the Gita?
5. What is the central message of the Gita?
6. What is wisdom?

8 Goal

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥ २-७१॥

vihāya kāmānyaḥ sarvānpumāṃścarati niḥspṛhaḥ ।
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntimadhigacchati ॥ 2-71॥

विहाय कामान् यः सर्वान् पुमान् चरति निःस्पृहः ।
निर्ममः निरहङ्कारः सः शान्तिम् अधिगच्छति ॥ २-७१॥

vihāya kāmān yaḥ sarvān pumān carati niḥspṛhāḥ ।
nirmamaḥ nirahaṅkāraḥ saḥ śāntim adhigacchati ॥ 2-71॥

The person who has abandoned all (selfish and sensory) desires, lives without getting attached, is free from sense of "mine", is free from sense of "I", he attains peace.

To understand the goal of life, let us look at it in a very impersonal and rational manner. The Universe as we see today formed out of the Big Bang about 13.8 billion years ago. Several billion years after, our solar system emerged, and our Earth was formed about 4.5 billion years ago. The first primitive life on earth formed about 3.7 billion years ago.

The most primitive life forms are unicellular. Then they evolved into multicellular organisms. Then came the vertebrates with brain and spinal cord. As life evolves, it becomes increasingly complex, till it reaches human beings, which is the most complex of all living beings.

We can take clues from this biological evolution to form an intelligent guess on what Nature has intended as the Goal of life for human beings.

The primitive life forms have only two goals – **survive and multiply**. If we think what success would mean for a fish, it would be to survive till adulthood and have a good number of healthy children. To enable this, Nature has endowed a fish with **hunger, fear, sleep, lust, greed**, etc. To survive and multiply is a good goal of life for a fish, or a virus or bacteria, but not for a human being.

With further evolution, animals started living in groups, like a herd of elephants or a pride of lions. What would success in life mean for an elephant? Beyond its own survival and multiplication, it must have **contributed to the herd**. It must have protected the herd from external aggressors and predators. It must have taken care of other members of the herd. To enable this, the highest manifestation of life for an elephant are emotions like **love, anger, pride, loyalty, courage, aggression, anxiety, parenthood**, etc. Nature has given various triggers of pleasure in the reward centers in the brain to enable these instincts in these animals. Even a dog or a bird has the natural instinct to take care of its young ones.

When we go still higher up in the evolutionary ladder, we come to human beings. Human beings live by **ideologies** that are **voluntarily** picked up. In animal societies, the strong dominate the weak. In human societies, the strong protect the weak. That is why we have affirmative action, reservation, etc. Animal societies are all about competition. Human societies are about **cooperation and collaboration**. Animal societies are about exploitation. Human societies

are about conservation. Human societies are dominated by **art and poetry** in everything from food, dress, dwelling, language, sound, etc. It is these that separate humans from animals.

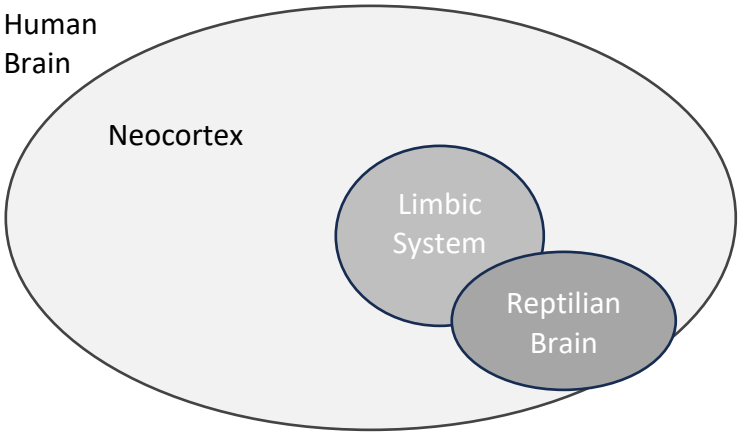
You may say that people also feel emotions like lust, greed, jealousy, anger, etc. These are evolutionary remnants. We have several useless evolutionary remnants in the body called vestigial organs like appendix, second eyelid, and ear muscles. Similarly, these are vestigial emotions. These try to pin us down at the animal level and it is a human struggle to rise above their influence to manifest our human nature. For example, the emotion of anger is absolutely of no use to a human being. No problem or situation can be addressed with anger. It is an evolutionary remnant. It is a vestigial emotion. Similarly, lust, jealousy, hatred, etc. are vestigial emotions. They are animal emotions and have no use for a human being. Being a proper human being means outgrowing these emotions.

Self-discipline is another distinguishing factor in human beings. Animals eat when they are hungry and sleep when they are tired. It is humans who voluntarily regulate these. Humans fast voluntarily for health (like intermittent fasting) or religious reasons (like Ekādasi, Lent, and Ramzān). Most humans have breakfast only after taking a bath in the morning. No animal would keep awake because it is Shivarātri. Animals start reproduction when they attain puberty. Human beings wait till they form stable families. Also, some people take to monastic life and live as celibates. These cannot be found in animals.

Just as animals find happiness in survival and sense pleasures, humans find pleasure in higher and nobler pursuits. The happiness thus got is also much higher.

Still, even this happiness is conditional and temporary. If we ask a person, “when do you want to be happy? Sunday or Monday? January or February? Morning or evening?”, the answer will be, “always”. If we ask, “Where? At home or work or road?”, the answer will be, “everywhere”. If we ask under what conditions, the answer will be “unconditionally”. If we ask how much, the answer will be “maximum”. Thus, we all want **unconditional, eternal infinite happiness everywhere**. Now, if such happiness is possible, it must be available here and now, everywhere and always. But, we are sad sometimes. Does that mean that it is not possible? The Gita promises us freedom from all sorrow. Then why are we not able to avail it? The Gita says, “ignorance of your true nature”. Thus, the final goal is to discover our intrinsic unconditional happiness by the knowledge of our true nature.

Thus, we need to evolve from our animal nature to human nature, and from human nature to divine nature. This is the goal of not only individual life. **Even the whole Universe sees its fulfillment when humanity reaches this goal.** Thus, a human being reaching the goal gives meaning to the billions of years of evolution of the Universe. This possibility is there only in human beings, because the other animals have not evolved a complex enough brain for this. The lower animals have only the **reptilian brain** well developed. This is the seat of survival instincts. The higher animals have **limbic system** also developed. This is the seat of emotions. Human beings have well developed **neocortex**. This is the seat of mirror neurons which help us to think from other’s



point of view and be empathetic. This is the source of our value systems. Thus, the whole Universe is evolving through living beings along this hierarchy of goals. The next development is the spiritual goal. Fortunately, no additional biological evolution is needed. Every human being is endowed with the necessary biology to pursue the final spiritual goal. We only need to develop some understanding of concepts, and training to thinking clearly by following discipline and practicing meditation.

Thus, the goal of life that is pointed to by the Gita is what the whole Universe is evolving towards. These four stages of the goal are what is referred to in our scriptures as:

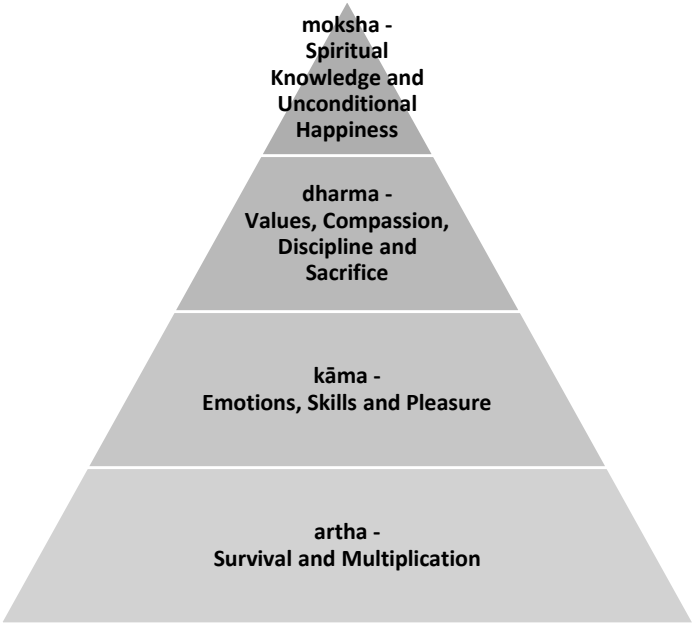
1. **artha** – security
2. **kāma** – pleasure
3. **dharma** – virtue
4. **moksha** – freedom

These are called **caturvidha purushārthāh** – four pursuits of human beings. The lower living organisms are driven predominantly by “artha”. The next higher living organisms are driven by “kāma”. Human beings live by “dharma”. The

next step in this evolution is “moksha” – freedom from all sorrow by means of the right knowledge.

This is what is indicated in the three colours of the Indian National Flag. The green indicates artha and kāma, prosperity. The white indicates “dharma” with the dharma chakra. The saffron indicates “moksha”. The order indicates the evolution of one above the other.

This is the hierarchy of goals.



Out of the trillions and trillions of living beings on Earth, human beings are only about seven or eight billion. Thus, **human life is very rare on Earth**. We, having got this human life, if we have artha and kāma as primary goals, it is a misuse and abuse of the opportunity. It is a disappointing betrayal of billions of years of evolution. The Kena

Upanishad calls it, “mahati vinashti” – “great calamity”. [Kena Upanishad 2.5] So, we need to identify the animal and human propensities, and strive our best to manifest our human qualities (like love, kindness, cooperation, patience, self-discipline, knowledge, and dispassion) and outgrow our animal qualities (like lust, greed, anger, arrogance, jealousy, fear, and licentiousness). Every time we choose to be patient and not shout in anger, we are doing a service to the Universe and to humanity. We are helping the Universe and all the human beings evolve one step ahead. Every time we succumb to lower animal instincts like lust, greed, anger, jealousy, and hatred, we are betraying the billions of years of evolution. We are dragging the Universe back from its evolution and doing a disservice.

The purpose of life is to become a better human being and manifest our higher nature. All situations in life provide opportunities for this growth. By manifesting our higher nature, we are helping the Universe and Nature to evolve further. This itself is a great contribution to the Universe. This is a contribution that can be made even when on the deathbed. It does not need any physical energy or resources. Becoming a better person is the true and lifelong goal for every human being. We need to break out of the evolutionary remnants of seeking security and pleasure. We need to grow out of narrow ideas of individuality and self-centeredness. We can see this very clearly from our knowledge of evolutionary biology.

The scriptures identify three types of happiness. **Vishaya ānanda** is got from the contact of sense organs with sense objects. These are like smell, taste, touch, etc. **Bhajana ānanda** is non-sensory pleasure. For example, the happiness that we get by listening to classical music or

reading a good poem. The third is **Ātma ānanda**, which is the fundamental happiness, which manifests as the previous two. It can be directly got by knowledge of the Self.

Vishaya ānanda and Bhajana ānanda are contrasting in

- Vishaya ānanda – Sensory pleasure
  - Diminishing returns
  - Weakens sense organs
  - Recollection gives pain
  - Sharing reduces pleasure

  } Available to animals also
- Bhajana ānanda – Non-sensory pleasure
  - Multiplying returns
  - Strengthens sense organs
  - Recollection gives pleasure
  - Sharing increases pleasure

  } Available to humans only
- Ātma ānanda – Fundamental pleasure
  - Cause of both Vishaya and Bhajana ānanda
  - Unconditional, infinite, absolute pleasure
  - Got by true knowledge of the Self

  } Got by spiritual knowledge

several ways. Vishaya ānanda gives diminishing returns. To get the same amount of happiness repeatedly, more and more input is needed. The senses get used to the input and become insensitive. For example, when we enter a room, we can smell the fragrance. Very soon our noses get accustomed to it and we no longer smell it. If there is a different fragrance or a stronger one, then we can temporarily smell it for some time. Bhajana ānanda gives increasing returns. Initially, classical music does not give much joy because we do not know the nuances of it. As we

listen more and more, we become more and more sensitive to the subtleties. The more we listen, the more we can enjoy. Also, even a small piece is enough to give great joy.

Vishaya ānanda gives desire and pain when we remember the past experience in the absence of the sense object currently. In the case of Bhajana ānanda, remembrance gives the same joy as actual experience. We can just close our eyes and mentally play the music that we have heard before or even compose new music in our heads. It gives the same joy.

When we share the source of Vishaya ānanda with others, our share of joy diminishes. When we share Bhajana ānanda with others, our joy multiplies.

Vishaya ānanda is accessible to animals and humans. Bhajana ānanda is accessible only to humans.

Ātma ānanda is the unconditional, infinite, and absolute happiness, which is the foundation of all other types of incidental happiness. It can be directly accessed by Self-knowledge alone.

Swāmi Vivekānanda says, “Sense-happiness is not the goal of humanity. Wisdom (Jnâna) is the goal of all life. We find that man enjoys his intellect more than an animal enjoys its senses; and we see that man enjoys his spiritual nature even more than his rational nature. So the highest wisdom must be this spiritual knowledge. With this knowledge will come bliss. All these things of this world are but the shadows, the manifestations in the third or fourth degree of the real Knowledge and Bliss.” [Complete Works of Swāmi Vivekānanda, Vol 3 pg 4]

The slokā we have selected to study here shows this. The goal is to become free from three-fold bondage:

1. **mamah** - Seeking security in the world by sense of "mine"
2. **kāmāh** - Seeking pleasure in the world in the form of desires
3. **ahamkārah** - Sense of individuality

Vihāya, being free from these, **pumān**, the person, **carati**, continues to move around and does his duties, **nispruhah**, without any attachment. He lives as a **jivanmukta**, who is free when living. **sah shāntim adhi gacchati**, he attains peace. This is the goal. This is called **Moksha**.

It is also to be noted that Moksha does not guarantee freedom from troubles in life. It does not promise health, wealth, relations, name, fame, success, etc. There are several slokās in the Bhagavad Gita in the second, twelfth, and fourteenth and other chapters where there are elaborate descriptions of the Jivanmukta. Everywhere, it says that the Jivanmukta will not lose his poise, cheer, and enthusiasm in the midst of success and failure. This is a clear indication that the Jivanmukta will face the dualities of life. He will have success and failure, gain and loss, health and disease, etc. However, the Gita says, he will have his senses always under his control. His mind will be calm under all situations. He will be honest, kind, self-disciplined, humble, and detached. Nowhere does the Gita mention physical or mental miraculous powers. There is no place for occultism in the Gita. Detachment, patience and purity are the superpowers of a Jivanmukta.

As long as we are dependent on the world for security and pleasure, we cannot attain freedom and peace. Sri Rāmakrishṇa explains this with a story. “It is narrated in the Bhagavata that the Avadhuta had twenty-four gurus, one of whom was a kite. In a certain place the fishermen were catching fish. A kite swooped down and snatched a fish. At the sight of the fish, about a thousand crows chased the kite and made a great noise with their cawing. Whichever way the kite flew with the fish, the crows followed it. The kite flew to the south and the crows followed it there. The kite flew to the north and still the crows followed after it. The kite went east and west, but with the same result. As the kite began to fly about in confusion, lo, the fish dropped from its mouth. The crows at once let the kite alone and flew after the fish. Thus relieved of its worries, the kite sat on the branch of a tree and thought: 'That wretched fish was at the root of all my troubles. I have now got rid of it and therefore I am at peace.' The Avadhuta learnt this lesson from the kite, that as long as a man has the fish, that is, worldly desires, he must perform actions and consequently suffer from worry, anxiety, and restlessness. No sooner does he renounce these desires than his activities fall away and he enjoys peace of soul. But work without any selfish motive is good. It does not create any worry. But it is very difficult to be totally unselfish. We may think that our work is selfless,

but selfishness comes, unknown to us, from no one knows where. But if a man has already undergone great spiritual discipline, then as a result of it he may be able to do work without any selfish motive. After the vision of God a man can easily do unselfish work." [Gospel of Sri Rāmakrishṇa, pg 314]

Sri Rāmakrishṇa repeatedly asks spiritual aspirants to renounce kāma (lust or seeking pleasure) and kāncana (greed or seeking wealth). Swāmi Vivekānanda has coined the motto of the Rāmakrishṇa Math as **ātmano mokshārtham jagat hitāya ca (for the liberation of the self and welfare of the world)**. Thus, Sri Rāmakrishṇa asks us to renounce artha and kāma. His disciple, Swāmi Vivekānanda asks us to pursue dharma and moksha.

Knowledge Check:

1. What are the four pursuits of living beings?
2. How are human beings different from animals?
3. What is the goal of life?
4. What do the colours of the Indian National Flag indicate?
5. What is dharma?
6. What is moksha?
7. What are the three types of happiness?
8. What is the purpose of human beings in the Universe?
9. What is the purpose of life that is applicable even at the last breath on the deathbed?

9 Path

योगयुक्तो विशुद्धात्मा विजितात्मा जितेन्द्रियः ।
सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते ॥ ५-७॥

yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ ।
sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvannapi na lipyate ॥ 5-7॥

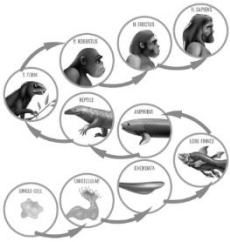
योग-युक्तः विशुद्ध-आत्मा विजित-आत्मा जित-इन्द्रियः ।
सर्व-भूत-आत्म-भूत-आत्मा कुर्वन् अपि न लिप्यते ॥ ५-७॥

yoga-yuktaḥ viśuddha-ātmā vijita-ātmā jita-indriyaḥ ।
sarva-bhūta-ātma-bhūta-ātmā kurvan api na lipyate ॥ 5-7॥

Having attained purity of mind by (through selfless action, Karma Yoga), having attained mastery over senses by control of mind (through meditation, Dhyāna Yoga), seeing himself in the self of all living beings (through Self-Knowledge, Jnāna Yoga), he is not tainted (by action, and by positive and negative results) even when he works.

We have seen that the true knowledge about ourselves is what is going to free us from all sorrow. Now, what is preventing us from getting the true knowledge about ourselves? Nature. Research done by Donald Hoffman, shows that Nature has designed living beings for survival and not for true knowledge. Nature hides the truth from the perception and conception of living beings, and gives them only the knowledge that aids in survival. As we have seen in the analysis of evolution, the lower most living beings have only basic survival instinct. All the activities are oriented only towards the survival of the individual and the species. As evolution progressed, even the pleasure instinct is only towards survival of the individual and the species. When we come to spiritual evolution, this stands as a roadblock. The

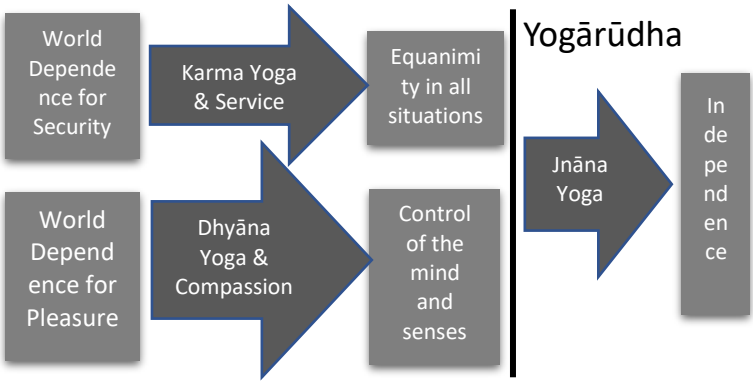
survival and pleasure-seeking instincts have done their job well. That is why we are here. However, to proceed further, we need to overcome them.



Just as the body has various vestigial organs like the appendix, inner eyelids, ear muscles, etc., there are vestigial instincts and emotions. The survival instinct which leads to fear and anxiety is one such. When humans were living like animals, there were physical threats. Human biology has mechanisms to handle these by activating the sympathetic nervous system. This is called fight-flight-freeze response. But, modern day threats are rarely physical. They are more intellectual or relationship-oriented. For these, the fight-flight-freeze response makes the problem worse. But, the biology of the body does not know this. This is the cause of many chronic diseases like diabetes, cardiac problems, obesity, etc. Similarly, the human mind has various vestigial emotions like competition, anger, jealousy, hatred, etc. These were useful in the animal stage. But now, they are counter-productive even in human society. They are absolute problems in spiritual life. All these remnants of our animal past need to be overcome to be able to move forward.

Similarly, the old habit of seeking pleasure in the senses is another problem to be overcome. Even to achieve human goals in life, a person needs to develop the discipline to go beyond sense gratifications. Psychological research has shown that to which extent a child can postpone gratification, to that extent the child can succeed in life later. The capacity to not get distracted by the pull of sense pleasures is a basic trait that needs to be developed for any

success in any human endeavour. This is all the more true for spiritual progress. To progress in spiritual life, people need to be able to free themselves from the pull of the senses.



When a person has sufficiently overcome the evolutionary baggage of seeking security and pleasure outside, the mind would be in state of maturity, when a deeper analysis of "Who am I?" can be done. The idea that we are limited individuals is false. This needs to be corrected by logical reasoning and deep thinking under the guidance of a wise person.

These three bondages of survival instinct, pleasure-seeking behaviour and ignorance of self are called Brahma granti, Vishnu granti and Rudra granti respectively in the Yoga and Tantra texts. Granti means knot. These three knots are called Mahāmāya. These are ways by which Nature holds us back in ignorance and slavery to perpetuate the world. These knots need to be cut or untied to reach the goal of freedom (Moksha).

A person who has overcome the dependence upon the world for security and pleasure is called a yogārūdha in the

Gita verses 6.3 and 6.4. Only such a person is qualified for the final step to dig deeper into the knowledge of self. The same is explained in the verses 12.3-5 also.

The three steps to attaining freedom (Moksha) are presented clearly in the Gita (5.7):

1. **Karma Yoga** – **yogayuktah** doing work without attachment to results - **viśuddhātmā** to purify the mind from likes and dislikes, and become free from seeking security in situations

2. **Dhyāna Yoga** – **vijitātmā** doing meditation to gain mastery over the mind – **jitendriyaḥ** to gain victory over the sense organs and become free from seeking pleasure in the sense objects

3. **Jnāna Yoga** – **sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā** understanding one's true Self as non-different from the Self of all living beings – to become free from the false idea of limited individual identity

Such a person can move around and **kurvannapi** work in this world **na lipyate** without getting affected by or attached to the work.

The first two, Karma Yoga and Dhyāna Yoga, prepare the mind for Jnāna Yoga. Jnāna Yoga gives the knowledge. There are some illustrations that can help us to understand this.

Suppose a person is very hungry. He goes to a place where they are serving food as Annadāna. He says, "I am very, very hungry. Please give me food." The volunteer who is

serving the food replies, “See, there are plates kept there, and we are serving Kichadi. Please take the plate, wash it in the tap there, and bring it. I will serve you Kichadi.” Suppose the person says, “No, no, no, I am very, very hungry. You are asking me to go and wash the plate?” The volunteer says, “We cannot serve Kichadi in any other way. Yes, you are hungry. Kichadi is going to satisfy your hunger. But then, to handle the Kichadi, you need the plate. So, you must do that.” The person takes the plate, washes it, and then brings it. Now, this is Karma Yoga.

Then, suppose, he is holding it upside down. Now, the volunteer says, “No, no, hold it correctly.” And then he holds it correctly, and then he is shaking it all over the place. The volunteer says, “No, no, hold it without shaking. Only then I can serve the Kichadi.” Now, this is Dhyāna Yoga. The plate is our mind. We must take the Kichadi on the plate only. Knowledge must be served in the container called the mind.

Then, the knowledge is actually served. That is called Shravana. Now, once the knowledge is served, then you need to eat that. Just food being on the plate is not going to help. You must eat the food. That is called Manana. Then, you must digest the food and absorb the nutrients. That is called Nididhyāsana. These are the steps: Karma Yoga, then Dhyāna Yoga, then Shravana, Manana, and Nididhyāsana.

Here is another illustration. Suppose a person faints and falls. Some well-wishers take him to a hospital. They revive him, and then they do a checkup. The doctor says, “We did

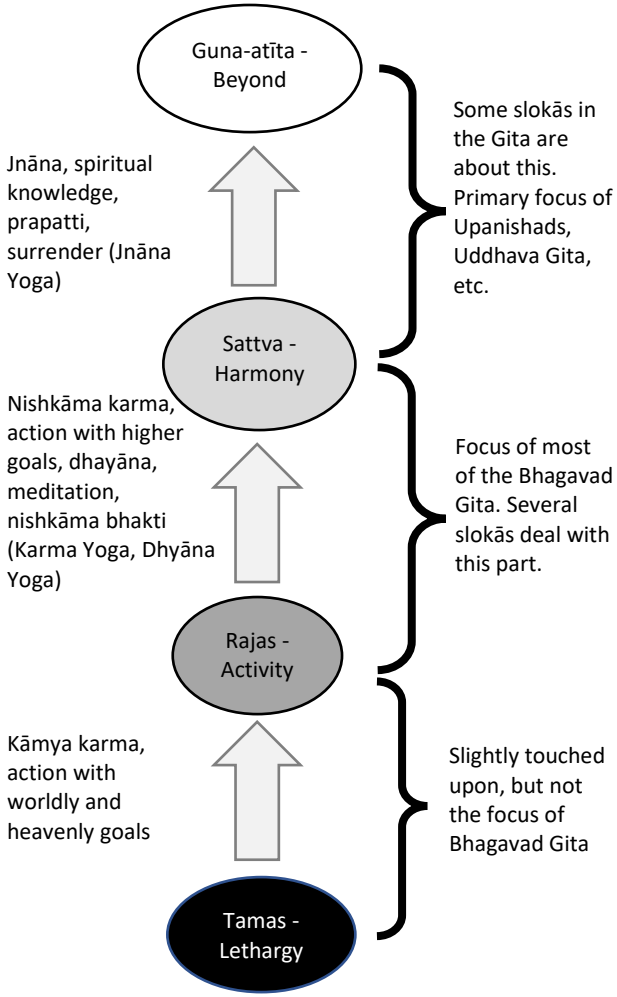
a checkup on you. There is a 60% block in your blood vessel, so we must put a stent. We must do a surgery. So let us first do a checkup." And then they do a checkup. The hemoglobin count comes to 6.5. Then the doctor says, "With this 6.5 hemoglobin, we cannot do surgery. So first, you must build up your strength." So, the doctor says, "Eat a lot of nutritious food and take these vitamin tablets and strengthen your body so that the body can withstand the surgery." So he goes, he prepares, and then after a month's time, he comes back. And they check. The hemoglobin is 15. The doctor says, "Yes, now you are healthy. The body is healthy enough to do the surgery."

They take him into the operating theatre. They give him anesthesia. If they try to do the surgery without anesthesia, the body will resist because the body does not know that the surgery is good for it. The body cannot distinguish between a surgeon's knife and a murderer's knife. So, the body will resist. So, you must give anesthesia. Then after anesthesia, the doctor does the surgery and fixes it, and then the person is healthy.

Now, these three again are the process. Preparing the body, strengthening the body to withstand the surgery, is called Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga prepares the mind so that the surgery called Jnāna Yoga will work. The second one is anesthesia. Anesthesia is to calm down the mind so that knowledge can be given, and the knowledge can be taken. This is Dhyāna Yoga. Without meditation, the mind will rebel against this knowledge because the mind does not

know that this knowledge is good for it. So, meditation is needed. Thus, Karma Yoga and Dhyāna Yoga are prerequisites for Jnāna Yoga to work.

Another way to look at spiritual progress is using the framework of the three gunās. Vedānta and Sānkhya philosophies define three categories to understand the



nature of things. **Tamas** is the state of inertia. **Rajas** is the state of activity. **Sattva** is the state of harmony.

A person in Tamas state can only understand sticks and carrots. He needs to be motivated to work by threatening him with punishment or luring him with rewards. Such a person should be shown worldly and heavenly goals to encourage him to work. The Gita does not address this class of people. By doing work motivated by worldly and heavenly goals, such a person will rise to the level of Rajas state.

A person who is established in Rajas state will start questioning those worldly and heavenly goals after some time. He would have seen the limitations of those goals. Those goals will no longer be motivating for him. Such a person needs to be given the next set of goals of duty, righteousness, virtue, etc. Such a person needs to be motivated by showing him a higher purpose in life than worldly and heavenly goals. Most parts of the Gita address this person. Karma Yoga and Dhyāna Yoga are prescribed for this person.

A person who has sufficiently progressed in Karma Yoga and Dhyāna Yoga will reach the Sattva state. Such a person would start seeking the next level. To this person, Jnāna Yoga and Prapatti (surrender) are the disciplines to be followed. The Bhagavad Gita has some slokās that touch upon these also. However, Upanishads, Uddhava Gita, and other texts deal with these in greater detail.

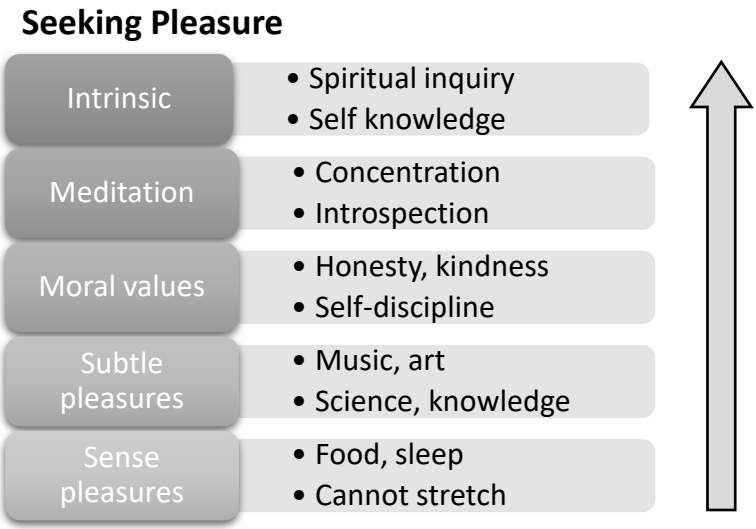
As a person progresses in life, we can also see his attitudes towards security and pleasure undergoing changes.

At the lowest level of development, a person would be lethargic and not have any initiative to do anything. He would just be satisfied with food and sleep. Such a person

Seeking Security

needs to be shown sticks and carrots to make him do any work. This is the level of Tamas. When the person evolves slightly, he would start looking, “what is in it for me?”. He will start pursuing selfish goals. Rewards and possessions will induce such a person to work. This is the state of Rajas. When he develops still further, he will understand that the world operates on give-and-take. He will strive for win-win situations. Then, as he evolves more, he will value name and fame as more significant than material possessions. This is the state of Sattva. At the highest level of evolution, he would be a selfless person. He would work for work’s sake for the welfare of everyone. He will serve people without any expectation of personal gain. This is the state beyond the gunās.

A similar parallel development can be seen in the way a person seeks pleasure also. At the lowest level, the person



would seek only food, sleep, and other sense pleasures. He cannot stretch himself to forgo food and sleep, or inconvenience himself to attain any higher goal or achievement. This is the state of Tamas. As the person evolves, he will start finding pleasure in pursuits like arts and sciences. Scientific and technological achievements, creations of art, craft, architecture, literature, music, etc. will start making sense to him. This is the state of Rajas. Moving further, he will become an introvert. He will find pleasure in self-discipline, austerity, concentration, meditation, solitude, etc. This is the state of Sattva. Going beyond this also, he will attain true knowledge about himself by self-enquiry and will not depend on any external or internal situation for his peace. This is the state beyond the three gunās.

The movement from Tamas to Rajas needs to happen by doing work with desire for results (**kāmya karma**). The

movement from Rajas to Sattva needs to happen by doing work without the results as the goal, but with self-development as the goal (**nishkāma karma**). The Bhagavad Gita assumes that the person who is studying the Gita has already gone beyond the Tamas level and is in the Rajas level. So, the Gita does not talk about kāmya karma. The Gita condemns selfish actions. Most portions of the Gita focus on the evolution from Rajas to Sattva. Some portions guide us on the evolution from Sattva to beyond the gunās.

This spiritual development happens from an attitude as an experiencer (bhoktā) of the world to a doer (kartā) in the world to a pure witness (jnātā) of the situations in life. At the lowest level, a person sees the world as an object to be experienced. He evaluates the world as the cause of pleasure and pain. He measures his success by what he has experienced and accumulated. As he evolves, he takes the position of a doer in the world. He evaluates the world as situations demanding right and wrong actions. He measures his success by what he has contributed to the world. As he evolves further, he goes beyond both these attitudes and sees the world as it is, as a mere witness to the whole drama as it unfolds in front of his eyes. He knows that he is Pure Consciousness is not affected by anything that happens in the world.

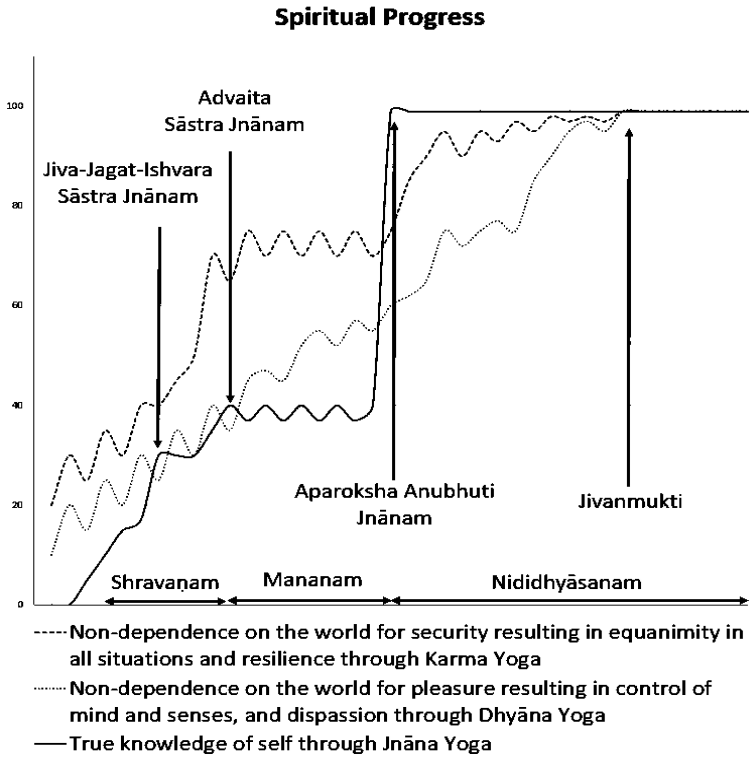
Swami Vivekananda names the yogās based on the **faculty** that is used. We have four faculties – to work, to feel, to think, and to will. Spiritual sādhana using the faculty to work is called Karma Yoga. Sādhana using the emotional faculty is Bhakti Yoga. Jnāna Yoga uses the intellect which is the faculty to think logically. Rāja Yoga or Dhyāna Yoga uses the faculty to control the mind using willpower. Different people have different faculties more developed than the

other. So, he advises the spiritual aspirants to identify their natural strengths and do spiritual sādhana accordingly. If a person has more than one faculty well developed, he can combine the corresponding yogās. Thus, according to this nomenclature, there is no sequence between the various yogās. Any of them can be picked up and practiced to the exclusion of the others, and in any sequence.

The traditional nomenclature of yogās is based on the **results** achieved. Knowledge of our relationship with Ishvara and other living beings is attained by Jnāna Yoga. Equanimity in all situations is attained by Karma Yoga. Control over the mind and senses is attained by Dhyāna Yoga. Love for Ishvara and all living beings is attained by Bhakti Yoga. Thus, according to this nomenclature, one is the prerequisite for the other. Even if not full familiarity, some progress in one Yoga is needed to step into the next Yoga. Without the basic understanding of the concepts of jiva, jagat, and Ishvara, no practice of any Yoga is possible. Without sufficient progress in Karma Yoga, which will give detachment from strong likes and dislikes, meditation is not possible. Meditation is the means to deep devotion to Ishvara. Devotion to Viswarupa Ishvara (God in the form of the universe) is the prerequisite for Nirguna Brahma jnānam (knowledge of God as Pure Consciousness).

Thus, the difference is because of nomenclature. When we look beyond the nomenclature, we will find that the practice is the same. The spiritual aspirant doing sādhana using any of the faculties will sequentially get the results mentioned above and move from one step to the next.

Here is a picture showing the Spiritual Progress through the period of sādhana.



The spiritual aspirant first tries to lead a noble life. He is convinced about leading an unselfish life. Even though he does not have a conceptual background, he values morality, kindness, and discipline. He tries to read various self-help books and religious books. He seeks a purpose for life. He tries to be truthful as much as possible. He gives in charity. He helps others. He follows discipline in life. He learns meditation, etc. from various sources available to him and tries to follow them. He slowly develops a thirst for serious guidance.

This leads him to a teacher. He learns the scriptures. He understands the concepts of Jiva, Jagat, and Ishvara. He is

slowly convinced about his nature as not the body or mind. He shifts his identity as the Jiva. This creates a big change in his worldview. He is able to lead a life of purpose, honesty, kindness, and discipline with a lot more conviction and effectiveness.

He is also introduced to the idea of his identity as beyond even as the Jiva, as Pure Consciousness. This is an idea that goes over his head. He is not able to relate to it. Still, he has faith in the teacher and scriptures. He continues to listen. Even though he knows theoretically what the scriptures are trying to say, the true meaning of the word “Consciousness” still eludes him. He has a lot of questions. He asks them or the teacher and scripture themselves raises the questions. They are all answered by strong logic by the teacher and scriptures. He continues to do his sadhana as advised by the teacher.

Suddenly one day, there is an “Aha” moment and everything makes sense. He now understands the true meaning of the word “Consciousness”. Everything that he had been reading without really understanding so far suddenly makes sense. He is able to validate the words of the scriptures. So far, his response to these words was “Ok.” Now his response to these words is “Yes. It is true.” The words of the scriptures are no longer new knowledge. They are just validating what he intuitively knows already. Earlier they were information. Now they are restatement of what he already knows.

From now starts a new phase in spiritual life. He continues his sādhana as before. There is nothing for him to attain. He knows that he has been free all through. Sādhana is just to train the mind to align to the knowledge. Sādhana picks up

a new speed. Changes happen fast. Still the mind slips into desire and despondency occasionally. However, he takes it sportively, because he knows that he is free irrespective of the state of the mind. Slowly the mind aligns with the knowledge.

Then there comes a stage where the mind is almost stable. Whatever happens in life, the mind is free from rāga (desire) and dvesha (hatred). This is the final state of jivanmukti. Rest of the life till the body drops is just unalloyed bliss. Life has its usual ups and downs. The body has its states of health and disease. But the mind is unaffected by them. The person continues to do sādhana as before out of gratitude to the teacher, scripture, and Ishvara, and also as a role model to others.

This is the spiritual journey. You can do a self-analysis to see where you are in this.

Knowledge Check:

1. What are the three problems that block the knowledge of truth?
2. What are the three spiritual disciplines (Yogās) to address the three problems?
3. What is achieved by each of the three Yogās?
4. What are the three gunās (modes of Nature)?
5. How do the three Yogas relate to the three gunās?
6. What are the two primary areas of focus of the Bhagavad Gita?
7. What changes in attitude will happen when a person progresses in spiritual life?

10 Individual

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥ ६-५॥

uddharedātmanātmānaṃ nātmānamavasādayet ।
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhurātmaiva ripurātmanaḥ ॥ 6-5॥

उद्धरेत् आत्मना आत्मानम् न आत्मानम् अवसादयेत् ।
आत्मा एव हि आत्मनः बन्धुः आत्मा एव रिपुः आत्मनः ॥ ६-५॥

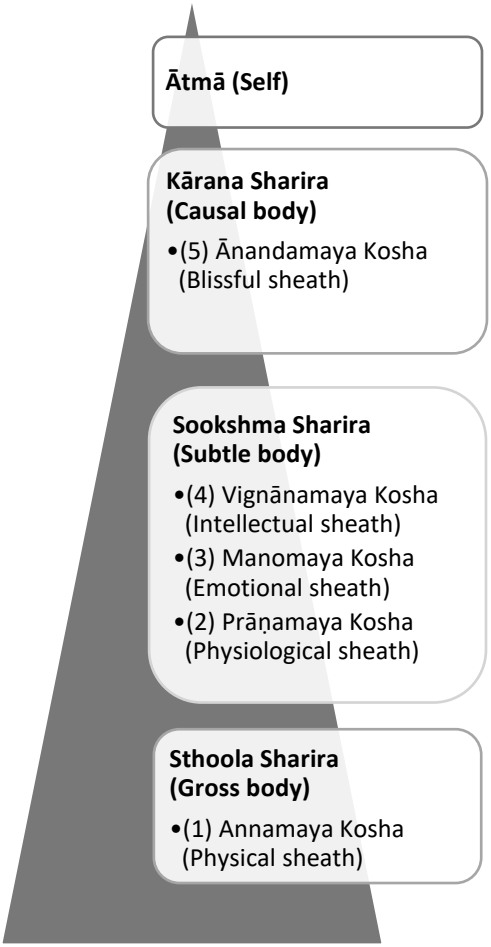
uddharet ātmanā ātmānam na ātmānam avasādayet ।
ātmā eva hi ātmanaḥ bandhuḥ ātmā eva ripuḥ ātmanaḥ ॥ 6-5॥

A person must elevate himself (punya-merits, samskāra-character, and jnāna-knowledge) by (the right use of) his body, mind and intellect (as instruments), he should not lower himself down; the body, mind and intellect (when under control) are one's friend, and they are one's enemy (when uncontrolled). (Be a better person today than you were yesterday.)

Who are we as individuals? In Vedānta, Sānkhya, and most of the Indian philosophy and psychology, there is a five-layer model of personality. These five layers are called koshas.

The first Kosha is called **annamaya kosha** – the physical layer. Suppose a person has just now died. What is common between that dead body and a person who is living? The dead body has a particular weight. The dead body has a colour of the skin, colour of the hair, etc. All the physical features are there for the dead body also. These are things like height, weight, place of birth, name of parents, complexion, colour of eyes, colour of hair, etc. All these

things are the same just before dying, and just after dying. This is called annamaya Kosha.



Now, consider a person in coma. The brain is working. Heart is beating. Lungs are breathing. Blood is flowing. Digestion happens. Kidneys and liver are functioning. Yet, there is absolutely no awareness of anything outside. What is common between the person in coma and us, but which is not there in a dead body? This is called the **prāṇamaya kosha** -- the physiological layer. The body has temperature,

pulse rate, blood pressure, sugar level, state of health, allergies, illnesses. These are all properties of the prāṇamaya kosha.

Suppose there is a mad person or an animal. This person has something more than the person in coma. There are likes and dislikes, emotions like anger, desire, jealousy, and even knowledge and skills. Weaver birds make beautiful nests by instinct. Beavers make dams. Ants grow aphids for milk. This layer that is common to humans and animals is called **manomaya kosa** – the emotional layer. The properties of this layer are skills, knowledge, anger, jealousy, arrogance, greed, desire, fears, various phobias, likes and dislikes, the food you like, the places you like to see, the weather you like, the movies and books you like, your hobbies and activities that you like, etc. All these likes and dislikes come under the manomaya kosha. This is the layer of emotion and instinct.

Human beings have one more layer called **vignānamaya kosha** – the layer of values. Our value system comes from this layer. What is right, and what is wrong? Why should a person be honest? Why should a person be kind? Honesty, kindness, discipline, patriotism, political affiliations, religious beliefs, willpower, etc. are properties of this layer.

As we have seen, the annamaya kosha (physical sheath) is there even in inanimate objects like stones. The prāṇamaya kosha is there for even the lowest animals. This is the security layer (artha) that we saw when we discussed the four purushārthās (pursuits or goals). The manomaya kosha is functional in higher animals. We saw this as the pleasure layer (kāma). The vignānamaya kosha is functional only in human beings. We saw this as the value layer (dharma).

From neurobiology point of view, the prāṇamaya kosha is the **reptilian brain**, that governs all the involuntary activities of the body. The manomaya kosha is the **limbic system**, which is the seat of emotions. The vignānamaya kosha is the **neocortex**, which is the seat of higher order thinking. In particular, the neocortex has a portion call the "mirror neurons". That is the part of the brain by which we can run simulations. We can imagine what the other person is thinking. We can judge what will happen if we do this or that. We can run mental simulations of various situations and predict the possible outcomes. This is the source of all our value systems, and human cognitive functions like empathy, planning, imagination, extrapolation, generalization, inductive logic, deductive logic, etc. Buddhimaya kosa is a synonym of vignānamaya kosha.

The popular Sanskrit slokā indicates this:
āhāra nidrā bhaya maitunam ca
sāmanyam etat pashubhir-narānām
buddhir-hi teshām adhiko visheshah
buddhir-vihinā pashubhis-samānāh
Food, sleep, fear, and reproduction are common to both animals and humans. Intellect is the speciality of humans. Without using intellect, humans are same as animals.

It is the functioning of the buddhimaya kosha that separates humans from animals.

Beyond these four is the **ānandamaya kosha** – the blissful sheath. It is the dormant storehouse of memories, tendencies, and worldview. If we compare the whole system with a computer, the ānandamaya kosha is the hard disk where everything is stored. The files from this are loaded into the working memory, which is the manomaya

kosha and vignānamaya kosha, worked upon and stored back. When we go into deep sleep, we wake up back with all the previous programming and data, because they are all stored in the ānandamaya kosha. The prāṇamaya kosha is like the electricity and electric signals flowing through the circuits. The physical hardware is the annamaya kosha. If the hard disk is removed from one computer and plugged into another one, the second computer has all the programs and data that was earlier in the first one. Thus, the hard disk is the actual individual identity.

These five koshas are the topics of study of the various human sciences – physics, biology, psychology, ethics and philosophy, respectively.

Another classification of the five koshas is as three bodies. The annamaya kosha is called the **sthoola sharira** (gross body). The next three koshas together is called the **sookshma sharira** (subtle body). The ānandamaya kosha is called the **kārana sharira** (causal body). When we are in jāgrat avasta (waking state), all the three bodies function in all transactions. The sthoola sharira gathers inputs through the sense organs from the external world, which are processed by the sookshma sharira. When we are in swapna avasta (dreaming state), the sthoola sharira does not participate in the transactions. The old memories are pulled out of the kārana sharira and worked upon by the sookshma sharira. When we are in sushupti avasta (deep sleep state), the sookshma sharira also becomes dormant. The memory in the kārana sharira is in unmanifested potential form.

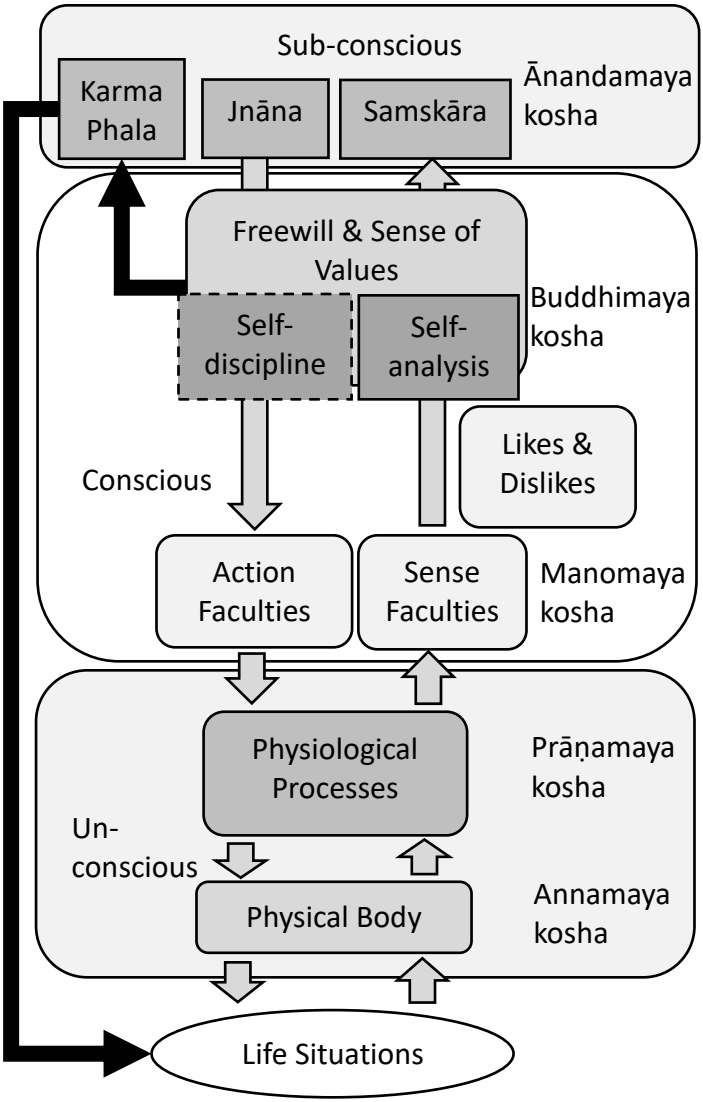
We can see our own sthoola sharira, and also other's sthoola sharira. We can see our own sookshma sharira, but we cannot see other's sookshma sharira. We cannot see our

own kārana sharira. It is the subconscous layer of the mind. We can only infer it because we wake up as the same person that went to sleep. The kārana sharira is also the one that goes from one birth to another.

The kārana sharira has three components:
(1) the result of past actions – **karma phala** – results of good actions (punya) and results of bad actions (pāpa), good luck and bad luck
(2) the subconscious tendencies and habits created by past experiences and behaviour – **samskāra** – our level of desire, anger, jealousy, patience, forbearance, humility, arrogance, truthfulness, etc.
(3) the worldview created by introspection – **jnāna** – our mental model of the world, purpose of life, concept of self, concept of God, morality
It is these that we carry from life to life. Thus, the consciousness identified with the kārana sharira or ānandamaya kosha is the actual individual. This is called the **Jivātma**, which is often translated as **soul**. This along with the other four koshas is called the living being – **Jiva**.

Beyond the fifth layer is the real Self, which is pure Consciousness, **caitanya**. That is our true nature. It is beyond individuality. It is infinite. The final goal is to identify with this pure Consciousness. But we cannot jump to this directly. The first step will be to root our identity in the Jivātma and use that to remove our identity with the other four koshas. When we are sufficiently established in the identity of Jivātma, that is what we called as the Yogārūdha state before. Then, we can go to the next step, to drop that identity also, to discover our true nature as pure Consciousness.

So far, we have seen how the five sheaths are structured. To understand this better, we look at the transactional view.

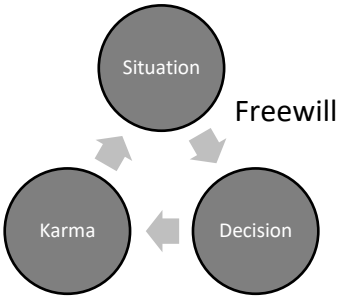


First let us consider for an animal, which does not have an active vignānamaya kosha. Let us say, a dog sees a person offering a biscuit. This is a life situation for the dog. The dog is hungry. A stranger is offering a biscuit. At the physical level, the light rays from the biscuit fall into the retina of the dog. The smell from the biscuit is carried by air into the nostrils of the dog. Then, at the physiological level, the dog sees and smells the biscuit. Saliva starts getting produced. Then, the emotional layer kicks in. The dog has previous memories of hunger getting satisfied by a biscuit. It has a memory of the taste of a similar biscuit. The dog liked the taste. All this information goes to the sub-conscious layer, ānandamaya kosha. The decision is taken there to go and grab the biscuit. The dog becomes aware of the decision at the manomaya kosha level to grab the biscuit. That causes the right muscles to contract at the physiological layer. That makes the body at the annamaya kosha layer move and grab the biscuit.

Now, let us see how it works for a human being. Let us say a hungry human being sees a fruit in a shop on the roadside. This is a life situation. The eyes see the fruit. The past memory of eating fruit and liking it comes in. Next comes the vignānamaya kosha. It says the purse is empty. The options are to beg, borrow, steal, or defer. Begging is below dignity. Borrowing will not work because this shopkeeper is a stranger. Stealing is not right, and it can cause bad consequences. We can defer getting the fruit, go home and return with money. All these options and their pros and cons are presented to the subconscious mind. The decision is made there to go home. The decision comes to the

vignānamaya kosha and trickles down through various koshas. The person goes home.

It is to be noted that most of the decisions are made at the sub-conscious level based on the past habits (samskāra) and convictions (jnāna). The conscious level of vignānamaya kosha has very little control over the decision making. Using willpower, some amount of self-discipline is possible. More often than not, the subconscious mind prevails. However, the vignānamaya kosha can be used to do introspection, retrospection, reading, analysis, studying, listening, etc. to build the right habits and convictions in the subconscious mind. The conscious intellect can be used to reprogram the subconscious mind to make the right decision. This capability to consciously reprogram habits is unique to human beings. This is what distinguishes human beings from animals. Personality development and character building are essentially reprogramming the subconscious habits in line with intellectual conviction.



Another thing to note is that every decision made puts the responsibility for the results of the decision on the decision maker. This is called the **Law of Karma**. It is these accumulated past results that create life situations. So, everything that a person faces in life is the result of the decisions made in the past.

Now, this brings us to one of the core concepts of all Indian philosophies and religions. Understanding this is very

important to lead a responsible life and progress in spirituality.

As an individual, “Who am I?” is the question. We define the “individual” as the “**wielder of freewill and who is responsible for it**”. Freewill is the idea that we are free to decide when there are options. Surely, I cannot fly in the air like a bird. I cannot change the past. However, in a given situation, I have multiple choices, between which I can decide. Suppose I lift my hand. Did I have the freedom to lift my hand or not? Surely, yes. That is freewill.

Now, if we go by a materialistic paradigm that all thoughts are purely the result of the electrical and chemical activity in the brain, then there cannot be freewill. The “free” in “freewill” indicates freedom from matter. Of course, matter affects thoughts. When a person consumes a few pegs of whisky and the alcohol content in his blood goes up, his thinking becomes affected. The person who has been sober so far, suddenly starts behaving differently. However, the physical brain needs to be viewed as a manifestation medium of thoughts than as the originator of thoughts.

A good example to consider is an **FM radio**. The quality of the sound depends on the quality of the radio and its components. A fifty rupees radio will play some music. A five thousand rupees radio will play the same music in a much better way. The fidelity of the music would be high in the high-quality radio. You can listen to the subtle high frequency and low frequency sounds and the stereo channels which you did not notice in the low-quality radio. The radio is the originator of the sound. However, the radio is not the originator of the music. The quality of the music

depends on the artist who created the music. The radio is only a manifesting medium.

The “free” in “freewill” indicates a non-material entity, who is not a part or product of the material brain. The name given to a non-material entity is “spiritual” entity. This non-material, spiritual entity is the real individual called “jivātma” or “soul”. This entity is non-material and has freewill. This is our real identity as individuals.

In nature, whenever we define an independent entity, the law of conservation adapts to the commodity being transacted and governs it. In the physical world, we see laws of conservation of energy, mass, charge, linear momentum, angular momentum, etc. All laws of physics are in effect, law of conservation applied to various entities. Now that we have defined an entity called jiva, the law of conservation will apply. The commodity here is the decision made. So, the jiva is responsible for the decision made. A good decision needs to result in good effect. A bad decision needs to result in a bad effect. This is what is expressed in the statements like “you reap what you sow”. This universal law is called “Law of Karma”.

Law of Karma and freewill are two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other. If we assume that freewill exists, Law of Karma also must exist. Actions and their effects must be connected by a cause-effect relationship. Without a constant Law that says “as you sow, so shall you reap”, freewill will have no meaning. Without the Law, there is no basis to make any decision. Without freewill, the Law of Karma does not exist. Thus, freewill and Law of Karma are actually the same idea from the point of view of the individual and the Whole respectively.

When this is understood and accepted, we can apply this to various situations. Different people can behave in different ways at the last minute of life. One person may die while wholeheartedly thanking the people around his deathbed. He can thank the nurses, the doctors, and the relatives for taking care of him when he got bedridden during his last days. Another person may die when scolding the people around him. What happens to the effect? Only the same individual needs to face the effect. Similarly, one child is born to poor parents, and another child is born to rich parents. One child is born in an educated and cultured family, and another child is born in a family which values nothing other than pleasure and possessions. When two individuals face different situations, the causes must be different. The only logical explanation to these observations would be based on the assumption that the individual existed before birth and continues to exist after the death of the body. Thus, if we accept freewill, we need to accept Law of Karma. If we accept both, we need to accept continuation of existence of the individual across births and deaths of the bodies.

The only other alternative is to reject the idea of freewill. In that case, everything is predetermined, and individuals have no choice. When there is no choice, there is no responsibility. All human systems are based on the power of choice and responsibility of individuals. When they are removed, there is no purpose in life, no concept of right and wrong, no basis for reward and punishment, no rights and duties, etc. Human institutions like family, city, country, law, industry, business, religion, philosophy, etc. will all tumble down. There has been great work by people like Sam Harris who have tried to rebuild and validate human institutions without having freewill as the basis. However,

human society is greatly dependent on freewill as the foundation of almost all its institutions, pursuits, and norms.

In Vedanta, which includes the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, etc., we assume freewill as the working model. Eventually, the very idea of individuality will be transcended. However, to start with, we make this explicit assumption that freewill is true for all practical purposes.

Thus, the real individual is rooted in the ānandamaya kosha, which is also called the kārana sharira. This has three components – **tendencies (samskāra), conviction or worldview (jnāna), and result of past actions (karma phala – pāpa and punya)**. They remain dormant in the kārana sharira and manifest through the lower koshās. These three are the ones that the individual carries from one birth to another. Improvement in these three is real improvement. All other achievements in the world are left behind at the time of death. Improving the tendencies is to reduce negative psychological traits like lethargy, hatred, anger, ego, jealousy, lust, greed, dishonesty, etc. and to increase positive traits like love, kindness, truthfulness, optimism, willingness to work hard, etc. Improving worldview is to get exposed to ideologies that are closer to the truth, explore questions like “Who am I?”, “What is the purpose of life?”, “What is the basis of morality?”, etc. Improving the karma phala is to involve in good deeds with good intentions. Doing our duties and serving family, society, and profession, doing social services, giving in charity, living an austere life, etc. will increase our store of merit. This is the view of life according to Vedanta.

To improve the ānandamaya kosha, we need to use our freewill and the other four koshas as instruments. The body, senses, mind, and intellect are our tools.

Suppose I am working on writing an article for a magazine. I have a copy of the document in a pen drive which I carry with me. I happen to go to a friend's house. A discussion about the article comes up. The lively discussion triggers a few new ideas. I don't want to lose the ideas. I borrow a laptop from my friend, power it up, plug in my pen-drive, and edit the document. Halfway through, I find that the laptop is running out of battery. I ask my friend for charger. He says that he has forgotten the charger at the office. I borrow another laptop from another friend. I save the document into the pen-drive, shut down the first laptop, plug out my pen-drive, and return the laptop to my friend. I start up the second laptop, plug in my pen-drive, and continue editing from where I left. After I am done, I save the document, shut down the laptop, plug out my pen-drive, and return the laptop to my second friend. The pen-drive is the kārana sharira. I have three documents in it – pāpa-punya, samskāra, and jnāna. My friends are Nature (prakriti). The laptop is the sthoola sharira. The power, the OS, and the application that run in the laptop are the sookshma sharira. I borrow this body, life, mind, and intellect (the lower four koshās) from prakriti, improve my punya, samskāra, and jnāna, and at the end of life, I return the lower four koshās back to prakriti.

The ātma identified with the kārana sharira is called **Jivātma**. As an individual, that is our identity. Improving the kārana sharira is the purpose of life. The other infrastructures are only tools. They belong to prakriti and

improving them is useful only as long as they help us to improve the kārana sharira. Improving our karma phala, samskāra, and jnāna is real improvement, and that is the purpose.

Once there was a rich man in a village. He was a great miser. He loved his money a lot. He never spent the money, nor gave anything to anyone. Suddenly one day he realized that he would die eventually. He did not want to part with his money when he died.

He went to the priest of the temple and asked him, “Sir, when I die can I take my money with me?” The priest told him, “What a foolish man you are! Has anyone taken their wealth with him when he died? When a man dies, his children fight over his wealth. Strangers cheat the children and take a part of the wealth for themselves. A man spends all his life earning wealth only to find that either the wealth leaves him, or he must leave the wealth at the time of his death.” The miser cried out loud and ran back to his money in his house. He could not bear the idea that he had to part with his wealth.

Whenever any pundit visited the village, he went and asked him the same question. The pundits took pity on him and explained to him that he could not take even a broken needle with him. The miser spent sleepless nights in great agony.

One day, Guru Nānak came to the village during his travels. The miser asked the great saint, “Oh Holy Sir, I have spent all my life in earning wealth. I understand that I will die one day. I want to take my wealth with me when I die. Everyone

says that I cannot do so. Is there any way by which I can take my wealth with me?" Guru Nānak looked at the miser with great love and replied, "Oh dear, you have worked hard all your life to earn this wealth. Surely it is yours. You can take it with you when you die." The miser jumped with joy. Finally, he had found a saint who had spoken words of nectar. He fell at the feet of the saint and asked, "Oh great Sir, your words have brought me great joy. Please tell me how I can take my wealth with me when I die. No one whom I have met so far seems to know that it can be done."

Guru Nānak asked the miser, "Have you travelled to foreign countries?" The miser said, "Oh yes, several times. I have travelled to several countries to do business. That is how I have earned all my wealth." Guru Nānak asked, "Is the local currency useful in the foreign countries?" The miser replied, "No. They all have different currencies. But I can buy gold and gems for the local currency here and take them with me. Gold and gems are valued in all countries." Guru Nānak said, "Yes. So, you must do the same with your wealth. The local currency, and even gold and gems are not valued in the world after death. You need to convert all your wealth into a form that is valued across death." The miser replied, "Yes. You are right. Please tell me into which form should I convert all my wealth into?"

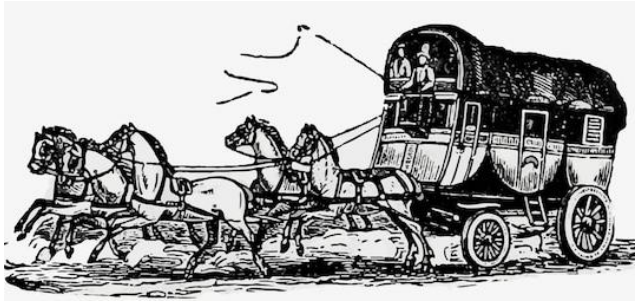
Guru Nānak replied, "Punya is the only one that is valued even after death. Spend your wealth for the good of society by building schools, hospitals and temples. Help people in distress using your wealth. This way, you can convert your wealth into punya. Whatever you have converted into punya by such activities can be taken with you when you die. Whatever you have still left as currency, gold, gems,

land, houses, etc must be left back here. You cannot take them with you when you die."

The rich man was very happy. He did not remain a miser any longer. He lived a simple life and spent all his wealth for the good of society.

Once we have truly understood our real identity, and the fact that what is good for the real me is my good, it answers a lot of questions. For example, what is freedom? Many young children are exceedingly happy if the school unexpectedly declares holiday for the next day. They can wake up whenever they want, eat whenever they want, choose whether to take a bath or not, while away the whole day doing nothing or spending their time as they like playing games or watching TV. They think this is freedom. A disciplined life would be for the person to decide when to wake up, when to eat, what to eat, do exercise and take bath at the pre-decided time, do various activities as pre-planned, and go to sleep at the pre-decided time. Which is freedom? In the first case, the child gave freedom to the body, senses, and mind. In the second case, the person exercises his freedom from the body, senses, and mind. The child behaves like a slave. The mature person manifests his mastery and freedom. Suppose a person is riding a horse. Giving freedom to the horse and letting it do what it wants and go where it wants is not freedom to the rider. Having control over the horse and leading the horse to where the rider wants to go is freedom for the rider.

Kathopanishad verses 1.3.3 and 1.3.4 give a nice illustration. It compares the body with a chariot. The horses are the senses. The rein is the mind. The charioteer is the intellect. The passenger is the jivātma. The road is the



world. If the hierarchy of control is well established, then the passenger can reach his desired destination. The charioteer must obey the passenger. If you hire a cab, the driver should take you to your desired destination, not to a random place based on his whims and fancies. The charioteer should hold the reins with the right amount of tightness. The horses must be under the control of the charioteer. If this hierarchy of control is not established, it can lead to accidents. The same idea is there in the Gita also in verse 3.42. In fact, this Gita verse is very similar to Kathopanishad verse 1.3.10.

Often what is good for the body may not be good for the mind. For example, garlic is considered very good for the body in various ways. However, it tends to agitate the mind. So, a person whose goal is to control the mind in meditation is advised to avoid garlic. Similar is the case with various food items and other worldly pursuits. Thus, when we shift our identity from the body to the jivātma, we will have to re-tune our worldview and recalibrate our priorities.

Once Rishi Nārada asked Lord Shiva, “Oh Lord, everyone knows that you are always chanting the name of Rāma in your mind. What is so great about the Rāma mantra? Can you please enlighten me?”

Shiva showed Nārada a worm living in a lump of cow dung and said, “Nārada please go to the worm and chant the mantra ‘Om Shri Rām Jaya Rām Jaya Jaya Rām’ to it and tell me what happened.” Nārada went to the worm and did so. Immediately the worm died. Nārada became sad. He came back to Shiva and told, “Oh Lord, I must have chanted wrongly. The worm died immediately on hearing the chanting.” Shiva replied, “Nārada, nothing was wrong in your chanting.”

Shiva showed Nārada a newly born puppy and said, “Nārada, can you see that lovely puppy that was born just a few moments ago? Go and chant the mantra ‘Om Shri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram’ into the ears of the puppy.” Nārada went to the puppy and chanted. Immediately the puppy also died. Nārada came back to Shiva with a lot of sorrow. Nārada told Shiva, “Oh Lord, I do not understand. The puppy also died. What should I do?”

Shiva showed Nārada a newly born calf of a cow and said, “Nārada, go and chant into the ears of the calf.” Nārada went hesitatingly to the calf and chanted ‘Om Shri Rām Jaya Rām Jaya Jaya Rām’ into the ears of the calf that was born just a few moments back. As expected by Nārada, the calf also died. Nārada came back to Shiva and complained, “Oh Lord, you have made me the messenger of death. Why are you asking me to do this? Why is the mantra, which is supposed to be a saving mantra, killing every jiva that hears it? I am confused. Please tell me.”

Shiva replied, “Nārada, do it just one more time. There is a noble king to whom a son was born a few moments ago. Go and chant the mantra into the ears of the little prince.” Nārada was shocked. He replied, “Oh Lord. No, please do not make me the messenger of death again. My heart is already tormented by being the cause of death of three lives.” Shiva smiled and said, “Nārada, do not worry. It will not happen this time. The baby will tell you the greatness of the mantra.”

With great hesitation, Nārada went to the palace. The palace was fully decorated with flowers and arches. There were lamps lit all over the palace. The king was extremely happy to have the great Rishi Nārada visit the palace on the occasion of the birth of his son. With great respect, the king took the sage to the cradle of the newborn prince and asked the sage to bless the baby. Nārada shivered with fear. He had no choice but to follow the instructions of Lord Shiva. With great reluctance, Nārada chanted ‘Om Shri Rām Jaya Rām Jaya Jaya Rām’ into the ears of the baby. Nārada closed his eyes tightly not wanting to see the tragedy that had happened on the three previous occasions.

Nārada felt the soft hands of the baby touch his cheeks and the baby told in a sweet voice, “Thank you, Oh great rishi, for taking me through three lowly births within a short time into this noble human birth. I was the one who was the worm in the cow dung. By the power of the mantra, I was immediately freed from that wretched body and was born as a puppy. You came and blessed me again with the mantra. By the power of the mantra, I was freed from all the suffering of that birth. I was born as a calf. You came and blessed me once again with the mantra. I got freed from that body and took birth as a prince in this noble and

devoted family. How can I thank you enough for the great blessing that you have given to me, birth after birth? Glory to you. Glory to the great Rama mantra. Glory to Lord Shiva, who always chants the Rama mantra in his mind."

Nārada was full of joy. He went back to Shiva and said, "Oh Lord, please forgive me for doubting the greatness of the mantra and doubting your words. Now I understand the glory of the mantra."

In verses 6.40 to 6.45, Krishṇa says that when a person dies, he continues his spiritual pursuit from where he left. Suppose there is a person who tries to lead a self-disciplined life, helps other living beings, practices meditation, and strives to reach the spiritual goal. When he dies, he is born into a wealthy, cultured family, where he continues his spiritual pursuit. If he has strived really well in this birth, in the next birth he is born in a family of devotees, saints or jnānis. Krishṇa assures us that nothing that is done goes to waste. Even a small improvement in punya, samskāra, and jnāna is real progress, and is not lost by death. If a stranger asks you the way to the bus-stop and you help him, the punya is yours and will not get lost even by death of the body. If you work on yourself and reduce your tendency to get angry, that improvement is in samskāra is yours. Even if the body dies, in your next body, you will be born with less tendency towards anger. The shift in identity that you make now and the change in worldview that you imbibe deep into your subconcious mind will be carried over to the next life. Thus, life after life, you keep progressing towards the goal and eventually reach it.

This is what is said in the slokā that we have selected.

We are in the process of evolution from animal nature to human nature, and then to our divine nature beyond. We should not succumb to lower expressions like anger, greed, jealousy, violence, competition, hatred, fear, etc. We should elevate ourselves by manifesting higher expressions like love, patience, kindness, self-discipline, service, sacrifice, renunciation, knowledge, etc. This is the way to spiritual evolution and development. This is what is meant by **uddharet**. By what must we elevate? **ātmanā**. Here, ātmā means the lower four koshas. What must we elevate? **ātmānam**. Here ātmā means the fifth kosha, which is the ānandamaya kosha, which is also known as kārana sharira. By exercising our freewill, we have the capacity to rise up or sink down. **na ātmānam avasādayet** We should not sink down.

The lower four koshas – body, life, mind and intellect – are our instruments. Just like any instrument, they are good slaves but bad masters. If we have them under our control, **ātmā eva hi ātmanah bandhuh**, they will be our friends and help us achieve our goals. Here again, the first ātmā means the four lower koshas. The second ātmā means the fifth kosha. If we do not have them under our control, **ātmā eva hi ripuh ātmanah**, they will be our enemies and lead us astray.

Thus, we need to have a clear understanding of our real individual identity as jivātma, which is separate and different from the body, life, mind, and intellect. We need to work towards improving our punya, samskāra, and jnāna, which is real progress. The purpose of life is to be a better person today than we were yesterday. With this continuous progress, we will reach the goal finally.

Question: Isn't trying to gain punya for myself being selfish?

Answer: For the lower pursuits, the supply is limited. Any increase in security and pleasure of one person is always at the cost of another person's access to his security and pleasure. So, those are selfish pursuits. Regarding punya, good samskāra and right jnāna, the supply is infinite. One person's pursuit of these does not limit others' pursuit of these. So, it is not considered a selfish pursuit. One person solving his anger problem does not stop others from solving their anger problem. Also, the acts of gaining punya and developing better samskāra by a person are generally beneficial to other people. So, these are not classified as selfish actions.

Knowledge Check:

1. What are the five koshās (sheaths)?
2. What are the properties governed by each kosha?
3. Which kosha is not functional fully in animals?
4. How do the koshās function during transactions?
5. What illustration does Kathopanishad give about the koshās?
6. What is the real identity of the individual?
7. What all are carried by the individual from one life to another?
8. What is Law of Karma?
9. How can we explain differences in birth?

11 Impersonal Truth

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।
अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥ १०-२०॥

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

अहम् आत्मा गुडाका-ईश सर्व-भूत-आशय-स्थितः ।
अहम् आदिः च मध्यम् च भूतानाम् अन्तः एव च ॥ १०-२०॥

aham ātmā guḍākā-īśa sarva-bhūta-āśaya-sthitaḥ ।
aham ādiḥ ca madhyam ca bhūtānām antaḥ eva ca ॥ 10-20॥

(As sentient cause,) I am the (Pure Conscious) Self residing in the heart of all beings, (as material cause,) I am the beginning, middle and end of all beings. (There is nothing that exists other than Me.)

It has been repeatedly said that true knowledge of the Self is the way to liberation. If we understand the true meaning of words like Self, Consciousness, Subject, Atman, I, which all mean the same, it immediately results in Moksha. Here are different prakriyās – pedagogies to understand the Self.

I am the Light of Consciousness

Suppose you are in a completely dark room. If someone asks, “Is there a clock on the wall?”, you will say, “Bring me a light. Then I can see and tell you.” If the person asks, “Are you there?”, you will not say, “Bring me a light. Then I can see and tell you.” What is the difference? It is so dark that you cannot even see your own hand. Still, you don’t need an external light to ascertain your own existence. This figurative “light” by which you are able to say, “I am”, is called Consciousness. That is the real you.

I am the Witness of Mental States

Once King Janaka asked his teacher Sage Ashtavakara, “Last night, I had a dream. I was a beggar. I was very hungry. I did not have any money. I had to beg for food. The experience seemed very real during the dream. I went through all the emotions of the dream character. I still remember how bad I felt when I was denied money. Now I experience this state where I am a king. I don’t lack anything. All this wealth did not help me in my dream when I was a beggar. Dear sage, please tell me, am I a king who dreamt he was a beggar, or am I a beggar who is dreaming he is a king.” The wise sage replied, “You are neither the king nor the beggar. You are the witness of both the king and the beggar. You are pure Consciousness. You are untouched by the experiences of the king and beggar.”

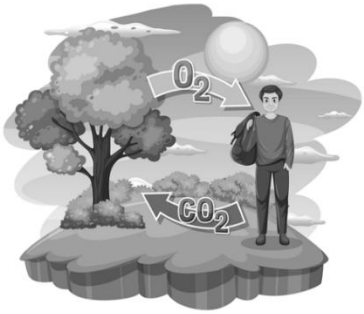
This is a common experience that each one of us go through. We take up a different identity in each dream. During the dream, the dream world is as real as this world that we experience when we are awake. We assume that the waking state is the “default” state and dreams come and go. This is only an assumption. We just call the current “dream” world as “real” world. There is no way to prove that this world is any more real than any dream world during the dream. Each world has its own framework of space, time, and causation within it. So, we cannot talk about them across the worlds. The common continuous entity across all the worlds is the witness of all of them, which is the real Subject. If the identities were completely

different and disconnected, we would not remember the dreams. So, there is one common thread that runs across the waking state, all the dream states, and also the deep sleep state. This is the real identity. Just like space, time, and causation, matter is also local to each world. So, the entity that spans across all the worlds cannot be a product of matter. It is of the nature of Pure Consciousness. That is the real 'I'.

I am Beyond the Five Sheaths

We have seen the panca koshāh – five sheaths.

The first kosha is Annamaya kosha, the body. This body is an integral part of this universe. So, when I breathe in, a lot of oxygen comes from outside into my lungs, and an exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide happens. When I breathe out, a lot of carbon from the body goes out as carbon dioxide into the rest of the universe. So, with every breath there is a lot of interaction. When I clap my hands, a lot of dry cells fall off. If I look through a microscope, I can see them. An apple is there as a part of the external universe. I eat the apple, and now the apple is a part of this body. Every moment there is a constant interchange between this body and the rest of the universe. This physical body is an integral part of the physical universe. It cannot be separate from the physical universe.



As a physics student, you know that no single particle of this universe can be isolated or separated from the rest of the

universe. Every particle of this universe is an integral part of the rest of the universe. That is how we have the law of conservation of momentum, the law of conservation of energy, etc. Let us take a pendulum to demonstrate the law of conservation of angular momentum. I make the pendulum swing. Now, the angular momentum is conserved with respect to what? With respect to the rest of the universe. So, the moment I draw a system boundary around any part of this universe, there will be the law of conservation with the rest of the universe. So, every part of this universe is an integral part of the rest of the universe. You cannot isolate even a single electron, a single neutron, or even a single photon from the rest of the universe. Every part of this universe is an integral part of the rest of the universe. Nothing is apart.

So, when that is the case, when I call this body as “my body”, it is only a mental construct. It is only a mental phenomenon. In fact, no part of this body which was there 12 years before is here now. There is a constant exchange of the parts of this body with the rest of the universe. In Greek philosophy, it is called Ship of Theseus, and in Buddhist philosophy, it is called Malinda’s chariot. You cannot step into the same river twice. It is continuously changing. So, saying that this is “my” body is only a mental concept. The first point to note is, this body is not apart from, not separate from, the rest of the universe. Second, this body is constantly changing. So, this idea of “I” and “this is my body” is only in my mind.

This idea of individuality is merely a concept. It is not real. There are no individual bodies. This entire universe is one single physical universe. There are no individual bodies here. So, the apple which is there on the table today will be

a part of this body tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow it will be gone away in the toilet. So, there is nothing in this body which is constant. I draw a mental line around a part of the universe and say, “this is my body” or “this is me”. That is only an illusion. It is a fiction. This body is an integral part of the rest of the physical universe.

Next is Prāṇamaya kosha. The same thing applies to life also. There is a very beautiful experiment in the Chāndogya Upanishad. The Guru shows a plant to the Shishya, and then the Guru asks, “Where is life in this plant?” The Shishya says, “All through the branches and all through the leaves.” So now, the Guru says, “Cut one leaf off.” The Shishya does it. Then the Guru asks, “Where is life in this plant?” The Shishya says, “Till where it was cut.” The Guru asks, “What has happened to the life which was there?” The Shishya says, “It has withdrawn itself.” The Gurus says, “The life which was manifest has withdrawn itself because the physical condition was not conducive for life. If you keep cutting, then life completely withdraws. Now, the question is, when the plant dies, where does life go?” The Guru teaches, “It merges with the rest of the universe. So now, the question is, was there a life in the plant apart from the rest of the universe to start with at all? The answer is no.”

Suppose there is a hibiscus plant. I cut one branch and put it into the soil. That becomes another plant. From one hibiscus plant, I can create hundreds of hibiscus plants. So now, how many lives are there? Is there one life or a hundred lives? The same thing applies to a seed of a tree.

The same applies to a pair of dogs. After a few years, they become twenty dogs. So, is there one life or multiple lives? Even if you consider at the cellular level, one cell divides into two cells, the sperm and the egg merge into one cell, one cell dies away, one cell eats another cell. Even in this one body, there are so many living things which are there. So, the number of living things in this universe is a very abstract, indefinite, and non-deterministic entity.

So, what is life? How many living things are there in this universe? If you analyze from this point of view, you can find that there is only one life in this universe. This universe is living, that's all. There is only one life in this universe, and that life manifests wherever the environment is conducive. If this body is conducive to supporting life, life will manifest through this body. The moment this body is not conducive to support life, then life will be withdrawn from this body. But the rest of the universe will be there. So, it is only a manifestation and withdrawal of life in different parts of this universe. We call this birth and death.

So, there is one life in this universe, and no life can be independent of the rest of the life of this universe. No living being in this universe can live only on inorganic matter. Every living being needs organic matter as food to live. From a small bacterium to a complicated life, every living being can live only on other living beings. Life needs life to sustain. So, actually, there is only one life in this entire universe, which manifests through multiple beings.

The idea of individual life is only a mental construct. It is only an imagination. It is an illusion. There is only one life in this entire universe. This is expressed in the Gita slokā, “aham vaishvānaro bhutvā prāninām deham āshritah, prāṇa apāna samā yukta pacāmi annam caturvidam” – “As the digestive fire in the bodies of all living beings, I digest the food that is eaten. I breathe in and breathe out from inside all living beings.”

Next is Manomaya kosha. The same applies to the mind also. It is difficult to accept this because we are very emotional. Everything that a mind knows has come from outside. Everything that a mind feels has come from experience. There is constant interaction between different minds. It is as if there is one Universal mind that uses the brains of various living beings to manifest various ideas and emotions. This is expressed in the Gita Slokā, “sarvasya ca aham hrudi sannivishtho matta smrutir jnānam apohanam ca” – “Sitting in the heart of all living beings, I remember, know, and forget things.”

Next is Vigyānamaya kosha. The same applies to the intellect also. This is easier to understand. We say, “I have got a new idea.” But no idea is independent of the other ideas which we have picked up from this world. You are reading now. How are we able to communicate? Because our nursery schoolteacher taught us “A for apple, B for banana.” From there it started, and we have so many ideas, so many concepts, the meaning of these words that you are reading, and so on. We have picked up everything from the rest of this universe. Because of that, we can understand, and we are communicating now. So, no idea is new. No idea is original. It is just a combination of two ideas which have been picked up from this universe only.

So, there is this universe of ideas. We have just picked up something here and there, and created a combination, and then that becomes a new idea. There is really no new idea. So, there is nothing called an individual idea or an original idea, or my intellect or your intellect. It is just this universe of intellect, universe of knowledge. This universe of knowledge manifests one idea in one brain, and another idea in another brain. If some knowledge manifests in the brain of which I call my body, then I say, "I know it." Then I say, "This knowledge belongs to me." Whereas if some knowledge manifests in another brain, in another body, I say, "It is his knowledge." But this idea of my knowledge and your knowledge, is totally fictitious. It is an illusion. It is imaginary. There is no identity. There is no individuality at all. It is just a universe of ideas. This universal intellect uses my brain to remember something and uses your brain to remember something else. It uses my writing to you to transfer some knowledge from my brain to your brain. But everything is done in an intellectual universe of ideas. The individual brains are used by this universe to remember something. This is expressed in the Gita Slokā, "vedaisca sarvaih aham eva vedyo vedānta krut vedavid eva ca aham" – "I am the topic of all knowledge, I am the teacher, I am the student."

Next is Ānandamaya kosha or kārana sharira. Even individual karma is a part of universal karma. Otherwise, why would a person be born at this time, in this age, in this place? So, unless a son's karma is to be the son of that father, and the father's karma is to be the father of that son, they cannot have a relationship. In fact, even if you are going on the road and some stranger comes and asks you, "What is the way to the metro station?" unless his karma

and your karma overlap, that transaction will not happen. He will not come and ask you.

So, the prārabdha karma of every individual must fit like a huge jigsaw puzzle with everyone else's prārabdha karma with whom he is going to transact with in this universe. This complex jigsaw puzzle of karma cannot exist unless the whole thing is just one universal karma. Now, a person who has the karma to be born during the First World War will be born during the First World War. Another person's karma will be to be born in the Second World War; he will be born in the Second World War. So, unless the prārabdha karma of this entire universe matches with the individual prārabdha karma, that will not happen.

To put it in simpler words, there is only universal karma. This whole universe is evolving. This whole universe has a sanchita karma, prārabdha karma, and āgāmi karma. Calling it as this individual's prārabdha karma or this individual's sanchita karma is only an illusion. It is just a fictitious boundary that we draw. So, there is only the universal; there is no individual.

I am calling myself Gokulmuthu and he is calling himself Avik — these are all fictitious entities. These are all illusions. If I ask, "Where am I?", Google Maps will say 13 degrees North and 78 degrees East. That is Bangalore's latitude and longitude. Now, if you ask, "Are these 13 degrees, 78 degrees real?" These are all fictitious entities. We have learnt in school: latitudes are imaginary lines drawn parallel to the equator, and

longitudes are imaginary lines drawn perpendicular to the equator. If these are imaginary lines, why do we have them? If we go to a satellite and see from space, we will not see latitudes and longitudes. But then, why do we need these imaginary lines? Why do we need to know the latitude or longitude of a particular place? Otherwise, we cannot transact. For the sake of transaction, we give names, we give numbers, we give the latitude and longitude to different points on this earth, so that we can calculate distances, we can calculate routes, we can say where I am, how do I go to the railway station, etc. Google Maps can show us the way. All these things are possible only because we have given identity to locations. Similarly, these names given to people are just for the sake of convenience and transaction. Now, I am calling myself Gokulmuthu, he is calling himself Avik, and she is calling herself Uma — these names are just for the sake of convenience. They are all imaginary.

Individuality is imaginary. There is no individuality at all. Only the universal exists. Saying "I," "you," "I am this person," "you are that person," is imaginary. It is only for the sake of transactions. Beyond the transaction, there is no sanctity in any individuality. That is why we say "Om Tat Sat." It means, "Only the universal exists".

Thus, all the five koshās belong to the Universe and not to the person. When stripped of all the koshās, the pure Individual is just a pure Conscious Witness. This is the real 'I'. It is called Cit – Consciousness.

I am the Tenth Man

We are so involved in the experience of the external world and the five koshas, that we miss out the obvious Self,

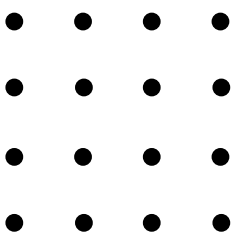
which is ourselves. This is illustrated by the story of the tenth man. Ten friends wanted to cross a river by wading through it. After crossing the river, they wanted to confirm that all of them had reached safely. Each person counted and found that they could count only nine. They assumed that one of them was lost in the river and started crying. A passerby saw them and understood the mistake they were making. He touched each one with a stick and asked them to count each touch. They counted to ten and were happy that they had got back their lost friend.

When we experience the world of objects, we miss counting ourselves, who is the Witness of all experiences. The Truth is so close and so trivial that it is always overlooked. Self-knowledge is very very simple.

Suppose I show my friend the pictures that took of my pilgrimage to Badrinath. The beautiful landscapes, the breathtaking size of the tall mountains on the way to Bhavishya-Badrinath, the vast meadows, the tall pine trees, and the simple and elegant temples – they are all there in the pictures. My friend asks me, “Did you take a camera with you?” I reply, “Obviously. You are seeing the pictures.” My friend says, “Yes. But I don’t see any camera in any of the pictures. What is the proof that you took a camera with you?” I reply, “The camera is not in the picture because that is the one taking the pictures. The pictures are the proof of the camera.”

The Self is the Subject. All experiences of the world are because of the Self. The world is the proof of the Existence of the Self. The Self is ‘I’, the experiencer of the world, body, life, mind, intellect, and ego. It is the Pure Consciousness behind everything that is experienced.

Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithyā



It is important to understand the concept of superimposition to reconcile truth with experience. The Sanskrit word for superimposition is adhyāsa.

Look at the picture. You can see 16 dots. Now, count the number of squares. First you can see 9 squares. They need not be of the same size. Now, you can see 14 squares. The squares need not be aligned straight. They can be at a 45 degrees angle. Now you can see 4 more. They can be slightly tilted too. Now you can see 2 more.

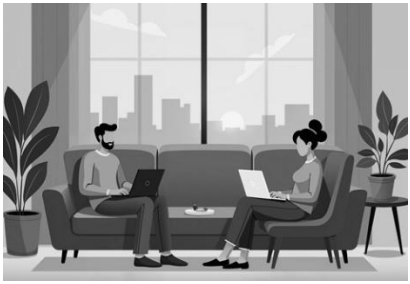
Similarly, you can count the number of hexagons. You can find 12 of them.

Now, the question is, are the squares and hexagons real or imaginary? They are neither. The squares and hexagons are in Unmanifested or Potential state in the grid. They manifest when your mind counts them. In other words, the mind superimposes squares and hexagons on the dots. The mind did not create the squares and hexagons independent of the dots. Still, from the point of view of the dots, there are no squares and hexagons. Even though the mind could see and count the shapes, nothing changed on the paper. Simultaneously, one person can look at the same picture and count squares while another person can count hexagons. They don't interfere with each other. Another person can just see the dots without counting any shapes. The peculiar status of the dots and the shapes are called **satyam** and **mithyā** respectively. The dots are satyam – real. The shapes are mithyā – superimposed. The shapes exist because of a combination of the dots and the mind that

wants to count. Mithyā is not fully imaginary. Whoever counts properly any number of times will count the same number of squares and hexagons. So, the shapes have a degree of reality, consistency, and universality. Still, compared to the dots, their level of reality is lower. If no dots were given and you were asked to imagine some squares, that would be imaginary. It is called **tucca**. Each person can imagine any number of squares. In this case where the dots are given, the squares are mithyā, which means superimposed. This concept of superimposition is called **adhyāsa**.

Now, let us try to analyze this universe. I see something red in colour. What is red? Why do I see this as red? I see this as red because it absorbs all the colours except red, and it reflects only that frequency. So, I see it as red. Now, our human eyes can see only the range from red to violet. We cannot see below infrared, and we cannot see beyond ultraviolet.

Suppose I place that green colour coriander chutney on a green leaf. I cannot easily differentiate it. I would say, “Oh, what camouflage! Both are exactly green. They are identical. We cannot even distinguish that there is coriander chutney on this green leaf.” But if a bird sees that, it would be able to distinctly see the coriander chutney separate from the green leaf. This is because the bird can see infrared. The temperature of the chutney is lower because I took it from the refrigerator, and the temperature of the leaf is higher because it was in the sunlight. I cannot see the difference because I cannot see infrared, but the bird can easily see the difference because the temperatures are different, and so the amount of infrared emitted is different.



Suppose I enter the hall. I see father and mother sitting, and there are two empty sofas. I just see this and then keep going. Now, suppose a cat enters the same hall where father and mother are sitting, and there are two empty sofas. What would the cat see? The cat has a very, very high power of smell. So, when the cat sees this room, it sees the empty sofa and says, “I can smell the elder child on this sofa.” By the amount of smell, the cat can say that the elder child was sitting on this sofa five minutes back. The cat smells the younger child on the second sofa, but the child is not there. By the amount of smell, it knows that the younger child was sitting on this sofa half an hour back. The father is sitting there, and the cat can smell the pollen from the neighbouring park on the father. So, the father has gone for a walk in that neighbouring park, and by the amount of pollen, the cat knows that the father came back ten minutes ago. The mother is sitting here, and the cat can smell the milk that she was boiling. So, the mother was boiling milk sometime back. Then she came and sat here. The cat can very easily infer all these, which I cannot, because the cat has a stronger sense of smell. I also have a sense of smell, but the cat’s sense of smell is much stronger. So, the universe that the cat sees is entirely different. The knowledge that the cat has from the same situation is very different from the knowledge which I can gain.

Dogs can listen to ultrasonic sounds. Sharks have sensors for electrical pulses on their skin that can detect the nerve signals in living beings at a far distance. So, it knows some

living being is there, and depending on the kind of electrical pulse it can sense, it can know whether it is a human being, a fish, or a whale. It can know all that just by its skin that can sense some electric pulses.

Now look around this universe again. You see something as red because you are looking at it with your naked eyes. Now, if you put it under a microscope, then you cannot see red. You will see the lattice structures. If you use a stronger microscope, you will see only the atoms. Under a still more powerful microscope, you will see protons, neutrons, electrons. You will be seeing entirely different things. So, the world which you see—the table, the laptop, the mouse, the screen, the window, the wall, the colour of the wall—everything is an illusion. This whole illusion is created by the limitation and the capacity of your senses. The limitation and the capacity of your senses have created this entire illusion called this world, which you perceive with your five senses. This whole experience is an illusion.

What is it that exists in reality beyond this illusion, beyond this experience, beyond what you see? You have absolutely no access to it. What is it that exists beyond this experience of this universe that you have through the limitations of your senses? What is beyond the senses? In reality, what is this universe? What is the real nature of this universe? What is the reality? We have no access to it.

The same thing applies to the mind also. The mind also gives so much colouring to the universe that we see. A guy behaves normally. Two pegs of alcohol enter his mouth, and he starts behaving like a monkey. The world he sees becomes entirely different when some alcohol enters his brain. A boy is normal when he is five to ten years old. When

he enters his teens, some chemicals, some hormones enter his blood, and the world he sees is entirely different. The way he looks at different genders is entirely different the moment some hormones enter into his bloodstream. The whole universe that we see is entirely coloured by our mind. An insurance agent looks at everyone only as a potential life insurance policyholder. We see our mother differently, our sister differently, and wife differently. We see a stranger, our brother, our neighbour, a shopkeeper, an employee, an employer, and a manager differently. It's all in the mind. Our mind colours what we see, and what we think – our attitude and our behavior. So, our senses and our minds colour the universe that we see. Whatever we see, we are seeing through this window of our senses and mind. And we have absolutely no access to the real world that exists outside of the senses and mind. What is the real world out there? We have no access.

Thus, this universe is a superimposition by our senses and mind. On what? What is the substratum? The unmanifest substratum of this universe beyond our senses and mind is called *Brahman*.

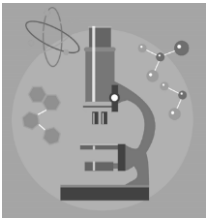
Now, recall the dots and the shapes. The dots are there. That is Satyam. The squares and hexagons exist only in your mind; it is a superimposition. That is mithyā. Similarly, the universe that you see is a superimposition by your senses and mind on the unmanifest substratum behind, called Brahman. And we have no access to the Brahman. We have access only through our senses and mind, and what we see is the universe. And we know that there exists an unmanifested Brahman only because we see this manifested universe. The manifested universe, which is a superimposition, is the proof that the unmanifested

substratum exists behind our senses and mind. So, there is absolutely no doubt that Brahman exists because if the unmanifest substratum does not exist, then this universe cannot be experienced. This mithyā universe is superimposed on the satya vastu called Brahman. This is what Adi Sankara means by his famous words, ***brahma satyam jagat mithyā***. Brahman means that unmanifest substratum that really exists. Jagat means the manifest universe that is experienced.

Like the example of the dots and shapes that we used here, the traditional scriptures use various examples. The most famous ones are rope and snake, desert-sand and mirage water, seashell and silver, and tree-stump and person.

Jivah Brahma Eva Na Aparah

Let us analyze the substratum more. Another word for the substratum is **sat** – essence. The substratum is the fundamental substance that the universe is made of. For example, what is this pen made of? Plastic. What is the plastic made of? Carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen. What is carbon made of? Protons, neutrons, electrons. Now, what are they made of? Quarks, leptons. Science has gone a long way in search of the fundamental substance of this universe. But if we make the intuitive jump, what is the ultimate substance out of which everything in this universe is made? Now, that entity is what we call Brahman.



Let us try to understand the properties of this Brahman. The property that we see of an object depends on the instrument used and the level at which it is considered. When seen through the eyes at the gross scale, we see colours. If we

look at the same object using a different instrument like an electron microscope, the property of colour is not applicable. There are only molecular structures, space between molecules, etc. If we do deeper at the subatomic level, these also are not existent. Thus, every property of an object is an appearance in a particular context. If we use an instrument that can detect colours, we will see the colours of that object. If we use an instrument that detects the charge of an object, then we will detect charge. If we use an instrument that measures the length of an object, we will get the length of the object as a property. With a thermometer, we will measure the temperature. Thus, the property measured depends on the instrument and the interaction between the instrument and the object. This is what we saw in the previous section that the experience is a superimposition by the instrument. The shape and count of the squares and hexagons belong to the superimposed shapes. They don't belong to the dots. Also, at the most fundamental level, the distinction between the instrument and the object will vanish because everything is Brahman. When that is the case, there can be no property.

Thus, the ultimate substance cannot have properties. Sat is **nirguna** – propertyless. Any change is a change of property only. So, Sat would be **nirvikāra** – changeless. All changes happen in time or space. As Sat is nirvikāra, it must be independent of space and time. It would be **sarvagata** – omnipresent and **nitya** – eternal. As the distinction between one object and another is also based on properties, there can be only one such object. It needs to be **advitiya** – non-dual. Thus, there is only one Sat. It is **ekam** – only One.

Next, let us analyze subject-object relationship. The classic book titled Drg-Drsya-Viveka gives this beautiful line of thought. When we see an object, we see its colour and shape. The eye is the perceiver, and the object is the perceived. The properties like colour and shape belong to the object. When we judge the capacity of the eye, like myopia, colour-blindness, cataract, etc., the eye is the object. The perceiver is the mind. The properties perceived belong to the eye. When we put one more step back and judge the state of the mind like angry, confused, cheerful, etc., the mind is the object, and the properties belong to the mind. If we take an intuitive leap, the ultimate Subject, which can never be an object of perception or conception, is the real 'I'. This real 'I' is called **cit** – Consciousness.

Properties always belong to the object under consideration and never to the instrument or subject. So, Cit cannot have any properties because it is never an object in any context. So, the Cit is nirguna – propertyless. As seen before, nirguna would imply nirvikāra, sarvagata, nitya, advitiya and ekam. As both Sat and Cit are ekam, they must be identical. Thus, **Sat and Cit are identical**. They are two aspects of the same fundamental thing.

As we have seen, Sat is the substratum of the Universe and Cit is 'I'. Thus, as Pure Consciousness, I am the substratum of the Universe. I am that substratum on which the Universe is superimposed. This is what is meant by the mahāvākya (great statement) of the Vedās, ***aham brahma asmi*** – "I am Brahman". This is what Adi Sankara means by the famous words, ***jivah brahma eva na aparah*** – "Jiva is not different from Brahman".

This is the startling but logical conclusion of advaita vedāntā.

I am the Witness

We can understand the implication of this knowledge using a story.

There were a father and a son who went to watch a movie. The son had never seen a movie before. So, while going, the son asked the father, “Father, what is a movie?” The father said, "There will be a big screen. On the screen, they will project images in quick succession, so that the images will seem to move. They will also play synchronized sound. So, it will look as if the whole thing is alive." The son could not fully understand what his father said. Any way, he said, “Okay, fine, let us go and see.”

By the time they went there, the movie had already started. They found their seat, sat, and saw the movie. Now, the son asked the father, "Father, you said there will be a screen on which they will project. I don’t see the screen. Where is it?" The father said, "It is there in front of you. On the screen only, they have projected the movie." The son said, “No, I don’t see the screen.” Now, the father asked, “Okay, tell me, what do you see?” So, the son said, “I see a lion.” Then the father said, “Okay, what do you see behind the lion?” The son saw, “Oh, behind the lion, I see a tree.” Then the father asked, “What do you see behind the tree?” Then the son saw more carefully. He said, “I see sky behind the tree.” Then the father asked, "No, what do you see behind the sky?" Then the son said, “What do you mean by behind the sky? How can you say behind the sky? There is a lion. Behind the lion, there is a tree. Behind the tree there is the sky.

That is all. What else is there?” Then the father said, "Okay, you watch the movie. I will tell you later. "

They continued watching the movie. After some time, there came the announcement, “Interval”. The movie was turned off and lights were turned on. The father and the son had popcorn, ice cream, and nachos. Then again, the lights were switched off, and the movie continued. Now, the father asked the son, “Do you see the screen now?” The son said, “Yes, yes, I am seeing the screen very clearly. I can see that they are projecting the movie on the screen only.”

Before the interval, the son did not see the screen. Now, the son has no doubt about the screen. He is able to see the screen. The eyes are seeing the same thing. But cognitively, earlier the son was not able to recognize the screen. Now, the son is able to recognize the screen. What happened in between? In between, the movie was switched off, and the son could see the screen. After that, even after the movie restarted, he had no doubt about the screen. This is what Patanjali calls **chitta vritti nirodaha**, - “cessation of the movement of the mind”. One moment, if you are able to get a glimpse of the screen without the movie, then you have no more doubt about the screen. You can see the screen even after the movie has restarted.

The same can be recognized by understanding through the prakriyās (thought experiments) also.

The substratum is the screen. You are the substratum. The universe is the movie. Once you have recognized the screen as separate from the movie, there is no going back. Once you have recognized yourself as the screen on which this entire experience of the world is being projected, you are liberated.

Let us take the movie as the “2012” movie. In that movie, there are volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, and storms. Everything happens, but the screen is not burnt by the fire of the volcanoes in the movie. The screen does not get wet by the floods in the movie. The screen is not torn by the earthquakes in the movie. The screen is not blown away by the storms in the movie. Why? Because the movie is a movie. The screen is one more level of reality higher than the movie. The screen can never get affected by what is there in the movie.

Now, when you realize that “I am pure Consciousness,” then life will not touch you. The Gita talks about this: water cannot wet it, fire cannot burn it, wind cannot dry it, weapons cannot cut it. And this, interestingly matches with the “2012” movie where we have all these basic elements of nature, and the screen is not affected by them.

I am the Screen. I am pure Consciousness on which this entire universe is superimposed. This whole movie of the universe is getting projected on me as the screen. The screen can never get affected by the movie. So, nothing in this universe can affect me. I am the Witness. Whatever happens in this universe, whatever happens in this life, it is all part of the movie. It is all part of this whole drama, and I am the Witness. I am the screen, and my reality is higher than the reality of the movie. My reality is higher than the reality of this world. This world is just a superimposition. I am the substratum on which this world is superimposed. I am the Witness. The world has no power to affect me.

Swami Vivekananda put this in a very nice way in the paragraph that he wrote in the prospectus of Advaita Ashrama in Mayavati: “In Whom is the Universe, Who is in

the Universe, Who is the Universe; in Whom is the Soul, Who is in the Soul, Who is the Soul of Man; knowing Him — and therefore the Universe — as our Self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an end to misery and leads to Infinite Freedom. Wherever there has been expansion in love or progress in well-being, of individuals or numbers, it has been through the perception, realisation, and the practicalisation of the Eternal Truth — THE ONENESS OF ALL BEINGS. "Dependence is misery. Independence is happiness." The Advaita is the only system which gives unto man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and its associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain to Absolute Freedom." (CW Vol 5. pp. 435)

Visvarupa Ishvara

The Supreme Being who identifies with the entire universe is called **Ishvara**.

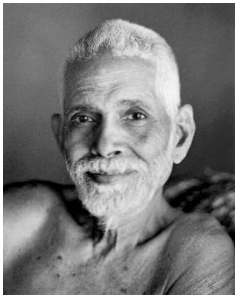
As an individual, when we say, "I", we identify ourselves with this body. This body has trillions of cells. Each one is a separate living being on its own. For example, we have red blood cells in the blood. The cell takes birth in the bone marrow. It lives for 120 days. It dies in the liver. During its lifetime, it swims in the blood stream carrying oxygen from the lungs to various parts of the body and carbon dioxide back to the lungs. It is an independent living being. Similarly, the muscle cells, bone cells, nerve cells, skin cells, etc. are all living beings. There are also so many bacteria and other living organisms in the gut. But then we say "I." By "I", we

mean the super being identifying with this body. Similarly, Isvara is the Super Being, identifying himself with the entire universe. When he says "I," he means this this whole universe – everything that exists, all the living beings, all the galaxies and solar systems, everything put together. He considers himself as the whole of existence. That person is Ishvara. The consciousness associated with the universe is called Ishvara. This is the definition of Ishvara. It is also called **Visvarupa Ishvara** – Ishvara in the form of the universe, and **Saguna Brahman** – Brahman with properties, or manifested Brahman.

The same Nirguna Brahman that we saw before as the substratum without any properties is the Saguna Brahman with properties. Ishvara is the personification of Brahman. Ishvara does not depend on the universe. The universe depends on Ishvara. The whole universe arises, exists, and resolves back into Ishvara. Ishvara is the material cause of this universe. Just as gold is the material cause of the various ornaments, Brahman or Isvara is the material cause of the universe. Just as the various ornaments like chain and ring are just various forms and names of gold, the various living and non-living objects in the universe are just various forms and names of Ishvara. There is nothing that exists other than Ishvara.

When any living being feels "I", it is just a reflection of the feeling of "I" of Ishvara. It is Ishvara who exists in the core of every conscious being as the feeling, "I". Thus, when we say, "I", the real meaning of that word is the Ishvara within as Pure Consciousness.

This is what Krishṇa as Ishvara says in this verse. When Sri Ramana Maharshi, a great sage of recent times, was asked



which is the most important verse in the entire Gita, he pointed to this verse. The first half talks about Ishvara as the Self of all living beings. The second half talks about Ishvara as the material cause of this universe. **aham ātmā** – I am the Pure Consciousness which every living being feels and calls "I". **sarva bhutāshaya sthitah** – I am established in the core of all living beings. **aham ādishca madhyam ca bhutānām anta eva ca** – I am the beginning, middle, and end of all living beings. Thus, nothing exists other than Ishvara.

As we have seen before, the same declaration can be made by a Jnāni also from the point of view of Pure Consciousness. A Jnāni knows that he is the Consciousness reflected in all the living beings, and the entire universe arises, exists, and dissolves in himself only.

The second line of this slokā was put in different words by Adi Sankara as "brahma satyam jagat mityā" – Brahman is the substratum on which the experience of the universe is a superimposition. The first line was put by Him as "jivah brahma eva na aparah" – as Pure Consciousness, the individual is not different from the universal.

Seeing the universe as a manifestation of Ishvara is a pre-requisite for gaining the knowledge of the Self. This is depicted in a beautiful story.

Once Nārada brought a fruit to Shiva's abode, Kailāsa. He said to Shiva, "Oh Lord, this is jnāna phalam, the fruit of knowledge. It is a very valuable fruit. So, I thought instead of me eating it, I would give it to you. It will be more useful." Shiva, like any good husband, gave the good thing he got to

his wife. So, he gave it to Parvati and said, “Pārvati, Nārada has brought this nice fruit. I think you will enjoy it. Please take it.” Pārvati, like any good mother, took it and wanted to give it to her children. She said, “Let my children Ganesha and Kārtikeya have the fruit instead of me.” The two children, Ganesha and Kārtikeya, both said, “I want the fruit.” When Pārvati wanted to divide the fruit, Nārada intervened and said, “The fruit should not be divided. Half knowledge is dangerous. As this is jnāna phalam, it must be taken fully only.” Nārada suggested, “Let us have a competition. The winner will get the fruit.” The competition was decided as the one who goes around this entire universe and comes first will be given the fruit.

Ganesha and Kārtikeya started to go. Kārtikeya is very thin and light. His vehicle is also the peacock, which can swiftly fly. He immediately got on his peacock and started going around the universe. Ganesha is very bulky. His vehicle is a small mouse. He thought, “There should be an alternative way. Shiva and Shakti are here. They are the cause of this universe. The effect is just the cause in a different form. The universe is nothing but a manifestation of Shiva and Shakti. So, going around the cause is equivalent to going around the effect. Going around Shiva and Shakti with reverence, acknowledging them as the cause of this universe, acknowledging them as the Ishvara, is equivalent to going around this universe itself.” He explained this to the sages and wise people assembled there. He asked, “If I go around

Shiva and Shakti, wouldn't it be the same as going around the universe?" Everyone agreed. Ganesha went around Shiva and Pārvati, bowed down to them, and got the fruit. Kārtikeya came back very confident after going around the universe on his peacock. He saw that the competition was over, the winner had been declared, and the fruit had been given to Ganesha. He became very upset and went to Palani mountain to do tapasya.

As you can see in the story, the fruit was jnāna phalam, the knowledge of the Self. To get the jnāna phalam, the aspirant must pass the test. The aspirant must acknowledge that this universe is not different from Ishvara. Vishwarupa Ishvara darshanam is the prerequisite for jnāna phalam – ātma jnāna, Self Knowledge. This is what this story is meant to teach.

Ishvara Alone Exists

The first nāma of Ishvara in Vishnu Sahasranāma is "vishvam" – universe. So, vishvam is not different from Vishnu. The first half of the Nārāyaṇa Suktam is only a description of how Nārāyaṇa manifests as this universe. It says, "yat ca kincit jagat sarvam drushyate shruyate api va" – everything that you see or hear in this universe is Nārāyaṇa only. It says, "antar bahisca tat sarvam vyāpya Nārāyaṇa sthitah" – Nārāyaṇa exists fully pervading everything inside and outside. Thus, the jagat does not exist separate from Ishvara.

We have already discussed how every part of this universe is an integral part of the whole and cannot be separated. We have seen how individuality is only an illusion at each of the five layers. Individuality is a purely mental construct. The universal alone exists and individual identity is only

imaginary. Now, we see that the universal is the Ishvara. Thus, jivatva – individual identity – is imaginary. Ishvara alone exists in reality. The jiva does not exist separate from Ishvara.

Thus, even in the manifested state as Saguna Brahman, Ishvara alone exists. The jagat – universe – and the jiva – individual – are not separate from Ishvara. This is what is indicated by **Om Tat Sat** – That alone exists.

As long as the Jiva considers himself or herself or itself as an individual, the jiva cannot be considered identical to Ishvara. The jiva is a part of Ishvara. The popular illustration used is the **waves** in the **ocean**. As wave, it is a part of the ocean. The ocean is all the waves put together, and a lot more. As a wave, each wave is different from the other wave and also from the ocean. However, as **water**, there is no distinction between the waves and the ocean. Thus, only as Pure Consciousness, the jiva is the same as Ishvara. When identified with individuality, as a doer or experiencer, as body or mind, etc., the jiva is a part of Ishvara.

Knowledge Check:

1. What is Consciousness? / Who am I?
2. What is Adhyāsa (superimposition)?
3. What does “brahma satyam jagat mityā” mean?
4. What does “aham brahma asmi” mean?
5. How can it be proven that I, the Consciousness (Cit) is the Substratum of the Universe (Sat)?
6. What is the definition of Ishvara or God in Vedānta?
7. What is Advaita?
8. Can Jiva be the same as Ishvara?

12 Personal God

भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम् ।
सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥ ५-२९॥

bhoktāraṃ yajñatapasāṃ sarvalokamaheśvaram ।
suhṛdaṃ sarvabhūtānāṃ jñātvā māṃ śāntimṛcchati ॥ 5-29॥

भोक्तारम् यज्ञ-तपसाम् सर्व-लोक-महेश्वरम् ।
सुहृदम् सर्व-भूतानाम् ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिम् ऋच्छति ॥ ५-२९॥

bhoktāram yajña-tapasām sarva-loka-maheśvaram ।
suhṛdam sarva-bhūtānām jñātvā māṃ śāntim ṛcchati ॥ 5-29॥

(I, Universal Being, am) the (omnipresent) recipient and beneficiary of all external and internal activities, the (omnipotent) Lord of all the worlds, the (compassionate) friend of all living beings; (a person) attains peace by knowing Me (thus).

In the previous verse, we saw Ishvara as the Pure Consciousness in the core of all living beings and as the material cause of the universe. Ishvara has a personal aspect also. Ishvara can be transacted with. Thousands of people from all cultures of all ages have transacted with Ishvara. They have seen, talked with, played with, and fed Ishvara through the form they have been worshipping or through manifestations as people and other living beings. Today also, all over the world, there are thousands of people to whom Ishvara is a tangible entity of knowledge. For millions of others, Ishvara is a tangible entity of faith. Brilliant minds like Adi Sankara, Sri Rāmakrishṇa, Swami Vivekananda, and the like have declared their transaction with Ishvara. We cannot ignore these testimonies.

Even though we sometimes use pronouns like He and She, Ishvara is beyond all identities based on form, species, gender, time, age, culture, country, race, etc.

Three Characteristics of Ishvara

When we analyze the personal transactional aspect of Ishvara, we find that every transaction assumes three aspects of Ishvara.

Ishvara is **Omniscient**. Ishvara knows the whole of past, present, and future of the whole of existence. Ishvara knows the innermost thoughts of all living beings. There is nothing that is unknown to Ishvara. As Ishvara is beyond any limitations of space and time, Ishvara is **Omnipresent** and **Eternal**.

Ishvara is **Omnipotent**. By mere will, Ishvara creates, sustains, and recycles the entire universe. By mere will, Ishvara can manifest any thought in the mind of any living being. There is nothing that is not possible for Ishvara.

Ishvara is **Compassionate**. Ishvara is the real well-wisher of all living beings. Ishvara considers the spiritual progress of all living beings as the real well-being. Ishvara designs every life situation faced by every living being in such a way that leads to spiritual progress of the living being.

Every prayer by any person to any entity assumes that the entity is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Compassionate. The person assumes that the entity knows the problem, its solution, and also the fact that the person is praying to the entity. The person assumes that the entity has the capability to solve or mitigate the problem. The person also assumes that the entity is willing to address the problem for

the sake of the person. Even without one of these three, prayer will not be possible.

There can be only one such entity in the universe. That is Ishvara. In the Gita verse 7.21, Krishṇa says, “Whoever prays to any entity through whichever form, name or ritual, the prayer comes to Me. I respond back to the devotee through the same name and form, and thus deepen the faith of the devotee.”

Several great devotees with brilliant intellect have deeply analyzed the various aspects of personal relationship and transaction with Ishvara. There is a huge corpus of Bhakti literature. There are innumerable stories of how Ishvara transacted with devotees. There are also several texts trying to categorize these to understand easily and use it as a guidance to progress efficiently in spiritual life.

Nine Steps of Bhakti

To absorb these three aspects of Ishvara, in the Bhāgavatam, Prahalāda give nine steps to Bhakti. The Omnipotent aspect of Ishvara is emphasized through **shravanam** – listening to glories of Ishvara, **keertanam** – singing the glories of Ishvara, and **smaranam** – remembering the glories of Ishvara. The Omnipresent aspect of Ishvara is emphasized through **pāda sevanam** – serving the living beings as part of Ishvara, **archanam** – doing one’s duty in the world as offering to Ishvara, and **vandyam** – bowing down to all living beings as manifestations of Ishvara. The Compassionate aspect of Ishvara is emphasized through various attitudes towards Ishvara. They are **dāsyam** – considering Ishvara as the master and ourselves as servants of Ishvara, **sakhyam** –

considering Ishvara as a friend, and **ātmanivedanam** – offering oneself completely to Ishvara.

Five Aspects of Ishvara

Vedānta Desika, a great Acharya from the Vaishnava tradition, identifies five aspects of Ishvara.

The first one is **paravāsudeva** – the impersonal unmanifested aspect of Ishvara. We have discussed this in detail as the explanation of the previous verse. Ishvara exists as the Sat-Cit-Ānanda – Pure Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss.

The second is **vyuha avatāra** – the manifestation of Ishvara as the universe of insentient matter, living beings, minds, life, the law of the universe, etc. We have already seen in detail how the universe is a manifestation of Ishvara.

Depending on the particular context that we consider ourselves in, we can consider Ishvara as the corresponding universal. For example, when we consider ourselves as citizens of India and say, "I am a Bhāratiya,", then we portray Ishvara as Bhārat Māta, the corresponding universal aspect. When I say, "I am living in Karnātaka, I am a citizen of Karnātaka," then Karnātaka Māta is the corresponding universal aspect. When I say, "I am a Tamilian, Tamil is my mother tongue," then Mother Tamil is the corresponding universal aspect. When I go to take a bath in the Gangā, Gangā Māta is the corresponding universal aspect. When I say, "I am a living being on earth," then Bhumi Mata – Mother Earth, and also the Surya Devata – Sun God, become the aspects of Ishvara. If I am starting a new venture, Ganesha becomes the corresponding aspect of Ishvara. When pursuing knowledge, music, art, etc., I

worship the same Ishvara as Sarasvati. If I am going to start a business venture, I worship the same Ishvara as Lakshmi. If I want to go for bodybuilding, I will worship the same Ishvara as Durga or Hanumānji.

Depending on how I consider myself as an individual in a context, the corresponding universal concept in the context is considered as Ishvara. And, Ishwara being universal, He can play all those roles. This is exactly the same way as I play different roles – to my parents I am son, to my children I am father, to my wife I am husband, to my company I am employee, to my neighbours I am neighbour, and to this country I am a citizen. Depending upon the contexts, I have so many individual identities. In the same way, the same Ishvara is Bhārat Māta, Karnātaka Māta, Tamil Māta, Gangā Māta, Bhumi Māta, Surya Devata, Ganesha, Sarasvati, Lakshmi, Durga, Hanumānji, Shiva, Vishnu, etc.

There is a popular slokā which says, “Just like all rivers flow into the same ocean, all worship reaches the same Ishvara.” The Vedās declare “ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti” – Ishvara is one; sages all him by various names. The Nārāyaṇa Suktam says, “sah brahma sah shiva sah hari sah indra” – He is Brahma, He is Shiva, He is Hari, He is Indra. There are several such statements in the Vedas, the Gita, and several Hindu texts and prayers. Sri Rāmakrishṇa says, “Just as different people call the water as āp, jal, aqua, etc., different people call the same Ishvara as Rāma, Krishṇa, Kāli, Allah, Jesus, etc.”

If anyone says, “God must be worshiped only as formless or only as a particular form”, he is limiting God, which is a blasphemy. If he says, “God will respond only if called by a particular name”, he is challenging the omniscience and

compassion of God, which is contrary to any definition of God. So, all exclusivist ideas of God are foolish, illogical, and blasphemous.

The third is **vibhava avatāra** – the special manifestations of Ishvara as incarnations. Even though the entire universe, including every jiva is a manifestation of Ishvara, there are some special characters in the universe through whom Ishvara manifests special powers of knowledge, strength, fame, compassion, etc. These are called incarnations of Ishvara.

There are infinite number of such incarnations manifesting different degrees of power. They have been coming from time immemorial and will continue to come into the future also. They will come in all cultures, societies, races, species, etc. There is no limit. Krishṇa declares in the Gita, "In all ages, again and again, whenever there is a decline in righteousness and vice tries to dominate, I embody myself in the world to protect the noble and punish the wicked." When there is a huge accumulation of cases in the court pertaining to a topic, the Supreme Court combines all the cases together, appoints a special jury headed by a senior judge and does the legal proceedings of all the cases in a fast-track manner. Similarly, even though Law of Karma is there to ensure that people get the results of their action, sometimes they pile up a lot due to extraordinary circumstances. Then Ishvara himself comes into the universe and handles them.

With the advent of great incarnations, we get new forms, names, stories, devotees, festivals, places of pilgrimages, books, songs, etc. For example, with the advent of Ishvara as Sri Rāma, we have the various forms of Rāma, various

names and mantras of Rāma, the great story of Rāmāyaṇa, various devotees like Bharata, Guhaka, Sabari, Jatāyu, Hanumān, Vibhishana, etc., festivals like Rāmanavami, Dusshera and Deepavali, pilgrimage places like Ayodhya, Chitrakoota, Nashik, Kishkinda, Rameshwaram, etc., so many books related to Rāma, bhajans on Rāma, millions of temples of various sizes for Rāma and Hanumān, etc. Similarly, Sri Krishṇa avatāra has resulted in a huge revival of religion.

The Srimad Bhagavatm lists 24 avatārās and says that there are infinite number of avatārās. The popular set of ten avatārās of Vishnu was collected from Srimad Bhagavatam as a sample of some prominent ones. Great sages and saints like Durvāsa, Vyāsa, Kapila muni, Rishabha deva the founder of Jainism, Buddha the founder of Buddhism, and Adi Sankara are also considered as incarnations. In recent times, saints like Sri Rāmakrishṇa and Swami Vivekananda are considered as incarnations by their devotees. Every person is entitled to have his or her own opinion and belief. As long as the idea inspires noble thoughts and conduct, it is acceptable. Everyone need not believe it. And there need not be any condemnation or quarrel over it either.

The fourth is **archa avatāra** – the manifestation of Ishvara through holy images, symbols, places, books, etc. Just as Ishvara manifests special powers through sentient beings called incarnations, Ishvara also manifests special powers through insentient objects, places, etc. in this universe. As we are humans, a human-like form is easy to relate to. They

are called pratima. We also transact with Ishvara through other forms like shiva linga, shālagrama, sri chakra, the letter Om, etc. They are called pratika. Ishvara can be invoked in any of these, and Ishvara will manifest and transact through these.

The human mind needs these symbols and rituals. For example, during national festivals like Republic Day, we want to show our respect to the nation. The nation is all around us in all the directions. How do we show respect to the nation? We put a flagpole and a picture of Bhāratmāta. We hoist the national flag and salute it. We put flowers to the picture and worship it. These are symbols of the nation. The flag is a pratika. The picture is a pratima. Saluting is a ritual. These symbols and rituals help us to express our emotions and deepen them. They help us to become more patriotic. If we observe any ceremony like the Olympic Inauguration or a Military event, we can see so many rituals. Marching, saluting, carrying a flag, lighting a lamp, signing an anthem, etc are all rituals. Even saying “Good Morning”, “Have a nice day”, “Goodbye”, shaking hands, giving a bouquet of flowers, etc are all rituals. Similarly, the religious symbols and rituals help us to transact with Ishvara and deepen our devotion. All rituals are designed to create certain emotions in the person who does it. These are psychological tools.

Every word is a symbol of an idea. Every corporate or organization uses logos as symbols. Every religion uses various symbols, names, chants, etc. They are all “idols”. When a person worships through an idol, he is very clear that he is worshiping the One Supreme Ishvara through the idol. As Ishvara knows the innermost thoughts of everyone, Ishvara also knows that the devotee is worshiping him. As Ishvara is compassionate, he responds back through the same idol. It is a blasphemy against God to call someone an idolator.

During the time of Swami Vivekananda, it was a fashion to condemn idol worship. When he was visiting the king of Alwar, the king asked Swamiji how we can justify people worshipping a stone. Swamiji explained that the devotees were not worshipping the stone. They were worshipping Ishvara through the stone. The king could not understand. There was a picture of the king on the wall. Swamiji asked the picture to be brought to him. He gave it to the minister and asked him to spit on the picture. Everyone was shocked. The minister said, “This is our king. I love and respect him. I cannot do what you say.” Swamiji said, “It is just a piece of paper. You king is standing over there. This is not your king.” The minister said, “On this paper is a picture of our king. It represents our king. It reminds me of our king. I consider respecting or disrespecting this as respecting or disrespecting our king.” The king said, “Swamiji, now I understand the significance of worshiping Ishvara through images.”

There are several anecdotes in the life of various devotees where Ishvara has helped to correct the attitude of the devotee if they become too fixed with one form over the other. For example, Narahari Sonār was a devout jeweller in Pandarpur. He was a great devotee of Shiva. He never entered the temple of Pānduranga, which is a form of Vishnu. The Lord wanted to correct his devotee's reservation.

There was a rich devotee who wanted to make a golden waist chain for Pānduranga. He asked the local people, "I want to get this done only by the best jeweler. Please tell me who is the best jeweler in Pandarpur." Everyone told him, "Narahari Sonār is the best jeweler here. You go to him." He went to Narahari Sonār and told him, "I want to make a golden waist chain for Pānduranga. So please make it." Narahari Sonār said, "No, I am a Shiva devotee. I will not make it for Pānduranga." The devotee said, "No. You are a jeweler. It is your professional dharma, to attend to the needs of your customers. Why do you bother whether it goes to Pānduranga or Mallikārjuna? People are saying that you are the best jeweler, and I want it to be done only by the best jeweler. I am your customer. You must make it for me." Narahari Sonār said, "Okay, fine. I will make it. But then you must take the measurements. I will not come to Pānduranga temple to take measurements. I will make it according to your measurements." So, the devotee took the measurements of Pānduranga and came back and said, "This is the length. Make the waist chain." Narahari Sonār made a very beautiful waist chain with different gems studded in it and gave it to the devotee. The devotee was very happy. He took it to Pānduranga temple and put it on the image. But it was very loose. It was not even standing on the waist. It just slid and fell to the feet of Pānduranga.

The devotee took it back to Narahari Sonār and said, “It is too big. Make it smaller.” Narahari Sonār said, “Okay, fine.” Then he cut some pieces from the extra chain and made it smaller. Now, the devotee took it to Pānduranga and again put it on. It was too small. They couldn’t even put it around the waist of Pānduranga. The devotee came back to Narahari Sonār and said, “It is too small. It must be bigger.” Narahari Sonār said, “Okay, fine.” He added some more pieces to increase the length. The devotee took it to Pānduranga. Now it was too big. It again did not stay on the waist. It fell to the feet. The devotee got frustrated. He said, “Narahari Sonār, you must come and take the measurements yourself. It is not working.”

Narahari Sonār, having made so much of a commitment, had no other way. He said, “Okay, fine. I will come. But I will not see Pānduranga because I am a Shiva devotee. I will come blindfolded. I have never entered the Pānduranga temple so far. I don’t want to go. I’m coming just for you. And I don’t want to see the Pānduranga image. So, blindfold me, take me by my hand. I know my job. Even without looking, I can take measurements with my hand. No problem.” Narahari Sonār was blindfolded, and the devotee took him by his hand into the temple to the image of Pānduranga. Narahari Sonār touched with his hand to see where the waist was. To his surprise, when he touched the waist of the image, he felt tiger skin. He was surprised and then touched further

up the image. He could feel Rudraksha māla. He could feel snakes around the neck. He could feel the matted locks of hair. He could feel the Kamandalu, Damaru, and Trishula. As he touched and felt the image with his hands, still with his eyes blindfolded, he could feel all the aspects of Shiva with his hands. Then he said, “Oh Shiva, Oh Lord Shankara, I never knew that it was you. People told me you are Vishnu. That is why I never came to this temple. If only I knew that you are Shankara, then I would have come and fallen at your feet.”

Having touched the image and having felt all the aspects of Shiva, Narahari Sonār untied his blindfold. When he saw with his own eyes, there was Pānduranga standing, smiling with Makara Kundala on his ears, with hands on his hips, and the Urdhva Pundra on his forehead. Narahari Sonār said, “What is this? What is this?” He immediately closed his eyes and re-tied the blindfold.

With his hands, he again felt the image. Again, he could feel Rudraksha, Damaru, Trishula, Jatamudi, and the snakes. He could feel all the aspects of Shiva with his hands. Again, he untied his blindfold. Again, he could see Panduranga smiling with the Makara Kundala, Urdhva Pundra, and with hands on his hips. Panduranga spoke to Narahari Sonār, “Narahari, you are such a great devotee. Why are you distinguishing between Shiva and me? I am Shiva. I am Vishnu. I am Brahma. I am Durga. All the Gods are me only. Don’t distinguish. I want you to be a devotee of all aspects of me.” Narahari Sonār realized his mistake and started going to all the temples. The waistband that Narahari Sonār made for Pānduranga is still there in Pandharpur.

Human-like forms appeal to the human mind easily. Swami Vivekananda says, “If fish had a God, it will be in the form of a big fish. Man creates God in his own form.” It is not wrong to give a human-like form to Ishvara for the sake of worship. Several great saints have transacted with Ishvara through images. It is very easy to concentrate our minds on an image. Various aspects of the image like the articles carries, jewellery worn, accompanying animals, gestures of the hand and feet, etc. encode various noble ideas into the symbolism. These help us to meditate upon these noble ideas.

To enhance our concentration and emotion, various stories have been created around these forms of Ishvara. They help us to remember noble ideas easily and also appeal to our emotions. One need not worry too much about the facts and historicity of the stories. What is important is the intended psychological effect. For this reason, one need not quarrel about the differences in the stories. The stories have only one real purpose - that is to enhance the noble feelings of those who listen with faith. Often real stories of saints and devotees are exaggerated to attract the attention of the mind. We need not condemn them. We should understand that the intention is not to be historically accurate. The intention is to inspire the listener.

The fifth is **antaryāmi** – the manifestation of Ishvara in the hearts of everyone as the inner Witness. We all have access to Ishvara as a personal level through this inner Witness. This can be enhanced and deepened through spiritual practices. All of us have an intuitive idea of what is right and what is wrong, which is correct most of the time. We have an inner critique that watches everything that we do. Whenever we face disturbing situations in the life outside,

we can turn inward, dive deep, and get solace, provided we have established a personal living connection with the Ishvara within. We have a tangible intuitive feeling of our individual Sat-Cit-Ānanda – Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss. This is a reflection of Ishvara. This inner Witness is the fountain of our existence, knowledge, morality, solace, bliss, and joy.

Ishta Devata

We can choose any form of Ishvara as our **Ishta devata** – personal favourite form of Ishvara. Having an Ishta devata and a single name or mantra as the main one for spiritual sādhana gives focus and force. This helps us to develop a personal relationship with Ishvara. It can be Rāma, Krishṇa, Shiva, Hanumān, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Ganesha, Kartikeya, Sri Ramākrishṇa, whichever aspect. If you have a Guru, the Guru would have given you an Ishta Devata. Until then, you can pick any Ishta Devata you like, or if you are not able to choose, you can pick your family deity or the deity of the place where you are residing.

Stages of Bhakti

However, we should understand that worshiping Ishvara in one form should not lead to fanaticism. We should not criticize or disrespect other forms of worship. This is only the first step. This is called **Ekarupa** Ishvara Bhakti – devotion towards one form of God. This should quickly lead to **Bahurupa** Ishvara Bhakti – devotion towards multiple forms of God. Even though the person still sticks to his own Ishta Devata, he knows that all the other forms are also various forms of his own Ishta Devata only. From this, the devotee should graduate to **Vishwarupa** Ishvara Bhakti – devotion towards God as manifesting as this Universe.

When the devotee reaches this stage, there is no difference between sacred and secular activities. From this, the devotee should graduate to **Caitanyarupa** Ishvara Bhakti, also called Advaita Bhakti – devotion towards God as the pure Consciousness residing in the hearts of all living beings and one's own self.

This path of growth can be seen in the life of the great devotee of Pandharpur, Saint Nāmdev.

Nāmdev was a small boy, and his father was the priest in the Pandharpur temple. This boy had been accompanying his father whenever he was doing puja. After puja, his father would close the screen and offer naivedya (food offering). After the naivedya is over, his father would open the screen and then distribute prasāda to everyone. This boy did not know what was happening behind the screen when naivedya was given.

One day, his father had to travel. His father asked this boy to do the puja. He did the puja exactly as his father used to do. When naivedya time came, he had not seen his father doing naivedya because it was done behind the screen. He kept the food in front of the Lord and said, "Oh Lord, eat." And nothing happened. He thought the Lord would come and eat. He waited, and nothing happened. He said, "Oh Lord, Oh Pānduranga, if you don't eat, then my father will think I didn't do puja properly for you, and he will beat me. Please come and eat the food." Even after praying like this several times nothing happened. The boy started crying and he started hitting his head on the feet of Pānduranga, saying, "Oh Pānduranga, Pānduranga, eat, eat, come. What did I do wrong? Did I make any mistake in my puja? Why are you not coming? If I made any mistake, please excuse me.

And don't get me scolded by my father. Please come, come, come, come." He was crying, and ultimately the Lord could not hold back. So, He came. The child gave the naivedya, to Pānduranga. Pānduranga ate it almost fully. Pānduranga said, "You also eat" and gave one mouthful to Nāmdev also. People were waiting outside. The screen was put for Naivedya, and no one knew what was happening inside. They were all waiting for prasāda. Finally, the screen was opened, and Nāmdev came out. Everyone said, "We want prasāda." Nāmdev said, "Pānduranga ate it." They said, "Hey, you sat inside and ate everything. We can see it in your mouth. And you are telling us Pānduranga ate it." Nāmdev said, "No, no, no, Pānduranga ate almost everything. He just gave a small piece to me in my mouth." Obviously, people did not believe it. They said, "Okay, anyway he is small child. It doesn't matter. He ate the prasāda. No problem." And all the people dispersed.

Nāmdev went home. That night, his father came back from his travel. He heard from the neighbours what had happened. But the father had so much faith in the five-year-old child that he would not lie. So, he asked Nāmdev, "Nāmdev, you tell me what happened." Nāmdev told him everything: "I kept the Naivedya. I asked the Lord to come and eat. He did not come first. Then I cried. Still he did not come. Then I hit my head on His feet and I cried. And then He came." Nāmdev described the Lord and then said, "He ate the prasāda. He also gave me one piece in my mouth. This is what happened, father. And the people are blaming me like this." Then his father said, "Don't worry, I believe you. And today, I also want to see."

The next day, his father was there. His father asked Nāmdev, "Just like yesterday, whatever you did in the puja,

do the puja today, and I will watch." He was watching as Nāmdev did the puja. When the time came for the Naivedya, again Nāmdev said, "Oh Lord, come and eat." The Lord didn't come at first. Then Nāmdev said, "No, no, please come. Today, see, my father is watching. Now, if you don't come, then he will think I told a lie yesterday. So please come." Finally, the Lord came. But the Lord was not visible to his father. The Lord was visible only to Nāmdev. Then Nāmdev said, "See, if you don't show yourself to my father, then again he will think I'm telling a lie." Pānduranga smilingly said, "Okay, fine, your father will also be able to see Me." Then Nāmdev said, "Not only my father. My mother also should be able to see." The Lord agreed.

Thus, because of Nāmdev's devotion, he created a bond between Pānduranga and his entire family. Pānduranga became a household person in this family. Pānduranga would come and play with Nāmdev throughout the day. When his mother cooked food, she would call them. Pānduranga and Nāmdev would both sit and eat. Then they would go to play again. He was just like a household person.

Over a period of time, when Nāmdev grew up and got married, his wife was also able to see Pānduranga. Nāmdev's wife and Rukmini became close friends. As usual, like any wives of friends, Rukmini used to complain to Nāmdev's wife about what happened in her household, how Pānduranga behaved in the house, and how he created trouble and made her life difficult. Nāmdev's wife used to tell Rukmini how Nāmdev behaved in the house and how he made her life difficult. That's what all wives talk about when they meet. The same thing used to happen between Rukmini and Nāmdev's wife. This is how their household was going.

After a few years, there was a Bhakta Sammelan (get-together of devotees) in Gorākumbhā's house. Saint Jnānadev, his elder brother Sopānadev and his younger sister Muktābai were also there. All the devotees had assembled together and were singing bhajans. Muktābai was just a five-year-old child at that time. Gorākumbhā was a potter. In the house, there was a stick used to see if the pot was baked or not.

A potter makes pots out of clay and keeps them in a huge fire kiln where the pots are baked. After the fire is settled, he takes each pot and taps it with that stick. If a sharp sound like ting-ting comes then that pot is properly baked - pakkā. If a flat sound like dup-dup comes then that pot is not baked properly - kacchā. It must be put back into the kiln for further baking.

Muktābai took that stick and asked Gorākumbhā, "What is this stick for?" Gorākumbhā explained how the stick is used to check whether a pot is baked or not - pakkā or kacchā.

The five-year-old Muktābai took that stick and playfully started testing the heads of all the great Pānduranga devotees including Jnānadev, Nāmdev, Sopāndev, Ravidās, and so many others. She tapped the head of each person and gave her verdict "pakkā" or "kacchā". Because she was only a child and a great devotee of Pānduranga, everyone took it sportively and bent down and took the tap on their head. She kept giving her verdict as "pakkā". Nāmdev was very proud that his entire family was a close friend of Pānduranga, and they conversed with Pānduranga on an everyday basis. He was annoyed and thought, "What is this? I am such a close devotee and friend of Pānduranga. This five-year-old girl wants to hit me on the head with this

stick." When Nāmdev's turn came, unlike the others who bowed down with reverence, he did not bow down. He just said, "Get away." Muktābai said, "This pot is kacchā. This pot is not baked." Everyone laughed and she carried on with the others.

Nāmdev became very angry. He became very hurt and upset. He immediately got up and went to the Pandharpur temple. He went before Pānduranga and said, "Pānduranga, I was insulted." Pānduranga asked, as if he did not know what happened, "Hey Nāmdev, what happened? Why are you so sad?" Nāmdev said, "Do you know what happened in that Bhakta Sammelan?" The Lord replied, "Yeah, it is still going on. Why are you here? Why did you come here?" Nāmdev replied, "That Muktābai, you know ..." The Lord interrupted joyfully, "Oh yeah, that small girl, nice girl, sweet girl, very devoted..." Nāmdev said, "She insulted me." Pānduranga was puzzled, "Hey, how can a five-year-old child insult you?" Nāmdev said, "She called me kacchā and everyone else as pakkā." Pānduranga asked, "What do you mean?" Nāmdev explained to him fully and how everyone laughed. Pānduranga said, "Yeah, she told the truth only." Immediately, Nāmdev started crying even more. He said, "What do you mean? I thought you were the only one who is my friend. You are also saying I am kacchā." Pānduranga said, "Yes, you are kacchā. That is why she told so." Then, Nāmdev understood. He asked "Okay. Pānduranga, tell me what I should do. I want to become pakkā."

Pānduranga said, "In Pandharpur, there is one Mallikarjuna temple. There is one devotee named Vishoba in the temple. You go there and be his disciple." Nāmdev asked, "Why should I go to a Shiva temple? I like you only. You teach me.

Or send me to some devotee of yours. Why are you sending me to a Shiva devotee in the Mallikarjuna temple?" Pānduranga said, "No, no. He is the right person who can make you pakkā." Nāmdev did not have any other option. He went there. When he entered the temple, he found the whole temple empty. He shouted, "Is anyone there?" From one of the shrines, a sound came, "Yeah, yeah, I'm here." He went there and saw an old man lying in the garbhagraha on the floor with his leg on top of the Shiva linga. Even though Nāmdev was a devotee of Pānduranga, he said, "What is this? You have put your leg on the Shiva linga. You are so disrespectful. Who are you? Get out of this temple." The old man replied, "Who are you to ask me to leave the temple? I've been living here all my life." Nāmdev said, "What you are doing is wrong. You should remove your leg." The old man said, "See, I am very old, and my blood circulation in my leg is not good. I have to keep my leg at a higher position so that the blood flows back into my heart. Otherwise, my legs will become swollen. I have to keep my leg at some higher position." Nāmdev said, "Fine, you keep your leg elevated, but the Shiva linga is not the place to keep your leg on. You should keep your leg somewhere else where there is no Shiva linga." The old man said, "Okay, fine. I am very old. I cannot move my leg. You take my leg and put it wherever you want." Nāmdev became very angry. He went and caught hold of the old man's leg and pushed it aside. The moment that leg touched the ground, another Shiva linga arose from the ground, and the old man's leg was again on the Shiva linga. Nāmdev could not believe his eyes. He immediately grabbed the leg and put it somewhere else. Again, another Shiva linga appeared. Wherever he put the leg, a Shiva linga appeared.

Nāmdev realized and asked, "Who are you? What is your name?" The old man said, "I am Vishoba." Nāmdev had already caught hold of the leg of the Guru. Sparsha Deeksha (initiation by touch) was over. Nāmdev immediately fell at his feet. Vishoba said, "I know what happened. Pānduranga sent you here. See, there is no place where the Lord is not there. This entire world is a manifestation of the Lord only. So far, you have been seeing the Lord only as Pānduranga. So, you were kaccā. Now you know that the Lord is everywhere. Now you are pakkā." This was a new teaching for Nāmdev. So far, he had been worshipping Pānduranga. He had been a friend of Pānduranga, moving around with Pānduranga throughout the day. But it was Ekarupa Ishvara Bhakti. His bhakti was towards Ishvara in the form of Pānduranga only. Now he understood that the Lord is everywhere; this entire universe is nothing but the Lord. This teaching was given to Nāmdev by Vishoba in the Mallikarjuna temple. He became a Vishwarupa Ishvara Bhakta. Nāmdev continued living in the Mallikarjuna temple serving his guru. He completely forgot Pānduranga. Pānduranga sent word, saying, "Hey, I'm waiting for you here. I sent you to the guru to learn a lesson, but not to stay permanently in your school. Come back home." After a lot of persuasion by Pānduranga, Nāmdev finally returned to Pānduranga.

Nāmdev's vision was completely different now. He saw that this entire universe is nothing but the Lord. Earlier, he used to stay in the temple and around the temple to be with Pānduranga. But now, with his expanded vision, he saw the entire universe as the Lord. He started spending more time meditating on the banks of the Chandrabhāga river in Pandharpur. He went in the early morning to the bank of the Chandrabhāga river. Seeing the entire prakriti (Nature)

as a form of the Lord, he spent the whole day chanting, singing, and meditating. He would meditate for some time, and if his mind was not settling, he would start chanting loudly. When his mind was refreshed and could focus again, he would stop chanting and start meditating. Alternating between meditation and chanting, he spent the entire day by the Chandrabhāga river. Every day, his wife came searching for him and gave him food wherever he was. He considered his wife a disturbance, so he started moving farther along the riverbank to sit, sing, and meditate without being disturbed by his wife. But his wife could not leave him like that; she had to feed him lunch. She had to travel longer and longer every day. She complained to Pānduranga, saying, "Pānduranga, what is your friend Nāmdev doing? He is creating trouble for me. He is going and sitting farther away, and I have so much trouble searching for him all over the place. Every day he is sitting farther and farther. You should do something about your friend. Pānduranga said, "OK, I will do something."

The next day, when Nāmdev was sitting and meditating, his wife came and kept the roti in her bag. She said, "See, roti is there, and ghee is kept separately, and this chutney is there. You eat." He said, "I will eat later." She said, "No, no, I want to see you eat. Otherwise, you will not eat." He said, "No, no, you go. I will eat after finishing a few more rounds of japa." Finally, he convinced her to leave, and he went back into meditation. A dog came and grabbed the roti and started running. Nāmdev saw it and immediately took the rest of the bag and started chasing the dog. He chased and chased and finally caught the dog. He pulled the roti out of the dog's mouth and caught hold of the dog so that it wouldn't run away. With his other hand, he put ghee on the roti, sprinkled some chutney on it, rolled it, and said,

"Pānduranga, now you eat. See, if you eat without the ghee, it will get stuck in your throat. It is very dry. You should not eat the roti without ghee." He fed the dog the roti with ghee and chutney. Then the form of the dog became the form of Pānduranga. Pānduranga said, "Nāmdev, you identified that I am Pānduranga." Nāmdev said, "Why? You are always Pānduranga only. Not only this dog, that dog is also you only. That person is also you. This tree is also you. Everything is you." Then Pānduranga said, "Nāmdev, your wife is finding it difficult to search for you and feed you. I am everywhere. Stay closer to home only, so that it is easier for your wife." Nāmdev agreed.

The Lord was very happy that Nāmdev had established himself deeply in Vishwarupa Ishvara Bhakti. After that, Nāmdev still progressed further and became an Advaita Bhakta. That is how the progress of a devotee happens from Ekarupa Ishvara Bhakti to Vishwarupa Ishvara Bhakti to Advaita Bhakti. Nāmdev's life is a very good example of this spiritual progress.

Such instances are seen in the lives of several saints and devotees. Saint Eknāth went on a pilgrimage with some of his friends. They went to Kāshi, the holy place of Shiva on the banks of river Ganga. It is a custom to bring water from the holy river to offer and bathe the deity in other temples. Each pilgrim carried some water back to Pandharpur, the abode of Vishnu in the form of Pānduranga, from where they started the pilgrimage. When they were a few miles before Pandharpur, they were crossing a parched area. Beside the road, they saw a thirsty donkey almost on the verge of death. Eknāth sat beside the donkey with its head on his lap. He gave all the Ganga water that he had carried for hundreds of miles to the donkey to drink. The donkey

had a peaceful death. When the other people criticized him for having wasted the Ganga water that was meant for the temple, Eknāth said that God will be happier by using the water to quench the thirst of the poor donkey than by offering it at His temple. Eknāth explained that God is the life in all living beings. By serving living beings, we serve God.

In the lecture given at the temple at Rameshwaram, Swami Vivekananda says, “This is the gist of all worship — to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples.

“A rich man had a garden and two gardeners. One of these gardeners was very lazy and did not work; but when the owner came to the garden, the lazy man would get up and fold his arms and say, "How beautiful is the face of my master", and dance before him. The other gardener would not talk much, but would work hard, and produce all sorts of fruits and vegetables which he would carry on his head to his master who lived a long way off. Of these two gardeners, which would be the more beloved of his master? Shiva is that master, and this world is His garden, and there are two sorts of gardeners here; the one who is lazy, hypocritical, and does nothing, only talking about Shiva's beautiful eyes and nose and other features; and the other, who is taking care of Shiva's children, all those that are poor and weak, all animals, and all His creation. Which of these would be the more beloved of Shiva? Certainly he that

serves His children. He who wants to serve the father must serve the children first. He who wants to serve Shiva must serve His children — must serve all creatures in this world first. It is said in the Shâstra that those who serve the servants of God are His greatest servants. So you will bear this in mind.

“Let me tell you again that you must be pure and help any one who comes to you, as much as lies in your power. And this is good Karma. By the power of this, the heart becomes pure (Chitta-shuddhi), and then Shiva who is residing in every one will become manifest. He is always in the heart of every one. If there is dirt and dust on a mirror, we cannot see our image. So ignorance and wickedness are the dirt and dust that are on the mirror of our hearts. Selfishness is the chief sin, thinking of ourselves first. He who thinks, "I will eat first, I will have more money than others, and I will possess everything", he who thinks, "I will get to heaven before others I will get Mukti before others" is the selfish man. The unselfish man says, "I will be last, I do not care to go to heaven, I will even go to hell if by doing so I can help my brothers." This unselfishness is the test of religion. He who has more of this unselfishness is more spiritual and nearer to Shiva. Whether he is learned or ignorant, he is nearer to Shiva than anybody else, whether he knows it or not. And if a man is selfish, even though he has visited all the temples, seen all the places of pilgrimage, and painted himself like a leopard, he is still further off from Shiva.” (Complete Works, Vol.3, page 141-142)

He says, “After so much austerity, I have understood this as the real truth — God is present in every Jiva; there is no other God besides that. ‘Who serves Jiva, serves God indeed.’ ” (Complete Works, Vol.7, page 247)

Attitudes Towards Ishvara

Depending on how we identify ourselves, we may consider ourselves as separate from Ishvara, a part of Ishvara, or identical with Ishvara. Sri Rāmakrishṇa often quotes the prayer of Hanumānji. "**deha buddhyā dāsah asmi, jiva buddhyā tvad amsakhah, ātma buddhyā tvam eva aham, iti me nishchitā matihi"** – When I consider myself as body (sthoola and sookshma sharira), I am your servant. When I consider myself as jiva (kārana sharira), I am your part. When I consider myself as Pure Consciousness (ātman), I am identical to you. This is my clear and doubtless understanding. Thus, we can see that the three main philosophical positions of Vedanta – **dvaita**, **vishishtha advaita**, and **advaita** – are just from different points of view. There is no conflict between them.

Stages of Spiritual Life

The Bhagavad Gita identifies three stages in the spiritual progress. As a person progresses, the worldview, attitude towards work, and attitude towards worship change gradually. The Gita says, all these three are fine. They are all devotees only.

In the Ārta and Arthārthi stages, the devotee considers Jiva, Jagat, and Ishvara as separate. He says, "I work in this world. Ishvara blesses with the results. As a token of gratitude, I offer a part of the fruits of action to Ishvara." The devotee worships Ishvara to be free from afflictions and get desires fulfilled.

Stage	Worldview	Attitude towards Work	Attitude towards Worship
Ārta and Arthārthi	Jiva, Jagat and Isvara are separate	Work in the world, offer fruits of action to the Lord in gratitude	Worship the Lord to free from afflictions and to get desirable things
Jignāsu	Jagat is a manifestation of Isvara. Jiva and Isvara are separate	Knowing the world as manifestation of the Lord, offer work itself to the Lord	Worship the Lord to give knowledge and strength to calmly face all the ups and downs of life
Jnāni	There is only Isvara. Nothing else exists	Knowing the Lord is everything, including the self, offer doership of work to the Lord, in complete surrender	Worship the Lord without expecting anything, knowing oneself as not separate from the Lord

The one who worships Ishvara to get free from problems is called Ārta Bhakta. The one who worships Ishvara to get desirable things is called Arthārthi. It is not bad to go and

worship Ishvara saying, “Oh Lord, if I get free from this disease, I will come to Tirupati and I will offer my hair.” The Gita appreciates such devotees. He is doing the right thing. Instead of going to a bar and getting drunk to forget his problems, he is at least coming to the Lord, crying before the Lord, and worshipping the Lord. Similarly, if he wants something in life, after putting in all the effort, he worships the Lord to grant him the desired result. It is a great thing that he acknowledges that Ishvara is the one who grants the results of his efforts. This is called **Ishvara prasāda buddhi** – attitude of considering everything as a gift from Ishvara.

As the person progresses in spiritual life, he realizes that the world is a manifestation of Ishvara. He is able to conceive Vishwarupa Ishvara – the world as a form of Ishvara. Still Jiva and Ishvara are different. There are only two entities – Jiva and Ishvara. Everything that he does is a transaction with Ishvara only. So, work itself is an offering to Ishvara. This is called **Ishvara arpana buddhi** – attitude of offering to Ishvara. And because he knows that this universe is not different from Ishvara, he doesn’t ask the Lord to solve problems. He says, "Oh Lord, I don’t know why this is happening to me. Please give me the strength to calmly face the ups and downs of life. Tell me what lesson you want me to learn from this. Please teach me." This is the level of Jignāsu.

The next level is Jnāni. He realizes that he does not have a separate existence apart from Ishvara. He understands that it is Ishvara who does things through himself also. He surrenders the doership of work. He is just a witness to the drama that the Lord shows him. He just worships the Lord with love, awe and gratitude.

We can see the same progression in the relationship of a child towards his parents. When we ask a five-year-old boy

if he loves his parents, he will say, “Yes.” When asked, “Why do you love your parents?”, the boy will say, “My parents take care of me. They buy me chocolates. They take me to the playground. They celebrated my birthday by inviting all my friends. They protected me from an angry dog. They give me so many things. So, I love my parents.” If we ask a twelve-year-old boy why he loves his parents, he will say, “They are so knowledgeable and skillful. My mother is the best cook in the world. My father can answer all my questions. He can fix every broken thing in the house. I love my parents.” As age catches up, the parents may grow old, forgetful, and bedridden. If we ask the fifty-year-old man who is taking care of his bedridden father who has lost all his memory, he will say, “I love my parents because they are my parents.” He will not talk about the wealth or knowledge or skills that the parents have or had. The reasons that were

told by him when he was five years old and twelve years old do not hold any more. Now it is just love for love's sake. It is unconditional love. This gradual maturity comes in the relationship between a devotee and God also. The Ārta and Ārthārthi are like the five-year-old. The Jignāsu is like the twelve-year-old. The Jnāni loves God without any expectation.

With the concepts that we have picked up, we can revisit the verse that gives the three characteristics of Ishvara.

Every activity that we do is classified into two. Everything that we do outside is **yagna**. Doing our family duties, professional work, helping others, religious rituals, etc. are all classified under yagna. Everything that we do within is **tapas**. Trying to control our anger, overcoming jealousy, being compassionate, practicing self-discipline, speaking the truth, reducing speech, avoiding mental clutter, wishing good to everyone, practicing meditation, etc. are all classified under tapas. Isvara is **Omniscient** and Omnipresent. This universe and all living beings are his manifestations. So **bhoktāram yagna-tapasām** Ishvara is the ultimate beneficiary of all yagna and tapas.

Ishvara is **Omnipotent**. There is nothing impossible to Ishvara. At mere will, he creates, sustains, and recycles the

universe. He can make any living being think any thought that he wants. He has absolute control over everything. He is **sarva loka maheshvaram** – Supreme Lord of all the three worlds (physical, mental, and causal).

Ishvara is **Compassionate**. He is the **suhrudam sarva-bhutānām** real friend and well-wisher of all living beings. As he is the innermost Witness of all living beings and the whole universe is his manifestation, there is nothing that exists other than Ishvara. So, naturally, he is the real well-wisher, because he does not consider anyone as different from himself. Often, we don't have the bigger picture and so we think we are being put into unnecessary trouble.

For example, the doctor has advised us to do vigorous exercise every day to maintain health. We would go to a gym, and run on treadmill, do squats, lift weights, etc. Our heart, lungs, and muscles will get stressed. They would be crying and wondering why you are troubling them so much instead of just sitting and watching TV. That is because they don't have the bigger picture. You know why you are doing what you are doing. You know that it is for their good that you are doing all this, even though it creates a lot of trouble and pain for them. Similarly, Ishvara knows why he makes us go through various experiences. The goal of life is spiritual development. Ishvara puts us through experiences that will result in our spiritual growth. We only need to pray

to Ishvara to give us the knowledge to understand what is happening and the strength to go through everything. Ishvara is the one who is running this world. He knows how to run it. He does not need our advice or help in this. It is our lack of understanding that makes us question the incidents in our life.

If we have this understanding and acceptance of the Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Compassionate nature of Ishvara, we will have nothing to worry. **jnātvā mām shāntim adhigacchati** knowing Ishvara thus, a person will attain peace immediately.

Knowledge Check:

1. What are the three aspects of Personal God according to the Gita?
2. How can you say that God can be worshipped through any name, form or ritual?
3. What are the nine steps to devotion according to Srimad Bhagavatam?
4. What are the three stages in conception of God?
5. According to Vaishnava tradition, what are the five aspects of Personal God?
6. What are the different attitudes that a devotee can assume towards God?
7. What are the three major philosophies of Vedanta and how are they reconciled?

13 Review

We have covered all the important concepts in the Bhagavad Gita, and Vedānta in general. In the next sections, we will discuss the practical aspects, which are the Yogās.

Before proceeding further, we can pause to consolidate our understanding so far.

Here is a summary of the Vedānta concepts discussed till now.

- **Jiva tattva** - All living beings (Jiva) are essentially a conscious core, covered by three bodies (gross, subtle, causal).
- **Jagat tattva** - The (insentient) three bodies of all living beings and the rest of the insentient world constitute the material universe called Jagat.
- **Ishvara tattva** – The one supreme Universal Conscious Being, whose Will manifests as all the Laws, all the matter and minds and all the living beings in Universe, is the Ishvara.
- **Nirguna tattva** – All the three (Jiva, Jagat and Ishvara) are manifestations in the relative realm of the Supreme Pure Consciousness which remains unmanifest in the Absolute realm.
- The goal of life is **jivanmukti**, which is to realize the unreality of limited individuality of the Jiva.
- To prepare towards the goal, we need to develop our **punya** (merits), **samskāra** (tendencies), and **jnāna** (knowledge).

- Life gives experiences like pleasure / pain, success / failure, gain / loss, etc. to ponder over and realize the truth.
- **All sorrow in life is because of not understanding the goal of life and wrong identification with the body and mind.**
- Know this and be free from all sorrow.

This is very beautifully illustrated in the Mundaka Upanishad verses 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 using the story of two birds. Swami Vivekananda translates the story thus. "The whole of the Vedanta Philosophy is in this story: Two birds of golden plumage sat on the same tree. The one above, serene, majestic, immersed in his own glory; the one below restless and eating the fruits of the tree, now sweet, now bitter. Once he ate an exceptionally bitter fruit, then he paused and looked up at the majestic bird above; but he soon forgot about the other bird and went on eating the fruits of the tree as before. Again he ate a bitter fruit, and this time he hopped up a few boughs nearer to the bird at the top. This happened many times until at last the lower bird came to the place of the upper bird and lost himself. He found all at once that there had never been two birds, but that he was all the time that upper bird, serene, majestic, and immersed in his own glory." (Swami Vivekananda - CW VII-80)

The lower bird is the Jivātma. The upper bird is the Paramātma. Actually, there is only one bird. The lower bird is only a reflection of the upper bird. As long as the lower bird eats sweet fruits, it is happily unaware of the upper bird. Only when the lower bird eats a bitter fruit, it looks up. As long as we have favourable experiences in life, we don't seek the truth. Only when we face challenges in life, we ask

questions like “Who am I?” and “Why am I here?” That is the purpose of problems in life. They are a wakeup call. They are love letters from Ishvara to make us seek Him. As we progress closer and closer to Ishvara, we experience more and more peace. When we reach Him, we realize that there was never a separation between us and Him. We were just looking the other way. When we realize His oneness with us, we become free from all guilt, grudge, fear, anxiety, sorrow, anger, jealousy, greed, etc. We enjoy peace.

With this, you should be able to give the Bhagavad Gita’s answers to the questions that we started with.

- What is the purpose of your life?
- What is the difference between animals and human beings?
- What is the purpose of human beings in the Universe?
- Who am I as an individual?
- What are the real things that matter at the end of life?
- How can I decide between right and wrong in various situations?
- Who is Ishvara (God)?
- What is the relationship between Ishvara and the world?
- What is the relationship between Ishvara and the individual?
- Why do good people sometimes face tough situations?
- What does a successful life look and feel like?

Law of Karma can answer most of the moral dilemmas. As we sow, so shall we reap. We will get exactly what we deserve. What is ours will never be lost. What is not ours will never stay with us. Nature has a balance and keeps the accounts. We don't need to worry about it.

The goal of life is not pleasure. The goal of life is to improve our punya, samskāra, and jnāna. Everything else is useful only if they contribute to these. For example, we go through education to be able to serve society more efficiently. Similarly, wealth is also useful to serve society and thus gain punya. We need to ensure that we are better people today than we were yesterday. Better people means – less anger, jealousy, arrogance, hatred, greed, etc, and more kindness, honesty, self-control, love, etc.

Based on this understanding, you can try to answer some practical questions.

- A person won a huge sum of money in a lottery. Where do you think he got that money from?
- A person works hard in his office. But somehow success eludes him. He feels that he is not being paid enough for his work. What do you think is happening?
- Suppose a friend has been facing a lot of bad situations. He has lost a lot of money in poor business ventures. He is thinking of committing suicide. Why do you think committing suicide is not the right decision?
- Suppose you have a friend who is badly in need of money. The friend is a good person. His need is genuine. But the friend has no means to return the money in the near future. What should you do?

- A person works in a government office. He draws a decent salary and other benefits. To do his assigned duty in the office, he takes bribes from the citizens. He is clever and can manage without getting caught by the law. What do you think will happen to him in the future?
- A person works as an employee in a company. Even though he draws a handsome salary, he does not work hard. He just whiles away time playing, browsing, chatting, etc. What do you think will happen?
- A person is born very brilliant. He can understand things very easily. But he is very lazy. He does not want to use or develop his talents. Why do you think he was born gifted? Why do you think he is not doing the right thing by not developing his innate talent?
- When you are walking on a lonely road, you see a 500 rupees note lying on the road. What should you do? Why? What will happen if you take and keep the money for yourself?

Similarly, in future, whenever you face a situation in life where you need to make a decision, you can think on these lines. You can use the concepts that you have learnt to consider what would be the solution or suggestion based on the Bhagavad Gita.

14 Gita's Way

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः ।
अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥ १२-६॥
ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṃnyasya matparāḥ ।
ananyenaiva yogena māṃ dhyāyanta upāsate ॥ 12-6॥
ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्-पराः ।
अनन्येन एव योगेन माम् ध्यायन्तः उपासते ॥ १२-६॥
ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṃnyasya mat-parāḥ ।
ananyena eva yogena mām dhyāyantaḥ upāsate ॥ 12-6॥
They who offer all (personal, family, professional, social service, religious, spiritual, etc.) actions to Me (as Karma Yoga), having Me as the Goal, worshipping Me and meditating upon Me with single-minded (Dhyāna) Yoga,

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।
भवामि न चिरात्पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥ १२-७॥
teṣāmahaṃ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṃsārasāgarāt ।
bhavāmi na cirātpārtha mayyāveśitacetasām ॥ 12-7॥
तेषाम् अहम् समुद्धर्ता मृत्यु-संसार-सागरात् ।
भवामि न चिरात् पार्थ मयि आवेशित-चेतसाम् ॥ १२-७॥
teṣām aham samuddhartā mṛtyu-saṃsāra-sāgarāt ।
bhavāmi na cirāt pārtha mayi āveśita-cetasām ॥ 12-7॥
To those who have their mind fixed on Me, I very soon become their Saviour from the ocean of death, desire, and sorrow.

Recap of the Roadmap

We have seen that the true knowledge of "who am I" is going to make us free. Knowing that "I am Pure Consciousness" is called moksha. In the analogy of movie,

knowing that "I am the screen on which the movie of this universe and life is being projected. The screen is not affected by what happens in the movie. In the same way, I am not affected by what happens in this universe and in life." This understanding frees us from all sorrow. Now, what is hiding that knowledge? What is hiding the truth? The evolutionary baggage. This biological and psychological system that we possess as the body and mind has been designed for survival and not for freedom. So, we must overcome this evolutionary defect in the body and mind to go further along the spiritual path.

We saw that there are three specific problems: the survival instinct called Brahma Granthi, the pleasure-seeking tendency called Vishnu Granthi, and the wrong idea of limited individuality called Rudra Granthi. These three must be overcome. They were useful so far; it is not that they are totally negative. For survival, they were needed. Our ancestors and great-grandfathers have survived and brought us to where we are because of these three. But to go ahead in spiritual life, we need to outgrow them. Suppose I need to go from my house to the temple. I need to take an autorickshaw. When I have reached the temple, I need to renounce the autorickshaw. There is no hatred towards the autorickshaw. It has been useful so far. Now, to get into the temple, I need to leave the autorickshaw behind. There are others who are still on the way, to whom the autorickshaw is useful. I would even recommend other people to take the autorickshaw. To the people who have reached the threshold of the temple, the instruction is to renounce the autorickshaw. Thus, we need to free ourselves from Avidyā Māyā in the form of the three Granthis with gratitude. We need to pray and take blessings from Vidyā Māya for this.

For this, we saw a two-step process. A plane runs on the runway to pick up sufficient speed and then lifts off. Similarly, there is a **two-step process in spiritual life**.

The **first step** is to identify myself as the Jivātman, which is associated with the Kārna Sharira. Holding on to this identity, I give up my identification with this body and mind. I say, "I am not this body, I am not this life principle, I am not these emotions, I am not these value systems" – Annamaya Kosha, Prāṇamaya Kosha, Manomaya Kosha, Vijnānamaya Kosha — I am not any of these things. I am the wielder of free will. I take decisions, and I am responsible for them. As I am responsible for them, I reap the fruits of my actions. I go from birth to death, death to birth, and again birth to death. Birth after birth, "punarapi jananam punarapi maranam" During the whole process, I improve myself.

How do I improve myself? I develop more punya, I develop good samskara, and I develop the right knowledge. I develop these three over multiple lifetimes. In each lifetime I get a body, and I use that body to develop these qualities. Then I drop that body and take another one. I keep doing this because it is not possible to develop these qualities sufficiently in one lifetime. I have already gone through many lifetimes developing all these things.

Now, why do we need these ideas? You might say, "How can we believe in this?" We logically saw that if I believe in free will, I must believe in the law of karma. If I believe in the law of karma, I must believe in rebirth. Rebirth is not a belief; it is a logical conclusion that I arrive at if I believe in free will. Understanding and imbibing this idea is very important. I have free will, there is the Law of Karma, and I

go from birth to death, death to birth, birth to death, death to birth, and so on.

This belief in free will is important so that I know the goal of my life. I need to evolve. My life is in my hands. Accepting the idea of rebirth is very important because by accepting the idea of rebirth, we can easily give up our identity with this body and attachment to the various things like pleasures, relatives, wealth, education, name, etc., which are all pinned on the body. Once I understand this, I know I am not this body, and I am not this life. I have been through several bodies and several lives. This body is of no consequence; it's just incidental. I will not get too attached to this body, and I will not get attached to all the relationships that have come because of this body. All the worldly relationships are because of this body, and I will not have strong attachments if I identify myself with the Jivātma.

So, I identify myself as the Jivātma, and the only thing that matters in life is spiritual progress. Am I gathering more punya? Am I gathering good samskāras? Is my jealousy going down? Is my anger going down? Am I becoming more honest? Am I becoming kinder, more loving? Am I developing the right knowledge? This is what I carry with me across births, and this is what really matters in life. This entire multi-lifetime project is to become a better person. It is as simple as that. Am I a better person today than I was yesterday? By the time I am 30, am I a better person than I was at 20? At 40, am I a better person than I was at 30? At 50, am I a better person than I was at 40? This is what matters. When we say a better person, we mean less self-centeredness, less jealousy, less anger, less arrogance,

more honesty, more selflessness, more kindness, and more self-discipline.

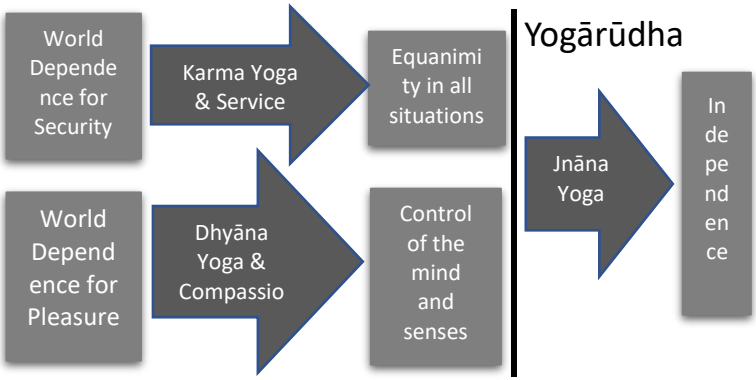
This is achieved by doing our duties, helping others, following self-discipline, practicing japa, puja, and meditation, and exposing ourselves to good company (satsanga), reading good books, listening to good lectures, doing introspection, and retrospection. We should see what we did wrong and how we can become better. Be obsessed with this one idea: **I need to become a better person today than I was yesterday.** This is not only a lifelong project; it is a multi-lifetime project for every living being on this earth. Even if they don't know it, nature does it unconsciously. They do it unconsciously, instinctively, but this is the one goal of every living being on earth. Every living being in this universe has just one goal, and that is to become better day by day, year by year, life by life. Whenever you see any living being, always remember this: this person is here to make themselves better. Let me see how I can help. That's it. That is the first step.

Once a person has progressed sufficiently in becoming a better person, then God will give a Guru to go to the next step: to give up even this identity with the Jivātma and identify with Pure Consciousness. This is the **second step**.

This roadmap is given very clearly in the Bhagavad Gita. From world dependence for security and world dependence for pleasure, you need to go ahead. These are the two main problems when you start.

By **Karma Yoga** and having a service attitude, you give up this dependence upon the world for security. Here, Karma Yoga in a secular way basically means, "As I sow, so shall I reap." Law of Karma is there. So, I do good things, I do social

service, I do everything right. How do I know I have become independent of this world? I will have equanimity in all situations. That is the measuring criteria to say whether I am independent of this world. If you are dependent on this world for security, you will be tossed by the ups and downs of life very violently. If you are independent of this world for security, you will have equanimity in all situations. The Gita slokā 12.4 defines this **sarvatra samabuddhi** as the definition or characteristic of a person who has achieved independence from this world for security.



The second one is independence from the world for pleasure. This independence is achieved by meditation (**Dhyāna Yoga**) and also compassion for living beings. By Dhyāna Yoga, we break this dependence on the world for pleasure. There are secular ways of meditation like watching the breath, counting the breath, compassion meditation, mindfulness meditation, etc. Meditation itself gives a lot of pleasure. You can literally generate your own dopamine in your brain by doing meditation. That is why meditation is sometimes addictive. Dhyāna Yoga is a technique by which we establish our independence from the world for pleasure. How do I know I have become

independent of this world for pleasure? I will have control of the mind and senses. The Gita slokā 12.4 defines this as **sanniyamya indriya grāmam**. If I have control over the mind and senses, then that is an indication that I no longer depend on this world for pleasure.

A person who has sufficiently attained these two is called a **yoga ārudha**. The Gita slokā 6.4 defines who is a yoga aruda: a person who does not depend on the karmendriyas or jnanendriyas for his satisfaction and does not have any worldly agenda (sarvasankalpa sannyasi). This yoga ārudha state is the prerequisite for **Jnāna Yoga**. When such a person goes through the practices of **shravana** (listening), **manana** (clearing all doubts), and **nididhyāsana** (meditating), he will attain the jnāna (knowledge) of identity with Pure Consciousness. He will attain complete independence, which is **moksha** (liberation).

This is the roadmap of a secular approach to attain the final destination of a Jivanmukta. The first six chapters of the Gita present this in detail.

The Gita's Smoother Roadmap

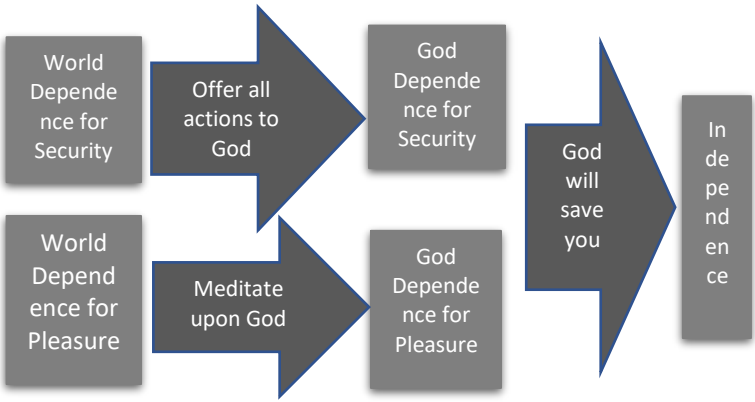
In the second six chapters, the Gita introduces Ishvara. Ishvara is the Supreme Being who has manifested as this universe, and with whom we can have a personal emotional transaction. This brings in an alternate approach to spiritual life which involves **Bhakti Yoga**.

In the 12th chapter, Arjuna asks the question, "**Can a person be spiritual but not religious?**" Krishṇa answers, "Yes, it is possible. But it is very difficult. A religious life is incomplete without becoming spiritual. A spiritual life is difficult without being religious. So, lead a religious and spiritual

life." Verse 12.4 gives a list of three prerequisites for a spiritual life – (1) control over the mind and senses, (2) equanimity in all situations, and (3) interest in the welfare of all living beings. If the person has these prerequisites, then he can attempt to be spiritual without being religious. Verse 12.5 says that it is very difficult to develop these for people who have strong identification with the body. Most people are highly influenced by the body conditions. When we are hungry, we get angry. If have a good meal, we feel sleepy. If the condition of the mind and mood is dependent on whether the stomach is empty or full, how can we attempt to be spiritual with such a condition? Nature has a lot of control over our mind. An intelligent person takes a few pints of alcohol, and he starts behaving like a monkey. A boy's perspective is normal until ten years. When he enters teenage years, some hormones enter the blood and his perspective about the other gender changes. With such identification with body, relationships related to the body, influence of body over mind, etc., it is impossible to be spiritual.

A religious approach gives a smooth roadmap. Accepting Ishvara as the Supreme Being of this universe, and accepting the universe as a manifestation of Ishvara gives a good middle step. Also, almost all the problems and obstacles that we are trying to solve like anger, jealousy, arrogance, anxiety, fear, guilt, greed, etc. are all emotional in nature. A purely intellectual approach to solve these emotional problems rarely works. Even doctors who know all the ills of smoking or drinking are sometimes addicted to these. There is a gap between intellectual conviction and behaviour. So, having a personal emotional relationship with Ishvara right from the beginning of spiritual life makes it easy and smooth. Various religious practices like listening

to the stories about Ishvara and various devotees, singing bhajans, chanting hymns, celebrating religious festivals, going on pilgrimages, doing ritualistic puja, following various religious austerities like fasting, etc. are all designed to develop a deep personal emotional relationship with Ishvara. With this emotional relationship, it is easy to drop the identity and dependence on the body and other relationships based on the body and worldly life.



In these verses 12.6 and 12.7, the Gita gives an approach towards Karma Yoga and Dhyāna Yoga mixed with Bhakti Yoga. This is the Gita's recommended approach to spiritual life.

To become independent of the world for security, we can shift from world dependence for security to God dependence for security. Ishvara is there. This entire universe is run by Ishvara. Everything happens by his will. He knows how to run the universe. He does not need our help or advice. It is a privilege that we are allowed to serve him through working in this world. The verse says, **mat parāh** - Ishvara is the goal. Health, wealth, relations, fame, comforts, pleasure, etc. are not the goal. They are fine as

long as they help us towards Ishvara. Otherwise, they are distractions to be avoided. We need to offer all actions to God, **sarvāni karmāni mayi sannyasya**. "All actions" means actions like brushing our teeth, eating food, helping our family, doing our job in our office, helping someone on the road, doing social service, or sitting and doing puja and meditation. We need to do all our actions as offering to Ishvara. It is Ishvara who manifests as the universe and all the living beings. So, all actions are transactions with Ishvara only. And everything happens by Ishvara's grace. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Compassionate. So, I don't need to worry about anything. Thus, we say, "Ishvara is the one who gives me security. I don't depend upon this world." Depend upon Ishvara for security and not upon the world. This is Karma Yoga along with Bhakti.

To free ourselves from depending upon the world for pleasure, we need to meditate upon the Lord: **ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate**. We should meditate upon Ishvara in the center of our heart with deep love and devotion for Ishvara through any name and form that we are able to relate to. This will give us immense pleasure. That will free us from dependence upon this world for pleasure. Close your eyes, think of the Lord in the center of your heart, and chant His name. That pleasure is much, much higher than any pleasure we can get in this world. In the sixth chapter, Krishṇa describes the pleasure we get from meditation. He says, "buddhi grāhyam athiindriyam," a very tangible pleasure experienced in the mind that does not depend on any sense organs. By holding on to the pleasure from meditation upon the Lord, we can easily give up dependence on this world for pleasure. This is Dhyāna Yoga along with Bhakti.

Once we have done these two, we become yoga āruda. The mind gets into a state called **mayi āveshita chetasām** – mind soaked with Ishvara, like a rasagolla soaked in sweet syrup. The Lord says, **teshām aham samuddhartā mrityu samsāra sāgarāt** – to such a person, I am the Saviour from the ocean of death and misery. The Lord saves the person by giving the knowledge of Brahman. Krishṇa describes this in the 10th chapter as well. He says, "If you meditate upon the Lord in the center of your heart, then the knowledge will shine forth from within." How does it work? It's very simple. When we accept the Lord as the Vishwaroopa Ishwara, we transition from the Jiva-Jagat-Ishwara model to just Jiva-Ishwara model. There are only two entities: I and the Lord, no one else. Switching from that to the knowledge of Oneness - advaita jnāna is easy. It's a graded approach. We will naturally mature to the next level.

Thus, if we are able to develop a mind soaked in the Lord by these two steps, then the Lord will take care of the rest. To develop such a mind, we need to (1) have Ishvara as the goal of life, (2) do all our actions as offering to Ishvara (karma yoga), and (3) meditate upon Ishvara (dhyāna yoga). We will see these two yogās in detail.

Knowledge Check:

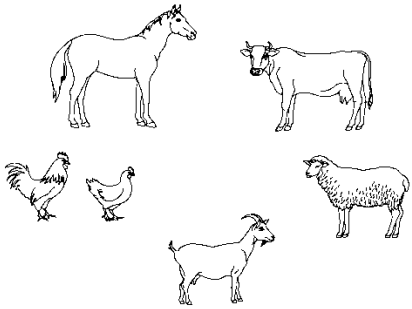
1. Can one be spiritual but not religious?
2. What is Karma Yoga when taken along with Bhakti?
3. What is Dhyāna Yoga when taken along with Bhakti?
4. What is the advantage of spiritual sādhana with Bhakti?
5. What is the Lord's promise to devotees?

15 Karma Yoga

The purpose of Karma Yoga is to purify the mind from strong likes (rāga) and dislikes (dvesha). Here are a few illustrations to understand Karma Yoga easily.

Lesson From a Farm

Let us listen to a story. There was a farm with many animals. One day, the animals had a discussion. The sheep said, "I give wool to the master. With that wool, the master makes clothes and blankets, which keep him warm. The master is very happy with me; he loves me; he feeds me, takes care of me, and protects me." Then the cock heard this and said, "Yes, yes, I am also serving the master. I wake him up every day at the right time and take care of the chicken, so the master likes me." The chicken said, "Yes, I give eggs to the master. With those eggs, the master's family get protein and stay healthy. I help the master, and the master takes care of me. I love my master." The cow said, "Yes, what you are saying is right. Our master is very good. I give milk to the master, and with that milk, the master's entire family is very healthy. The master loves me and gives me nice juicy grass to eat." Then the horse said, "Yes, I help the master plow the field and draw the cart to take the produce to the market. I even carry the master when he wants to go alone. The master takes care of me, feeds me, and protects me." When the goat listened to all these conversations, it



laughed and said, “You guys are all fools. Look at me. I don’t work hard. I don’t give anything. I just keep playing and jumping around all day. You are all fools. You should enjoy life. Life is for enjoying. Why are you sweating it out like this? Don’t take life so seriously. Don’t work so hard. Look at me. I am just enjoying life. The master feeds me and takes care of me. Don’t work so hard.” The other animals were wondering, “Is it really so?” In fact, they were confused. The goat’s speech was so convincing that even the animals were wondering, “Should we also stop working? Is it right?” Then that weekend, the master’s daughter’s wedding was there. There was a big feast, a lot of guests had come, and the next day, the animals found that the goat was missing. We all can guess what happened to the goat—the goat became biryani.

So, if you are being fed and clothed for free, that is a very dangerous situation. Some people may tell you, “No, no, don’t work hard, take life easy, life is for enjoyment.” That is the Cārvāka argument. It is called hedonism. They’ll say, “Take care of yourself.” This is a self-centered, bohemian, hedonistic argument. Whenever anyone puts forth this kind of argument, remember this—they are all bakrās (goats), they are going to be chopped. That’s what it means. Nature is smarter than you. Nothing comes for free. You must give. If you don’t give willingly, it will be forced out of you, and you’ll be made the bakrā. So, work hard, contribute to Nature. Don’t live as a burden on Earth. Nature has a balance. Nature keeps a perfect account. If you try to take more than you give, Nature will forcibly take back from you. It may be at a time, place and situation that may make it more painful and complicated. If you try to give more than you have taken, Nature will give it back to you in various ways. You can also choose the time, place and situation

when you give. It will be easy and smooth. So, be very careful and ensure that you give more than what you take.

Mileage

Now, let us look at another illustration. When you go to buy a car or a bike, what is the most important question will you ask? “Kitna deta hai?” – How much does it give? What is the mileage? What do you mean by that? Efficiency. Efficiency is output by input. A vehicle that gives maximum output for minimum input—less petrol or diesel and maximum mileage—that is what we need. Now, ask yourself the question, “What is my mileage?” Are you taking more than you are giving, or are you giving more than you are taking? In Tamil, there’s a very nice word for a person who takes more than he gives. We call a person who is just eating without contributing anything - “thendachoru” – Waste of rice. You might as well dump that food straight into the commode instead of passing it through that person. Are you living as a burden on this earth, or are you contributing to this world? Is your contribution more than your consumption?

Life is measured by your output, not by what you have accumulated. Suppose you are preparing a resume or a CV. What can you put in your CV? Can you put, “I have five lakhs in my bank account. I have stocks worth ten lakhs. I have property worth this much. Last year I went on a European tour”? Can you put on your resume? No. Whatever you have accumulated, whatever you have spent, what you have enjoyed as entertainment, all those things cannot go into your resume. Life is measured by your capability and achievements, not by what you have accumulated and consumed. You can say, “I have this degree, I have

completed this certification course. I have worked in this company and contributed to various projects. I won the first prize in a cooking competition. I am a promoter of terrace gardening. I am a volunteer at Rāmakrishṇa Math and have participated in numerous social service activities." In your resume, you highlight what you have delivered in life and your capability to deliver. You mention the courses and certifications you have completed to demonstrate your capability to perform certain tasks. Life is measured by your output, not by what you have consumed or accumulated. This is your "mileage."

Beggar or King

In summary, there are two ways to live: you can live life as a beggar, or as a king or queen. Consider a beggar at a traffic signal or outside a temple. When he looks at each person, all he thinks is, "Can I get some money from this person? Will this person give me 10 rupees or 20 rupees, or will he just say, 'no change'?" Everywhere he looks, he thinks, "What is in it for me?" This is a beggarly attitude. The other attitude is, "How can I help?" Everywhere you look at people, you think, "How can I help this person? How can I make life better for this person? How can I add value in this situation?" You focus on giving. Even if you go to a function, you can see the difference. Once the function is over and lunch starts, some people will immediately rush to stand in the queue for lunch, thinking, "If I don't go fast, I will have to wait in the queue." Others will see the chairs spread out and think, "The volunteers will have to put these chairs

away. Let me give them a hand." They start helping to arrange and put back the chairs along with the volunteers. They are more focused on giving than grabbing. The grabber has a beggarly attitude. The giver has a royal attitude. We have the choice to be a beggar or a king.

Eat Prasāda

With the above three illustrations, you would have got a fair idea of Karma Yoga. There is a very beautiful slokā in the third chapter. Verse 3.13 says, "Noble people who consume food that is obtained after contributing to the world are freed from all sins. Those who only cook and eat for themselves eat only sin." The previous slokā says that those who consume without contributing are thieves. Work hard in this world, contribute to the world, and deserve the food on your plate. If you deserve the food you eat, that food will free you from sins. If you don't deserve the food you eat, you are eating only sin.

Ensure that the food you eat is prasāda. What do you mean by prāsada? This whole universe is Ishvara, and all your actions are contributions to this entire universe as Ishvara. The food you get on your plate is Ishvara prasāda. The Gita calls it *yajna shishta*, which means the Lord is giving you this food as prasāda for the work you have done in this universe, as an offering to Him. Be aware of the world as manifested Ishvara and do all your work as offering to Ishvara who is in front of you as the Universe. Then the food that is on your plate becomes His prasāda, and that food will free you from all sins. This is the idea of Karma Yoga. By extension, the food you eat, the place you live, the clothes you wear, the entertainment you get—everything should be prasāda for you. You should deserve them.

Principles of Karma Yoga

Some principles of Karma Yoga can be enumerated thus:

This Universe operates based on a Natural Law. Every decision has its consequences. As you sow, so shall you reap. You alone are the maker of your destiny. There is no extraneous factor.

What you did in the past decides what you get now. What you do now decides what you will get in the future. You get only what you deserve. Nothing is lost. So, don't worry. Relax. Work on what life brings you. Whatever situation you are in—whether you are a student, an employer, an employee, a social worker, or working in your family as a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, or wife—work, work, work. Do whatever is justified and needed in that situation. Work because it needs to be done, and don't worry about what comes back. Nature will take care of that. There is a balance in nature. You don't need to worry about what comes back. You only need to worry about whether you have done your duty and given more than what you have received.

Give, give, give. If you contribute to the welfare of the world and serve the living beings, you will be taken care of in the long run. Krishṇa says in the 9th chapter of the Gita, not to consider this world as different from the Lord. Ishvara and the world are not different. Those who serve the world, and all living beings in this world are serving Ishvara only. Krishṇa says, "Those who are so busy serving the living beings that they don't even take care of their own well-being, I will take care of their welfare. I will take care of their yoga and kshema. Whatever they need, I will give it, and whatever they have, I will protect." There is a beautiful

Tamil proverb: “If you take care of the orphans, your children will grow by themselves.” If you take care of underprivileged children, then your children will be taken care of by Ishvara.

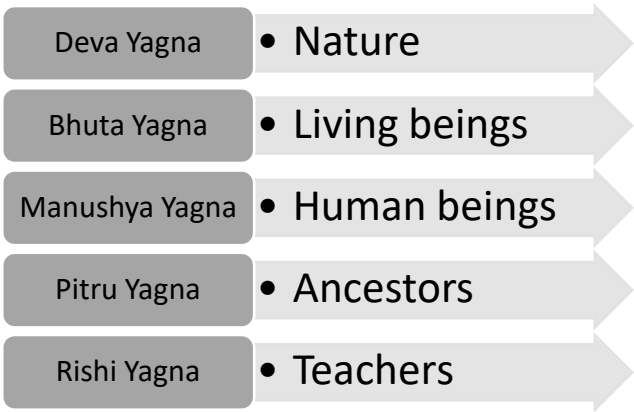
The goal is to improve yourself in the process. Gaining merit (punya), character building (samskāra) and gaining wisdom (jnāna) are the goals. Working for these long-term developmental goals, instead of short-term results is called Karma Yoga.

The key to open your mind for higher perspectives and possibilities is in the hands of Nature or Mahāmāya. You have taken a lot from Nature already. Unless you have cleared your debts, access to higher possibilities of the mind will not be unlocked for you. Your mind will not develop detachment and understanding unless you have repaid what you have taken.

The goal of Karma Yoga is to purify the mind from strong likes (rāga) and dislikes (dvesha). The Gita presents three aspects of Karma Yoga – yagna (giving back), dāna (charity), and tapas (austerity). All these must be done as offerings to Ishvara. Karma (action) becomes Karma Yoga only if it is done as an offering to Ishvara with the objective of spiritual growth. Otherwise, it becomes mere Karma and it binds more than it purifies.

Panca Mahā Yagna – Giving Back

We have been consuming so much right from our birth. In the Indian tradition and scriptures, five debts (runās) are enumerated. Repaying these five debts is called panca mahā yagna.



Deva Yagna - First, we owe nature - pancabhutās. We drink water. Breathe the air. Even to stand we need earth. We are indebted to the whole nature around us. This is called deva runa. And how do we pay back? Conserve nature. Don't waste electricity. Don't waste water. Don't pollute the surroundings. Plant trees. Conserve species. Donate to forest conservation activities. Be grateful to nature and give back to nature by all these ways. That is called deva yagna.

Bhuta Yagna - Second, we owe to other living beings. We consume milk, wool, honey, etc. Even if you are vegan, to pollinate your food, you need living beings. Unless bees and insects pollinate the rice and wheat, we will not get food. So, even if you are a vegan, you depend on other living beings. Many people depend on pets for psychological support. All this is called bhuta runa. We must give back by taking care of living beings. Pay fairly for milk and such animal products. In the summer keep a bowl of water for thirsty birds, squirrels, and insects. Donate to goshalas. Be kind to animals. This is called bhuta yagna.

Manushya Yagna - We owe to other human beings. We depend on other human beings for so many things. For

example, take the clothes that we are wearing. Some human beings planted seeds of cotton and grew that cotton into plants, and then harvested that cotton. And then someone else took it to the market, someone else beat it and carded it, and then made it into fiber. Someone else spun it into threads, someone weaved it into cloth, someone dyed it into colours, someone stitched it, and someone brought it to the store. In the whole process, so many other people are involved too. Someone discovered the fertilizers and pesticides, someone manufactured them, someone built the machines involved, someone mined the iron for the machines, someone built the store, etc. So many people like engineers, masons, mechanics, electricians, salesperson, accountant, software developers, etc. are involved in just the small piece of cloth that we are wearing. Similarly, the food that we eat, the place where we live, the transportation we use, etc. Millions and millions of human beings are involved in all goods and services that we are using. We must be thankful to them. We must give back to them. First, pay properly for the goods and services that you are using. Don't take things for free. Pay for every good and service that you are taking. Also, treat other human beings with kindness. Don't try to exploit the kiranavala (grocer) or the sabjiwali (vegetable vendor) by bargaining unfairly. Don't try to get the advantage of them. Serve people, help people, and be kind to people. Also, donate in times of calamities. Volunteer in social service organizations. All these are called manushya yagna.

Pitru Yagna - We owe our biological inheritance to our father, grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, to all our previous generations or ancestors. So, we are indebted to all of them, and we must pay back our biological inheritance. How do we pay back? By

providing good children and grandchildren to society, taking care of our parents and grandparents, taking care of children and grandchildren, and taking care of brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, etc. The best way to make our grandfather happy is to take care of our underprivileged cousins. The best way to make our great-grandfather happy is to take care of our underprivileged second cousins who are also his grandchildren. You share a common ancestry. Just placing their photo, putting a garland and then offering some food will not make them happy if you do not take care of their grandchildren. For example, if there is your second cousin who is unfortunately poor and who is having difficulty in paying the school fees or college fees for their children, go and help them out. That is the way you can make your grandfather and great-grandfather happy. There are some people who don't have these kinds of relationships. There are orphanages and old age homes to take care of them. Donate to them and serve them. This is called pitru yagna.

Rishi Yagna - Rishi runa is our debt to our culture and to our teachers. We are different from animals because of the culture — science, technology, arts, humanities, music, dance, language. This cultural inheritance is called the rishi runa. Just like the biological inheritance is pitru runa, the cultural inheritance is rishi runa. We must pay back. Pay fairly for education. Don't buy pirated copies of books. Don't watch pirated movies. Pay for the book you buy and for the movie you watch. That way, by watching good movies and paying for good books, you are encouraging the authors and producers by giving them royalties. You are also encouraging them to make more good movies and to write better books. If the primary school where you studied does not have enough funds now, go and do some social

service there. Donate some money to that. Build a lab. Alumni can get together and renovate some buildings in your old school. You can mentor the current students. You can help the education of children and grandchildren of your primary school teachers. And pass down whatever you have studied to the next generation. You can take tuition for some children. Run tuition centers for underprivileged children. And whatever you are studying now, go and teach others. Also, follow that you have learnt. All these things come under rishi yagna.

Dāna – Charity

We saw that giving back what we owe is called yagna. Giving more than that is called dāna – charity. The Gita verse 17.20 gives a beautiful definition of dāna. It says, "The donation that is given as a duty (without arrogance) without expecting anything in return, to the neediest person at the place and time of need is the best charity."

Tapas – Austerity

The third aspect of Karma Yoga is tapas – austerity. Austerities are needed to make us aware of our limits and to stretch our limits. It is important to note that austerities are for the mind and not for the body. The Gita mentions that we should not hurt our bodies in the name of austerities. Also, austerities should not be done in an ostentatious manner. The Gita describes tapas under three categories – physical, verbal and mental – in verses 17.14, 17.15, and 17.16 respectively.

Physical Austerities – The Gita verse 17.14 gives a sample list of physical austerities.

deva dvija guru prājna pujanam – bowing down (falling at the feet, touching the feet, etc.) and saluting (doing namaste) deities, educated people, teachers and wise people. Deities are various aspects of Ishvara. Dvija literally means twice-born. We have our biological birth as animals through our parents. We have our cultural birth as human beings through our teachers through education. Thus, an educated person is a twice-born person. In ancient times, the upanayana ceremony marked the starting of education for all students irrespective of caste, gender, etc. Later, during the past couple of centuries, it became restricted to only certain sections of society. Today, it is again open to everyone. It includes both secular and spiritual education. Prājna is a person who is not only educated, but also has experience and so has wisdom also.

saucam – cleanliness and neatness. We should keep our room, house, kitchen, bathroom, street, city, and country clean and neat.

ārjavam – straight forwardness in behaviour. Our actions should align with our words.

brahmacaryam – self-discipline. Brahma means Vedas. Brahmacaryam means following a lifestyle guided by the Vedas. Self-discipline is the key. It is only by following discipline that we can train our mind to obey us. We should wake up, go to sleep, eat food, do exercise, etc. every day at a fixed time. Nothing should be haphazard and random. We should also take up fasts and other austerities to train our mind into discipline. This is the intention of doing sandhya-vandanam 3 times a day, formal puja 6 times a day, etc. by some sadhakās. Every ashram will have a daily and weekly routine with special routines for special days like

ekadasi, purnima, amavasya, pradosham, etc. It is important for every spiritual aspirant to have a personal spiritual routine covering the entire day. Also, brahmacaryam indicates celibacy, chastity, avoidance of luxuries, etc.

ahimsa – non-violence. Any form of exploitation of the weakness of others is violence. It may be physical, emotional, social, educational, financial, or intellectual weakness. We should support and help people when they are having a weakness. That is non-violence.

Verbal Austerities – The Gita verse 17.15 gives a sample list of verbal austerities.

anudvegakaram vākyam – softspokenness. We should not shout. We should limit the volume and force of our sound under all circumstances.

satyam-priyam-hitam – truthful-pleasant-beneficial. Whatever we say, must have all these three. If not, we should say it.

svādhyāya – self-study. We should study good books, listen to good lectures, etc. Every day we should read a few pages of some book that will contribute to our knowledge and inspire us to a noble life.

abhyasanam – repetition. We should chant, do japa, etc. every day. Abhyasanam is where the meaning is not given importance. Svādhyāya is where the meaning is given importance. Both are needed.

Mental Austerities – The Gita verse 17.16 gives a sample list of mental austerities.

manah prasāda – gratitude. We should have an attitude of gratitude. We should count our blessings and not worry about what we lack. Gratitude for what we have will give us a positive outlook. It will bring in more things to be grateful for. Many modern psychologists recommend maintaining a gratitude diary, where every morning we should write two things that we are grateful for in life in general, and every evening we should write three things that happened during that day that we are grateful for. This is a very powerful exercise that has helped thousands of people.

saumyatvam – pleasant. We should expose our mind only to positive and wholesome ideas. We should avoid dark, sarcastic, horrifying, violent, etc. ideas, books, movies, etc. We should engage our minds only in bright, beautiful, artistic, pleasant, enriching ideas, books, movies, etc.

maunam – silent. As this is mental austerity, here maunam means absence of mental clutter. We should do one thing at a time. We should maintain a proper calendar and to-do list. We can use modern tools like GTD (Getting Things Done) method. This will give mental clarity and promote creativity.

ātma vinigrahah – control of mind. Mind will have random thoughts. They cannot be controlled. However, we can decide whether to pursue a thought or not. Also, we can decide our voluntary thoughts. This is what is meant by control of mind. Always doing mānasa japa when the mind is not actively engaged in an intellectual activity is an effective means for this. We will discuss more of this in the next section on Dhyāna Yoga.

bhāva samshuddhi – purity of intention. We should always wish good to everyone. Even towards people who have

done evil actions, we should pray to Ishvara to give them the right understanding. For example, if you see someone doing wheeling or driving rashly, don't think, "These people will understand only if they meet with an accident." Think, "Oh Lord, these foolish people should not meet with any accident. Please make them understand." Let no curse against anyone come to your mind. Let your mind always bless everyone abundantly and pray for everyone's wellbeing.

These are sample austerities that are listed in these three verses of the Gita. Other parts of the Gita give few more such austerities. Based on this, we can design our own austerities. For example, we can avoid eating ice cream for one month. It will not hurt the body. It will push the mind out of its comfort zone. Taking bath in room temperature water is a popular austerity.

Svadharma – Own Duty

The Gita verse 18.46 says that doing one's duty is a way to worship Ishvara. The verse gives the reason behind it also. Ishvara is the cause of this universe, and he pervades this universe fully. Everything happens by his will. It is he who has given us various roles in life like parent, sibling, neighbour, employer, employee, citizen, etc. Doing full justice to these roles is our duty. Doing this is the worship of Ishvara, who gave us these roles.

Suppose there is a rich owner of a big factory. His only son has gone abroad, got educated and come back. He wants his son to become familiar with the factory. This is preparation for the son, who will inherit the factory after his father. The father will put his son as an intern in each department for three months each – three months on the

shop floor, three months in the packaging department, three months in the accounting department, three months in the sales department, etc. The father has assigned a manager for each of the three months. Now, the son must humbly work under that manager just like any other employee. It is not right if out of his pride, the son says, “My grandfather is the founder of this company. My father is the current owner. After my father, I am going to become the owner of this company. I will not do this menial job.” If he shows such an attitude, then that reflects very badly on the father. His father is the one who has placed him in that situation in life. Doing his duty in that role is the way he brings credit to his father. Out of gratitude and out of respect, and to bring glory to his father, he must do his duty in that role.

Also, we have our duty towards ourselves. It is our duty to spiritually evolve and progress towards Moksha, the ultimate goal of life. Ishvara has given us the capacity to think. We have access to scriptural knowledge. It is also our duty to study the scriptures, think deeply about them, tune our life along higher values, and to disseminate to others.

A point to note here is that you need to decide where to draw the line. If you let others, including your parents, spouse and other family members, decide your duty, there will be no end to their demands. Also, their demands will be mutually conflicting. So, you cannot satisfy everyone. You cannot even satisfy one person. You need to listen to everyone’s expectations patiently, lovingly and respectfully. But you need not obey anyone. Prahlada did not obey his father. Mahabali did not obey his Guru. Vibhishana did not obey his elder brother. Obedience is not an obligation. Following Dharma is the only obligation. You

need to listen to everyone and decide for yourselves what your duty is and where to draw the line. You may make a few mistakes. You may underreach or overreach sometimes. Learn your lessons and make the necessary corrections.

Do all your duties as duties to Ishvara. You have no obligation to satisfy the people around you. You can never satisfy them. In fact, there are no real people to satisfy. Your goal is to satisfy Ishvara only. Be loving and truthful to Ishvara. Do all your duties as service to Ishvara for His pleasure and satisfaction to the best of your knowledge and ability. It is ok to make a few wrong judgements and make some mistakes. Try not to repeat them. Be sincere to Ishvara. That is all that is needed. Let every action be a transaction with Ishvara and Ishvara alone.

Another point to note is that the world does not depend on any of us. You are not running this world. Ishvara is running this world. He knows how to run this world and doesn't need your help or advice. He is not dependent on you. He does it perfectly. So, whether you do your work or not, the world will go on. You are not helping the world by doing anything. If you help, participate, and do your duty, it is good for you. For example, let's say there is a big function in an ashram. A lot of people are being fed, and there are many volunteers serving food. There are enough people, and everything is running smoothly. If you go to the organizers and ask, "Can you please give me an opportunity to serve food for some time?" They will say, "Yes, please take this spoon. Please serve half a spoon puliyogare to everyone who comes." You are given a small role in the function. The puliyogare is not yours. You are just helping them serve their puliyogare. Whether you volunteer or not,

the function will go on. You are not running the function. Your role is a very small part of the whole event. Ishvara does not need your help to run the world. But by volunteering and doing some service, you are offering your small portion to Ishvara, just like the squirrel which helped build the Ram Setu. Rama was building the bridge from Rameshwaram to Sri Lanka. When the huge monkeys were building the bridge, a small squirrel also went and put some sand particles on the bridge as a service to Rama. So, whatever you are doing in life — whether serving your family, serving your profession, or doing social service — it is all like the contribution of that squirrel to the bridge. It is insignificant. Ishvara is running this world. With you or without you, because of you or in spite of you, the world will run. Whatever work you do, it is just an opportunity for you to get rid of some of your karma and to gain some punya, jnāna, and samskara.

With this attitude of humility, you say, "Whatever I contribute is actually contributing more to me than to the world. This is an opportunity for me to burn some karma. I have taken so much. I have so much karma. This is an opportunity for me to repay some of my loan. I'm thankful for that." If you do your duties with this approach, you will not have any anxiety. This is called Karma Yoga.

A side note. People often ask, if Ishvara knows how to run the world, why is there so much suffering in the world. The answer is this: Pleasure is not the goal of life. The question of suffering in the world has an underlying assumption that pleasure is the goal of life. That is wrong. Wisdom is the goal of life. Ishvara has designed the world to help everyone develop on this line and reach the goal. If this correction is done in your fundamental assumption about life, you will

see that the world is a perfect place. The ups and downs of life, the pleasure and pain, the success and failure, are all perfectly placed so that the person develops detachment and seeks wisdom. Anytime a person becomes complacent or proud, a blow will come to wake that person up. When a person is about to give up, help will come to encourage the person to try again. There will be beginner's luck to help a novice. Then there will be a chasm to get over to become an expert. People will easily get used to gain or loss and keep striving for more and more. Nothing is permanent so that people cannot hold on to things and can keep progressing in spiritual life. If you observe the world carefully, you will find that it is perfectly designed for the spiritual progress of individuals, not for material progress or pleasure.

Thus, we need to do all our duties sincerely as worship of Ishvara as an expression of our gratitude. Ishvara has given these roles to us for our benefit and spiritual development.

Doing all these – yagna, dāna, tapas, and svadharma - as offering to Ishvara for the purpose of spiritual progress is called Karma Yoga.

We should give more than we take. We need to minimize our consumption and maximize our contribution. Draw a circle around yourself and ensure that there is a net outflow. We cannot avoid consumption. We need to eat food. We need certain conveniences to live healthily and work efficiently. We need to educate ourselves in knowledge and skill to be able to contribute effectively. We should ensure that we give more than we take. We should serve family, profession, society, country, etc. We should look for opportunities to give - physically, intellectually,

emotionally, financially, etc. Sometimes accepting a physical service will be giving emotionally. For example, relishing a dish prepared by our mother with love will be taking physically but giving emotionally. So, we should give intelligently.

The simplest way to start is to give a part of our earnings to charity. We can start giving about 2% to 15% of our monthly earnings to any charity of our faith and liking. Also, offering some fruits, milk or sweets to Ishvara in a temple or at home physically, creates a deep psychological relationship with Ishvara. Giving more frequently repeatedly, even if it is a small amount every time, has deeper impact than giving a big amount less frequently. The objective is to break the habit of attachment of the mind to objects, conveniences, worldly relationships, etc.

Doing this will purify the mind from strong likes and dislikes.

Knowledge Check:

1. What is the law of Karma?
2. Why is it better to give than to grab?
3. What are the three sādhanās (practices) of Karma Yoga?
4. What are the five ways in which we are indebted?
5. What are the three modes of tapas (austerities)?
6. Name some tapas prescribed in the Gita.
7. How must a person do yagna, dāna, and tapas according to the Gita?

16 Dhyāna Yoga

Meditation is a continuous flow of related thoughts as a pure mental activity. There are several ideas about meditation. We will restrict ourselves to the Yoga and Vedanta perspectives. It is not emptying the mind. It is having related thoughts. It is a purely mental activity.

Types of Meditation

For example, you can meditate on Rāmayana. You can start with, "Dasaratha ruled over Ayodhya, Dasaratha had three queens – Kaushalya, Kaikeyi, and Sumitra. He did not have a son to rule the kingdom after him as lovingly and efficiently after him. Vashishtha was his Guru. Under the advice of Vashishtha, he invited Rishi Rishyashringa to do a Yajna. From the Yajna pāyasam came. He gave it to his queens. They ate the pāyasam. He had four sons: Rāma, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrughna." Like this, you can think mentally till, "Rāma was coronated the king of Ayodhya." This would be a meditation called **leelā dhyāna**. Similarly, you can meditate upon the stories, anecdotes, or lives of various devotees and saints like Prahlāda, Dhruva, Gajendra, Purandaradāsa, Kanakadāsa, Tulasidās, Adi Sankara, Sri Rāmakrishṇa, etc.

Another popular meditation is **mānasa puja**. You can imagine the luminous form of your favourite deity (ishta devata) in the center of your heart, seated on a fully bloomed lotus, facing the same direction as you are facing. You can do a full ritualistic puja with five offerings (panca upacāra) of sandal paste (gandham), flowers (pushpam), incense (dhoopam), light (deepam) and sweets or fruits (naivedyam). You can do a more elaborate puja with ten or

sixteen items also. Everything is done purely mentally and meticulously. This is a very popular and powerful meditation.

If you have memorized some slokās, suktas, etc., you can chant them mentally thinking of the meaning. There are various slokās that list the glories of various aspects of Ishvara, qualities of devotees, good characters needed for spiritual sādhana, etc. You can memorize these slokās or lists and meditate upon them. You can also meditate upon some Gita slokās. These are called **guna dhyāna**.

You can also mentally chant some stotrās without paying attention to the meaning. That is called **mānasa pārāyaṇa**. If you have memorized it and can chant it from memory as a purely mental activity, it can be called a form of meditation.

The most popular and powerful form of meditation is mental repetition of a short name or mantra. This is called **japa**.

For the activity to be considered as dhyāna, there should not be any deliberate physical movement. If there is movement of lips, tongue, or fingers, it will be considered as dhārana. In meditation, there are only the involuntary physical movements like breathing, etc. that happen automatically. The person should be able to completely forget the existence of the physical body.

Patanjali mentions four stages of meditation in the Yoga Sutras. **Pratyāhāra** is when you withdraw the senses. Then **Dhārana** is when you fix your mind on whatever you want to meditate upon. Then **Dhyāna** is when the mind has settled down without any effort. Then **Samādhi** is where

you completely forget even that you are meditating. You are so engrossed in your meditation that you completely forget even the fact that you are meditating. Then it becomes Samādhi. A broad definition of meditation includes all the four. We don't need to restrict it to only either of these four. So, the word meditation, and even here when we say Dhyāna Yoga, it covers all the four stages.

Purposes of Meditation

Here are some of the purposes of meditation.

Behaviour is driven by the subconscious mind. The subconscious mind, called Kārana Sharira or Ānandamaya Kosha, is where decisions are made. The samskāras (tendencies) and jnāna (worldview), which are stored in the kārana sharira are the ones that drive our decisions. By introspection and retrospection, we can change our tendencies and worldview to align to the values that we want to follow. We can use the conscious mind – manomaya kosha and buddhimaya kosha – to **reprogram the subconscious mind**. This can be done efficiently by meditation. Meditation puts our mind in a state where the boundary between conscious and subconscious blur. In such a state, whatever we consciously think gets deeply imprinted in the subconscious. This is called nididhyāsana. Swami Paramārthanandaji defines nididhyāsana as the process of converting intellectual conviction into emotional strength.

In deep sleep, we feel happy. No one says, “I slept well. It was a horrible experience.” Everyone says, “I slept well. It was a joyous and refreshing experience.” Everyone feels joy in sleep, even though there is no sensory experience. This shows that happiness does not come from sense objects.

They are only triggers. Real happiness comes from within. It has been discovered in neuroscience that the happiness that we experience is because of neurotransmitters like dopamine in the brain, irrespective of the source of happiness. By meditation, we can trigger dopamine in our system. The same happiness that comes from other sources can be created at will by meditation. The Gita verse 6.21 calls this as *sukham ātyantikam buddhi grāhyam ateendriyam* – eternal joy that is tangibly felt but not caused by sensory experience. When we experience this joy firsthand, we **stop depending on the people, objects, and situations outside for happiness**. We have the freedom to get into a meditative mood anytime and enjoy the fountain of bliss within. With this freedom, we can take clear rational decisions without getting swayed by desires, sentiments, biases, and anxieties. It gives great clarity of mind.

Meditation upon Ishvara helps to develop a **personal relationship with Ishvara**. Meditations like mānasa puja and leela dhyāna deepens our emotion towards the form of Ishvara that we meditate upon. This attachment (bhakti) to Ishvara will help us to develop detachment (vairagya) from the world, which will help us to develop knowledge (jnāna) about ourselves.

Meditation quietens the mind. The mind is often compared to a lake. We cannot see what lies at the bottom because of the muddy and turbulent water. Karma Yoga purifies the mind. The water becomes transparent. Dhyāna Yoga calms the mind. The water becomes still. When these two are achieved, we can see clearly through the mind. This is what Patanjali calls chitta vritti nirodhah – removal of modifications of the mind. We can see our true nature.

Thus, knowledge of the Self shines forth from within when the mind is clean and calm.

Spiritual Practice

You need to have a spiritual practice, which you do twice or thrice a day. It starts with a physical activity (**puja** – worship), followed by a verbal activity (**pārāyaṇa** – chanting), and then by a mental activity (**dhyāna** – meditation). This way, your mind gradually settles, making it easier and deeper. If you directly sit for meditation, it will not be easy. Follow this three-step approach of worship-chanting-meditation, and you will be able to meditate very easily. Krishṇa gives this technique in the 12th chapter.

First you need to have an ishta devata. If you have a guru, then the guru would have given you an ishta devata. It becomes easy. If you don't yet have a guru, then you can choose any devata whom you like most. It can be Rāma, Krishṇa, Vishnu, Shiva, Hanumānji, Ganesh, Kārthikeya, Durga, Kāli, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, etc. It can also be a particular manifestation like Tirupati Balaji, Udupi Krishṇa, Guruvayoor Krishṇa, Pānduranga, Badri Nārāyaṇa, etc. If you are not able to choose, you can choose your family deity.

Then you need to pick a short mantra or nāma related to your ishta devata. If you have a guru, your guru would have given you a mantra. If you don’t yet have a guru, you can choose any of the popular mantras.

- Om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya is the mantra given by Nārada to Dhruva. It is the mantra of Badrināth Vishnu.

- Om namo nārāyaṇāya is the mantra given by Nārada to Prahlāda. It is the mantra of Guruvayoor Krishṇa.
- Om shri rām jaya rām jaya jaya rām is sung by Hanumānji. It was popularized by great saints like Papa Rāmdās, Yogi Rāmsuratkumar, etc.
- Hare rāma hare rāma, rāma rāma hare hare, hare krishṇa hare krishṇa, krishṇa krishṇa hare hare is called mahāmantra. It was popularized by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.
- Om Namashivāya has been used by great devotees of Shiva.
- Mahā mrutyunjaya mantra is a popular mantra of Shiva from the Vedās.
- The gāyatri mantra is a powerful popular Vedic mantra.
- The Mahā Nārāyaṇa Upanishad gives a list of gāyatri mantras for various deities.

When you have chosen a mantra, don't change it, unless you meet a guru and take a formal initiation. Ideally, the mantra should be for life. It takes several years for the mantra to be fully absorbed by the mind.

If you have taken a mantra from a guru, your guru might have asked you to keep the mantra a secret. In that case, it should not be uttered loudly or written anywhere.

Next, you need to design a spiritual practice routine. If you have a guru, your guru must have given it to you. You should follow that. Otherwise, you can use this general routine, or pick up some useful tips from this:

Environment

- Have a room or a corner of the house reserved exclusively for meditation.
- Use that place only for studying scriptures, chanting, bhajans, meditation, etc.
- Have a personal rug that is soft enough to be seated on it comfortably for several minutes. It should be an insulator of heat. A cotton or woollen cloth folded a few times is also fine.
- Choose a specific time in the morning and evening for meditation. Just before sunrise and just after sunset are the best times. If not, pick any time and do meditation at the same time every day. Some people do thrice a day – dawn, midday, and dusk.

Puja – Worship

- Have an altar where you have pictures or idols of your ishta devata, and other deities, saints, or gurus.
- Light a lamp and offer some flowers, bilva leaves, or tulsi leaves to the deities.
- Bow down to touch your forehead on the floor in front of the altar.
- Optionally, you can chant 108 names of your ishta devata by offering a flower, leaf, or a pinch of Kumkum or turmeric powder for every name.
- Optionally, you can write a mantra or nāma of your ishta devata in a notebook several times on a page.

Āsana – Posture

- Sit on the rug cross-legged, with head, neck, and spine in a straight line. If you cannot sit cross-legged, then you

can sit on a chair. The posture should be free from any tension in such a way that you can completely forget your body.

- Don't sit on a high place. It is possible that you may fall asleep. You should not get hurt if you doze off.

Pārāyaṇa – Chanting

- Loudly sing or chant any stotra, bhajan, sukta, or a nāma of your ishta devata, or some verses from the Gita, etc.
- Optionally, you can do 4 to 5 rounds of prānāyāma. Breathe in for four seconds and breathe out for eight seconds. You can start with shorter times and reach these times.

Dhyāna – Meditation

- Close your eyes.
- Pray for the welfare and happiness of everyone in this world.
- Be grateful to your guru, parents, ishta devata, etc for the good things you have in your life.
- Be aware of the form of your body.
- Be aware of the sounds outside.
- Be aware of your breathing.
- Imagine a fully bloomed lotus flower facing upwards in the center of your chest.

- Imagine the luminous form of your ishta devata seated there facing the same direction as yourself.

- You can do mānasa puja or leela dhyana.
- Do japa of your mantra for 5 to 10 minutes.

Closure

- Thank your guru and ishta devata for the meditation session.
- Offer the fruits of the meditation to your ishta devata.
- Be aware of the sounds around you.
- Be aware of the form of your body.
- Open your eyes slowly.
- Bow down and get up.

The whole routine may take about 20-40 minutes. You can modify it over time as you see appropriate.

Meditation Conducive Lifestyle

To be able to meditate during your spiritual practice, you should lead a meditation conducive lifestyle. You cannot lead a random life for 23 hours and expect your mind to meditate half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening. The time outside meditation and time during meditation should support each other. Here are some guidelines for a meditation conducive lifestyle.

- When you wake up, start chanting your mantra even before opening your eyes and getting out of bed. If possible, sit on your bed and spend 5 minutes chanting your mantra mentally before getting out of bed.
- Before breakfast, do your spiritual practice consisting of puja-pārāyaṇa-dhyāna, and only then have breakfast. The best way to not skip your spiritual practice is to link it to your meals.

- During the day, before anything enters your mouth, offer it to your ishta devata and eat it only as prasāda. This way, you will remember your ishta devata every time you eat or drink.
- Chant your mantra when doing any work that does not need your full attention. Some activities in our life need full attention, like reading a book, coding, counting, doing some arithmetic, writing, or reading a document. These mental activities need your full attention. There are several other activities that we do every day that don't need our full attention, like brushing teeth, bathing, cooking, walking, etc. During these times, keep chanting your mantra within. The idea is to never leave the mind idle. When they want to take an elephant across the bazār street, they give a stick or a chain to its trunk. It will keep playing with that as it walks through the bazār. If they don't give that stick or chain to the trunk of the elephant, it will grab things from the shops on both sides of the bazār, creating havoc. The same thing happens with the mind. The mind cannot be idle; it will constantly be thinking about something. If you don't give the mind something to think about, it will think about all kinds of rubbish. Always engage the mind. Fill all the idle cycles of your mind with your mantra.
- Before dinner, do your spiritual practice consisting of puja-pārāyaṇa-dhyāna, and only then have dinner.
- Chant before going to sleep. When you decide to sleep, close your eyes, keep chanting your mantra mentally, and slip into sleep while chanting.

To strengthen your spiritual life, you can also take off for a spiritual retreat. Shri Rāmakrishṇa puts it in a very nice way: "vane kone mane." "Vane" means in a forest, "kone" means

in a corner, and "mane" means in the mind. Constantly, you need to remember your ishta devata in the mind (mane). To do that, at least twice a day, you need to sit in a corner of your puja room (kone) and do your spiritual practice – before breakfast and before dinner. To do this with full vigor, "vane" means leaving the house, going to a secluded place, and spending some time in spiritual sādhana. Every one or two months, take one or two days off for full-time spiritual sādhana. There are many āshrams and Rāmakrishṇa Mission centers for this purpose. Shri Rāmakrishṇa has recommended that every spiritual sādhaka take a few days off from home, work, and other worldly activities for full-time spiritual sādhana. Many Rāmakrishṇa Mission centers provide this facility and have the infrastructure for spiritual sādhakas to spend up to three days for exclusive sādhana. You must visit your local center regularly to attend ārati, lectures and festivals, and become familiar with the monks there. Then, they can recommend you to any center where you can stay for up to three days for exclusive spiritual sādhana. There are many other places like Divine Life Society, Chinmaya Mission, Arsha Vidya centers, and innumerable other āshrams in India where you can go alone, stay for a few days, and spend your entire time for sādhana. They will take care of your stay and food. Also, every year, see if you can take one or two weeks off for full-time spiritual sādhana. For this, there are a lot of āshrams which conduct full-time residential spiritual retreats. India is designed for spiritual sādhana. There are so many places where you can stay to do spiritual sādhana.

Obstacles to Meditation

In the Māṇḍukya kārika, Gaudapādāchārya, who is Adi Sankara's guru's guru, lists four obstacles to meditation.

Sleepiness – We are very habituated to sleep that whenever we close our eyes and shutdown other sensory inputs, the mind thinks we want to sleep. So, we need to put additional effort initially to keep ourselves awake. This can be done by moving the lips slightly when chanting, rolling beads on a japa māla, counting using fingers, etc. When we are habituated to meditating, the mind will get over this. Still, we can fall asleep if we have taken a heavy meal, if we did not have enough sleep in the past few days, or if we are physically exhausted and tired. We cannot avoid this. We should ensure that we cater to these bodily needs and then meditate when these conditions are not there.

Distractions – We have various duties in life. When we try to meditate, we will remember all the pending work. We can avoid this by maintaining a good calendar and to-do list. There are tools like Getting-Things-Done (GTD), which can help organize life and remove mental clutter. We need to temporarily renounce all our worldly relationships and roles like parent, sibling, employer, employee, citizen, etc. by taking up spiritual roles like sādhaka, student, disciple, devotee, etc. By doing this, we can avoid distractions.

Regrets, grudges, and anxieties – We all have done things that we regret now. We have grudges about what others did. We have anxieties about the future. These will come up when we sit for meditation. We need to forgive ourselves and others. If we think about the time when we did something wrong, we can find that we thought at that time that was the right thing to do. Now, we have more

knowledge and in retrospect, we know that what we did was wrong. When we did that, we did not know. So, we need to forgive ourselves. As we know better now, we should not repeat it. This way, we can get over our guilts and regrets. The same logic applies to others also. Everyone does what they think is right. When someone did something that we don't agree to, they did it because they thought that was the right thing to do. If we go and ask them, they will tell us their perspective. It was the right thing from their perspective at that time. So, we need to forgive them. This is called Hanlon's Razor. We need to talk to them and understand their point of view. Then we will be able to forgive them more easily. Everything in this world happens by the will of Ishvara. He gives the fruits of our actions in such a way that leads to our spiritual growth. So, we don't need to be anxious about the future. Thus, by having faith in Ishvara and the Law of Karma, we can get over self-pity, anxieties and fears.

Attachment to Pleasure – Meditation gives tangible pleasure. By using this pleasure, we can get over our attachment to other pleasures in the world. However, we should not get attached to the pleasure that is got out of meditation and start ignoring our duties. That will become a counter to spiritual development.

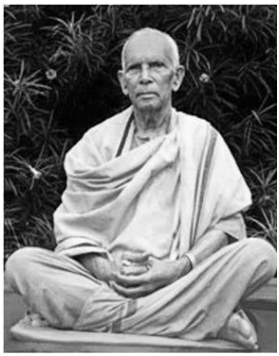
Thus, by following intelligent common-sense approaches, we can handle the obstacles to meditation.

Expected Outcomes

If we follow the meditation as mentioned above, we can expect these outcomes:

- Deep love for Ishvara and all living beings

- Deeper understanding of truths like the four goals of life, five layers of personality, Ishvara, four yogas
- Free from hankering after pleasure from people, objects and situations
- Reduced expectation and attachment to people, objects and situations
- Greater enthusiasm in life to do things, know things, help others, etc.
- Greater capacity to face adversities in life like failures, bereavements, etc.
- Reduced desire, greed, anger, jealousy, fear, sorrow, confusion, anxiety, etc.



In the Gita verse 12.7, Krishṇa uses the words "mayi āveshita cetasām" – mind soaked in Me. This is the goal. If we achieve that, Krishṇa says that He will take care of the rest. To attain this, in verse 12.6 He says, we need to (1) have Ishvara as the goal of life, (2) do all our duties as offering to Ishvara, and (3) meditate upon Ishvara. This is done by this two-fold approach of Karma Yoga and Dhyāna Yoga. This is what Swami Vivekananda codified in the motto of Rāmakrishṇa Mission as "ātmano mokshārtham jagat hitāya ca". Swami Ranganāthānandaji says, "Are you growing spiritually? Can you love others? Can you feel oneness with others? Have you peace within yourself? And do you radiate it around you? That is called spiritual growth, which is stimulated by meditation inwardly, and by work done in a spirit of service outwardly." This is the gist of spiritual life.

The six defects of the mind – **kāma** (desire), **krodha** (anger). **lobha** (greed), **moha** (delusion between transient and permanent), **mata** (arrogance), and **mātsarya** (jealousy) – are called **shatripu** (six enemies). The goal of all spiritual sādhana is to free the mind from these six defects. All these are various manifestations of desire and sorrow only. A person who is free from these is called a Jivanmukta.

Swami Paramarthānandaji says that as a person progresses in spiritual life, these six will reduce on three dimensions – Frequency, Intensity, and Recovery time. He calls this **FIR reduction**. For example, if a person is short tempered and frequently gets into bouts of anger. Initially, it may happen multiple times a day. When he gets angry, it may manifest physically as throwing things around. When it happens, the person may hold on to it for days. From this, as he practices Karma Yoga and Dhyāna Yoga, the frequency may come down from several times a day to once a day, then to once a week and then to once a month. As the intensity of anger comes down, the physical manifestation may stop and manifest as flowery words. Then that also may stop and remain only as a frown on the face. The recovery time may reduce from days to hours to minutes to seconds. The scriptures say that the anger in the mind of a sadhu is like water sprinkled on a red hot iron plate. It will create a hissing sound and vanish into thin air within no time. The same applies to all the six defects.

Along with this freedom from the six defects, three saintly qualities will arise. They are **jnāna** (knowledge about jiva, self), **bhakti** (devotion towards Ishvara, God), and **vairāgya** (freedom from dependence on jagat, world in the form of people, objects, and situations). All these three will come together. Also, along with devotion towards Ishvara will

come love towards all living beings, because the living beings are manifestations of Ishvara.

Knowledge Check:

1. What is meditation?
2. What are the purposes of meditation?
3. What is a meditation conducive lifestyle?
4. What is the general process of meditation?
5. What are the obstacles to meditation?
6. What are the expected outcomes of meditation?
7. How can a person be free from guilt, regrets and grudges?
8. How can a person be free from self-pity, anxiety and fear?
9. What are the six defects of the mind?
10. What are the attitudes of a Jivanmukta towards Jiva, Jagat, and Ishvara?

17 Gist of Vedānta

Here is the gist of Vedānta with references to slokās in the Bhagavad Gita.

- Depending on people, objects and situations for security and pleasure is the cause of all sorrow, fear and anxiety. Do your duties and depend on fairness of Nature and God for security (Karma Yoga). Meditation will free you from seeking pleasure in the sense objects (Dhyāna Yoga). This will give you peace. (2.71)
- Your real growth is to be free from lethargy, lust, anger, hatred, greed, arrogance, jealousy, fear, anxiety, etc. True knowledge of yourself and manifesting that knowledge (Jnāna Yoga) will give you this complete freedom (Moksha). (13.7-11)
- You (Jīva) are not this body (anna), life (prāṇa), mind (manas) and intellect (buddhi). These are your instruments. You are the user of all these. Keep

them under your control. Only then, they will help you achieve your goals. (3.42, 6.5-6)

- God (Isvara) is the Consciousness (Atman) in all living beings and the material cause of this Universe. God's will manifests as all the Laws of the universe. There is nothing that exists other than God. God is the Universal Supreme Being. God is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Compassionate. God can be worshipped through any name, form or ritual. Serving the living beings as service to God, is the best way to serve God. (10.20, 5.29, 7.21, 6.31)
- Develop your knowledge and skills to serve others better. Work for the welfare of all living beings. God will take care of the wellbeing (yoga-kshemam) of those who serve other living beings, seeing God in them. (9.22)
- Have God as the goal of life. Accept all situations as gift from God, offer all actions as gift to God, meditate upon God and see God in all living beings. God will save you from all sorrow. (12.6-7)

18 Starting Spiritual Practice

After having understood the theory and practice of Vedānta as given so far, if you want to start your spiritual practice, here is what you can start doing.

Karma Yoga

- Try to see that the Universe and all living beings are manifestations of Ishvara. Do all your duties to family, profession, and society as an offering to Ishvara. Accept all situations in life as the Will of Ishvara. Try to explore, "what lessons does Ishvara want me to learn from this situation?".
- Donate at least 5% of your income to any charity of your choice. You can go to a temple or ashram or NGO of your choice every month and donate. Alternatively, you can set a standing instruction in your bank account to transfer every month.
- Try to be a better person. Constantly evaluate your desire, anger, jealousy, lust, greed, hatred, and arrogance. Understand that these need to be reduced and overcome eventually. Just being aware of them will help you to manage them better.
- Try to follow some discipline in life. Get up at regular times. Take bath before eating anything. Do some exercise every day. Eat healthy food. Sleep at regular times.

- Understand that the purpose of life is to become a better person. Everything else is useful only if it helps towards this.

Dhyāna Yoga

- Have a spiritual practice routine consisting of puja, chanting, meditation, and silent nāma japa.
- Spend at least 15 minutes before breakfast and before dinner for your spiritual practice.
- As much as possible, try to mentally repeat your mantra throughout the day.

Bhakti Yoga

- Understand your relationship with Ishvara.
- Serve the world as service to Ishvara.
- Read stories of saints and devotees.
- Do ārati at home together with family every day.
- Visit a temple or an ashram at least once a week.
- Celebrate religious festivals at home and outside.
- Go on a pilgrimage at least once a year.

Jnāna Yoga

- Read a few pages of a spiritual book every day.
- Chant a few slokās (20) of Gita every day. Study a few slokās (5) of the Gita with meaning every day.
- Listen to spiritual lectures every day.
- Deeply think about and understand the nature of Individual (Jiva), World (Jagat), and God (Ishvara).
- Seek the holy company of monks and devotees.

19 Bhagavad Gita – Chapter 15

Two chapters in the Bhagavad Gita are small. Both the 12th chapter and the 15th chapter have 20 slokās each. Coincidentally, these two are also the most important chapters. The basic theory of Vedanta is covered in the 15th chapter. Practical aspects of the Gita are covered in the 12th chapter. These two chapters are commonly used for pārāyaṇa – chanting and memorizing. These are the popular chapters taken up for Bhagavad Gita chanting competitions – 12th chapter for children, and 15th chapter for adults.

The entire Vedanta philosophy is summarized in a very beautiful way by Krishṇa in the 15th chapter. In Uttarakhand and other northern parts of India, it is mandatory for sadhus (renunciates) to memorize the 15th chapter. In most of the places where free food is given to sadhus, they ask them to chant the 15th chapter, and then food is given.

Before we get into the slokās in the chapter, let us recollect the theory of Vedānta.

- There are five layers to your individual personality – annamaya kosha (physical layer), prāṇamaya kosha (physiological layer), manomaya kosha (emotional layer), buddhimaya kosha (intellectual layer), and ānandamaya kosha (bliss layer). The buddhimaya kosha is also called vijnānamaya kosha. From the sharira (body) point of view, there are three bodies – the annamaya kosha is also called sthoola sharira (gross body), the prāṇamaya, manomaya, and buddhimaya

koshas are together called sookshma sharira (subtle body), and the ānandamaya kosha is called kārana sharira (causal body).

- As an individual, you are the kārana sharira, also called Jivātma. You are the wielder of freewill. You make decisions and you are responsible for the consequences of your decisions. You hold the karma phala (results of your past decisions and actions), samskāra (your subconscious tendencies and habits), and jnāna (your worldview based on your conviction about yourself). The body, life, mind, and intellect are your instruments. The goal is to improve yourself (karma, samskāra, and jnāna) using these instruments. You are a non-material spiritual being temporarily occupying and using the body and mind to improve yourself. And so is everyone around you.
- In reality, you are beyond individuality. You are Shuddha Caitanya (Pure Consciousness). Knowing your real nature will shift your identity beyond all individuality. This is called Moksha (liberation or freedom). This needs to be achieved here and now, while living. A person who has achieved it is called Jivanmukta (free when living). This is the goal. It is got by Ātmajnāna (Knowledge about Self).
- As preparation to get the Knowledge, the individual needs to develop a lot of good karma by doing one's duties and virtuous deeds, develop good samskāras by working on oneself to improve character, and get right Jnāna by listening to the exposition of the scriptures. This is called spiritual progress. If the body dies before acquiring the Knowledge, the individual picks up a new body and continues from where it was left. Nothing is lost by death of the body. When the individual is mature

enough, the Knowledge taught by a Guru (teacher) is understood correctly and Moksha is realized.

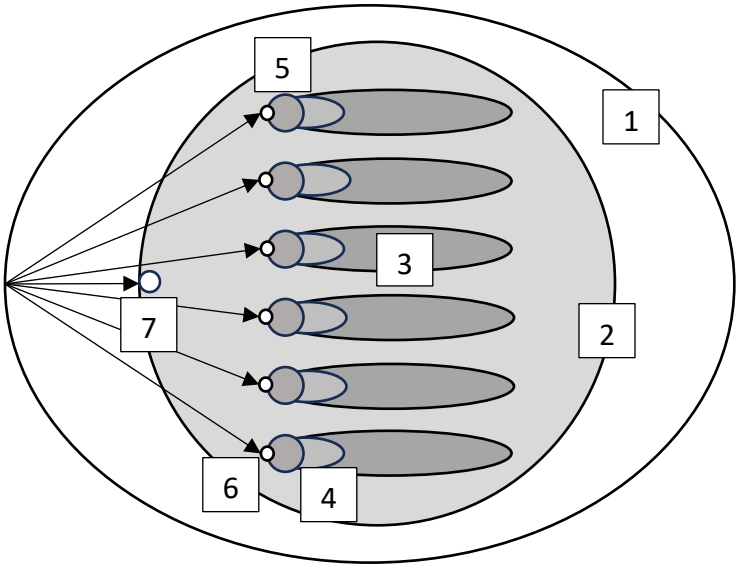
- The person realizes that the real nature of the self was Pure Consciousness all through. It was by ignorance that a wrong identity was assumed. That wrong identity created so much desire, attachment, anxiety, sorrow, anger, jealousy, greed, etc. When the real identity is established, the person becomes free from all desires, and all its offshoots like sorrow and anger.
- Ishvara is the totality of all that exists. Just as an individual identifies with his limited body, life, mind, and intellect, Ishvara identifies Himself with the whole of existence. Ishvara is the Universal Being. Ishvara is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Compassionate. Ishvara is available for transactions. Ishvara responds to prayers. As Ishvara knows the innermost thoughts of every individual, Ishvara responds to prayers through any name, form, or ritual.
- Ishvara is genuinely interested in the spiritual progress of every individual. The situations in life are designed based on the karma of the individual and what is most suited for the individual's spiritual progress. Everything happens by the will of Ishvara.
- By the right understanding of "Who am I?" and "What is the goal of life?", a person can reorient life in a way that it is most efficient for spiritual progress. Such a person will be free from all sorrow.
- This is the path of every individual. No one will be left out. Everyone is progressing towards the goal knowingly or unknowingly, fast or slow, straight or windy. Ishvara guides the individuals from within and from outside. Those who recognize it, take the clues, and work along with Ishvara move faster towards the goal. Some people get distracted, stray away from the path, and will

eventually get back to the path sooner or later. There is infinite time across multiple lifetimes. So, no one is lost forever.

- Blessed are the ones who have understood the real goal and strive towards it. Even the person that has strayed away will come back to the path by the grace of Ishvara any moment. A person on the path can go astray in a moment of arrogance or temptation. So, a person who is on the path should not look down upon the people who have gone astray. They should pray for them and hold on to their own path more strongly.

Here is a table and picture to summarize the model.

	Universal Consciousness	**Indiviual Concio usness**	**Universal Nature**	**Individualistic layer**	**Ideological layer**	**Emotional layer**	**Physiological layer**	**Physical layer**
kosha				ānanda maya	buddhi maya	mano maya	prāṇa maya	anna maya
sharira	ātma	prāgna		kārana	sookshma			sthoola
Gita 15th chapter	paramātma, purushottama	jivātmā	kūtastha	akshara purusha	kshara purusha			
Ka. Up. 1.3. 10,11		purusha	avyakta	ātman, mahat	buddhi	manas	indriya	artha
	Nirguna Brahman		Saguna Brahman					
Gita 13.1-6	Mām	Kshetrajna	Kshetra					
Gita 13.5			avyakta	ahamkārah	buddhi	ekam	indriyāni daśakam	indriya gocara
Gita 18.14			daivam	kartā	karaṇam	karaṇam	cestā	adhishthānam



(1) Ātmā = Nirguna Brahman
= Original Consciousness

(2) Prakruti = Māyā

(3) Sthula Sharira

(4) Sukshma Sharira

Kshara
Purusha

(5) Kāraṇa Sharira
= Akshara Purusha = Avidyā

Kshetra

Jagat

(6) Prājna = Kshetrajna = Jivātmā = Purusha =
Individual Reflected Consciousness

(7) Ishvara = Paramātmā = Purushottama = Universal
Reflected Consciousness = Saguna Brahman =
Viswaroopa Ishvara

The 15th chapter of the Gita presents this theory of Vedānta from three different points of view. In verses 1 to 6, it is presented from the point of view of the Jagat (world). In verses 6 to 12, it is presented from the point of view of Jiva (individual). In verses 12 to 18, it is presented from the point of view of Ishvara (Supreme Being). In verses 19 and 20, the glory of this Knowledge is presented.

अथ पञ्चदशोऽध्यायः । पुरुषोत्तमयोगः
atha pañcadaśo'dhyāyaḥ । puruṣottamayogaḥ
Now, fifteenth chapter. Purushottama Yoga.
श्रीभगवानुवाच । śrībhagavānuvāca ।
The Lord said:

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधःशाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥ १५-१॥
ūrdhvamūlamadhaḥśākham aśvatthaṃ prāhuravyayam ।
chandāṃsi yasya parṇāni yastaṃ veda sa vedavit ॥ 1 ॥
ऊर्ध्व-मूलम् अधः-शाखम् अश्वत्थम् प्राहुः अव्ययम् ।
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यः तम् वेद सः वेदवित् ॥ १५-१॥
ūrdhva-mūlam adhaḥ-śākham aśvattham prāhuḥ avyayam ।
chandāṃsi yasya parṇāni yaḥ tam veda saḥ vedavit ॥ 1 ॥
This world is compared to a Peepal tree. Its roots (origin) are up in the Unmanifest realm. Its branches are below in the Manifest realm. Its leaves are the Vedas, whose essential teaching is the Law of conservation of everything – physical, mental and moral. A person who knows this really knows the essence of the Vedas.
The world is compared to an eternal Peepal tree. ‘sva’ means tomorrow. ‘asva’ means eternal. The very name of the tree means eternal. It is also mentioned as avyayam, which also means eternal. The word ‘prāhuh’ is significant.

It means, “it has been told”. Krishṇa makes it clear that this is not his illustration. This is a well-known illustration in the tradition. ‘urdhvam’ means up. Here it indicates subtle and unmanifest. ‘moolam’ means root. It indicates the cause. ‘adhah’ means below. Here it indicates gross and manifest. ‘sākham’ mean branches. The cause is subtle, and the effect is gross. This has always been the case with Nature. The objects that we see are gross. Their constituents are atoms, which are subtle. Matter is gross. It is a manifestation of energy, which is subtle. Always, gross comes from the subtle. It is never the other way.

‘candas’ means the Vedās. The essence of the Vedās is the law of cause and effect. This is true of science also. All laws of physics are only the law of conservation applied to various entities in various contexts. The essence of the Vedās is also the same. As you sow, so shall you reap. Every action has an inviolable effect. You cannot escape the effects of your actions even by death. This Law of Karma is the essence of the Vedās. ‘parṇāni’ means leaves. Just as the tree is nourished and sustained by the leaves, this world is sustained by the Law of Karma. So, it is said that the Vedās are the leaves of the tree of the world.

A person who knows these two ideas is one who knows the Vedās.

अधश्चोर्ध्वं प्रसृतास्तस्य शाखा गुणप्रवृद्धा विषयप्रवालाः ।
अधश्च मूलान्यनुसन्ततानि कर्मानुबन्धीनि मनुष्यलोके ॥ १५-२॥

adhaścordhvaṃ prasṛtāstasya śākhā guṇapravṛddhā viṣayapravālāḥ ।
adhaśca mūlānyanusantatāni karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke ॥ 2 ॥

अधः च ऊर्ध्वम् प्रसृताः तस्य शाखाः गुण-प्रवृद्धाः विषय-प्रवालाः ।
अधः च मूलानि अनुसन्ततानि कर्म-अनुबन्धीनि मनुष्य-लोके ॥ १५-२॥

adhaḥ ca ūrdhvam prasṛtāḥ tasya śākhāḥ guṇa-pravṛddhāḥ viṣaya-pravālāḥ ।
adhaḥ ca mūlāni anusantatāni karma-anubandhīni manuṣya-loke ॥ 2॥

The branches are spread above and below. The branches are nourished by the Gunas and sense objects are its buds. There are some roots in the form of binding action that are spread below in the manifested realm of man.

There are lower branches 'adhasca' and higher branches 'urdhvamca'. There is the non-living world of stones, the world of plants, animals, and human beings. These are the layers. Vishaya are external sense objects which we experience outside. Guna are internal thoughts and emotions, which we recollect and experience within. These are compared to buds and flowers.

Among the multiple layers of branches, the human layer 'manushyaloka' has a specialty. There is freewill. This creates karma phala – merits and demerits of action 'karma anubandhīni'. This is indicated by the roots that originate from the branches 'adhasca moolāni anusantatāni'.

न रूपमस्येह तथोपलभ्यते नान्तो न चादिर्न च सम्प्रतिष्ठा ।
अश्वत्थमेनं सुविरूढमूलं असङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढेन छित्त्वा ॥ १५-३॥

na rūpamasyeha tathopalabhyate nānto na cādirna ca sampratiṣṭhā ।
aśvatthamenaṃ suvirūḍhamūlaṃ asaṅgaśastreṇa dṛḍhena chittvā ॥ 3॥

न रूपम् अस्य इह तथा उपलभ्यते न अन्तः न च आदिः न च सम्प्रतिष्ठा ।
अश्वत्थम् एनम् सुविरूढ-मूलम् असङ्ग-शस्त्रेण दृढेन छित्त्वा ॥ १५-३॥

na rūpam asya iha tathā upalabhyate na antaḥ na ca ādiḥ na ca sampratiṣṭhā ।
aśvattham enam suvirūḍha-mūlam asaṅga-śastreṇa dṛḍhena chittvā ॥ 3 ॥

Its form cannot be perceived clearly. It is not possible to trace the end, beginning and middle of these lower roots. These roots are holding the Peepal tree firmly. These roots can be cut only with the strong axe of detachment.

Because of the roots that emerge from the branches, the whole thing becomes a mess. It is not possible to find where the lower branches and roots start, how they go, and where they end. They completely cover the original root and the main trunk becomes invisible.

To get better clarity, first we need to clear the mess. We need to take an axe and chop off the roots that emerged from the branches. This is done by Karma Yoga. The axe 'sastra' is called detachment 'asanga'. By doing our duties without worldly desires, by increasing our contribution in the world and decreasing our consumption, by giving more than what we take, we are clearing off the mess.

This is the first of the two steps in spiritual life as mentioned by the Gita in the 6.3. The person who has completed this step is called 'yogārūdha' in the verses 6.3 and 6.4.

ततः पदं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं यस्मिन्गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः ।
तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ॥ १५-४॥

tataḥ padaṃ tatparimārgitavyaṃ yasmingatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ ।

tameva cādyaṃ puruṣaṃ prapadye yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī ll 4 ll

ततः पदम् तत् परिमार्गितव्यं यस्मिन् गताः न निवर्तन्ति भूयः ।
तम् एव च आद्यम् पुरुषम् प्रपद्ये यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ॥
१५-४ ॥

tataḥ padam tat parimārgitavyaṃ yasmin gatāḥ na nivartanti bhūyaḥ l
tam eva ca ādyam puruṣam prapadye yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī ll 4 ll

Then, the person should seek that Goal, reaching which there is no return again. This is done by surrendering to that Uncaused Eternal Being, from whom everything is manifested from the beginning of time.

When the mess is cleared, we can see clearly which is the original upper root 'urdhva moolam' and which are the lower branches 'adha shākam'. We can see from where this world has evolved from 'yatah pravrittih prasrtā purāni'. When we have seen the original Supreme Being 'ādyam purusham', we should surrender to him 'tam eva prapadye'.

Here 'surrender' means knowing and acknowledging that everything here, including this body and mind, are all manifestations of that Eternal Being. When this is done, the illusion of individual existence is erased. Then there is no death and no sorrow. This is the goal. When there is a physical travel, every reaching will need to be followed by departing. Here the Gita says 'na nivartanti bhooyah' there is no return. So, this cannot be a physical travel. Only in knowledge, there is no going back. So, the 'reaching' mentioned here is by knowledge.

This is the second of the two steps. A person who has completed this is called a 'jivanmukta' – one who is free when living. This is the goal.

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः ।
द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञैर्-गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥ १५-५॥

nirmānamohā jitasaṅgadoṣā adhyātmanityā vinivṛttakāmāḥ ।
dvandvairvimuktāḥ sukhaduḥkhasaṃjñairḥ gacchantyamūḍhāḥ padamavyayaṃ tat ॥ 5 ॥

निर्मान-मोहाः जितसङ्गदोषाः अध्यात्म-नित्याः विनिवृत्त-कामाः ।
द्वन्द्वैः विमुक्ताः सुख-दुःख-संज्ञैः गच्छन्ति अमूढाः पदम् अव्ययं तत् ॥ १५-५॥

nirmāna-mohāḥ jitasaṅgadoṣāḥ adhyātma-nityāḥ vinivṛtta-kāmāḥ ।
dvandvaiḥ vimuktāḥ sukha-duḥkha-saṃjñaiḥ gacchanti amūḍhāḥ padam avyayaṃ tat ॥ 5 ॥

Free from self-centeredness (by panca kosa viveka) and delusion (about transient and permanent), having overcome the problem of attachments (to possessions, fame, etc.), Firmly established in the Self, having become free from all desires (for pleasurable experiences), Unaffected by the pairs of opposites in the form of pleasure and pain, The person who is free from Ignorance reaches the Eternal Goal.

This verse gives the sequence of results of spiritual progress.

1. nirmāna – When we have understood by panca kosa viveka, that we are not this body, life, emotions, intellect, and tendencies, we know ourselves as Pure Consciousness.
2. nirmohā – We become free from delusion between what is ‘I’ and what are objects, what is permanent

and transient, what is worth pursuing and what can be given up.

3. jita sanga dosā – We overcome the defect of attachment to possessions, pleasure, and pride.
4. adhyātma nityā – We become firmly established in the knowledge of the Self.
5. vinivruttakāmā – We become free from all desires.
6. dvandvaih vimuktā sukha dukha samjnaih – We become unaffected by pair of opposites like pleasure-pain, success-failure, gain-loss, praise-blame, etc. which will happen naturally in life.
7. amuudhāh – We become free from ignorance. Ignorance is the cause of all problems. Wisdom is the solution. Ignorance is considering ourselves as body, mind, etc., becoming attached to possessions, pleasure, and pride, and being affected by the ups and downs of life. Wisdom is considering ourselves as Pure Conscious Witness, being unattached to these, and remaining calm and unaffected by whatever happens in life.
8. gacchanti padam avyayam – We reach the Eternal Abode.

न तद्भासयते सूर्यो न शशाङ्को न पावकः ।
यद्गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥ १५-६॥

na tadbhāsayate sūryo na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ ।
yadgatvā na nivartante taddhāma paramaṃ mama ॥ 6॥

न तत् भासयते सूर्यः न शशाङ्कः न पावकः ।
यत् गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तत् धाम परमम् मम ॥ १५-६॥

na tat bhāsayate sūryaḥ na śaśāṅkaḥ na pāvakaḥ ।
yat gatvā na nivartante tat dhāma paramam mama ॥ 6॥

That is not illumined by the Sun (sensory perception), Moon (inductive reasoning) or Fire (verbal testimony).

Reaching there, one does not return. That is My Supreme Abode.

There are three means of knowledge – 'pramānāh'. Knowledge can be got through the sense organs by seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. This is called **pratyaksha pramāna**. This is indicated by 'surya' Sun. Knowledge can be got through inference. Seeing smoke on a distant mountain, we can infer fire. Seeing wet roads in the morning, we can infer rains in the night before. Seeing an animal similar to what we have seen in a book, we can name it. Seeing an empty chair, we can know who is absent. These are called **anumāna pramāna**. This is indicated by 'shashānka' moon. Knowledge can be gained by reading or listening words. This is called **shabda pramāna**. This is indicated by 'pāvaka' fire. The senses, mind, and words have access only to finite properties of objects. The Self is the infinite propertyless Subject. So, these have no access to the Self. Still, it can be known as one's own Being by the process of elimination of everything else. When it is known, there is no going back. That is the Abode of the Universal Being.

Thus, by describing the world 'jagat', showing that the Supreme Being is the subtle eternal cause beyond the jagat, pointing to the problem of 'samsāra' bondage, describing the way to go beyond, the Gita has presented the whole Vedanta teaching from the point of view of jagat.

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः ।
मनःषष्ठानीन्द्रियाणि प्रकृतिस्थानि कर्षति ॥ १५-७॥

mamaivāṃśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ ।
manaḥṣaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati ॥ 7॥

मम एव अंशः जीव-लोके जीव-भूतः सनातनः ।
मनः-षष्ठानि-इन्द्रियाणि प्रकृति-स्थानि कर्षति ॥ १५-७॥

mama eva aṃśaḥ jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ ।
manaḥ-ṣaṣṭhāni-indriyāṇi prakṛti-sthāni karṣati ॥ 7 ॥
A part of My Supreme Being exists as an eternal individual self in the world of living beings. This draws the ingredients from Nature to form the six components of life, which is the mind and five senses.
The next few slokās present the Vedanta teaching from the point of view of 'jiva' individual.

The Lord says that the individual is an 'amsa' – a part of Himself. And, it is 'sanātanah' – eternal. We have seen panca kosa viveka (five sheaths) and sarira traya (three bodies). The ānanda maya kosa, also identified as kārana sarira, is the jiva. This is the individual. We have seen that this jiva is the storage of karma phala (merits), samskāra (tendencies), and jnāna (worldview). You should remember the pen drive example. The pen drive has files, which can be edited by plugging into a laptop. Similarly, the jiva draws body and mind from 'prakriti' nature to express and experience. Using this body and mind, it modifies the karma phala, samskāra, and jnāna.

The scriptures mention two levels here. The world goes through smaller and larger cycles of recycling. In the process of recycling, the destruction phase is called 'pralaya' and the creation phase is called 'kalpa'. In the smaller cycles, the physical universe is recycled, but the subtle universe is retained. In the larger cycles, both the physical universe and the subtle universe are recycled. The causal universe and causal bodies are eternal. They are never lost. They are the seeds of the next cycle of creation.

शरीरं यदवाप्नोति यच्चाप्युत्क्रामतीश्वरः ।
गृहीत्वैतानि संयाति वायुर्गन्धानिवाशयात् ॥ १५-८ ॥

śarīraṃ yadavāpnoti yaccāpyutkrāmatīśvaraḥ ।
gṛhītvaitāni saṃyāti vāyurgandhānivāśayāt ॥ 8॥

शरीरम् यत् अवाप्नोति यत् च अपि उत्क्रामति ईश्वरः ।
गृहीत्वा एतानि संयाति वायुः गन्धान् इव आशयात् ॥ १५-८॥

śarīram yat avāpnoti yat ca api utkrāmati īśvaraḥ ।
gṛhītvā etāni saṃyāti vāyuḥ gandhān iva āśayāt ॥ 8॥

When the jiva obtains another body and leaves the current body, it takes the mind and senses along with it, just as the wind carries fragrance from its seat.

When one physical body is no longer useful for various reasons, the jiva (causal body) leaves that body and draws another body from prakriti. It carries the subtle body along with it. This is what we call as death and birth. It is just like changing clothes, as mentioned in the Gita slokā 2.22. We step out of one set of clothes and get into another.

श्रोत्रं चक्षुः स्पर्शनं च रसनं घ्राणमेव च ।
अधिष्ठाय मनश्चायं विषयानुपसेवते ॥ १५-९॥

śrotraṃ cakṣuḥ sparśanaṃ ca rasanaṃ ghrāṇameva ca ।
adhiṣṭhāya manaścāyaṃ viṣayānupasevate ॥ 9॥

श्रोत्रम् चक्षुः स्पर्शनम् च रसनम् घ्राणम् एव च ।
अधिष्ठाय मनः च अयम् विषयान् उपसेवते ॥ १५-९॥

śrotram cakṣuḥ sparśanam ca rasanam ghrāṇam eva ca ।
adhiṣṭhāya manaḥ ca ayam viṣayān upasevate ॥ 9॥

Using the faculties of sound, sight, touch, taste, smell and mind, the jiva experiences the (world of) sense objects.

The jiva uses the faculties to experience the world. This indicates that the world experienced by the jiva is what is presented to it by the senses and mind. It is very limited and highly coloured by them. It is almost that every jiva experiences a personal world presented by the heavy colouring by the senses and the mind. The jiva has no access

to the real world outside the senses and mind. The experience of every jiva is as personal as a dream.

उत्क्रामन्तं स्थितं वापि भुञ्जानं वा गुणान्वितम् ।
विमूढा नानुपश्यन्ति पश्यन्ति ज्ञानचक्षुषः ॥ १५-१०॥

utkrāmantaṃ sthitaṃ vāpi bhuñjānaṃ vā guṇānvitam ।
vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñānacakṣuṣaḥ ॥ 10॥

उत्क्रामन्तम् स्थितम् वा अपि भुञ्जानम् वा गुण-अन्वितम् ।
विमूढाः न अनुपश्यन्ति पश्यन्ति ज्ञान-चक्षुषः ॥ १५-१०॥

utkrāmantam sthitam vā api bhuñjānam vā guṇa-anvitam ।
vimūḍhāḥ na anupaśyanti paśyanti jñāna-cakṣuṣaḥ ॥ 10॥

When moving from one body another or when staying in one body, when experiencing the external sense objects or inner emotions, the ignorant do not see the conscious jiva. The one with an eye of wisdom see it.

Usually, we say a jiva without a physical body as a ghost. This slokā says, whether the jiva is with a body or without a body, it is separate and distinct from the body. We need to see ourselves as non-material jivas who occupy the body temporarily. We need to identify ourselves with the kārana sarira and not with the body or mind. A wise person is one who considers himself as a spiritual being temporarily occupying the material body for the sake of experiencing and expressing the world. It is like the person in the Avatār movie sitting inside a robot and operating it. In that movie, the villain operates an inorganic robotic machine. The hero occupies an organic body and operates that from within. Similarly, we are spiritual beings, sitting inside this body and mind, and operating it. An ignorant person is one who does not see this distinction.

We also need to notice that all our worldly relationships are based on the body. Our parents, spouse, relatives, friends,

house, possessions, education, degrees, jobs, skills, etc. are all based on the body. When we leave this body and move on, all these relationships will be left behind. So, these are all only temporary and incidental. What we carry is only our karma phala, samskāra, and jnāna. These are our real assets. So, during our life, we need to focus on building these assets, and use the worldly relationships only as means to build our real assets. This is called wisdom. In the Mahābhārata, Sage Vyāsa says, “Oh humanity, with both hands raised I am calling and shouting to you. Jiva, Dharma, and Ishvara are shāsvatam (eternal). Everything else in life and this world are transient. Please understand this and focus your efforts on that which matters.”

यतन्तो योगिनश्चैनं पश्यन्त्यात्मन्यवस्थितम् ।
यतन्तोऽप्यकृतात्मानो नैनं पश्यन्त्यचेतसः ॥ १५-११॥

yatanto yoginaścainaṃ paśyantyātmanyavasthitam ।
yatanto'pyakṛtātmāno nainaṃ paśyantyacetasaḥ ॥ 11॥

यतन्तः योगिनः च एनम् पश्यन्ति आत्मनि अवस्थितम् ।
यतन्तः अपि अकृत-आत्मानः न एनम् पश्यन्ति अचेतसः ॥ १५-११॥

yatantaḥ yoginaḥ ca enam paśyanti ātmani avasthitam ।
yatantaḥ api akṛta-ātmānaḥ na enam paśyanti acetasaḥ ॥ 11॥

The Yogis who are striving for the spiritual Goal see the eternal part of the Lord residing in themselves. The unrefined and deluded people do not see the Lord even if they try.

In the previous slokā, the identity was shifted from the body and mind to the kārana sharira, the jiva. When that is established, we can see the Supreme Being residing or reflecting in the jiva as Pure Consciousness. Then the identity can be shifted to that. To be able to do this, the jiva

must be refined. The karma phala should be predominantly full of punya (merits). The samskāra (tendencies) must be refined, to be free from the shat ripu (six enemies) – kāma (desire), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (delusion), mata (arrogance), and mātsarya (jealousy). Positive tendencies of satya (honesty), ahimsa (kindness), and brahmacharya (self-discipline) should be cultivated. The jnāna (worldview) must be refined by studying scriptures, introspection, and retrospection.

Only such refined jivas can feel the presence of the Lord within. Without this refinement, even if a person tries to read scriptures or listen to lectures, the person will not be able to understand correctly and feel the presence within.

Thus, these verses of the Gita present Vedanta from the point of view of the jiva. Description of the individual jiva, cause of bondage, and way to freedom have been presented.

यदादित्यगतं तेजो जगद्भासयतेऽखिलम् ।
यच्चन्द्रमसि यच्चाग्नौ तत्तेजो विद्धि मामकम् ॥ १५-१२॥

yadādityagataṃ tejo jagadbhāsayate'khilam ।
yaccandramasi yaccāgnau tattejo viddhi māmakam ॥ 12॥

यत् आदित्य-गतं तेजः जगत् भासयते अखिलम् ।
यत् चन्द्रमसि यत् च अग्नौ तत् तेजः विद्धि मामकम् ॥ १५-१२॥

yat āditya-gataṃ tejaḥ jagat bhāsayate akhilam ।
yat candramasi yat ca agnau tat tejaḥ viddhi māmakam ॥ 12॥

The light of the Sun by which the whole world is illumined, and the light of the Moon and Fire – know that all these lights are Mine.

The next few slokās present Vedanta from the point of view of Ishvara. Ishvara is the sum total of all existence. Ishvara is also referred to as Saguna Brahman.

In the sixth verse, it was mentioned that the Supreme Being is beyond the three means of knowledge. The transcendence of the Supreme Being was indicated there. Here, the immanence of the Supreme Being is mentioned. It is because of the light of Consciousness within (as our own Self) that we are able to operate the various means of knowledge and we are able to know things through perception, inference, or words. Only sentient beings can know external objects using the three means of knowledge. Insentient objects cannot know other objects. Even if an insentient machine collects data and information, they become meaningful only when a sentient being goes through the information and makes sense of it. Thus, the inner light is the real light which shines through the three means of knowledge. This inner light is the Supreme Being.

गामाविश्य च भूतानि धारयाम्यहमोजसा ।
पुष्णामि चौषधीः सर्वाः सोमो भूत्वा रसात्मकः ॥ १५-१३॥

gāmāviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmyahamojasā ।
puṣṇāmi cauṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ ॥ 13॥

गाम् आविश्य च भूतानि धारयामि अहम् ओजसा ।
पुष्णामि च ओषधीः सर्वाः सोमः भूत्वा रसात्मकः ॥ १५-१३॥

gām āviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmi aham ojasā ।
puṣṇāmi ca oṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ somaḥ bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ ॥ 13॥

Entering the earth element, I support all the living beings with My energy. I nourish all the plants in the form of nutritious sap.

The entire physical universe is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. 'vyasti' means individual. 'samasti' means universal, which is all the vyasti put together. In this slokā, the Gita says, Ishvara manifests as the samasti annamaya kosha. It also covers the elements of 'gām' earth (all solids) and 'rasa' water (all liquids).

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः ।
प्राणापानसमायुक्तः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम् ॥ १५-१४॥

ahaṃ vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇināṃ dehamāśritaḥ ।
prāṇāpānasamāyuktaḥ pacāmyannaṃ caturvidham ॥ 14॥

अहम् वैश्वानरः भूत्वा प्राणिनाम् देहम् आश्रितः ।
प्राण-अपान-सम-आयुक्तः पचामि अन्नम् चतुर्विधम् ॥ १५-१४॥

aham vaiśvānaraḥ bhūtvā prāṇinām deham āśritaḥ ।
prāṇa-apāna-sama-āyuktaḥ pacāmi annam caturvidham ॥ 14॥

Being in the body of all living beings as the fire of life, I breathe in and out and I digest the four-fold food eaten.

The entire living universe is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. Isvara manifests as the samasti prāṇamaya kosha. We think we eat food. The Lord says, "I am sitting in your stomach and I digest the food you eat. So, I am the real eater." We think we breathe. The Lord says, "I am sitting in your lungs and I breathe in and breathe out." The same applies to the circulatory system, excretory system, nervous system, skeletal system, etc. Thus, all life in this universe is a manifestation of the life principle of Ishvara. This slokā also covers the elements of 'vaishvānara' fire (all plasma) and 'prāṇa' air (all gases).

सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टो मत्तः स्मृतिर्ज्ञानमपोहनञ्च ।
वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यो वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम् ॥ १५-१५॥

sarvasya cāhaṃ hṛdi sanniviṣṭo mattaḥ smṛtirjñānamapohanañca ।
vedaiśca sarvairahameva vedyo vedāntakṛdvedavideva cāham ॥ 15 ॥

सर्वस्य च अहम् हृदि सन्निविष्टः मत्तः स्मृतिः ज्ञानम् अपोहनम् च ।
वेदैः च सर्वैः अहम् एव वेद्यः वेदान्त-कृत् वेद-वित् एव च अहम् ॥ १५-१५॥

sarvasya ca aham hṛdi sanniviṣṭaḥ mattaḥ smṛtiḥ jñānam apohanam ca ।
vedaiḥ ca sarvaiḥ aham eva vedyaḥ vedānta-kṛt veda-vit eva ca aham ॥ 15 ॥

I reside in the hearts of everyone. Memory, perception, and their absence arise from Me. I am the One to be known by all the Vedas. (Residing in the intellect of all,) I am the author of Vedanta and the knower of Vedas.

Isvara manifests as the samasti manomaya kosha. The Lord says, “I am the one sitting in your mind and remembering what you remember. I am the one who perceives through the senses from within, what you think you perceive. I am the one who forgets from within, what you think you forgot.”

Isvara manifests as the samasti buddhimaya kosha. The Lord says, “As the student I study and as the teacher I teach. I am also the subject of the teaching.”

All the matter in the universe forms the material universe. Similarly, the whole universe has a mind and intellect, which is all the individual minds and intellects put together. Isvara is the Universal Being. He uses the minds and brains of all living beings to perceive, think, remember, calculate, imagine, etc.

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 ॥ 16॥
द्वौ इमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरः च अक्षरः एव च ।
क्षरः सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थः अक्षरः उच्यते ॥ १५-१६॥
dvau imau puruṣau loke kṣaraḥ ca akṣaraḥ eva ca ।
kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭasthaḥ akṣaraḥ ucyate ॥ 16॥
There are two Universal entities in this world – the perishable and the imperishable. All the (gross and subtle bodies of) beings are perishable. The kootastha (causal body) is imperishable.
Ishvara manifests as the samasti ānandamaya kosha. This is also called the kārana prapanca – the causal universe. The lower four koshas all put together is called the kshara, which is perishable. The ānandamaya kosha of all beings put together is called the akshara, which is imperishable. This was referred to as sanātana in the seventh slokā, which means eternal.

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्मेत्युदाहृतः ।
यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः ॥ १५-१७॥
uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ paramātmetyudāhṛtaḥ ।
yo lokatrayamāviśya bibhartyavyaya īśvaraḥ ॥ 17॥
उत्तमः पुरुषः तु अन्यः परम्-आत्मा इति उदाहृतः ।
यः लोक-त्रयम् आविश्य बिभर्ति अव्ययः ईश्वरः ॥ १५-१७॥
uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ tu anyaḥ param-ātmā iti udāhṛtaḥ ।
yaḥ loka-trayam āviśya bibharti avyayaḥ īśvaraḥ ॥ 17॥
There is a Supreme Being higher than these, called the Higher Self (Paramātma). He pervades all the three worlds and sustains them.

Beyond the perishable and imperishable aspects of the Supreme Being mentioned in the previous slokā is the Paramātmā (Higher Self). It is the Nirguna Brahman. This Nirguna Brahman pervades all the three worlds – sthula, sukshma, and kārana prapancas (gross, subtle, and causal worlds). Thus, the Nirguna Brahman, the unmanifested form of the Supreme Being, is transcendent and immanent to the Saguna Brahman (also called Isvara), which the manifested form of the Supreme Being.

Here again, Krishṇa uses the word 'udāhrtah', which means that this is already existing knowledge. Krishṇa is only restating what is already known and taught.

यस्मात्क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः ।
अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ १५-१८॥

yasmātkṣaramatīto'ham akṣarādapi cottamaḥ ।
ato'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ ॥ 18॥

यस्मात् क्षरम् अतीतः अहम् अक्षरात् अपि च उत्तमः ।
अतः अस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ १५-१८॥

yasmāt kṣaram atītaḥ aham akṣarāt api ca uttamaḥ ।
ataḥ asmi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ ॥ 18॥

I am beyond the Perishable (gross and subtle Universes), and higher than the Imperishable (causal Universe). So, I am celebrated in the world and in the Vedas (respectively) as the Supreme Being (Purushottama).

Physical sciences like physics, chemistry, and biology deal with the physical universe. Disciplines like management, psychology, politics, etc. deal with the subtle universe. These two are the topics of discussion of the 'loka' worldly sciences. Religion and philosophy deal with the causal universe. This is the topic of the 'veda' spiritual sciences. As the Supreme Being, the Lord is the manifestation of all

these three universes. So, He is celebrated as the topic of interest of both worldly and spiritual sciences.

यो मामेवमसम्मूढो जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
स सर्वविद्भजति मां सर्वभावेन भारत ॥ १५-१९॥
yo māmevamasammūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam ।
sa sarvavidbhajati māṃ sarvabhāvena bhārata ॥ 19॥
यः माम् एवम् असम्मूढः जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
सः सर्व-वित् भजति माम् सर्व-भावेन भारत ॥ १५-१९॥
yaḥ mām evam asammūḍhaḥ jānāti puruṣottamam ।
saḥ sarva-vit bhajati mām sarva-bhāvena bhārata ॥ 19॥
That undeluded person, who thus knows Me as the Supreme Being, that knower of the essence of Everything, worships Me in every way.
The wise person is one who sees the Supreme Being as the only real existence. There is nothing that exists other than Ishvara. So, everything he does is a transaction with Ishvara only. In fact, he knows that it is Ishvara who does everything though him from within also. There is no individual identity at all.

Thus, in the past few slokās, the Gita presents Vedanta from the point of view of Ishvara, the Universal Being.

इति गुह्यतमं शास्त्रमिदमुक्तं मयानघ ।
एतद्बुद्ध्वा बुद्धिमान्स्यात्कृतकृत्यश्च भारत ॥ १५-२०॥
iti guhyatamaṃ śāstram idamuktaṃ mayānagha ।
etadbuddhvā buddhimānsyāt kṛtakṛtyaśca bhārata ॥ 20॥
इति गुह्यतमम् शास्त्रम् इदम् उक्तम् मया अनघ ।
एतत् बुद्ध्वा बुद्धिमान् स्यात् कृतकृत्यः च भारत ॥ १५-२०॥
iti guhyatamam śāstram idam uktam mayā anagha ।
etat buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛtakṛtyaḥ ca bhārata ॥ 20॥

Thus, this most profound teaching has been imparted by Me. Knowing this, the person becomes wise. That one thing that is worth accomplishing is attained.

The goal of life is to realize God. This chapter presented the teaching of Vedanta from three angles in a systematic and comprehensive manner. When this teaching is understood and imbibed, the purpose of life has been accomplished.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुन संवादे पुरुषोत्तमयोगो नाम पञ्चदशोऽध्यायः

Oṁ tatsad iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde puruṣottamayogo nāma pañcadaśo'dhyāyaḥ

ॐ तत् सत् इति श्रीमत् भगवत् गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्म-विद्यायाम् योग-शास्त्रे श्रीकृष्ण-अर्जुन-संवादेपुरुषोत्तम-योगो
नाम पञ्चदशः अध्यायः

Oṁ tat sat iti śrīmat bhagavat gītāsu upaniṣatsu brahma-vidyāyām yoga-śāstre śrīkṛṣṇa-arjuna-saṃvādepuruṣottama-yogo
nāma pañcadaśaḥ adhyāyaḥ

Om. God alone exists. In the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, which is equivalent to Upanishad, which expounds both (the theory as) Brahma Vidya and (the practice as) Yoga Sāstra, in the form of dialogue between Sri Krishṇa and Arjuna, this is the fifteenth chapter named Purushottama Yoga.

20 Bhagavad Gita – Chapter 12

Broadly the Gita is structured into three sections, with six chapters each. Each section has a set of topics that are predominantly covered. The first six chapters talk about Jiva (individual), Karma Yoga, and Dhyāna Yoga. The middle six chapters talk about Ishvara (God) and Bhakti Yoga. The last six chapters talk about Jiva-Ishvara aikyam (essential identicalness of Jiva and Ishvara), Jnāna Yoga, and sadācāra (right conduct). The 12th chapter, being the last of the middle section, gives a summary of Bhakti Yoga.

The Gita's vision of Bhakti Yoga is to have God as the goal of life, see the world and all living beings as manifestations of God, do all actions as service to God, accept all situations as will of God, and meditate upon God. Thus, this Bhakti is based on knowledge (jnāna) of Jiva and Ishvara, and detachment (vairāgya) from the people, objects, and situations of the world. This is the Bhakti that is presented by the Sage Nārada in his Bhakti Sutrās. This is the Bhakti that Sri Rāmakrishṇa repeatedly refers to as jnāna-vairāgya-sahita-bhakti, or as "Bhakti according to Nārada". It is not mere ritualistic worship (without jnāna) or prayers for worldly benefits (without vairāgya). It involves doing all action for God (karma yoga) with open eyes, meditating upon God (dhyāna yoga) with closed eyes, with clear knowledge of the nature of jiva, jagat, Ishvara, and purpose of life (jnāna yoga), and with deep wholehearted devotion to God (bhakti yoga). Thus, it is an integrated approach involving all the four yogās.

There are two major schools of Vedānta which take different meanings for the word “jnāna yoga”. Because of this, the sequence of spiritual sādhana has a variation in terminology, but not in practice. The Vishishṭhādvaita school considers “jnāna yoga” as acquiring knowledge of the nature of jiva, jagat, Ishvara, and the relationship between them. Here, jiva is the individual and Ishvara is Saguna Brahman. So, this jnāna yoga comes before bhakti yoga as a prerequisite. As the goal in this school is to know

that the jivātmā is an inseparable part of paramātmā, bhakti yoga is the final step. The Advaita school considers "jnāna yoga" as acquiring knowledge of the jiva-ishvara-aikyam – the essential identicalness of jiva and Ishvara as Pure Consciousness. Here, jiva is the ātman – shuddha caitanya, Pure Consciousness. Ishvara is the Nirguna Brahman, which is also Pure Consciousness. So, this jnāna yoga comes after bhakti yoga as the final step. Vishishṭhādvaita school does not accept Nirguna Brahman and so it does not include final step of Advaita school. Which is correct? Both are correct. If you are oriented towards knowledge, you can go for Advaita. However, Vishishṭhādvaita is a prerequisite. You cannot come to Advaita except through Vishishṭhādvaita . So, you cannot condemn or reject Vishishṭhādvaita. If you are not oriented towards knowledge, no problem. Focus on Vishishṭhādvaita. However, don't condemn or reject Advaita. Thus, combining both, we can consider this as the sequence of sadhana:

It is assumed that you are familiar with the concepts about jiva, jagat, and Ishvara given in the previous section on chapter 15 of the Gita. Here is a quick recap.

- Jiva tattva - All living beings (Jiva) are essentially a conscious core, covered by three bodies (gross, subtle, causal – sthoola sharira, sookshma sharira, and kārana sharira). As an individual, the jiva is the kārana sharira. It carries karma phala (merits), samskāra (tendencies), and jnāna (worldview) from one birth to another. In reality, it is beyond the kārana sharira also, as Pure Consciousness.

- Jagat tattva - The (insentient) three bodies of all living beings and the rest of the insentient world constitute

the material world called Jagat. When the jiva identifies with the kārana sharira, the other two lower shariras constitute the jagat. When the jiva gives up that identity, that also is included in the jagat.

- Ishvara tattva – The one supreme Universal conscious Being, whose Will manifests as all the Laws, all the matter and minds and all the living beings in Universe, is the Ishvara. This is also called the Saguna Brahman. Ishvara is the Universal Being who identifies himself with the whole of existence.

- Nirguna tattva – All the three (Jiva, Jagat and Ishvara) are manifestations in the relative realm of the Supreme Pure Consciousness which remains unmanifest in the Absolute realm. The distinction between wave and ocean exists from the point of view of the wave. When seen as water, they are all the same. The distinction between them ceases to exist.

- The goal of life is to realize the unreality of limited individuality of the Jiva. This individuality can be given up primarily in two ways. One way is to know that Ishvara is everything, including us and all our gross, subtle and causal bodies. They're all parts of Ishvara only. There is no individuality. Ishvara alone exists. The other way is by realizing our true nature as pure consciousness. In that case also, there is no individuality at all. It is all akhanda caitanya – undivided Consciousness. Thus, both from the point of view of Saguna Brahman and Nirguna Brahman, individuality doesn't hold good at all. Individuality is only a mental construct. It is an imagination. It is a superimposition because of ignorance.

- Life gives experiences like pleasure / pain, success / failure, gain / loss, etc. to ponder over and realize the truth. There is a beautiful illustration in the Mundaka Upanishad where there are two birds – the lower bird and the higher bird. The lower bird is busy eating fruits from the tree while the higher bird is sitting serene. As long as the lower bird is eating sweet fruits, it is totally lost in the world. When it eats a bitter fruit, it looks up at the higher bird and asks, 'Why is this happening to me alone? Do I deserve this?' We ask such questions only when there is pain, failure, and loss. We live in our own blissful ignorance when there is pleasure, success, and gain. Only when pain comes do we ask, 'Why is this happening to me? What is the purpose of life? Is there God?' These questions move us closer to the truth, and that is the way Ishvara pulls us. There is a beautiful Doha by Kabir: 'If you remember the Lord in your good times, then bad times need not come at all. If you remember the Lord only during bad times, then the Lord gives you bad times so that you remember Him.' So, if we don't remember the Lord during our good times, then to remind us of the purpose of life, the Lord is forced to give us bad times so that we wake up. The truth is, we must realize the truth—the purpose of life is not pleasure, the purpose of life is wisdom. We will reach there. We need to eventually know that there were never two birds.

- All sorrow in life is because of not understanding the goal of life and wrong identification with the body and mind. The goal of life is not pleasure; the goal of life is wisdom. I am not this body; I am not this mind. As an individual, I am the kārana sharira, the jiva; in reality, I

am Pure Consciousness. If we understand this, then we can be free from all sorrow.

This is the gist of the entire Vedanta which we have seen.

Thus, Jnāna yoga 1 and 2 were covered in chapter 15 elaborately. In chapter 12, the other yogās are covered in detail. Verse 1 starts with a question from Arjuna. Krishṇa gives his answer in brief in verse 2. Verses 3 to 5 cover jnāna yoga. Verses 6 and 7 give a summary of the Gita's way of sādhana, which includes all the four yogās. Verses 8 to 12 elaborate on dhyāna yoga based on bhakti. Verses 13 to 19 elaborate on karma yoga based on bhakti. Verse 20 gives the conclusion.

अथ द्वादशोऽध्यायः । भक्तियोगः
atha dvādaśo'dhyāyaḥ । bhaktiyogaḥ
Now, twelfth chapter. Bhakti Yoga.

This chapter starts with a question from Arjuna.

अर्जुन उवाच ।
arjuna uvāca ।
Arjuna said:

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते ।
ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः ॥ १२-१॥
evaṃ satatayuktā ye bhaktāstvāṃ paryupāsate ।
ye cāpyakṣaramavyaktaṃ teṣāṃ ke yogavittamāḥ ॥ 1॥
एवम् सतत-युक्ताः ये भक्ताः त्वाम् पर्युपासते ।
ये च अपि अक्षरम् अव्यक्तम् तेषाम् के योग-वित्तमाः ॥ १२-१॥
evam satata-yuktāḥ ye bhaktāḥ tvām paryupāsate ।

ye ca api akṣaram avyaktam teṣām ke yoga-vittamāḥ ll 1 ll
Between the devotees who are ever-steadfast in worshipping You and those who worship the Imperishable Unmanifest, who is better established in Yoga?
Arjuna asks a very interesting question here. This is a common question that several people ask today too, "Can I be spiritual and not religious?" The question of Arjuna can be interpreted into several variants of this question: "Should I follow Bhakti Yoga or Jnāna Yoga?", "Should I follow Vishishṭhādvaita or Advaita?", "Does God have form or is He formless?"

The next 6 verses give the answer to this question.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
śrībhagavānuvāca l
The Lord said:

मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
श्रद्धया परयोपेताः ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥ १२-२॥
mayyāveśya mano ye māṃ nityayuktā upāsate l
śraddhayā parayopetāḥ te me yuktatamā matāḥ ll 2 ll
मयि आवेश्य मनः ये माम् नित्य-युक्ताः उपासते ।
श्रद्धया परया उपेताः ते मे युक्ततमाः मताः ॥ १२-२॥
mayi āveśya manaḥ ye mām nitya-yuktāḥ upāsate l
śraddhayā parayā upetāḥ te me yuktatamāḥ matāḥ ll 2 ll
Those who, fix their mind on Me, ever-steadfast in worship, worship with supreme faith, they are best established in Yoga, in My opinion.

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यञ्च कूटस्थमचलन्ध्रुवम् ॥ १२-३॥

ye tvakṣaramanirdeśyam avyaktaṃ paryupāsate ।
sarvatragamacintyañca kūṭasthamacalandhruvam ॥ 3॥
ये तु अक्षरम् अनिर्देश्यम् अव्यक्तम् पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगम् अचिन्त्यम् च कूटस्थम् अचलम् ध्रुवम् ॥ १२-३॥
ye tu akṣaram anirdeśyam avyaktam paryupāsate ।
sarvatragam acintyam ca kūṭastham acalam dhruvam ॥ 3॥
But, they who worship the Imperishable, Indefinable, Unmanifest, Omnipresent, Unthinkable, Unchangeable, Immovable, Eternal, …

सन्नियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥ १२-४॥
sanniyamyendriyagrāmaṃ sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ ।
te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ ॥ 4॥
सन्नियम्य इन्द्रिय-ग्रामम् सर्वत्र सम-बुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति माम् एव सर्व-भूत-हिते रताः ॥ १२-४॥
sanniyamya indriya-grāmam sarvatra sama-buddhayaḥ ।
te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ ॥ 4॥
Having subdued all senses and mind, being even-minded in all situations, engaged in the welfare of all living beings, they alone will surely reach only Me.

Krishṇa's answer is simple. The goal is reached only when you are spiritual. A religious life reaches its culmination only when you become spiritual. And, being religious will lead you to become spiritual.

This applies to the other variants of the question as well. Jnāna is the only way to reach the goal. Bhakti without Jnāna will not take you to the goal. However, Bhakti will prepare your mind for Jnāna. You need to comprehend nirākāra nirguna shuddha caitanya Brahman – formless propertyless Pure Consciousness Infinite, which is the goal.

However, accepting God with noble qualities who can be worshipped through a form will take you easily and quickly towards the comprehension of nirguna Brahman. Advaita is the final goal. Vishishṭhādvaita is the way to Advaita.

The answer to the question, "Can I be spiritual but not religious?" is "Yes. But it is difficult." The only way to the goal is given as **avyaktam paryupāsate** – one who comprehends the Unmanifest. Thus, being spiritual is not an option. Everyone needs to be spiritual to reach the goal. However, to be spiritual, Krishṇa gives three prerequisites.

1. **sarvatra sama buddhi** – Equanimity in all situations
2. **sanniyamya indriya grāmam** – Control of the mind and senses
3. **sarva bhuta hite rathāh** – Interest in the welfare of all living beings

Krishṇa says "**te prāpnuvanti mām eva**". The word "eva" gives the stress, which needs to be applied to all the three other words in the phrase. "te eva" – Only they who have all the three prerequisites and pursue the Unmanifest. "prāpnuvanti eva" – They will surely reach without any doubt. "mām eva" – They will reach the final goal of mukti and nothing else. No heaven. No paradise. No different lokās. No rebirth. No other destinations. They will reach liberation and liberation only.

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ॥ १२-५॥

kleśo'dhikatarasteṣām avyaktāsaktacetasām ।
avyaktā hi gatirduḥkhaṃ dehavadbhiravāpyate ॥ 5 ॥

क्लेशः अधिकतरः तेषाम् अव्यक्त-आसक्त-चेतसाम् ॥
अव्यक्ता हि गतिः दुःखम् देहवद्भिः अवाप्यते ॥ १२-५॥

kleśaḥ adhikataraḥ teṣām avyakta-āsakta-cetasām ll
avyaktā hi gatiḥ duḥkham dehavadbhiḥ avāpyate ll 5 ll
The difficulty is greater for those who are (pursuing the path of) fixing the mind on the Unmanifest. Reaching the goal through the path of the Unmanifest is very hard for people who are attached to the body.

However, fully and absolutely developing the three prerequisites listed is very difficult. Can a beginner be absolutely equanimous in all situations? Can he be absolutely calm and cheerful in all extreme situations of failure, disappointment, blame, disgrace, pain, loss, disease, hunger, thirst, uncertainty, tiredness, heat, cold, and all kinds of personal inconvenience? Can he have absolute control over the mind and senses in all extreme conditions of temptations of pleasure, fame, gain, food, gold, heaven, etc.? Can a person have so much love for other living beings that he is ready to give up all conveniences and even his own life for the welfare of another living being? If a person has all these three to the absolute level, then his mind will be without any biases, without being subject to fallacies, without settling for any compromises, for the pursuit of Truth and Truth alone. Such a person alone can reach the goal. If a person can claim to have these three prerequisites, such a person can proceed to be "spiritual but not religious". History has examples of such people – Sanaka, Sanatkumāra, Sanātana, Sanandana, Sukha, Mārkandeya, Buddha – to name a few. They demonstrated these prerequisites in their life and they were spiritual without being religious. However, this is not for all.

The common people, like each one of us, are **dehavadbhih,** who are very much attached to the body. If we are hungry,

we get angry. If we are full, we become sleepy. When the condition of the stomach determines our mood, being spiritual is a long way to go. The body identity and other identities that are rooted in the body like gender, ancestry, possessions, worldly achievements like degrees and awards, job, relatives, friends, neighbours, nationality, religion, culture, etc. tie us down in a sticky web. It is impossible to be spiritual while holding on to all these. Krishṇa says, "**kleshah adhika tara teshām**" – it is extremely difficult for them. First one needs to become a Yoga-āruda – one who is accomplished in yoga, as described in the verse 6.4 – free from attachment to sense objects, to actions and their results, and to worldly ambitions. The three prerequisites mentioned in the verse 12.4 also indicate almost the same. This is the first step in the spiritual path, as mentioned in the verse 6.3. There it is mentioned that this can be attained by Karma Yoga. In verse 12.2, it is mentioned that the same can be attained by worship, which is another form of Karma Yoga. It says that the state of Yoga-āruda can be attained by mind soaked in the thought of Ishvara, mind ever merged in the thought of Ishvara.

This is summarized and presented in the next two verses of the Gita. These two verses are the summary of the Gita's recommended way of Spiritual Sādhana for everyone.

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः ।
अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥ १२-६॥

ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṃnyasya matparāḥ ।
ananyenaiva yogena māṃ dhyāyanta upāsate ॥ 6 ॥

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्-पराः ।
अनन्येन एव योगेन माम् ध्यायन्तः उपासते ॥ १२-६॥

ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṃnyasya mat-parāḥ ।

ananyena eva yogena mām dhyāyantaḥ upāsate ll 6 ll
But those people who surrender all actions to Me, with Me as the highest Goal, with single-minded Yoga, worship by meditating upon Me, …

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।
भवामि नचिरात्पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥ १२-७॥
teṣāmahaṃ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṃsārasāgarāt l
bhavāmi nacirātpārtha mayyāveśitacetasām ll 7 ll
तेषाम् अहम् समुद्धर्ता मृत्यु-संसार-सागरात् ।
भवामि न चिरात् पार्थ मयि आवेशित-चेतसाम् ॥ १२-७॥
teṣām aham samuddhartā mṛtyu-saṃsāra-sāgarāt l
bhavāmi na cirāt pārtha mayi āveśita-cetasām ll 7 ll
To them, whose mind is set on Me, very soon, I become the Saviour from the ocean of transience and bondage.

Krishṇa asks us to do both Karma Yoga and Dhyāna Yoga with devotion (Bhakti) to Ishvara. The goal is to develop **mayi āvesita cetas** – mind soaked in Ishvara. If that is done, Krishṇa promises that He will give the necessary knowledge and understanding to know oneself as Pure Consciousness, which will result in liberation. To get this Ishvara-soaked mind, four disciplines are presented:

1. **matparāh** – Have Ishvara as the goal of life. Worldly goals like possessions, pleasure, and fame need to be given up. If they come on their own, they should be considered as gifts of Ishvara and they should be put into use for spiritual pursuits, social service, and doing one's natural duties for the pleasure of Ishvara. There should not be any other goal in life like wealth, health, powers, success, fame, pleasure, convenience, etc. Every action should be done to

please Ishvara by serving Him in the form of all living beings. Ishvara preeti is the only objective.

2. **sarvāni karmāni mayi sannyasya** – Surrender all actions to Ishvara. This is done in three steps. First, acknowledge Ishvara as the bestower of the fruits of all action – karma phala dātā. Offer the fruits of action to Ishvara. Second is to acknowledge that Ishvara is not different from the world – vishvarupa Ishvara. Offer all actions to Ishvara. Third is to understand that it is Ishvara who is within me also. Completely surrender to Ishvara, knowing that everything happens by His will. There is no freewill. As a person progresses in Karma Yoga, these come naturally one after the other. Also, there is no difference between various kinds of work. All actions without exception – doing personal work like eating and sleeping, serving the family members, doing professional work, doing social service, helping other living beings, doing ritualistic puja, doing various austerities, going on pilgrimage, etc. – are included in this. There is no divide between sacred and secular. Every action is an offering to Ishvara. The entire life is a continuous puja without any break. The functioning of the whole universe is a grand ārati done by nature to Ishvara. The devotee is a small leaf of Bilva or Tulasi offered by nature at the altar of Ishvara in this grand ārati that is going on.
3. **ananyena iva yogena** – Have single minded concentration. Concentrate upon Ishvara using various kinds of rituals, chantings, bhajans, stories, etc. All these have only one purpose – to spend time thinking of Ishvara to the exclusion of all other thoughts. The devotee should develop taste and

desire for these activities. You should gain immense pleasure in thinking about Ishvara and chanting the name of Ishvara.

4. **mām dhyāyanta** – Meditate upon Ishvara. You should close your eyes, cut off all sense objects, turn within and meditate upon Ishvara in the center of your being as instructed by your Guru. Discovering the innermost core of one's being as Pure Consciousness is the essence of spiritual life. The closest to this is to meditate upon Ishvara as the innermost core as instructed by the Guru. There are various stages of meditation. Pratyāhāra is withdrawing from the sense objects. Dhārana is to fix the mind on the object of meditation within. Dhyāna is when the concentration is unbroken. Samādhi is when the meditator completely forgets himself in the act of meditation, which happens automatically when Dhyāna gets deep.

The first two constitute Karma Yoga. The second two constitute Dhyāna Yoga. Bhakti to Ishvara is involved in both. Dhyāna Yoga takes care of the time and place of puja, chanting, and meditation. Karma Yoga takes care of all the rest of the time. Thus, these two cover the entire 24 hours on all days. No bit of life is left outside these two. These two Yogas reinforce each other. With this twin sādhana, the spiritual aspirant can easily reach the goal.

Krishṇa as the Supreme Being promises that the devotees, who have attained the mind that is soaked in Ishvara 24x7 by following this twin sādhana, will be saved from all sorrow.

The next three slokās give three steps to meditation – puja, chanting, and meditation. It is given in the reverse order in the form of preparation.

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥ १२-८॥
mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya ।
nivasiṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvaṃ na saṃśayaḥ ॥ 8॥
मयि एव मनः आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिम् निवेशय ।
निवसिष्यसि मयि एव अतः ऊर्ध्वम् न संशयः ॥ १२-८॥
mayi eva manaḥ ādhatsva mayi buddhim niveśaya ।
nivasiṣyasi mayi eva ataḥ ūrdhvam na saṃśayaḥ ॥ 8॥
Fix your mind on Me. Fix your intellect on Me. Then, you will abide in Me alone. There is no doubt in this.

Meditation is a purely mental activity. Not even the lips, tongue or fingers should move. The **manas** (emotions) and **buddhi** (intellect) are the only two things that need to be engaged with the Ishvara during meditation. Feel with the mind and think with the intellect, directing both towards Ishvara. When this done, we can reach the state of mayi āvesita cetas – mind soaked in Ishvara, which was mentioned in the previous verse. Here, it is said **nivasishyasi mayi eva** – you will reside in Ishvara only.

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम् ।
अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छाप्तुं धनञ्जय ॥ १२-९॥
atha cittaṃ samādhātuṃ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram ।
abhyāsayogena tato māmicchāptuṃ dhanañjaya ॥ 9॥
अथ चित्तम् समाधातुम् न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम् ।
अभ्यास-योगेन ततः माम् इच्छ आप्तुम् धनञ्जय ॥ १२-९॥
atha cittam samādhātum na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram ।
abhyāsa-yogena tataḥ mām iccha āptum dhanañjaya ॥ 9॥

If you are not able to fix your mind steadily on Me, you can seek to reach Me through chanting and japa.

If a person is not able steadily fix the mind on Ishvara as mentioned above, then he should do chanting. It can be loud singing of some bhajans or nāmas, or chanting suktās or stotrās. The mantra can be chanted silently with movement in the lips, tongue, and counting on fingers. A person can use a japa māla. He can refer to books and chant silently or aloud. These activities will help the person to concentrate to move to the meditation mentioned in the previous verse. This is not an alternative to meditation. This is preparation for meditation.

अभ्यासेऽप्यसमर्थोऽसि मत्कर्मपरमो भव ।
मदर्थमपि कर्माणि कुर्वन्सिद्धिमवाप्स्यसि ॥ १२-१० ॥

abhyāse'pyasamartho'si matkarmaparamo bhava ।
madarthamapi karmāṇi kurvansiddhimavāpsyasi ॥ 10 ॥

अभ्यासे अपि असमर्थः असि मत्-कर्म-परमः भव ।
मत्-अर्थम् अपि कर्माणि कुर्वन् सिद्धिम् अवाप्स्यसि ॥ १२-१० ॥

abhyāse api asamarthaḥ asi mat-karma-paramaḥ bhava ।
mat-artham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi ॥ 10 ॥

If you are not able to steady your mind by chanting, then do physical rituals and puja with Me as the goal. By doing actions for My sake, you will (gradually) attain perfection.

If a person is not able to concentrate enough to do chanting, then he should do ritualistic puja. He should clean the place and place some images or pictures that will remind him of Ishvara. He can decorate with some nice flowers, light a lamp, light incense, do archana with flowers or kumkuma,

do abhisheka, do homa, offer naivedyam, etc. He can practice a few rounds of prānāyāmā. He can do one or more of these. There are standard procedures for doing homa, puja with five steps, puja with ten steps, puja with sixteen steps, etc. to suit the person, time, and place. These can be done by the devotee as instructed by his Guru, in the absence of which, it can be done based on his inclination. These are not alternatives to chanting and meditation. These prepare the mind for chanting and meditation.

In general, when doing daily spiritual practices, these three – puja, chanting, and meditation – are done in sequence always. Doing puja and chanting put the mind in the right state that is conducive to meditation.

अथैतदप्यशक्तोऽसि कर्तुं मद्योगमाश्रितः ।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं ततः कुरु यतात्मवान् ॥ १२-११॥

athaitadapyaśakto'si kartuṃ madyogamāśritaḥ ।
sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṃ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān ॥ 11 ॥

अथ एतत् अपि अशक्तः असि कर्तुम् मत्-योगम् आश्रितः ।
सर्व-कर्म-फल-त्यागम् ततः कुरु यत-आत्मवान् ॥ १२-११॥

atha etat api aśaktaḥ asi kartum mat-yogam āśritaḥ ।
sarva-karma-phala-tyāgam tataḥ kuru yata-ātmavān ॥ 11 ॥

If you are not able to even do this (puja), then taking refuge in Me, offer the fruits of all your actions to Me and lead a self-controlled life.

If on certain days, if you are not able to sit and do puja, chanting, and meditation, then ask for pardon from Ishvara. Request Ishvara to accept all the everyday actions as puja. Of course, this is not only on the days when you could not do meditation. It is applicable on all days. It applies all the

more importantly on the days when you could not do meditation.

Can all action be offered to the Lord? Or, are there any restrictions? Yes, in general, we need to offer all the actions to the Lord. In the nineth chapter, Krishṇa says, “yat karoshi yat ashnāshi” – everything that you contribute and consume. Thus, all actions done towards personal, family, profession, and social service causes need to be offered to the Lord. This includes eating, sleeping, walking, brushing teeth, cooking, writing, reading, etc. Any action that cannot be offered to the Lord is not worth doing.

However, on the days when we are offering actions to the Lord because of lack of time to do puja, chanting, and meditation, we should be yatātmavān – we should have restrictions on entertainment. So, skipping spiritual practice occasionally because of too much urgent work is fine, but entertainment cannot be the reason.

This is only for rare occasions. We should try not to skip our daily spiritual practice. Even when we are very busy, we can wake up half an hour earlier and complete our daily spiritual practice without affecting our service to family, profession, and society.

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते ।
ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥ १२-१२॥

śreyo hi jñānamabhyāsāt jñānāddhyānaṃ viśiṣyate ।
dhyānātkarmaphalatyāgaḥ tyāgācchāntiranantaram ॥ 12॥

श्रेयः हि ज्ञानम् अभ्यासात् ज्ञानात् ध्यानम् विशिष्यते ।
ध्यानात् कर्म-फल-त्यागः त्यागात् शान्तिः अनन्तरम् ॥ १२-१२॥

śreyaḥ hi jñānam abhyāsāt jñānāt dhyānam viśiṣyate ।

dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgaḥ tyāgāt śāntiḥ anantaram ll 12 ll

Knowing the meaning is better than just knowing to chant the words. Better than mere knowledge, is deep meditation upon the knowledge. Better than only meditation, is detachment from the fruits of action. From detachment comes peace immediately.

This is the sequence in Dhyāna Yoga – **abhyāsa** (shravana, knowing the words), **jnānam** (manana, complete doubt-free understanding of the meaning), **dhyānam** (nididhyāsana, meditating upon the meaning of the words), **tyāga** (vairāgya, absence of expectations from people, objects, and situations), and **shānti** (peace got from the detachment). A similar sequence in Dhyāna Yoga is given in the verse 6.27 and a sequence in Jnāna Yoga is given in the verses 13.7 to 13.11 also.

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥ १२-१३॥

adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca l
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī ll 13 ll

अद्वेष्टा सर्व-भूतानां मैत्रः करुणः एव च ।
निर्ममः निरहङ्कारः सम-दुःख-सुखः क्षमी ॥ १२-१३॥

adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇaḥ eva ca l
nirmamaḥ nirahaṅkāraḥ sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ kṣamī ll 13 ll

He who has no hatred towards any living being, friendly and compassionate towards all, free from attachment to possessions and self-centeredness, forbearing pain and pleasure with equanimity, …

There are several lists of characteristics of a Jivanmukta, a person who is liberated while living. In the second chapter, the list is called sthitaprajna lakshana – signs of a person of steady wisdom (2.54-72). In the fourteenth chapter, the list is called guna atita lakshana – signs of a person who has transcended the gunās (14.22-25). In the fourth chapter, there is a list of characteristics of a jnāni (4.19-23). In the thirteenth chapter there is a list of characters that a person on the path of Jnāna Yoga develops (13.7-11). In the sixteenth chapter there is a list of daivi sampath – divine treasures, which are virtues of a spiritually advanced person (16.1-3). In the seventeeth chapter, there is a list of tapas, austerities that are virtues that can be practiced (17.14-16). In the twelfth chapter, there is a list of parābhakta lakshana – signs of a great devotee (12.13-20). Also, there are several individual slokās like 12.4 and 15.5 which also give a list of characteristics. Though all these go by different names, they are essentially a list of virtues. These virtues are naturally present in great jnānis and bhaktās – who are spiritually advanced. Thus, broadly, they can be used to identify such people. These virtues need to be cultivated by others as spiritual practice.

This sloka presents Karma Yoga from the point of view of relationships. It talks about four things in life: people, objects, situations, and ourselves. We need to have the right attitude towards these and that itself constitutes Karma Yoga.

People: We will meet three types – people who consider us as competitors or enemies, people who are successful in life, and people who are going through tough times in life. Towards these people, we should have the following attitudes: have no hatred towards people who look upon us

as competitors (**adveshṭa**), be friendly towards people who are successful in life without any jealousy (**maitra**), and have compassion towards people who are going through some misfortune in life (**karuna**). The same idea comes in the Patanjali Yoga Sutras also. It is the Lord alone who has become this world and all the living beings. We should treat everyone with love and respect.

Objects: We should not have any sense of mine-ness **nirmama**. Everything belongs to the Lord. We should not claim ownership of anything. The Lord has given things to us to put them to good use in service of the world and the people whom He has entrusted to us.

Situations: We should look upon pain and pleasure **dukha-sukha** with equanimity **sama** and forebear **kshami**. Every situation is a gift from the Lord. Everything happens by His will for our spiritual development. The Lord is Omnipotent – sarva loka maheshvaram, and Compassionate – suhrudam sarva bhutānām. We need to ask ourselves, "What is the lesson that the Lord wants me to learn from this?"

Ourselves: We should not identify ourselves with the body and mind. We should not be self-centered **nirahankāra**.

Thus, through pointing us to the right attitudes that we need to have towards people, objects, situations, and ourselves, the Gita teaches the gist of Karma Yoga.

सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥ १२-१४॥

santuṣṭaḥ satataṃ yogī yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ ।
mayyarpitamanobuddhiḥ yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ ॥ 14॥

सन्तुष्टः सततम् योगी यत-आत्मा दृढ-निश्चयः ।
मयि अर्पित-मनः-बुद्धिः यः मत्-भक्तः सः मे प्रियः ॥ १२-१४॥

santuṣṭaḥ satatam yogī yata-ātmā dṛḍha-niścayaḥ ।
mayi arpita-manaḥ-buddhiḥ yaḥ mat-bhaktaḥ saḥ me priyaḥ ॥ 14॥

Ever content, the Yogi is self-controlled, with strong conviction, with mind and intellect offered to Me, such a devotee is dear to Me.

This sloka gives the four Yogas as the sequence of spiritual sadhana.

- The state of **santushṭah statam** complete satisfaction and contentment is achieved by Karma Yoga. A reasonable level of progress in that is necessary to be able to sit and meditate.
- By Dhyāna Yoga, the person will develop **yata ātmā** a mind under control. A reasonable level of progress in that is necessary to proceed towards the next stage.
- Jnāna Yoga will give **druḍha niscayah** clarity and conviction about our real nature and the purpose of life.
- All these are achieved by **mayi arpita mano buddhih** fixing the mind and intellect on Ishvara. Of the five koshas, the manomaya kosha and the buddhimaya kosha are the only two that are directly under our control. The other three koshas cannot be directly worked upon. So, these two should be offered to Ishvara. As we have seen, the mind is about likes and dislikes. We need to accept everything that happens as a gift from Ishvara and accept the situations in life as they come. The buddhimaya kosha is about value system. We need to align our values with the Vedantic concepts like chaturvida-purushārthāh, panca-kosha,

Jiva as the individual being, Ishvara as the Supreme Being, etc. Accepting this, we need to offer all our actions as gift to Ishvara. Thus, offering the mind to the Lord indicates Ishvara prasāda buddhi, and offering the intellect to the Lord indicates Ishvara arpana buddhi. Another way to look at these two is that manas is the emotional faculty and buddhi is the intellectual faculty. We need to direct both towards Ishvara. We need to have a deep emotional personal relationship with Ishvara. We need to have a clear intellectual understanding of Ishvara. Thus, we can approach Ishvara with these two faculties.

Krishṇa says, **yah mat bhaktah sah me priyah** such a devotee is dear to Me. This is a beautiful idea. We have a new definition of bhakti here. Instead of saying "I love you", I behave in such a way that Ishvara will love me. Six aspects of surrender are talked of in the Bhakti literature. Doing what the Lord likes and not doing what the Lord will not like are two of them. This is where that comes from. Now, how do I know what Ishvara likes? How does he want me to behave? *adveshṭhā sarva bhutānām maitrah karuṇa eva ca*, etc. Thus, this and a few subsequent verses in the Gita mention the characteristics of a devotee and the Lord says, such a devotee is dear to me. Thus, these serve two purposes: (1) they give the way to us to identify devotees, and (2) they are instructions to guide our behaviour.

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥ १२-१५॥

yasmānnodvijate loko lokānnodvijate ca yaḥ ।
harṣāmarṣabhayodvegaiḥ mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ ॥ 15 ॥

यस्मात् न उद्विजते लोकः लोकात् न उद्विजते च यः ।

हर्ष-आमर्ष-भय-उद्वेगैः मुक्तः यः सः च मे प्रियः ॥ १२-१५॥
yasmāt na udvijate lokaḥ lokāt na udvijate ca yaḥ ।
harṣa-āmarṣa-bhaya-udvegaiḥ muktaḥ yaḥ saḥ ca me priyaḥ ॥ 15॥
He who does not threaten or is afraid of the world, free from elation, jealousy, fear and anxiety, such a person is dear to Me.

God is the goal of the devotee. He does not compete with anyone in the world for worldly things. So, he is not a threat to anyone in the world. Also, as he does not depend upon the world, the world can not threaten him. As he does not have the worldly success as the goal, he is free from various emotions associated with the ups and downs of worldly life.

अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः ।
सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥ १२-१६॥
anapekṣaḥ śucirdakṣa udāsīno gatavyathaḥ ।
sarvārambhaparityāgī yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ ॥ 16॥
अनपेक्षः शुचिः दक्षः उदासीनः गत-व्यथः ।
सर्व-आरम्भ-परित्यागी यः मत्-भक्तः सः मे प्रियः ॥ १२-१६॥
anapekṣaḥ śuciḥ dakṣaḥ udāsīnaḥ gata-vyathaḥ ।
sarva-ārambha-parityāgī yaḥ mat-bhaktaḥ saḥ me priyaḥ ॥ 16॥
He is free from dependence, pure, spontaneous, unconcerned, untroubled, free from any selfish venture, such a devotee is dear to Me.

As the devotee does not have any worldly ambitions, he does not have any hidden agenda. He is free from the opinions of others. He does not care what other people would think of him. He does not do anything for any personal gain, name or fame.

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान्यः स मे प्रियः ॥ १२-१७॥
yo na hṛṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati ।
śubhāśubhaparityāgī bhaktimānyaḥ sa me priyaḥ ॥ 17॥
यः न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
शुभ-अशुभ-परित्यागी भक्तिमान् यः सः मे प्रियः ॥ १२-१७॥
yaḥ na hṛṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati ।
śubha-aśubha-parityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ saḥ me priyaḥ ॥ 17॥
He neither rejoices nor hates, he neither worries nor desires, he is free from concepts of auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, such a devotee is dear to Me.

The devotee is free from attachments and aversions. So, he is free from dualities in life.

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥ १२-१८॥
samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoḥ ।
śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅgavivarjitaḥ ॥ 18॥
समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मान-अपमानयोः ।
शीत-उष्ण-सुख-दुःखेषु समः सङ्ग-विवर्जितः ॥ १२-१८॥
samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā māna-apamānayoḥ ।
śīta-uṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅga-vivarjitaḥ ॥ 18॥
He is equal to people who consider him as enemy and friend, to praise and blame, to cold and heat, to pleasure and pain, to union and separation, …

The devotee depends on the Lord only. So, he does not have any expectations from people. So, his behaviour is the same towards people who consider him as enemy or friend. He is not moved by how people treat him and talk to him.

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥ १२-१९॥
tulyanindāstutirmaunī santuṣṭo yena kenacit ।
aniketaḥ sthiramatiḥ bhaktimānme priyo naraḥ ॥ 19॥
तुल्य-निन्दा-स्तुतिः मौनी सन्तुष्टः येन केनचित् ।
अनिकेतः स्थिर-मतिः भक्तिमान् मे प्रियः नरः ॥ १२-१९॥
tulya-nindā-stutiḥ maunī santuṣṭaḥ yena kenacit ।
aniketaḥ sthira-matiḥ bhaktimān me priyaḥ naraḥ ॥ 19॥
He sees equally censure and praise, he is ever silent, he is content with anything, not attached to his dwelling place, steady-minded, such a devoted man is dear to Me.

The devotee does not bother about what people say about him. He is silent. He is satisfied with whatever comes in life as prasāda from the Lord. He does not consider any place or any thing as his own. He has full clarity on what is temporary and what is permanent, and always sticks to the permanent, which is Dharma and Ishvara.

ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते ।
श्रद्दधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः ॥ १२-२०॥
ye tu dharmyāmṛtamidaṃ yathoktaṃ paryupāsate ।
śraddadhānā matparamā bhaktāste'tīva me priyāḥ ॥ 20॥
ये तु धर्म्य-अमृतम् इदम् यथा उक्तम् पर्युपासते ।
श्रद्दधानाः मत्-परमाः भक्ताः ते अतीव मे प्रियाः ॥ १२-२०॥
ye tu dharmya-amṛtam idam yathā uktam paryupāsate ।
śraddadhānāḥ mat-paramāḥ bhaktāḥ te atīva me priyāḥ ॥ 20॥
Those people who follow this eternal dharma as told here, with faith, considering Me as the supreme goal, such devotees are exceedingly dear to Me.

Whatever way of life as the four Yogas that the Lord has mentioned in this chapter is the Sanātana Dharma, which is also called Hinduism. Having the Lord as the goal of life, those who lead a spiritual life as mentioned here, are very dear to the Lord.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे भक्तियोगो नाम द्वादशोऽध्यायः

Om̃ tatsad iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde bhaktiyogo nāma dvādaśo'dhyāyaḥ

ॐ तत् सत् इति श्रीमत् भगवत् गीतासु उपनिषत्सु ब्रह्म-विद्यायाम् योग-शास्त्रे श्रीकृष्ण-अर्जुन-संवादे भक्ति-योगः नाम द्वादशः अध्यायः

Om̃ tat sat iti śrīmat bhagavat gītāsu upaniṣatsu brahma-vidyāyām yoga-śāstre śrīkṛṣṇa-arjuna-saṃvāde bhakti-yogaḥ nāma dvādaśaḥ adhyāyaḥ

Om. God alone exists. In the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, which is equivalent to Upanishad, which expounds both (the theory as) Brahma Vidya and (the practice as) Yoga Sāstra, in the form of dialogue between Sri Krishṇa and Arjuna, this is the twelfth chapter named Bhakti Yoga.

21 Ten Selected Verses on Karma Yoga

We have discussed Karma Yoga in detail in a previous chapter. We have seen yagna (giving back), dāna (charity), and tapas (austerity) as the three limbs of Karma Yoga. Having become familiar with those ideas, here are some important slokās from the Gita on Karma Yoga.

Selfless Action

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।
भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥ ३-१३॥

yajñaśiṣṭāśinaḥ santo mucyante sarvakilbiṣaiḥ ।
bhuñjate te tvaghaṃ pāpā ye pacantyātmakāraṇāt ॥ 3-13॥

यज्ञ-शिष्ट आशिनः सन्तः मुच्यन्ते सर्व-किल्बिषैः ।
भुञ्जते ते तु अघं पापाः ये पचन्ति आत्म-कारणात् ॥ ३-१३॥

yajña-śiṣṭa āśinaḥ santaḥ mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ ।
bhuñjate te tu aghaṃ pāpāḥ ye pacanti ātma-kāraṇāt ॥ 3-13॥

Eating the fruits got out of (selfless) work, the virtuous people become free from all defects.
But, the sinful (selfish) people who cook only for themselves eat only sin.

Yagna is giving back whatever you owe. After paying back your debt (runa) as the pancha mahā yagna, whatever you get is called Yagna Shishta. Ishvara has manifested in the form of this world and the living beings. Serving them is yagna. What is got as the result of that is prasāda. You make

positive contributions to this world. You get compensation for that in the form of money, materials, comforts, knowledge, or service. The food that you eat should be from what you got as compensation for your contribution. You should deserve the food. Such food is prasāda, consecrated food. Eating that for the sustenance of the body will not create more burden of karma. It will reduce the burden of karma. It will thus purify the person. On the contrary, if a person eats without having contributed to the world and the living beings, his burden of karma increases. Thus, he would be accumulating more karma. The previous slokā in the Gita calls such a person a thief.

Motivators for Action

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ २-४७॥
karmaṇyevādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana ।
mā karmaphalaheturbhūrmā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi ॥ 2-47॥
कर्मणि एव अधिकारः ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्म-फल-हेतुः भूः मा ते सङ्गः अस्तु अकर्मणि ॥ २-४७॥
karmaṇi eva adhikāraḥ te mā phaleṣu kadācana ।
mā karma-phala-hetuḥ bhūḥ mā te saṅgaḥ astu akarmaṇi ॥ 2-47॥
You have control only over the work that you do; never over the results (which depend on so many other factors). Let not the results be your motivation to action. Don’t resort to inaction or negligence.

You have control only over what work you can do. The result depends upon the current action, and also our previous actions throughout our past, which might spread

across multiple births. As there are so many other factors (which are also because of our karma only), which also contribute to the results, the results might not be in line with our current action. Your current action is only one of the contributors. So, you don't have full control over the results. You have control only over the action. So, the current results should not be the main motivating factor for your action. Also, having desire and attachment to results will create new karma. So, you need to do your duty without any desire for short term results. Do your duty to exhaust karma and thus purify yourself. Now, because there are several uncontrollable factors, you should not sit idle. By doing action, by catering to the current situation, you exhaust more karma. You will also be sowing the seeds for the right results in the future. Thus, your motivating factor should be to exhaust karma and set the direction for a better future in the long term. Nothing that is done will go wasted. If not now, it will show its result in the future. So, do your duty and keep working in the right direction.

Equanimity is Yoga

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते॥ २-४८॥

yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhanañjaya ।
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṃ yoga ucyate ॥ 2-48॥

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गम् त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।
सिद्धि असिद्ध्योः समः भूत्वा समत्वम् योगः उच्यते॥ २-४८॥

yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya ।
siddhi asiddhyoḥ samaḥ bhūtvā samatvam yogaḥ ucyate ॥ 2-48॥

Do action being steadfast in Yoga, free from attachment (to results), considering success and failure with equanimity. Equanimity is called Yoga.

The current action may result in success or failure. In either case, you would have exhausted your past karma. You would have learnt to control your passions. Your character would have improved. You would have got mental maturity. You would have learnt a few good lessons. So, it is always a positive development only. To reap all these developmental benefits, you need to maintain equanimity in both success and failure. This equanimity is called Yoga.

Doing Duty is Worship

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ १८-४६॥

yataḥ pravṛttirbhūtānāṃ yena sarvamidaṃ tatam ।
svakarmaṇā tamabhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ ॥ 18-46॥

यतः प्रवृत्तिः भूतानाम् येन सर्वम् इदम् ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तम् अभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिम् विन्दति मानवः ॥ १८-४६॥

yataḥ pravṛttiḥ bhūtānām yena sarvam idam tatam ।
svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhim vindati mānavaḥ ॥ 18-46॥

From whom this Universe has come, by whom this Universe is filled, by worshipping Him by doing one's duty, man attains perfection.

By doing your duty, you worship Ishvara. Work is worship. Why? This world belongs to Ishvara. This entire universe is nothing but Ishvara. And Ishvara has kept you in the position where you are. You are the son of so-and-so,

daughter of so-and-so, mother of so-and-so, father of so-and-so, citizen of this country. All these roles and responsibilities are given by Ishvara. So, doing full justice to your position in life is your duty. And doing that duty is the way to worship Ishvara.

Charity

दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।
देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ॥ १७-२० ॥

dātavyamiti yaddānaṃ dīyate'nupakāriṇe ।
deśe kāle ca pātre ca taddānaṃ sāttvikaṃ smṛtam ॥ 17-20 ॥

दातव्यम् इति यत् दानम् दीयते अनुपकारिणे ।
देशे काले च पात्रे च तत् दानम् सात्त्विकम् स्मृतम् ॥ १७-२० ॥

dātavyam iti yat dānam dīyate anupakāriṇe ।
deśe kāle ca pātre ca tat dānam sāttvikam smṛtam ॥ 17-20 ॥

Charity that is given with a sense of duty, without expecting anything in return, to the right person, at the right time and place is considered as the most noble one.

We saw that yagna is repaying to the world what we have already taken or going to take. Dāna is giving more than that. Here Krishṇa says what is the right way to do dāna. It must be given with a sense of duty. Don't look down upon the people to whom you are giving. Give out of humility. Give to people who cannot give you anything in return, and without expecting anything in return. Give at the right place, at the right time, and to the right person. In modern times, we can translate this as giving to the neediest person at the time and place where they need it the most.

Sankara's commentary says differently because there was no poverty in India at that time. There were no needy people. So, it was made obligatory that brahmins, brahmacharins, and sannyasins should beg their food, to give others opportunity to give in charity.

Austerities of Body

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञपूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते ॥ १७-१४॥

devadvijaguruprājñapūjanaṃ śaucamārjavam ।
brahmacaryamahiṃsā ca śārīraṃ tapa ucyate ॥ 17-14॥

देव-द्विज-गुरु-प्राज्ञ-पूजनम् शौचम् आर्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यम् अहिंसा च शारीरम् तपः उच्यते ॥ १७-१४॥

deva-dvija-guru-prājña-pūjanam śaucam ārjavam ।
brahmacaryam ahiṃsā ca śārīram tapaḥ ucyate ॥ 17-14॥

Bowing down to deities, cultured people, teachers and wise people, purity, straight-forwardness, continence, and non-violence are the austerities of the body.

This has been explained in detail in the chapter on Karma Yoga.

Austerities of Speech

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥ १७-१५॥

anudvegakaraṃ vākyaṃ satyaṃ priyahitaṃ ca yat ।
svādhyāyābhyasanaṃ caiva vāṅmayaṃ tapa ucyate ॥ 17-15॥

अनुद्वेगकरम् वाक्यम् सत्यम् प्रिय-हितम् च यत् ।
स्वाध्याय-अभ्यसनम् च एव वाङ्मयम् तपः उच्यते ॥ १७-१५॥

anudvegakaram vākyam satyam priya-hitam ca yat ।

svādhyāya-abhyasanam ca eva vāṅmayam tapaḥ ucyate ll 17-15 ll

Speaking softly that which is true, pleasant and beneficial, study (of good books) and chanting are austerities of speech.

This has been explained in detail in the chapter on Karma Yoga.

Austerities of Mind

मनः प्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ॥ १७-१६॥

manaḥ prasādaḥ saumyatvaṃ maunamātmavinigrahaḥ l
bhāvasaṃśuddhirityetattapo mānasamucyate ll 17-16 ll

मनः-प्रसादः सौम्यत्वम् मौनम् आत्म-विनिग्रहः ।
भाव-संशुद्धिः इति एतत् तपः मानसम् उच्यते ॥ १७-१६॥

manaḥ-prasādaḥ saumyatvam maunam ātma-vinigrahaḥ l
bhāva-saṃśuddhiḥ iti etat tapaḥ mānasam ucyate ll 17-16 ll

Having a mind that has serenity, compassion, calmness, self-control and purity of intention are austerities of the mind.

This has been explained in detail in the chapter on Karma Yoga.

Offer Everything to Ishvara

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥ ९-२७॥

yatkaroṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat l
yattapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam ll 9-27 ll

यत् करोषि यत् अश्नासि यत् जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत् तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत् कुरुष्व मत् अर्पणम् ॥ ९-२७॥
yat karoṣi yat aśnāsi yat juhoṣi dadāsi yat ।
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva mat arpaṇam ॥ 9-27॥
Whatever you contribute or consume, whatever you do as yagna, dāna or tapas, do it as an offering to Me.

All actions that we do are classified into two – contribution and consumption. Krishṇa says, offer both to Ishvara. Whatever we do outwards as helping our family, profession, strangers, society, etc. are to be done as offering to the Ishvara in the form of the universe. Whatever we do inwards as eating, sleeping, taking care of the body, etc. as an offering to the Ishvara who resides in this body and mind. Then, he asks us to do Yagna, Dāna, and Tapas as offerings to Ishvara. Thus, every action should be a transaction with Ishvara.

Culmination

शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः ।
संन्यासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि ॥ ९-२८॥
śubhāśubhaphalairevaṃ mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ ।
saṃnyāsayogayuktātmā vimukto māmupaiṣyasi ॥ 9-28॥
शुभ-अशुभ-फलैः एवम् मोक्ष्यसे कर्म-बन्धनैः ।
संन्यास-योग-युक्त-आत्मा विमुक्तः माम् उपैष्यसि ॥ ९-२८॥
śubha-aśubha-phalaiḥ evam mokṣyase karma-bandhanaiḥ ।
saṃnyāsa-yoga-yukta-ātmā vimuktaḥ mām upaiṣyasi ॥ 9-28॥
Thus, freed from the bondage of both auspicious and inauspicious results, with mind adhering steadfastly to

the Yoga of detachment, you will be liberated and come to Me.

There are three steps to Karma Yoga.

- First is to do actions in the world and offer the fruits to Ishvara in gratitude, acknowledging that He is the bestower of the fruits of action. This attitude is called **Ishvara prasāda buddhi**.
- Second is to offer all actions themselves to Ishvara, knowing that it is Ishvara Himself who appears as the world. This attitude is called **Ishvara arpana buddhi**.
- Third is to offer the doership to Ishvara, with an attitude of surrender that he is the doer within us also. This is called **sannyāsa**.

When the doership has been offered to Ishvara, and thus individual identity has been given up completely, this is Moksha. He has attained Jivanmukti. Such a person is completely free from pāpa and punya. Later when the body drops, he will attain videhamukti. That is what is described in this slokā.

22 Ten Selected Verses on Dhyāna Yoga

We saw Dhyāna Yoga in detail in an earlier chapter. Being familiar with the concepts in that chapter, we can see some important slokās on Dhyāna. The sixth chapter deals with Dhyāna Yoga in detail. The chapter starts with "anāshrita karma phalam kāryam karma karoti yah" – they who do their duties which need to be done, without any expectation of the results of action. Karma Yoga is a prerequisite for Dhyāna Yoga. A person needs to develop equanimity of mind to face the dualities of life. Without that meditation is not possible. This is discussed in the sixth chapter as a part of the preparations for meditation.

Hierarchy of Control

इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः ।
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः ॥ ३-४२॥
indriyāṇi parāṇyāhurindriyebhyaḥ paraṃ manaḥ ।
manasastu parā buddhiryo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ ॥ 3-42॥
इन्द्रियाणि पराणि आहुः इन्द्रियेभ्यः परम् मनः ।
मनसः तु परा बुद्धिः यः बुद्धेः परतः तु सः ॥ ३-४२॥
indriyāṇi parāṇi āhuḥ indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ ।
manasaḥ tu parā buddhiḥ yaḥ buddheḥ parataḥ tu saḥ॥ 3-42॥
Sense organs are higher than sense objects. Higher than sense organs is the mind. Higher than the mind is the intellect. The Jiva is higher than the intellect.

This beautiful slokā sets the context and the ground for all meditation and spiritual life. It says that the sense organs are higher than the sense objects. The word ahuhu is significant. It means, “It has been said so”. This idea is taken from Kathopanishad 1.3.10. In several places in the Gita, Krishṇa makes it very clear that these are not his original ideas. He attributes the ideas to the existing tradition, which is the Upanishads. There are several slokās in the Gita, which are very close to mantras in the Kathopanishad. The hierarchy is mentioned in this slokā – sense objects, sense organs (annamaya and prāṇamaya koshās), mind (manomaya kosha), intellect (buddhimaya kosha), and jiva (ānandamaya kosha or kārana sharira). Thus, the pancakoshās are summarized here. The next Kathopanishad mantra mentions two levels beyond these as Avyakta (Undifferentiated or Unmanifested) and Purusha (Pure Consciousness). Then it mentions that sequentially the lower layer should be merged into the next higher layer. These are part of the section on the illustration of chariot (Ratha Kalpana) in the Kathopanishad – sense objects are the road, the sense organs are the horses, mind is the rein, and intellect is the charioteer, and jiva is the passenger. The hierarchy of control is mentioned here. The charioteer must obey the passenger. The charioteer must hold the horses in control using the reins, and just as tight as needed. If he holds it too tight, the chariot will not move. So, he must hold it just right so that the chariot moves, and still the chariot is under control. Then the passenger can reach the destination. So, we have control over the intellect, the intellect has control over the mind, and the mind has control over the sense organs. Thus, the whole process should start with aligning the value system. Without a clear intellectual conviction about what is right and what is wrong, it would be mere suppression, and it will not work.

The first step is to have a clear understanding of the goal. Then there must be conviction about the values and behaviour that are conducive to the goal. Only after that comes the alignment of habits and behaviour to the intellectual conviction. This hierarchy of control is needed even to achieve worldly goals. They are all the more essential to progress towards the spiritual goal.

Regulation and Moderation

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥ ६-१७॥

yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu ।
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā ॥ 6-17॥

युक्त-आहार-विहारस्य युक्त-चेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्त-स्वप्न-अवबोधस्य योगः भवति दुःखहा ॥ ६-१७॥

yukta-āhāra-vihārasya yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu ।
yukta-svapna-avabodhasya yogaḥ bhavati duḥkhahā ॥ 6-17॥

To the person who has regulation in eating, relaxing, working, sleeping and waking, Yoga becomes the destroyer of misery.

When the hierarchy of control is established, we can apply it in everyday life. To be able to sit and meditate, first we must lead a life which is conducive to meditation. We must establish control over our mind. We must tell our mind, 'I am the person in control,' even before we sit for meditation, even in our everyday activities. That is what this slokā talks about. To the person who exercises regulation in eating, relaxing, working, sleeping, and waking, meditation becomes possible. 'āhāra' is eating. 'vihāra' is withdrawing from eating. It needs to be extended to all inputs to the

sense organs also — not only food for the body, but food for the mind also. Leading a regulated life is a starting point of controlling the mind. Real freedom is freedom from the whims and fancies of the body and sense organs, not giving them freedom to do as they want.

Suppose you ask a fifth standard boy, 'Tomorrow is a holiday. Are you happy or are you sad?' He will say, 'A holiday! I am happy!' He thinks freedom is waking up whenever he wants. If it is a holiday, there is no need to wake up early, take a bath early, go and catch the school bus, go to school, sit in the school, and then do homework after returning from school. The child finds that schedule regimental and very repressive. If there is suddenly a holiday and during weekends, he feels that it is freedom. But the question is, which is freedom? Is freedom waking up whenever you want, eating whenever you want, even not taking a bath, etc.? Is that freedom, or keeping an alarm at 5 o'clock, waking up at 5 o'clock, taking a bath, doing your puja, then having breakfast, having a routine for the day — is this freedom? It depends on where your identity is. If your identity is pinned to the body, then giving freedom to the body would be freedom. Whereas if your identity is not the body, it is not even the mind, and your identity is the Jivātma, the person who is the master of this body and mind, then freedom to the master is real freedom.

Suppose a person is sitting on a horse. If the horse goes wherever it wants, that is not freedom. If the horse goes to the place where the rider wants, then that is freedom to the rider. So now, the question is, are you the horse or are you the rider. If you say waking up anytime, eating anytime, and sleeping anytime, is freedom, then that is freedom to the horse, not freedom to the rider. Freedom to the rider is

discipline to the horse. Only when you follow discipline, then you are actually free. So, you are establishing your freedom as the rider only when you have the horse under your control. So, the body, the mind and the senses are all like the horse, and your freedom is when the horse is under your control. So, waking up at a fixed time, going to sleep at a fixed time, eating at fixed times, and having some self-discipline is real freedom. Discipline is real freedom, not leading a desultory life. Real freedom is freedom from the whims and fancies of the body, senses, and mind, not freedom to those. Freedom from those is what is important. Having control over them is real freedom.

Various austerities mentioned in the 17th chapter of the Gita, which we have discussed as part of Karma Yoga can enable us to establish this freedom. Thus, following austerities help us to gain mastery over the mind, which is needed to be able to meditate.

It should also be noted that austerity is for the mind and not for the body. The body and health of the body should not get impaired in the name of austerity. In the 17th chapter, the Gita condemns hurting the body in the name of austerity. In this slokā, it is told that extremes in eating, fasting, working, relaxing, sleeping, and waking must be avoided. There must be moderation in all these. All these must be done deliberately in a pre-planned manner. That way, the mind can be brought under control.

Solitude

योगी युञ्जीत सततमात्मानं रहसि स्थितः ।
एकाकी यतचित्तात्मा निराशीरपरिग्रहः ॥ ६-१० ॥

yogī yuñjīta satatamātmānaṃ rahasi sthitaḥ ।

ekākī yatacittātmā nirāśīraparigrahaḥ ll 6-10 ll

योगी युञ्जीत सततम् आत्मानम् रहसि स्थितः ।
एकाकी यत-चित्त-आत्मा निराशीः अपरिग्रहः ॥ ६-१० ॥

yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānam rahasi sthitaḥ l
ekākī yata-citta-ātmā nirāśīḥ aparigrahaḥ ll 6-10 ll

The Yogi must always meditate within in the heart, remaining in solitude, alone, with body and mind under control, free from desires and possessions.

A lifestyle of solitude is necessary to be able to meditate deeply. Different aspects of solitude are listed here:

1. **Rahasi - Environmental solitude – meditate in a place where no one else is there**
2. **Sthitah - Physical solitude – be in a comfortable straight posture, in which you can forget the body and breathing**
3. **Ekāki - Relational solitude – forget all relationships, roles and responsibilities in the world during meditation**
4. **Yata citta ātmā - Emotional solitude – be free from all grudges, guilt, regrets, anxiety, fear, jealousy, hatred, etc.**
5. **Nirāshīh - Ambitional solitude – be free from all worldly agenda and ambitions during meditation**
6. **Aparigrahah - Possessional solitude – be free from all claims of ownership, trusteeship, controllership, etc.**

When this solitude is attained, the mind will naturally settle on the Atman within

Six levels of solitude are mentioned here. If we address these six levels one after the other, automatically the mind will get into a meditative state.

'Rahasi' means environmental solitude. You must be in a place where people don't disturb you. You can go away from home and meditate in an ashram or temple. Or, in your own house, you can have a meditation room or a puja room. You can sit in a room where no one is there, no loud sounds, not too much smell, etc. If you cannot find such a place, you can play some soft chanting to block away sounds from outside. You can light mild incense to block away smells from outside. These constitute environmental solitude.

'Sthitaha' means a comfortable straight stable posture. When you withdraw your mind into meditation, you should be able to completely forget that you have a body, without falling asleep. Your breathing should go on automatically without any interruption. For that, you need to sit straight. Your body should be trained to sit still for at least 20 to 30 minutes. Thus, sthitaha means solitude from your own physical body.

'Ekāki' means relational solitude. Normally, we have a lot of relationships, roles, and responsibilities in the world. We play several roles in life like father, mother, friend, son, daughter, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, employee, employer, citizen, neighbour, etc. Each role comes with a lot of responsibilities. During the time of meditation, mentally, temporarily, we need to just keep everything aside. We are not a father, not a mother, not a husband, not a wife, not a daughter, not a son, not a citizen, etc. We need to suspend every role and relationship. Swami Paramārthānandji says, this can be easily done by taking up a new role. You say, 'I am a spiritual aspirant.' 'I am the disciple of this guru.' 'I am the devotee of this God.' 'I am a devotee of this ashram.' Thus, by taking up a spiritual

relationship, you can suspend all your worldly relationships. You are no longer a worldly person. You no longer have any worldly roles or responsibilities. Temporarily put everything aside. Say, 'I am a sādhaka – a spiritual aspirant.' This is called 'ekāki,' relational solitude.

‘Yata citta ātmā’ means emotional solitude. You must free yourself from all your past grudges, guilt, and regrets, and future anxiety, fear, and worry. If we try to meditate without getting free from these, only these thoughts will come up when we try to meditate. There are specific techniques to become free from these. Let us consider the past first. We have regret over several stupid things that we have done. If we think deeply about them, we will realize that when we did those actions, we thought we were doing a smart thing or the right thing. Now we know better and in hindsight, we see how that was a very stupid thing to do. As we did the right thing according to our understanding at that time, we need to forgive ourselves. Now we know better. So, we need to take care that we don’t repeat the same mistake again. The same logic applies to others also. People do things because they think that is the right thing to do. So, we need to understand why they thought that was the right thing to do. That will help us to judge better. By this logic, we need to forgive everyone. Thus, all the past can be resolved using this technique. This is called Hanlon’s Razor. Then, let us consider the future. We will get what we deserve, not more and not less. The law of Karma is there. Ishvara oversees the functioning of the world. He knows what to do. Everything happens according to His Will. So, we don’t need to have any anxiety or fear about the future. This is called ‘yata citta ātmā’, emotional solitude.

‘Nirāshīhi’ means ambitional solitude. Worldly desires make us run after worldly goals. There is a lot of competition for the meagre resources in the world. Thus, these create jealousy, anger, and hatred. Our goal in life is not pleasure. Our goal in life is freedom through knowledge. Worldly desires, greed, and lust are distractions. They take us away from the goal and make us waste a lot of precious time and energy. Different people in the world have different goals. Not everyone in this world is a spiritual aspirant. Let others have their worldly goals and let them pursue them. As spiritual aspirants, our goal is jnāna (knowledge), bhakti (devotion), and vairagya (detachment), which results in mukti (liberation) even in this life when living. By understanding the true goal of life as Jivamukti (liberated living), we can become free from worldly ambitions and the negative traits associated with them. This is called ‘nirāshīhi’, ambitional solitude.

‘Aparigraha’ means possessional solitude. Keep aside mentally temporarily all your possessions like house, vehicles, gadgets, bank balance, degrees, achievements, positions, skills, knowledge, gender, appearance, body, birth, race, nationality, caste, culture, etc. All these are associated with this body and this life. When we leave this body, none of these are going to come with us. Without waiting for that moment, now only we need to mentally renounce them. We need to hold on to an identity which is not associated with anything that has to do with this body and mind. This mental renunciation is called ‘aparigraha’, possessional solitude.

When we have achieved solitude in all these six aspects, the mind will be fully available for meditation.

Seat

शुचौ देशे प्रतिष्ठाप्य स्थिरमासनमात्मनः ।
नात्युच्छ्रितं नातिनीचं चैलाजिनकुशोत्तरम् ॥ ६-११॥
śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiramāsanamātmanaḥ ।
nātyucchritaṃ nātinīcaṃ cailājinakuśottaram ॥ 6-11॥
शुचौ देशे प्रतिष्ठाप्य स्थिरम् आसनम् आत्मनः ।
न अति-उच्छ्रितम् न अति-नीचम् चैल-अजिन-कुश-उत्तरम् ॥ ६-११॥
śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ ।
na ati-ucchritam na ati-nīcam caila-ajina-kuśa-uttaram ॥ 6-11॥
In a clean place, establishing a firm personal seat, that is neither too high nor too low, made of a cloth, skin and grass placed one over the other …

So far, we have discussed the meditation conducive lifestyle and mental attitude. These are called 'bahiranga sādhanāni' external preparations. Next, we get to the procedure at the time and place of meditation. These are called 'antaranga sādhanāni' internal preparations.

Sit in a clean place that is free from any foul smell, dust, insects, etc. because they will disturb your meditation. You need to have a personal seat. As you keep using it, the seat will get deformed to suit your sitting. Then it will not create any discomfort while sitting. The seat needs to be stable. It should not be moving here and there. It needs to be not too high and not too low. It is common to fall asleep while meditating. During deep meditation, you will completely forget your body. Even under these conditions, your body should still be sitting. It should not fall and hurt itself. That is why you need to sit in a cross-legged posture with a broad

base. The meditation seat should be a good insulator of heat. It should have ventilation, and it must not prick the skin. So, the Gita recommends cloth, skin, and grass, placed one above the other. It is like the railway seat – coir inside and rexine outside, on which you put a cloth. For indoor use, you can use thick multilayered cloth or a small woolen rug.

Preparatory Practice

तत्रैकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः ।
उपविश्यासने युञ्ज्याद्योगमात्मविशुद्धये ॥ ६-१२ ॥
tatraikāgraṃ manaḥ kṛtvā yatacittendriyakriyaḥ ।
upaviśyāsane yuñjyādyogamātmaviśuddhaye ॥ 6-12 ॥
तत्र एकाग्रम् मनः कृत्वा यत-चित्त-इन्द्रिय-क्रियः ।
उपविश्य आसने युञ्ज्यात् योगम् आत्म-विशुद्धये ॥ ६-१२ ॥
tatra ekāgram manaḥ kṛtvā yata-citta-indriya-kriyaḥ ।
upaviśya āsane yuñjyāt yogam ātma-viśuddhaye ॥ 6-12 ॥
There, concentrating the mind, controlling the activities of the senses and mind, sitting on the seat, you must practice Yoga for the purification of the mind.

When you sit for meditation, the mind will not settle down immediately. You need to follow some preparatory steps to gradually let it settle down. Cleaning the room, cleaning the altar, putting some flowers, lighting a lamp, doing 4-5 rounds of simple prānāyāma, and doing ritualistic puja are physical procedures. Then, chanting loudly some stotras or singing some bhajans are verbal procedures. Then, thank God and the people who have helped in your life. Wish good for everyone in the world. These are preparatory steps referred to as upāsana. These help in purifying and calming the mind.

Posture and Gaze

समं कायशिरोग्रीवं धारयन्नचलं स्थिरः ।
सम्प्रेक्ष्य नासिकाग्रं स्वं दिशश्चानवलोकयन् ॥ ६-१३॥
samaṃ kāyaśirogrīvaṃ dhārayannacalaṃ sthiraḥ ।
samprekṣya nāsikāgraṃ svaṃ diśaścānavalokayan ॥ 6-13 ॥
समम् काय-शिरः-ग्रीवम् धारयन् अचलम् स्थिरः ।
सम्प्रेक्ष्य नासिक-अग्रं स्वम् दिशः च अनवलोकयन् ॥ ६-१३॥
samam kāya-śiraḥ-grīvam dhārayan acalam sthiraḥ ।
samprekṣya nāsika-agraṃ svam diśaḥ ca anavalokayan ॥ 6-13 ॥
With body, head and neck in a straight line, holding steady without any movement, gazing at the tip of your nose, not looking in any other direction.

Sit straight with the body, head, and neck in a straight line, so that there is no strain anywhere in the body. The intention is to sit relaxed so that you can forget the body. That is possible only if the body is held straight and steady. Then, you can completely withdraw the mind from the body. Then, gaze at the tip of your nose, not looking in any other direction. There are different types of meditation: meditation in the heart, meditation in the eyebrow center, meditation on the top of the head, etc. Here, the Gita talks about meditation in the heart. For this meditation, the gaze of the eye should be downwards, as if looking at the tip of the nose.

Process of Meditation

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः ।
मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत मत्परः ॥ ६-१४॥
praśāntātmā vigatabhīrbrahmacārivrate sthitaḥ ।

manaḥ saṃyamya maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ ll 6-14 ll

प्रशान्त-आत्मा विगत-भीः ब्रह्मचारि-व्रते स्थितः ।
मनः संयम्य मत्-चित्तः युक्तः आसीत मत्-परः ॥ ६-१४ ॥

praśānta-ātmā vigata-bhīḥ brahmacāri-vrate sthitaḥ ।
manaḥ saṃyamya mat-cittaḥ yuktaḥ āsīta mat-paraḥ ll 6-14 ll

With serene mind, free from fear, established in the vow of sense-control, controlling the mind, with mind focused on Me, having Me as the Supreme Goal, sit (in meditation).

The first line talks about freedom from the past, future, and present. Free from grudges and regrets about the past, free from fear and anxiety about the future, and free from desires for sense experiences in the present. This is possible only when the person has already resolved them outside the meditation session as mentioned earlier in the discussion on the various forms of solitude. Such a mind can be directed towards Ishvara. Attaining knowledge about and devotion towards Ishvara should be the goal.

The word āsīta is significant. Here we are not talking about meditation when walking and doing other activities. We are talking about sitting and doing meditation as an exclusive activity. We need to remember Isvara during all times as much as possible. It is also important that we sit and do meditation a few times every day.

Ishvara can be conceived in several aspects – with human-like form (pratima), with an abstract form (pratika), in the form of the whole universe (vishvarupa), formless with noble attributes (saguna nirākāra), or as Pure Consciousness without attributes (nirguna caitanya). Irrespective of the aspect of Isvara, meditation within the

heart with closed eyes in the manner prescribed in the Gita is necessary.

शनैः शनैरुपरमेद् बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।
आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥ ६-२५॥

śanaiḥ śanairuparamed buddhyā dhṛtigṛhītayā ।
ātmasaṃsthaṃ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcidapi cintayet ॥ 6-25॥

शनैः शनैः उपरमेत् बुद्ध्या धृति-गृहीतया ।
आत्म-संस्थम् मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चित् अपि चिन्तयेत् ॥ ६-२५॥

śanaiḥ śanaiḥ uparamet buddhyā dhṛti-gṛhītayā ।
ātma-saṃstham manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcit api cintayet ॥ 6-25॥

Gradually attain quietude, by the intellect set in patient determination, by the mind established in the Self, don't think about anything else.

Meditation will come slowly only. We need a lot of patience and determination. We should not give up. Gradually, we will be able to establish the mind within the self. The Gita says, don't think of anything else. The Gita never talks about emptying the mind. That is not the kind of meditation we are talking about here. Here, either we think about "Who am I?"—the pure consciousness—or we think about Isvara in any aspect as mentioned above.

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ ६-२६॥

yato yato niścarati manaścañcalamasthiram ।
tatastato niyamyaitadātmanyeva vaśaṃ nayet ॥ 6-26॥

यतः यतः निश्चरति मनः चञ्चलम् अस्थिरम् ।
ततः ततः नियम्य एतत् आत्मनि एव वशं नयेत् ॥ ६-२६॥

yataḥ yataḥ niścarati manaḥ cañcalam asthiram ।
tataḥ tataḥ niyamya etat ātmani eva vaśaṃ nayet ॥ 6-26॥

Wherever (and whenever, repeatedly) the unsteady mind wanders away restlessly, from there (and then) bring back the mind and put it in (the thought of) the Self.

The mind will wander. Don't worry. That is the nature of the mind. Whenever you find that the mind has wandered, no matter how many times, bring it back gently and firmly. Put it back in the self. Don't get disheartened. This is a part of the meditation process. This is called dhārana. When this is done repeatedly, sometimes the mind may get into a deep mood and enter into dhyāna.

It is like going to sleep. We cannot deliberately sleep. We can only make all the preparations and hope that we fall asleep. Similarly, we can do all the preparations, follow the prescribed procedure, and hope that the mind gets into meditation.

Culmination

प्रशान्तमनसं ह्येनं योगिनं सुखमुत्तमम् ।
उपैति शान्तरजसं ब्रह्मभूतमकल्मषम् ॥ ६-२७॥

praśāntamanasaṃ hyenaṃ yoginaṃ sukhamuttamam ।
upaiti śāntarajasaṃ brahmabhūtamakalmaṣam ॥ 6-27 ॥

प्रशान्त-मनसम् हि एनम् योगिनम् सुखम् उत्तमम् ।
उपैति शान्त-रजसम् ब्रह्म-भूतम् अकल्मषम् ॥ ६-२७॥

praśānta-manasam hi enam yoginam sukham uttamam ।
upaiti śānta-rajasam brahma-bhūtam akalmaṣam ॥ 6-27 ॥

One with tranquil mind, that Yogi, attains the supreme peace, with passions quietened, having become Brahman, is free from taint.
The sequence of attainments of the spiritual aspirant is enumerated here.

1. **The mind becomes tranquil, free from all grudges, guilt, anxiety, fear, etc.**
2. **The mind enjoys inner peace, contentment and bliss**
3. **The passions of desire, anger, jealousy, greed, etc. get subdued**
4. **Knowledge of the identity of the Self and Brahman comes**
5. **Freedom from all pāpa and punya, and consequently freedom from rebirth is attained**

Thus, Dhyāna Yoga results in the Supreme Goal of life.

This beautiful slokā enumerates what will be achieved by doing meditation. Note that it does not talk about any miraculous powers, nothing related to health or wealth, etc. We need to be very clear about the expected outcomes of meditation.

A question can arise that calmness and freedom from passions were mentioned as preparations for meditation earlier. Here they are mentioned as the outcomes of meditation. The answer is that we don't need to wait to get these hundred percent to start meditation. A reasonable level of inner calmness is needed to be able to meditate. That will result in more detachment. That will give more calmness. Thus, a positive cycle will build up and progress will happen day after day.

Eventually, we will get the knowledge clearly established and that will shift our identity to Pure Consciousness, which is the Goal.

23 Ten Selected Verses on Bhakti Yoga

Bhakti described in the Bhagavad Gita is predominantly Vishwarupa Ishvara Bhakti – devotion to the Lord who has manifested in the form of this Universe. Samsāra or suffering arises out of wrongly seeing the Universe as separate from the Lord. When the Universe is seen as a manifestation of the Lord, then there is no more suffering in the world. There is no more samsāra.

Other forms of Bhakti like doing rituals, offering flowers and fruits, and singing His glories are only preparations for Vishwarupa Ishvara Bhakti. Higher to all these forms of Bhakti is to serve the living beings in the world seeing the Lord in them. Higher even to that is complete surrender of one's will to the Will of the Lord and serve in the world as a mere instrument in His hands.

We have also seen in the 12th chapter Arjunā's question and Krishṇa's answer. Mere religious observances are only the kindergarten of Bhakti. Through them we need to develop the prerequisites for a spiritual life. In the slokās 6 and 7 of the 12th chapter, Krishṇa summarized the entire Bhakti Yoga. He said, "With Me as the goal, do all your actions as offerings to Me. Meditate upon Me with loving concentration. Fill your mind with My thoughts without any break. I will free you from all suffering." He used the word, "mayi āveshita cetasām" – "mind soaked in Me". That is the essence of Bhakti.

Let us see some more slokās.

Impersonal Truth

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।
अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥ १०-२०॥
ahamātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitaḥ ।
ahamādiśca madhyaṃ ca bhūtānāmanta eva ca ॥ 10-20॥
अहम् आत्मा गुडाका-ईश सर्व-भूत-आशय-स्थितः ।
अहम् आदिः च मध्यम् च भूतानाम् अन्तः एव च ॥ १०-२०॥
aham ātmā guḍākā-īśa sarva-bhūta-āśaya-sthitaḥ ।
aham ādiḥ ca madhyam ca bhūtānām antaḥ eva ca ॥ 10-20॥
I am the (Pure Conscious) Self residing in the heart all beings,
I am the beginning, middle and end of all beings.

We have seen this slokā before. The Lord is the pure Consciousness in our innermost being. He is the 'I' in every living being. It is He alone who shines as the 'I' in all living beings. The Lord is also the material cause of this Universe. Everything that we experience is a manifestation of the Lord. All the law of the Universe are manifestations of His Will. There is nothing that exists other than the Lord.

Every experience of the world is an experience of the Lord. In several places in the Gita, Krishṇa says, "I am the light that you see with your eyes. I am the fragrance that you smell with your nose. I am the sound that you hear with your ears. etc." Every living being that we encounter in our life is a manifestation of Ishvara. It is Ishvara alone who comes as mother, father, teacher, stranger, etc. Strangers may be hungry, sick, poor, uneducated, evil, corrupt, etc. They are all forms of the Lord. We need to serve the Lord in all forms with love appropriately. We need not hug a tiger.

But we should not wish harm to the tiger. We should wish and pray that the Lord gives the right understanding and direction even to the evilest person whom we see.

Through this world, we are transacting with the Lord. So, we cannot disrespect anything in this world. We cannot be proud and arrogant. We cannot hold any hatred towards anyone. In every experience in life, we must to pray to the Lord to show us what lessons we need to learn from it.

Personal God

भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम् ।
सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥ ५-२९॥
bhoktāraṃ yajñatapasāṃ sarvalokamaheśvaram ।
suhṛdaṃ sarvabhūtānāṃ jñātvā māṃ śāntimṛcchati ॥ 5-29॥
भोक्तारम् यज्ञ-तपसाम् सर्व-लोक-महेश्वरम् ।
सुहृदम् सर्व-भूतानाम् ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिम् ऋच्छति ॥ ५-२९॥
bhoktāram yajña-tapasām sarva-loka-maheśvaram ।
suhṛdam sarva-bhūtānām jñātvā māṃ śāntim ṛcchati ॥ 5-29॥
(I am) the enjoyer of all external and internal activities, (I am) the Lord of all the worlds,
(I am) the friend of all living beings, (a person) attains peace by knowing Me (thus).

We have seen this slokā also before. The Lord is the Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Compassionate Being. Everything that happens is by His Will. He knows how to run this Universe. He does not need our help or advice. He is the true well wisher of all living beings, including us. He knows what is good for our spiritual development. Everything that

happens in our life happens with His Will. It is for our good. The problem is that we don't know what is good for us. So, we think we are getting into trouble. For example, suppose I go to a gym and do some cardio exercises. My lungs, heart, and other muscles are literally crying, which is the pain that experience. My lungs are gasping for air. My heart is beating fast. My muscles are aching. They are crying to me, "Why are you torturing us like this? We are in great pain. Can't you see? Don't you have eyes? Don't you have any compassion?" What they don't know is that it is for their good that I am doing all this. We are all parts of God. Ishvara is the sum total of all that exists. He is the Supreme Being, which includes all the living beings, including me. Just as I care for my fingers, He cares for me, because I am not separate from Him. I need to have this knowledge and faith. If I have faith, I will have peace.

Cause of Incarnation

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ ४-७॥

yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata ।
abhyutthānamadharmasya tadātmānaṃ sṛjāmyaham ॥4-7॥

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिः भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानम् अधर्मस्य तदा आत्मानम् सृजामि अहम् ॥ ४-७॥

yadā yadā hi dharmasya glāniḥ bhavati bhārata ।
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadā ātmānam sṛjāmi aham ॥4-7॥

Arjuna, whenever there is decline of Dharma and rise of Adharma then I Myself embody (in this world).

Purpose of Incarnation

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥ ४-८॥

paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṃ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām ।
dharmasaṃsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge ॥4-8॥

परित्राणाय साधूनाम् विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्म-संस्थापन-अर्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥ ४-८॥

paritrāṇāya sādhūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām ।
dharma-saṃsthāpana-arthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge ॥4-8॥

For the protection of the noble, destruction of the evil doers, establishment of Dharma, I embody in every age.

Law of Karma ensures that everyone gets what they deserve. But people desire and work for incompatible things. A mother of a single son desires him to become an engineer, doctor, IAS officer, scientist, professor, rich, famous, handsome, strong, etc. etc. which is not possible in one birth. Like this, repeatedly the living being desire contradictory results and work for them in all directions. Karma is created a much higher rate than it can fructify. Because of this, they are not able to see the causal relationship between the action and the result. This makes people lose faith in the Law of Karma. This makes people do evil things. When the same person has done a lot of good things and also a lot of evil things, the results are confusing.

When there is a huge backlog of cases in the court on a particular subject, a special fast-track court will be created and all the related cases will be taken up together and cleared. This is what happens in the world too. When there

is a huge backlog of Karma and people start losing faith in the law of Karma and in Ishvara, the Lord comes Himself.

Whenever the Lord comes, He establishes Dharma in a stronger footing. He reinstates the faith in law of Karma and in Ishvara. He also leaves behind a huge legacy of teachings, scriptures, forms, names, stories, etc. and thus gives a new energy to spiritual life of people for generations.

Types of Devotees

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥ ७-१६॥
caturvidhā bhajante māṃ janāḥ sukṛtino'rjuna ।
ārto jijñāsurarthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha ॥7-16॥
चतुः-विधाः भजन्ते माम् जनाः सुकृतिनः अर्जुन ।
आर्तः जिज्ञासुः अर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥ ७-१६॥
catuḥ-vidhāḥ bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtinaḥ arjuna ।
ārtaḥ jijñāsuḥ arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha ॥7-16॥
Four types of devotees worship me. They are virtuous people. They are distressed, seekers of knowledge, seekers of enjoyment and the wise.

We have seen these three stages of Bhakti elaborately in the chapter on Ishvara. The Gita helps us to start with Ārta and Ārtharthi, then graduate to Jignāsu, and then mature into Jnāni.

The Way of the Lord

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥ ७-२१॥
yo yo yāṃ yāṃ tanuṃ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitumicchati ।

tasya tasyācalāṃ śraddhāṃ tāmeva vidadhāmyaham ll 7-21 ll

यः यः याम् याम् तनुम् भक्तः श्रद्धया अर्चितुम् इच्छति ।
तस्य तस्य अचलाम् श्रद्धाम् ताम् एव विदधामि अहम् ॥ ७-२१॥

yaḥ yaḥ yām yām tanum bhaktaḥ śraddhayā arcitum icchati l
tasya tasya acalām śraddhām tām eva vidadhāmi aham ll 7-21 ll

Whichever devotee wants to worship whichever form with faith, I make that very faith unwavering (by responding to the worship).

In every context of our identification of ourselves as individuals, Ishvara is the corresponding Whole. When I go to take a bath in the Ganga, I worship Isvara as Ganga Māta. When I start any work, I worship Ishvara as Ganesha. When seeking knowledge, I worship Ishvara as Saraswati. When seeking wealth, I worship Ishvara as Lakshmi. When I consider myself as a living being on Earth, I worship Ishvara as Mother Earth. When I consider myself as a citizen of India, I worship Ishvara as Bharatamāta. The same Ishvara is worshipped by different people using different forms and names. Ishvara, being Omniscient and Compassionate, responds through the same form and name through which He is worshipped.

Hope for Everyone

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥ ९-३०॥

api cetsudurācāro bhajate māmananyabhāk l
sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ samyagvyavasito hi saḥ ll9-30 ll

अपि चेत् सु-दुः-आचारः भजते माम् अनन्य-भाक् ।

साधुः एव सः मन्तव्यः सम्यक् व्यवसितः हि सः ॥ ९-३०॥
api cet su-duḥ-ācāraḥ bhajate mām ananya-bhāk ।
sādhuḥ eva saḥ mantavyaḥ samyak vyavasitaḥ hi saḥ ॥9-30॥
If even a person with bad (and evil) behavior worships Me with one-pointed devotion, he must be regarded as a noble person, because he has taken the right resolution.

Lord's Assurance

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥ ९-३१॥
kṣipraṃ bhavati dharmātmā śaśvacchāntiṃ nigacchati ।
kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati ॥9-31॥
क्षिप्रम् भवति धर्म-आत्मा शश्वत् शान्तिम् निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥ ९-३१॥
kṣipram bhavati dharma-ātmā śaśvat śāntim nigacchati ।
kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati ॥9-31॥
Soon, he becomes noble and attains eternal Peace. Arjuna, declare to the world that My devotees are never destroyed.

The usage of the words itself is so beautiful here. The two classes of people are sādhus (good people) and durācārah (people who do bad and behave in an uncultured manner). It does not brand people as bad. It condemns only the actions and behaviour. And, Krishṇa says, the moment a person has decided to follow goodness and culture, consider him as good. It will take some time for people to change their actions and behaviour. Habits will change only gradually. However, we should encourage the person by considering him as a noble one. Otherwise, he may slip back

into his old ways. The Lord gives assurance that His devotees are taken care of by Him.

It has been found by research on habits that identity shift should be done in the mind before any habits can be followed. If a person who is addicted to smoking wants to give it up, first he should shift his mental identity about himself into a “non-smoker”. As long as a person holds on to an identity as “a smoker who is trying to give up”, it will not be possible to give up the habit. If the person first takes up the identity as “a non-smoker who may occasionally be overcome by temptation”, then gradually he can give up smoking altogether.

To be a noble person and give up evil habits, first one must take up the identity as a “devotee”. The Lord unconditionally accepts everyone as a “devotee” without any consideration to the past or present. It is only up to us to declare ourselves as devotees. After the shift in identity, it will be easier for us to follow all the disciplines and behavioral changes. We need to keep the pictures of our Ishta devata on our desktop, mobile background, in our wallet, on our walls, on our desks, on our car dashboard, and every possible place. We need to wear lockets with a picture of our Ishta devata. We need to keep chanting the name of our Ishta devata and the mantra given by our Guru. By all these, we create a shift in our identity. We should boldly and unabashedly declare to everyone our identity as a devotee. This will help us to follow a lifestyle in line with our identity as a devotee.

Service to Living Beings

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥ ९-२२॥

ananyāścintayanto māṃ ye janāḥ paryupāsate ।
teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānāṃ yogakṣemaṃ vahāmyaham ॥9-22॥

अनन्याः चिन्तयन्तः माम् ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषाम् नित्य-अभियुक्तानाम् योग-क्षेमम् वहामि अहम् ॥ ९-२२॥

ananyāḥ cintayantaḥ mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate ।
teṣām nitya-abhiyuktānām yoga-kṣemam vahāmi aham ॥9-22॥

People, who meditate upon Me as non-separate (from all beings) and worship Me in all beings, who are always engaged (in the welfare of all beings), I carry to them all their needs and well-being.

It is the Lord alone who has manifested as this world and the living beings. So, serving the living beings is serving the Lord. This is what Swami Vivekananda calls as “Shiva Jnāne Jiva Seva” – “serving living being seeing Shiva in them”. When a person is so busy serving the living beings that he does not take care of his own personal needs, the Lord Himself steps in and takes care of the personal needs of the person. So, we should not discourage people who are doing social service or taking care of devotees. If possible, we should try to help them. If we don’t, the Lord Himself will take care of them.

Seeing God Everywhere

सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः ।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ॥ ६-३१॥

sarvabhūtasthitaṃ yo māṃ bhajatyekatvamāsthitaḥ ।
sarvathā vartamāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate ॥6-31॥

सर्व-भूत-स्थितम् यः माम् भजति एकत्वम् आस्थितः ।
सर्वथा वर्तमानः अपि सः योगी मयि वर्तते ॥ ६-३१॥

sarva-bhūta-sthitam yaḥ mām bhajati ekatvam āsthitaḥ ।
sarvathā vartamānaḥ api saḥ yogī mayi vartate ॥6-31॥

He, who worships Me as seated in all living beings, who is established in the unity (between Self and Me), whatever manner he lives, he lives in Me only.

This idea of seeing the Lord everywhere and serving Him in all living beings is the core teaching of Vedanta. The Bhagavad Gita, Srimad Bhagavatam, teachings of Swami Vivekananda, etc. all keep telling this again and again in various ways. A person who remembers this and serves the living beings worships the Lord alone through all the actions.

24 Five Selected Verses on Jnāna Yoga

Value of Jnāna

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥ ७-१९॥
bahūnāṃ janmanāmante jñānavānmāṃ prapadyate ।
vāsudevaḥ sarvamiti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ ॥7-19॥
बहूनाम् जन्मनाम् अन्ते ज्ञानवान् माम् प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वम् इति सः महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥ ७-१९॥
bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate ।
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti saḥ mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ ॥ 7-19॥
At the culmination of evolution through several lives, the wise person takes refuge in Me, (knowing that) the light of Consciousness in the heart is manifesting as everything outside. Such a person is great and rare.

Out of the trillions of living beings, eight billion human beings is a small number. This is the culmination of billions of years of evolution. Also, the soul has evolved over several lifetimes to become a human being. The culmination of evolution in human body is to become a Jnāni. The truth is that individuality is an illusion. Jnāna is got by complete surrender of individuality into the Universal.

The Jnāni understands that vāsudeva (Self) has become the sentient and insentient Universe and all the living beings. vāsudeva - vasanti sarvāni bhootani divyanti swayam prakāshah. Out of the eight billion people in the Universe, the number of Jnānis would be a few thousands. So, even though the number of Jnānis is not too small, compared to

the total number of human beings, they are rare. It is possible for each one of us to become a Jnāni in this birth itself. It is within easy reach by the grace of the Lord. We need to pursue with devotion, patience, and perseverance as guided by the Gita.

Definition of Absolute Reality

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ॥ १२-३॥

ye tvakṣaramanirdeśyamavyaktaṃ paryupāsate ।
sarvatragamacintyaṃ ca kūṭasthamacalaṃ dhruvam ॥ 12-3॥

ये तु अक्षरम् अनिर्देश्यम् अव्यक्तम् पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगम् अचिन्त्यम् च कूटस्थम् अचलम् ध्रुवम् ॥ १२-३॥

ye tu akṣaram anirdeśyam avyaktam paryupāsate ।
sarvatragam acintyam ca kūṭastham acalam dhruvam ॥ 12-3॥

Those who pursue the Unmanifest that is imperishable, indefinable, imperceptible, omnipresent, unthinkable, unchangeable, immovable and eternal, …

Omnipresent, Eternal, Imperishable = beyond the modes of manifestation in space, time and causation
Imperceptible, Unthinkable, Indefinable = beyond means of knowledge - perception (pratyaksha), inference (anumāna), reference (sabda)

As It is beyond time, space and causation, it is Infinite. It is the Ultimate Substratum. This is the Sat aspect. As It is beyond all means of knowledge (pramānās), it cannot be known as an object. It is the Subject. It is the Consciousness by which everything else is known. This is the Cit aspect.

Both these are different aspects of the Nirguna Brahman. This is one of the most comprehensive definitions of Nirguna Brahman available in the scriptures.

Pre-requisites for Jnāna Yoga

सन्नियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥ १२-४ ॥
sanniyamyendriyagrāmaṃ sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ ।
te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ ॥ 12-4 ॥
सन्नियम्य इन्द्रिय-ग्रामम् सर्वत्र सम-बुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति माम् एव सर्व-भूत-हिते रताः ॥ १२-४ ॥
sanniyamya indriya-grāmam sarvatra sama-buddhayaḥ ।
te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ ॥ 12-4 ॥
… having control over the collection of senses, having equanimity everywhere (at all times), engaged in the welfare of all living beings, reach Me alone for sure.

These three are pre-requisites for Jnāna Yoga to work. Jnāna Yoga is the relentless and ruthless pursuit of the Truth. These qualities are needed to do an unbiased study.

sanniyamya indriya grāmam – complete control over the collection of mind and senses. This is needed so that we don't fall for fallacies and illusions.

sarvatra sama-buddhi – equanimity in all situations. This is needed for our mind to be not influenced by likes and dislikes. If we don't have this, the extreme desire to see something particular will be shown by our own mind as a hallucination. So, we should have the desire to see the Truth, not this or that based on a preconceived notion. Also, we should have the tenacity to persevere for long enough to get the knowledge.

sarva-bhuta-hite ratāh – seeking the welfare of all living beings. A very dry attitude with only intellect without any emotion will not work. The aspirant should have empathy towards all living beings. The Self that we are searching for is the Self of all living beings. So, we cannot reject other living beings and seek the Self. Also, we need the blessing of all living beings.

With these pre-requisites, when a person studies and understands the characteristics of the Absolute, the intellectual knowledge will sink into the sub-conscious and change behaviour.

Steps to Jnāna

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ ४-३४॥
tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā ।
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṃ jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ ॥ 4-34॥
तत् विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानम् ज्ञानिनः तत्त्व-दर्शिनः ॥ ४-३४॥
tat viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā ।
upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninaḥ tattva-darśinaḥ ॥ 4-34॥
Know the Truth by prostrating, questioning and service to wise people. The wise people, who see the Truth, will teach the Knowledge to you.

Here are the steps to Jnāna:

Sravana – Hearing – A humble approach towards a teacher is needed to first get the Knowledge. First listen to the teacher fully, by keeping aside all prejudice and presumption. This is indicated by praṇipātena.

Manana – Clearing all intellectual gaps – Questions need to clarified. After having listened fully, now reconcile with previous knowledge and fill all intellectual gaps in understanding. This is indicated by paripraśnena.

Nididhyāsana – Align behaviour to knowledge – Learn to live the knowledge by serving the teacher. By observing how the teacher manifests the knowledge in everyday situations, the student also learns how to apply the knowledge. This is indicated by sevayā.

This knowledge cannot be learnt from books or by oneself. A living teacher is needed to impart the knowledge to a student. This is knowledge is so subtle that the student always overlooks it. It is so trivial that the student cannot even guess that it is so simple. It is so profound that the student cannot believe it as the truth. Without a teacher explaining the knowledge by expounding the words of the scriptures, it is not possible to gain this knowledge.

Vision of Jnāna

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ॥ ६-२९॥

sarvabhūtasthamātmānaṃ sarvabhūtāni cātmani ।
īkṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ ॥ 6-29॥

सर्व-भूतस्थम् आत्मानम् सर्व-भूतानि च आत्मनि ।
ईक्षते योग-युक्त-आत्मा सर्वत्र सम-दर्शनः ॥ ६-२९॥

sarva-bhūtastham ātmānam sarva-bhūtāni ca ātmani ।
īkṣate yoga-yukta-ātmā sarvatra sama-darśanaḥ ॥ 6-29॥

The Yogi beholds the Self residing in all living beings and all living beings residing in the Self. He has his heart steadfast in Yoga and has an equanimous view of everything.

Like ornaments in gold, everything in the Universe appears in the Self in its aspect of Sat. As Consciousness, the Self reflects in all beings in its aspect of Cit. Being fully established in the unity of all existence as one's own Self, the Yogi sees everything everywhere with equanimity without any desire or fear in its aspect of Ananda.

The whole experience of the Universe is like a 5D movie. The five are the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. I, the Pure Consciousness, is the unaffected and unaffecting screen, on which the movie is projected. I give the ground and also meaning to the whole movie. I am the only audience of this movie. Mahāmāya is projecting this movie for my education and entertainment. Some scenes are comedy. Some scenes are tragedy. Neither of them affect me because my reality is higher than the reality of the movie. I can laugh at the comedy and cry at the tragedy, knowing fully well that it is a movie. If I forget that it is a movie and take life too seriously, then it becomes samsāra. Knowing that it is a movie, I can just sit back and relax.

Just as the dreamer is the material and intelligent cause of the dream, I am the material cause (Sat) and the instrumental cause (Cit) of this Universe. This dream is for my entertainment and education (Ananda).

Thus, the Jnāni remains in his identity as Sat-Cit-Ananda. He knows that the world cannot touch him. So, he is peaceful irrespective of what happens in the world. He is free from all sorrow, desire, anger, anxiety, expectations, hatred, etc. This is Moksha.

25 Five Verses on Jnāna Yoga Sādhana

The Sādhana Panchakam of Sri Adi Sankarāchārya is very popular. In that, forty sadhanas (साधना) or spiritual disciplines are given in five verses.

Here is a set of five slokās in the Bhagavad Gita that gives a sequence of about twenty sādhanas. The beauty of these five slokās is that they are arranged in a sequence gradually taking the spiritual aspirant from basic external disciplines to advanced inner ones. These are the slokās 7 to 11 in the 13th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

Memorizing these five slokās and chanting them while thinking about the meaning of the words is a good sadhana. This will help us to have the goal and the way clearly in mind.

Karma Yoga

The first slokā gives a list of external disciplines that must be followed in behaviour and speech. The spiritual aspirant should have the basic morality in life like truthfulness (satya), non-violence (ahimsa) and self-control (brahmacharya). On top of that, the spiritual aspirant should follow cleanliness, humility, forbearance and tenacity. Such a person who seeks spiritual development will get the contact of a spiritual teacher (or institution) and get the opportunity to do service. That will lead to the subsequent internal steps.

अमानित्वमदम्भित्वमहिंसा क्षान्तिरार्जवम् ।
आचार्योपासनं शौचं स्थैर्यमात्मविनिग्रहः ॥ १३-७॥

amānitvamadambhitvamahiṃsā kṣāntirārjavam l
ācāryopāsanaṃ śaucaṃ sthairyamātmavinigrahaḥ ll 13-7 ll

अमानित्वम् – **amānitvam -** Humility in behaviour
अदम्भित्वम् – **adambhitvam -** Not bragging about oneself
अहिंसा – **ahiṃsā -** Not taking advantage of weakness of others
क्षान्तिः – **kṣāntiḥ -** Forbearance of the ups and downs of life
आर्जवम् – **ārjavam -** Alignment of words and deeds with thoughts
आचार्य-उपासनम् – **ācārya-upāsanaṃ -** Service to the spiritual teacher
शौचम् – **śaucaṃ** - Cleanliness and orderliness
स्थैर्यम् – **sthairyam -** Steadiness in righteousness
आत्म-विनिग्रहः – **ātma-vinigrahaḥ -** Self control

Dhyāna Yoga

The next two slokās give a list of internal disciplines that must be followed in thought and attitude. These will come as a result of following the disciplines mentioned in the previous slokā. Here we can see the gradual shift from sense objects in the world (jagat) to body (annamaya kosha) to physiological events (prānamaya kosha) to emotional attachments (manomaya kosha) to situations in life due to karma phala (buddhimaya kosha). Thus the sādhaka should develop detachment (vairāgya) step by step. If it is done in the sequence mentioned, it becomes easy and natural.

इन्द्रियार्थेषु वैराग्यमनहंकार एव च ।
जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनम् ॥ १३-८॥
indriyārtheṣu vairāgyamanahaṃkāra eva ca ।
janmamṛtyujarāvyādhiduḥkhadoṣānudarśanam ॥ 13-8॥

इन्द्रिय-अर्थेषु वैराग्यम् – **indriya-artheṣu vairāgyam -** Dispassion towards the objects of the senses
अनहंकारः – **anahaṃkāraḥ -** Absence of identification with the body
जन्म-मृत्यु-जरा-व्याधि-दुःख-दोष-अनुदर्शनम् – **janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha-doṣa-anudarśanam** - Deep understanding of the physiological defect of birth, death, old-age and disease as being sources of sorrow

असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु ।
नित्यं च समचित्तत्वमिष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु ॥ १३-९॥
asaktiranabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putradāragṛhādiṣu ।
nityaṃ ca samacittatvamiṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu ॥ 13-9॥

असक्तिः अनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्र-दार-गृह-आदिषु – **asaktiḥ-anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putra-dāra-gṛha-ādiṣu -** Non-attachment and non-identification with the roles related to children, wife, home, etc.
नित्यम् च सम-चित्तत्वम् इष्ट अनिष्ट-उपपत्तिषु – **nityaṃ ca sama-cittatvam-iṣṭa-aniṣṭa-upapattiṣu** - Constant even-mindedness in the occurrence of desirable and undesirable incidents

Bhakti Yoga

After gaining vairāgya as mentioned in the previous two slokās, the spiritual aspirant gets into meditation upon God and Truth as taught by the spiritual teacher. The higher

Bhakti of a spiritual aspirant does not have any worldly things as the goal. He has already given them up in the steps mentioned in the previous two slokās. Now God or Truth is the only goal. Such a person prefers to meditate in solitude than to be in the company of worldly people. By this deep meditation upon God and Truth, the spiritual aspirant gains spiritual Knowledge.

मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी ।
विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि ॥ १३-१० ॥

mayi cānanyayogena bhaktiravyabhicāriṇī ।
viviktadeśasevitvamaratirjanasaṃsadi ॥ 13-10 ॥

मयि च अनन्य-योगेन भक्तिः अव्यभिचारिणी – **mayi ca-ananya-yogena bhaktiḥ-avyabhicāriṇī -** Devotion to Me (God and Truth), seeing Me in everything, without expecting any worldly benefits
विविक्त-देश-सेवित्वम् – **vivikta-deśa-sevitvam -** Seeking secluded places (to meditate upon God and Truth)
अरतिः जन-संसदि – **aratiḥ-jana-saṃsadi -** Shunning the company of worldly people (who do not have God and Truth as the spiritual goal of life)

Jnāna Yoga

The first quarter of the next slokā covers sravana (hearing about the Truth) and manana (clearing all intellectual gaps in understanding). The second quarter covers Nididhyāsana (imbibing the practical implications of the Knowledge of the Truth). The last line emphasizes that this full sequence of spiritual practices is the way to Knowledge. Anything else will lead a person astray.

अध्यात्मज्ञाननित्यत्वं तत्त्वज्ञानार्थदर्शनम् ।
एतज्ज्ञानमिति प्रोक्तमज्ञानं यदतोऽन्यथा ॥ १३-११॥
adhyātmajñānanityatvaṃ tattvajñānārthadarśanam l
etajjñānamiti proktamajñānaṃ yadato'nyathā ll 13-11 ll

अध्यात्म-ज्ञान-नित्यत्वम् – **adhyātma-jñāna-nityatvaṃ** - Ever established in the intellectual conviction of spiritual Knowledge
तत्त्व-ज्ञान-अर्थ-दर्शनम् – **tattva-jñāna-artha-darśanam** - Having a clear vision of the tangible benefits of spiritual Knowledge
एतत् ज्ञानम् इति प्रोक्तम् – **etat-jñānam-iti proktam -** This is called the way to Knowledge
अज्ञानम् यत् अतः अन्यथा –**ajñānaṃ yad-ataḥ-anyathā -** What is different from this is the way to ignorance

Thus, in five slokās, the Bhagavad Gita gives a summary of the sequence of spiritual practice.

26 Deciding between Right and Wrong

(An edited version of this article was published in June 2020 issue of Vedanta Kesari, a monthly magazine of Sri Rāmakrishṇa Math, published from Chennai.)

We have two faculties which influence our decisions. In any given situation, we will have various options for action. We will have to choose one. One faculty, called *manas*, evaluates the various options based on likes and dislikes. Another faculty, called *buddhi* (intellect), evaluates the options based on right and wrong. Animals also make decisions. However, they always make decisions based on likes and dislikes. Only humans have the buddhi, which works through the mirror neurons in the pre-frontal cortex. Using this faculty, we are able to mentally run various simulations of what will be the consequence of the action to us and others, in the near-term and long-term. By this, we can make better decisions. This buddhi is the one that distinguishes between animals and human beings.

Katha Upanishad calls decision based on manas as *preyas*, and decision based on buddhi as *shreyas*. It says that following shreyas will lead us towards becoming better people. Following preyas will lead to downfall. A noble human being is one who ignores preyas and acts based on shreyas. (Katha Upanishad, 1.2.1,2) The person would do what is right, even if it is inconvenient or gives pain, and would avoid doing what is wrong, even if it is convenient or gives pleasure. This faculty or capacity to choose shreyas

over preyas is called *will power*. Exercising the will power is the only way to increase it.

What is right and what is wrong? How do we decide in confusing situations? Can we depend on our gut-feel or conscience? Is there guidance from our scriptures on this? This is a question that is asked very often.

In most of the situations in our life, what is right and what is wrong is quite unambiguous. Only in some situations, things are gray. In situations where it is clear, if we do not do what is right and refrain from what is wrong, we will be violating our own judgement. The intellect is uncomfortable with this. The intellect starts looking for a justification for the wrong action. This results in indecisiveness in a similar future situation. Over a period of time, this becomes a habit. So, every time we violate our intellectual conviction, we are pushing more situations into gray areas, thus weakening our intellect. We are also weakening our willpower. So, where we know what is right and what is wrong, following our intellectual conviction is very important. Without this, mere knowing is of no use.

Now, the next question is, how to strengthen our buddhi to be able to make better decisions and how to reduce the gray areas. Here the Hindu scriptures, especially the Bhagavad Gita give a lot of guidelines.

One guideline that the Gita gives is to depend on the scriptures regarding what is to be done and what is not to be done. (16.24) There are several series of verses like prerequisites for knowledge (13.7-11), divine treasures (16.1,2,3) and three types of tapas (17.14,15,16), which enumerate right action and attitude. In general, the lists include truthfulness, non-violence, self-control, absence of

arrogance, forbearance, cheerfulness, cleanliness, silence, respect to elders, helping others, etc.

Another guideline that the Gita gives is to depend on the words of people of good character. (13.25) The conduct of wise people can be referred to as the standard of righteousness. In fact, the Gita says that it is the duty of leaders to set an example to others by their actions. (3.21,25,26) It is helpful to be familiar with the life of saints. Then, when we need to decide something, we can think, "What would the saintly person do in this situation?" Taittriya Upanishad also mentions this in verse 1.11.4. The Gita has several lists of the qualities that saintly people possess like qualities of a wise person (2.55-71), qualities of a transcendent person (14.22-25) and qualities of a devotee (12.13-20).

The Gita mentions the Golden Rule: "Do to others what you would like others to do to you." The Gita says, "Keeping yourself as the yardstick, seeing others as equal to you, consider what is pleasurable and painful to them." (6.32) This is often a great way to discern right from wrong.

Another hint that the Gita gives is this. After doing the action, would you be comfortable in the presence of God or would you avoid Him? The Lord is the giver of the fruits of all action. He is impartial. So, if you do the right thing, you will not fear His presence. You will feel protected. When Arjuna saw the Lord in the form of Time, he saw that good people were bowing to Him and bad people were trying to run away from Him. (11.36) So this is one means to decide. A variation of this is to think if you can tell, with dignity, to your mother (or anyone whom you revere) about what you did. If you can, then it is right. Otherwise, it is wrong.

The merit of an action can be evaluated from the attitude of mind (to you and to others) that it would create or enable. If the action would pull down the mind to make the person identify with the body, it is bad. If it would make the person identify with the mind, it is better. If it would make the person identify with pure Consciousness, it is best. (18.20,21,22) For example, hunger and disease pull down the mind to the body. So, alleviating these from people is a noble activity. Giving secular education pulls towards identifying with the mind. Giving spiritual knowledge pulls towards identifying with the Self. These define the relative merits of these activities.

Another way is to seek the "greatest welfare to the greatest number of people". The Gita says, an action that is done as a duty (for the welfare of others) without seeking personal benefit is greatest. An action done for only personal benefit is not so good. Action that brings loss to oneself and others is bad. (18.23,24,25)

Every person does any action only if it gives benefit in the short-term or in the long-term. The Gita says, an action that gives benefit in the short-term but harms in the long-term is wrong. An action which appears inconvenient in the short-term but gives benefit in the long-term is right. (18.37,38) This analysis can be used in many situations to decide.

Thus, the Bhagavad Gita gives several ideas to decide between right and wrong. One or more of these can be used in any situation. When we have decided, it is important that we follow what is right and refrain from what is wrong. Even after all these, we are not able to decide, we can discuss with people. If there is no opportunity for that, or we are

not able to decide even after that, we can do whatever we think is the best out of the various options and pray to God to show more light next time. Following our intellectual conviction will strengthen our intellect and increase our willpower.

27 About the Author

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Gokulmuthu Narayanaswamy is a devotee and volunteer of Rāmakrishṇa Math. He conducts classes on the Bhagavad Gita, Swami Vivekananda, Spiritual Life, Leadership Development and Life Skills to students and professionals. He is a founder of Vivekananda Study Circle in IIT Madras. He is a mentor of Vivekananda Study Circle at IISc Bangalore. He is a mentor of Vivekananda Yuvak Sangha at Rāmakrishṇa Math, Halasuru, Bengaluru. He is a regular contributor of articles and book reviews to Vedanta Kesari and Prabuddha Bharata, monthly magazines published by Rāmakrishṇa Math. Several of his articles can be found in his blog at **www.practicalphilosophy.in**. Several of his talks are available on YouTube.

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28 Glossory

Word	Short description
Abhyāsa	repetition or sustained practice; used for chanting and disciplined training of the mind.
Ācārya	a spiritual teacher who expounds scripture and guides the student.
Adambhitvam	absence of pretence or self-display; not bragging about oneself.
Adharma	conduct contrary to righteousness, duty, and the sustaining moral order.
Adhikāri	the qualified or intended student of a teaching.
Adhyāsa	superimposition; attributing a mentally constructed appearance to an underlying reality.
Advaita	non-duality; the understanding that the individual Self and Brahman are not different as Pure Consciousness.
Āgāmi Karma	the future karmic result produced by present choices and actions.
Ahamkāra	the sense of individuality or identification with body, mind and ego.
Ahimsa	not hurting and actively helping with kindness.
Akshara Purusha	consciousness associated with the Kāraṇa Sharira (causal body).
Ānanda	bliss or fullness; one aspect of Sat-Cit-Ānanda.
Ānandamaya Kosha	the causal or subconscious sheath that stores karma phala, samskāra, and worldview.
Ananya Bhakti	single-minded devotion that does not seek a goal apart from God.
Annamaya Kosha	the physical sheath or material layer of the individual.
Antaryāmi	God as the inner Witness present in the hearts of all beings.
Anumāna	inference as a means of knowledge.
Aparigraha	freedom from possessiveness and claims of ownership; simple minimalistic living.
Archa Avatāra	the manifestation of God through holy images, symbols, places, sounds, words, or books.
Archana	ritual worship; doing duty as an offering to God.

Ārjavam	straightforwardness; alignment of thoughts, words, and deeds; truthfulness.
Ārta Bhakta	a devotee who approaches God for freedom from affliction.
Artha	security and material support.
Arthārthi	a devotee who approaches God for desired objects or favourable results.
Āsana	a stable and comfortable posture or seat used in meditation.
Asanga	detachment or non-attachment.
Ātatāyi	one guilty of a grave aggressive offence, such as poisoning, setting fire, humiliating a woman, etc.
Ātma	the Self; Pure Consciousness, beyond body, life, mind, intellect, and individuality.
Ātma Ānanda	fundamental, unconditional happiness discovered through Self-knowledge.
Ātma Jnāna	knowledge of oneself as Pure Consciousness.
Ātma Nivedanam	complete offering or surrender of oneself to God; one of the nine forms of Bhakti.
Ātma Vinigraha	self-control, especially mastery over the mind.
Ātman	See Ātma.
Avatāra	a special manifestation or incarnation of God in the world.
Avidyā	ignorance, especially ignorance of one's true nature.
Avidyā Māyā	the binding aspect of Nature that sustains ignorance through survival, pleasure-seeking, and individuality.
Avyakta	the unmanifest or undifferentiated causal condition; not experienceable through senses.
Bahurupa Ishvara Bhakti	devotion that recognizes all divine forms as expressions of the same One Supreme Being.
Bhajana Ānanda	non-sensory joy arising from music, art, poetry, knowledge, and other refined pursuits.
Bhakti	devotion or loving relationship with Ishvara.
Bhakti Yoga	spiritual discipline centred on love of God, offering action to God, meditation on God, and seeing God in all beings.
Bhāva Samshuddhi	purity of intention and the habit of wishing well for all.

Brahma Granthi	the knot of survival dependence that is overcome through Karma Yoga.
Brahmacarya	a disciplined life; also continence and restraint.
Brahman	the singular, partless, unmanifest, propertyless, Conscious, substratum of all existence.
Buddhi	the intellect that evaluates right and wrong and guides deliberate choice.
Buddhimaya Kosha	the intellectual and value-oriented sheath; a synonym used for Vignānamaya Kosha.
Caitanya	Consciousness; the self-revealing light by which all experience is known.
Caitanyarupa Ishvara Bhakti	devotion to Ishvara as Consciousness in oneself and all living beings, and appearing as the world.
Caturvidha Purushārthāh	the four pursuits of artha, kāma, dharma, and moksha.
Chitta Vritti Nirodha	quieting the movements of the mind so that the underlying Self can be recognized.
Cit	Pure Consciousness; the ultimate Subject and Witness; the real 'I'.
Dāna	charity without expecting anything in return.
Dāsyam	the devotional attitude of considering God the master and oneself the servant.
Deva Yagna	repayment of one's debt to Nature through conservation, gratitude, and responsible use.
Dhārana	the deliberate fixing and repeated returning of the mind to an object of meditation.
Dharma	righteousness, duty, virtue, and the capacity to discern and do what is right.
Dhyāna	an unbroken flow of related thoughts as a purely mental activity.
Dhyāna Yoga	the discipline of meditation used to gain mastery over mind and senses, and reduce dependence on senses for pleasure.
Dvaita	the standpoint in which the devotee and God are regarded as distinct, as servant and Master.
Dvesha	dislike, aversion, or hatred that binds the mind.
Ekarupa Ishvara Bhakti	devotion directed to one chosen form of God.
Granthi	a knot that obstructs spiritual freedom.
Guna	a mode of Nature; tamas, rajas, and sattva.
Guna-atīta	the state beyond the three gunās.

Hiranyagarbha	the universal subtle principle or total mind.
Ishta Devata	one's chosen, personally relatable form of God.
Ishvara	the omniscient, omnipotent, compassionate Universal Being whose manifestation is the universe; personification of all existence.
Jagat	the material universe, including the insentient aspects of living beings.
Jāgrat Avastha	the waking state in which gross, subtle, and causal bodies participate in experience.
Japa	repetition of a divine name or mantra.
Jignāsu	a seeker who worships for knowledge and spiritual understanding.
Jiva	the living being considered as a conscious core being associated with body, life, mind, intellect and individuality.
Jivanmukta	one who is liberated while living and remains poised amid life's dualities.
Jivanmukti	liberation while living; freedom rooted in knowledge of one's true nature.
Jivātma	the individual conscious spiritual being, identified as the causal body and the bearer of freewill, karma phala and samskara.
Jnāna	knowledge or conviction about reality, self, world, God, and the purpose of life.
Jnāna Mudra	the hand gesture symbolizing separation from body-mind-subconscious identification and identification as Pure Consciousness.
Jnāna Yoga	the discipline of inquiry and knowledge that reveals the identity of Self and Brahman.
Jnāni	a wise person established in spiritual knowledge.
Kāma	desire or the pursuit of pleasure.
Kāma-Kāncana	lust and greed, or dependence on pleasure and wealth for happiness or purpose.
Kāmya Karma	action motivated by worldly or heavenly results.
Kārana Sharira	the causal body, the subconscious store of karma phala, samskāra, and jnāna.
Karma	action and the moral causal relation between decisions and their results.
Karma Phala	the result or fruit of action, including merit and demerit.

Karma Yoga	performing duty and service without attachment to short-term results, as an offering to Ishvara for self-purification.
Keertanam	singing or reciting the glories of Ishvara.
Klesha	difficulty, affliction, or mental suffering.
Kosha	a sheath or layer that covers the Self in the five-layer model of personality.
Krodha	anger; one of the six defects of the mind.
Kshānti	forbearance and patient endurance of life's ups and downs.
Kshara Purusha	the perishable manifested layers, especially gross and subtle nature.
Law of Karma	the principle that choices and actions have corresponding consequences for the chooser.
Leelā Dhyāna	meditation through a connected mental recollection of divine stories and lives of saints.
Lobha	greed; one of the six defects of the mind.
Mahāmāyā	Nature's binding power expressed through the three granthis or knots.
Mahāvākya	a great Upanishadic statement revealing the identity of Self and Brahman.
Manana	reflection and questioning that remove intellectual doubts after hearing the teaching.
Manas	the mind as the faculty of thoughts, emotions, likes, and dislikes.
Manomaya Kosha	the emotional and instinctive sheath containing likes, dislikes, skills, and reactions.
Manushya Yagna	repayment of one's debt to humanity through fair exchange, kindness, service, and support.
Matparāh	having Ishvara as the highest and governing goal of life.
Mātsarya	jealousy; one of the six defects of the mind.
Māyā	the universal creative power through which the manifest universe appears.
Mithyā	a dependent, superimposed level of reality that is neither absolutely real nor merely imaginary.
Moha	confusion between transient and permanent.
Moksha	freedom from sorrow and limited identity through knowledge of one's true nature.
Mouna	silence; freedom from mental clutter.
Naivedya	food or other offering presented to Ishvara.

Nāma	a divine name used for remembrance, chanting, and meditation.
Nididhyāsana	deep assimilation of spiritual knowledge until conviction shapes emotion and behaviour.
Nirguna Brahman	Brahman without properties, form, limitation, or change.
Nirvikāra	changeless; free from modification.
Nishkāma Karma	action without attachment to personal worldly results, done as duty and for spiritual growth.
Om Tat Sat	the affirmation that the Universal Being alone truly exists.
Pāda Sevanam	serving living beings as parts or manifestations of Ishvara.
Panca Kosha	the five sheaths: physical, physiological, emotional, intellectual, and causal.
Panca Mahā Yagna	the five great obligations to Nature, living beings, humanity, ancestors, and teachers.
Pancabhutās	the five elements of Nature.
Pāpa	demerit arising from harmful or unrighteous action.
Parābhakta	a great devotee whose conduct displays mature spiritual virtues.
Paramātma	See Ishvara.
Paravāsudeva	the transcendent, unmanifest aspect of Ishvara as Sat-Cit-Ānanda.
Pārāyaṇa	chanting or recitation of sacred verses.
Pitru Yagna	repayment of one's debt to ancestors through care of family and those without family support.
Prakriti	Nature, including the material, mental, and causal universe.
Prakriyā	a teaching method or thought experiment used to reveal the Self.
Pramāna	a valid means of knowledge, such as perception, inference, or scriptural testimony.
Prāna	the physiological life principle sustaining bodily functions.
Prāṇamaya Kosha	the physiological sheath governing breath, circulation, digestion, and other living processes.
Prapatti	surrender to Ishvara, especially the surrender of individuality and doership.
Prasāda	a gift from Ishvara; also consecrated food.

Pratyāhāra	withdrawal of the senses from external objects as preparation for meditation.
Pratyaksha	direct perception as a means of knowledge.
Preyas	what is immediately pleasant or attractive, contrasted with what is truly beneficial.
Puja	physical ritual worship used to direct the mind toward Ishvara.
Punya	merit produced by virtuous action and service.
Purusha	individual spiritual conscious principle or person.
Purushottama	the Supreme Being beyond the perishable and imperishable manifestations.
Rāga	strong liking, desire, or attachment.
Rāja Yoga	the discipline that uses willpower to control and steady the mind; also called Dhyāna Yoga.
Rajas	the mode of activity, ambition, restlessness, and outward engagement.
Rishi Yagna	repayment of one's cultural and educational debt by supporting learning, teachers, and transmission of knowledge.
Runa	a debt or obligation arising from what one has received.
Sādhaka	a spiritual aspirant engaged in Sādhana.
Sādhana	spiritual discipline for inner development.
Saguna Brahman	Brahman manifest with properties as Ishvara, Jivas and the universe.
Sakhyam	devotional attitude of friendship with Ishvara.
Samādhi	deep absorption in meditation in which awareness of being the meditator falls away.
Sambandha	the relationship between the teaching and the result it promises.
Samsāra	the cycle and experience of bondage, transience, desire, death, and sorrow.
Samskāra	subconscious tendency, habit, or character created by past experience and action.
Sanātana Dharma	the eternal spiritual way of life presented as integrated knowledge, devotion, meditation, and right action; another name of Hinduism.
Sanchita Karma	the accumulated store of karmic results not yet experienced.
Sannyāsa	renunciation of worldly pursuits; monasticism.

Sat	existence or the unchanging substratum of all appearances.
Sat-Cit-Ānanda	Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, the threefold indication of absolute reality.
Sattva	the mode of harmony, clarity, purity, and balance.
Satya	truthfulness in conduct.
Saumyatvam	pleasantness and the deliberate exposure of the mind to wholesome influences.
Sevā	service, especially service to teacher, society, and living beings as forms of Ishvara.
Shabda	authoritative verbal or scriptural testimony as a means of knowledge.
Shānti	peace or freedom from agitation and sorrow.
Shariratrayam	the three bodies: gross, subtle, and causal.
Shat-ripu	the six enemies or defects of the mind: desire, anger, greed, delusion, arrogance, and jealousy.
Shraddhā	faith and trust that support sustained spiritual practice and inquiry.
Shravana	listening to the teacher's unfolding of scriptural knowledge.
Shreyas	what is truly beneficial and right, even when inconvenient or unpleasant.
Sookshma Sharira	the subtle body comprising physiological, emotional, and intellectual functions.
Sthitaprajna	a person of steady wisdom whose mind remains poised amid dualities.
Sthoola Sharira	the gross physical body.
Sushupti Avastha	deep-sleep state in which the mind is dormant and causal tendencies remain unmanifest.
Svadharma	one's own duty arising from one's roles, situation, and capacities.
Svādhyāya	self-study of elevating texts with attention to meaning.
Swapna Avastha	the dream state in which the mind operates without the gross body's participation.
Tamas	the mode of inertia, lethargy, confusion, and resistance to action.
Tapas	austerity or disciplined effort applied to body, speech, and mind without harming the body.

Tat Tvam Asi	the Upanishadic declaration that the essential Self is identical with absolute reality.
Tucca	the wholly imaginary, distinguished from the dependently real status of mithyā.
Tyāga	detachment from the fruits of action.
Upāsana	worship and contemplative practice that prepare and steady the mind.
Vairāgya	dispassion or freedom from dependence on people, objects, and situations.
Vandyam	bowing to living beings as manifestations of Ishvara.
Vedānta	essence of the Vedas.
Vibhava Avatāra	a special incarnation through which Ishvara manifests extraordinary qualities.
Videhamukti	liberation after the fall of the body, following realization in life.
Vidyā Māyā	the elevating aspect of Nature that supports knowledge and spiritual progress.
Vignānamaya Kosha	the intellectual sheath of values, ideologies, beliefs, reasoning, and deliberate choice.
Vishaya Ānanda	sensory pleasure arising from contact between sense organs and sense objects.
Vishishṭhādvaita	the qualified non-dual standpoint in which the individual is an inseparable part of Ishvara.
Vishnu Granthi	the knot of dependence on the world for pleasure, addressed through Dhyāna Yoga.
Vishwarupa Ishvara	Ishvara understood as the whole manifested universe including all living beings.
Viveka	discrimination between the permanent and the transient, Self and non-Self, or right and wrong.
Vyuha Avatāra	Ishvara's manifestation as the orderly universe of matter, life, mind, and law.
Yagna	sacrificial contribution or giving back what one owes to the world and its beings.
Yoga	a disciplined means of integration and spiritual growth; equanimity is also described as Yoga.
Yoga Ārūdha	one established in Yoga, sufficiently free from dependence on action and sense objects for satisfaction.