Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā

with

Abridged Gītā Bhāṣya of

Bhagavad Rāmānujācārya

Edited by

U.Ve. Sri Rama Rāmānuja Achari

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Śrīmate Rāmānujāya Namaḥ

Foreword

Why another translation and commentary on the Bhagavad Gita when there are already so many available in the bookstores and libraries throughout the world? The answer is that of the three Vedānta Ācaryas only Śankara's commentary supporting his Advaita (Non-dual) philosophy has been well propounded and perpetuated through the centuries, whereas Rāmānuja's commentary from the point of view of Visishtadvaita (Qualified non-dualism) has been largely ignored or available only to the Tamil speaking public or to Sanskrit scholars. As far as I am aware there are only two English versions in print. One by M.R. Sampatkumaran, published by Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute in January 1985. The other is by Swami Adidevananda published by the Ramakrishna Math.

These two works are of impeccable scholarship being based on a phrase for phrase translation of the medieval Sanskrit. Unfortunately this approach results in an English text that is stilted, repetitious and incomprehensible to many people. My approach has been to be as true as possible to the original meaning but to be more creative in it's formulation into contemporary English. I have relied heavily on these two scholarly works in making this work available to the lovers of the Gita. How well I have succeeded is for the discerning reader to judge.

Abbreviations Used

Sve. Up. — Śvetaśvatāra Upaṇiṣad
Mun. Up. — Muṇḍaka Upaṇiṣad
Chan. Up. — Chāṇḍogya Upaṇiṣad
Ka. Up. — Kaṭha Upaṇiṣad
Brh. Up. — Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaṇiṣad
B.S. — Brahma Sutras
V.P. — Viṣṇu Purāṇa

A Note on the Translation

It must be born in mind that Rāmānuja did not actually "translate" the Gita but paraphrased it in simpler Sanskrit. Much of the actual Commentary (*Bhashya)* is repetitive paraphrasing which I have left out whenever it does not elucidate the meaning of the verse. I have also taken the liberty of giving exhaustive footnotes to clarify points which many less scholarly readers would find difficult to understand. Apart from the archaic language, the other problem with Rāmānuja's Bhashya is that he frequently launches into technically detailed refutations of the Advaitic position of Shankara Acharya. These arguments are coached in the technical terms and classical style of Vedic logic and debate, and while interesting, they tend to be daunting, confusing and tedious to those unschooled in logic and the art of debate (*nyāya* and *tarka*). In order to render the text more "user-friendly" I have taken the liberty of extracting these debates and assembling them in an appendix at the end of the work so that those who are interested may study them and others may continue enjoying the text itself. Throughout the Gita Rāmānuja quotes extensively and exhaustively from the Upanishads, Vedas and Puranas to support his particular interpretation of knotty points. I have again taken the liberty of substituting many of the actual quotes with their references in order to make the commentary less bulky.

There is quite a difference between "translating" and "interpreting". Each and every Sanskrit word can be substituted by up to 10 different words in English — the word that we choose involves a certain amount of "interpreting" — which means that the translator can always be accused of bias and "spin" in his work. I humbly request the scholars to forgive any errors that I have made, and liberties that I may have taken in interpreting Bhagavad Rāmānuja's work, and accept this presentation as an introduction to the study of Rāmānuja's Bhashya. I encourage all those readers who are captivated by this imperfect treatise to approach a learned scholar and to study the Gita under him in order to rectify all the mistakes that I have made.

An important point to bear in mind is that Vedanta is an experiential methodology of investigating the highest truth. Every teaching needs to be applied in our own lives and to be integrated in order to personally experience it's veracity. Nothing of what Krishna says needs to be accepted simply because He is the speaker, rather it is accepted because it is an personally experiential Truth.

Rāmānuja has also summed up that according to Mīmāmsa (Vedic hermeneutics) in order for any Scriptural Text to be considered as authoritative it must fulfil certain conditions;

- It must conform to reality as we experience it.
- It must be logical and not contradict any of the other two other means of knowledge such as perception and inference.
- The content of the text must be internally consistent.
- The knowledge presented in the text must have a practical application.

And it is this practical application which is the true test of the Truth of Scripture.

Chapter 1

Arjuna-viśāda Yogaḥ

Arjuna's Grief

The Nature of the Incarnation

The Supreme Being, Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, projected the entire universe, beginning with Brahma (the creator) down to plants and minerals. Being inaccessible in His transcendental form for meditation and worship by sentient beings including Brahma, gods, humans etc., and being an ocean of compassion and loving condescension, maternal affection[1] and generosity — He took forms in the likeness of various kinds of beings. In this act of self-embodiment His own transcendental nature was not in any way compromised. Thus the Supreme Lord took birth in the world in order to receive the worship of devotees and in order to grant them their desired goals comprising of *Dharma* (righteousness, duty), *Artha* (material prosperity), *Kama* (Sense gratification) and *Moksha* (Liberation), each in accordance with his/her individual desires.

Under the pretext of relieving the earth of its burdens, but really in order to make Himself available for us (frail humans) to take refuge in Him, the Lord incarnated on the earth as Sri Krishna. He thus manifested Himself to all beings. He engaged in divine pastimes which captivated the minds and hearts of all, high and low.

With the ostensible intention of encouraging the sons of Pāṇḍu in their duty of engaging in war, He revealed the teaching of *Bhakti* (devotion) directed at Himself. This Yoga of Devotion was promulgated together with the subsidiary disciplines of *jñāna* (Meditation) and *Karma* (Selfless works). The Yoga of Devotion has been taught as the path to the ultimate goal of Liberation.

When the internecine war between the sons of Pāṇḍu and the descendants of Kuru broke out, Kṛṣṇa, overwhelmed by His love for those devotees who had taken refuge in Him, took upon Himself the humble role of the charioteer of Arjuna, so that He could be seen by all the people. Even though the King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who was blind both physically and spiritually, knew that Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Being, he expressed a desire to hear about the military competence of his son Suyodhana (Duryodhana) and questioned Sañjaya his chief minister thus: —

Dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca

dharma-kṣetre kuru-kṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ ।
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva kim akurvata sañjaya ॥ 1 ॥

Dhrtarashtra said:
1. What did my people and the Pandavas do, O Sanjaya[2], gathered together on the holy field of Kurukshetra, eager for battle?

---

[1] The term used is *vāsalya* which means the love of a cow for its calf. The image invoked is that of a cow spontaneously shedding milk on hearing the mooing of its calf.

[2] **Sañjaya** was the son of a charioteer named Gavalgama, he was an extremely learned scholar in the Scriptures, generous and a staunch practitioner of Dharma being impartial and truthful. For these reasons Bhishma appointed him to be the second minister of the King Dhrtarashtra along with Vidura as the first.

Sañjaya uvāca

dṛṣṭvā tu pāṇḍavānīkaṁ vyūḍhaṁ duryodhanas tadā |
ācāryam upasaṅgamya rājā vacanam abravīt || 2 ||

Sanjaya said:

2. O King! Duryodhana[3], being moved by the sight of the Pandava army in battle array, approached his teacher Drona[4] and said these words:

paśyaitām pāṇḍu-putrāṇām ācārya mahatīṁ camūm |
vyūḍhāṁ drupada-putreṇa tava śiṣyeṇa dhīmatā || 3 ||

Duryodhana said

3. Behold, O master, this mighty army of the Pandavas, commanded by their Field-Marshal the son of Drupada[5], who is your intelligent disciple.

atra śūrā maheṣvāsā bhīmārjuna samā yudhi |
yuyodhāno virāṭaśca drupadaśca mahārathaḥ || 4 ||

4. There (in that army) are heroes, great archers like Bhima and Arjuna; Yuyudhana[6], Virata[7] and Drupada a mighty warrior[8].

dhṛṣṭaketuś-cekitānaḥ kāśi-rājaśca vīryavān |
purujit-kunti-bhojaśca śaibyaśca nara-puṅgavaḥ || 5 ||

5. Dhrshtaketu, Cekitana[9], and the valiant king of Kashi[10], Purujit and Kuntibhoja[11], and Saibya[12] the best among men;

yudhāmanyuśca vikrānta uttamaujāśca vīryavān |
saubhadro draupadeyāśca sarva eva mahārathāḥ || 6 ||

---

[3] **Duryodhana** was the eldest among the one hundred sons of Dhrtarashtra, he was cruel and wicked and did everything in his power to exterminate the Pandavas. During the battle he was finally killed by Bhima.

[4] **Drona** was the son of a great Rishi Bharadvaja and learned the science of marshal arts from Parasurama. He had the benediction that he would only die at the time of his choosing and thus was invincible. After a falling out with his childhood friend Drupada, he took employment in the kaurava court and became the teacher to both the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

[5] **Drupada** was the king of Panchala who hated Drona and prayed for a son who would kill him. A son was born from a yajna (sacrifice) that he had performed and he was named Drishtadyumna. He became the disciple of Drona and even though Drona new full well that the boy would eventually kill him, he still taught him all that he new about martial arts. So Duryodhana's tone here is one of sarcasm.

[6] **Yuyodhana** is another name for Satyaki a close and dear servant of Lord Krishna.

[7] **Virata** was the king of Matsya, under whose protection the Pandavas spent their last year of exile living incognito. His daughter Uttara later married Abhimanyu the son of Arjuna. Virata was killed in the battle along with his sons, Uttara, Shveta and Shankha.

[8] *Mahā-ratha* — "great chariot warrior" — a highly skilled martial artist who is capable of fighting 1000 archers at the same time.

[9] **Cekitana** was one of Sri Krishna's Yadava/Vrshni clansmen, a very chivalrous warrior who was killed by Duryodhana during the battle.

[10] The King of Kashi was born as a partial manifestation of the asura — Dirgh-jihva.

[11] **Purujit** and **Kuntibhoja** were brothers of Arjuna's mother Kunti. Both met their end at the hands of Drona.

[12] **Saibya** was the father of Devika, one of Yudhishthira's wives and is called 'the best among men' because of his exceptional military prowess.

6. Yudhamanyu the valiant, and Uttamaujas the strong[13]; and also the son of Subhadra[14], and the sons of Draupadi[15], all mighty chariot-warriors.

asmākaṁ tu viśiṣṭā ye tān-nibodha dvijottama ।
nāyakāḥ mama sainyasya saṁjñārthaṁ tān bravīmi te ॥ 7 ॥

7. O best of Brahmins, I shall familiarise you with our principle warriors - those who are the commanders of my army. I shall name them to refresh your memory.

bhavān bhīṣmaśca karṇaśca kṛpaśca samitiñjayaḥ ।
aśvatthāmā vikarṇaśca saumadattas tathaiva ca ॥ 8 ॥

8. Yourself, Bhishma and Karna[16], the victorious Krpa[17], Ashvatthama[18], Vikarna[19] and Jayadratha the son of Somadatta[20].

anye ca bahavaḥ śūrā madārthe tyakta-jīvitāḥ ।
nānā-śāstra praharaṇāḥ sarve yuddha-viśāradāḥ ॥ 9 ॥

9. And there are many other heroes who are determined to give up their lives for my sake. They are all experts in weaponry and experienced in the art of warfare.

aparyāptaṁ tad asmakaṁ balaṁ bhīṣmābhirakṣitam ।
paryāptaṁ tvidam eteṣāṁ balaṁ bhīmābhirakṣitam ॥ 10 ॥

10. Inadequate is this force of ours, which is marshelled by Bhishma, while adequate is that force of theirs, which is marshelled by Bhima.

ayaneṣu ca sarveṣu yathā-bhāgam avasthitāḥ ।
bhīṣmam evābhi-rakṣantu bhavantaḥ sarva eva hi ॥ 11 ॥

11. Therefore, do all of you guard Bhishma alone, stationed in your respective positions in the divisions of the army.

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[13] **Yudhamanyu** and **Uttamaujas** were brothers and princes of the Panchala kingdom, they died at the hands of Ashvatthama.

[14] **Subhadra** was Krishna's sister married to Arjuna, her son Abhimanyu was called Saubhadra. He studied martial arts under Arjuna and his uncle Balarama - Krishna's brother. At the time of the war he was only 16 years old. In the absence of his father he was the only one who could penetrate the *Chakra-vyuha* military formation of Drona, but he had not learnt how to escape. Trapped, he was then mercilessly killed by seven great *maharathis*, including Drona, Kripa and Karna.

[15] **Draupadi** gave birth to five sons, one by each of the Pandavas, their names were; Pratibindhya, Sutasoma, Srutakarma, Satanika, Srutasena. They were murdered in their sleep by Ashvatthama in order to please his friend Duryodhana.

[16] **Karna** was the first son of Kunti born out of wedlock to the Sun god. His was abandoned by Kunti and raised by a charioteer and his wife. Later on he was befriended by Duryodhana after being insulted by the Pandavas during a competition. Only on the eve of the battle did Kunti reveal his true identity to him, but duty-bound he fully supported his benefactor Duryodhana, promising Kunti that he would kill only Arjuna and none of his other half-brothers.

[17] **Kripa** and his sister **Kripi** were born from the prematurely ejaculated semen of the Rishi Saradvan when he saw the apsara Janapadi. After the battle he was appointed by Yudhishthira to tutor the young prince Parikshit.

[18] **Ashvatthama** was the son of Kripi who married Drona. He learnt the art of warfare from his father and was the last appointed commander –in-chief of the Kaurava army. He killed the five sons of Draupadi mistaking them for the five Pandavas and was severely traduced and humiliated by the Pandavas. In revenge he tried to kill the unborn son of Abhimanyu — Parikshit who was the sole heir to the Pandava dynasty. Parikshit was saved by Lord Krishna.

[19] A brother of Duryodhana who was killed by Bhima.

[20] **Somadatta** was a scion of the Kuru dynasty. He and his equally renowned son **Jayadratha** also know as **Bhurisrava** an highly accomplished warrior, were both killed in battle by Satyaki.

tasya sañjanayan harṣaṁ kuru-vṛddhaḥ pitāmahaḥ ।
siṁhanādaṁ vinadyoccaiḥ śaṅkhaṁ dadhmau pratāpavān ॥ 12 ॥

(Sanjaya continued)
12. Then the valiant grandsire Bhishma, senior most of the Kuru clan, roaring like a lion, blew his conch with a view to encourage Duryodhana.

tataḥ śaṅkhāśca bheryaśca paṇavānaka-gomukhāḥ ।
sahasaivābhyahanyanta sa śabdas-tumulo'bhavat ॥ 13 ॥

13. Then suddenly conches and kettle drums, trumpets, tabors and horns blared forth; and the sound was terrific.

tataḥ śvetair-hayair-yukte mahati syandane sthitau ।
mādhavaḥ pāṇḍavaścaiva divyau śaṅkhau pradadhmatuḥ ॥ 14 ॥

14. Then Sri Krishna and Arjuna, stationed in their great chariot yoked with white horses, blew their divine conches.

pāñcajanyaṁ hṛṣīkeśo devadattaṁ dhanañjayaḥ ।
pauṇḍraṁ dadhmau mahā-śaṅkhaṁ bhīma-karmā vṛkodaraḥ ॥ 15 ॥

15. Sri Krishna blew his conch, Pañcajanya, Arjuna his, named Devadatta and Bhima of terrible deeds the great conch Paundra.

ananta-vijayaṁ rājā kuntī-putro yudhiṣṭhiraḥ ।
nakulaḥ sahadevaśca sughoṣa maṇi-puṣpakau ॥ 16 ॥

16. King Yudhishtira the son of Kunti blew his conch Ananta-vijaya and Nakula and Sahadeva blew their conches Sughosha and Mani-pushpaka.

kāśyaśca parameṣ-vasaḥ śikhaṇḍī ca mahārathaḥ ।
dhṛṣṭadyumno virāṭaśca sātyakiś-cāparājitaḥ ॥ 17 ॥

17. And the King of Kashi the supreme archer, Shikhandi the mighty warrior, Dhrshtadyumna and Virata; and Satyaki the invincible;

drupado draupadeyāśca sarvaśaḥ pṛthivī-pate ।
saubhadraśca mahā-bāhuḥ śaṅkhān dadhmuḥ pṛthak pṛthak ॥ 18 ॥

18. Drupada and the sons of Draupadi, and the strong-armed son of Subhadra[21] — all, O King, blew their various conches again and again

sa ghoṣo dhārtarāṣṭrāṇāṁ hṛdayāni vyadārayat ।
nabhaśca pṛthivīṁ caiva tumulo'bhyanunādayan ॥ 19 ॥

19. And that tumultuous uproar, resounding through heaven and earth, rent the hearts of Dhrtarashtra's sons.

Commentary

Duryodhana, after personally reviewing the forces of Pandavas marshalled by Bhima, and his own army marshalled by Bhishma, turned to Drona his teacher, and expressed his concern that his own army would be inadequate to conquer the Pandava forces — he was grief-stricken.

Observing Duryodhana's loss of confidence, Bhishma, in order to encourage him, roared like a lion, and then blowing his conch, made his army sound their conches and kettle-drums, which made an uproar as a sign of their confidence of victory.

atha vyavasthitān dṛṣṭvā dhārtarāṣṭrān kapi-dhvajaḥ ।
pravṛtte śastra-sampāte dhanur udyamya pāṇḍavaḥ ॥ 20 ॥
hṛṣīkeśaṁ tadā vākyam idam āha mahī-pate ।

20. Then Arjuna, who had Hanuman[22] as his banner crest, on beholding the sons of Dhrtarashtra in array, took up his bow, as the (preliminary) clashing of weapons began;

21. And he spoke, O King, these words to Sri Krishna …....

arjuna uvāca

senayor-ubhayor madhye rathaṁ sthāpaya me'cyuta ॥ 21 ॥
yāvad etān nirīkṣe'haṁ yoddhu-kāmān avasthitān ।
kair-mayā saha yoddhavyam asmin raṇa-samudyame ॥ 22 ॥

Arjuna said:
…….. Station my chariot, O Krishna, between the two armies,
22. So that I may have a good look at those who are standing eager to fight and know with whom I have to fight in this enterprise of war;

yotsyamānān avekṣehaṁ ya ete'tra samāgatāḥ ।
dhārtarāṣṭrasya durbuddher yuddhe priya cikīrṣavaḥ ॥ 23 ॥

23. I wish to see those gathered here ready to fight in this battle in order to please the evil-minded [Duryodhana] son of Dhrtarashtra.

sañjaya uvāca

evam ukto hṛṣīkeśo guḍākeśena bhārata ।
senayor-ubhayor madhye sthāpayitvā rathottamam ॥ 24 ॥

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[21] Subhadra was the sister of Krishna and wife of Arjuna

[22] In Mahābhārata 3;153 the story is told where Hanuman agrees to take the place of a flag upon Arjuna's chariot.

Sanjaya said:
24. O Dhrtarashtra, thus addressed by Arjuna, Sri Krishna stationed that best of chariots between the two armies,

bhiṣma droṇa pramukhataḥ sarveṣāṁ ca mahīkṣitām ।
uvāca pārtha paśyaitān samavetān kurūn iti ॥ 25 ॥

25. While Bhishma and Drona and all the other kings looked on, and said, 'O Arjuna, behold these assembled Kauravas.'

tatrāpaśyat sthitān pārthaḥ pitṛn atha pita-mahān ।
ācāryān mātulān bhrātṛn putrān pautrān sakhīṁs tathā ॥ 26 ॥

26. Then Arjuna saw standing there, fathers and grand-fathers, teachers, uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons and comrades;

śvaśurān suhṛdaścaiva senayor-ubhayor api ।
tān samīkṣya sa kaunteyaḥ sarvān bandhūn avasthitān ॥ 27 ॥
kṛpayā parayā'viṣṭho viṣīdann idam abravīt ।

27. fathers-in-law and dear friends in both armies. When Arjuna saw all these kinsmen in array,
28. he was filled with deep compassion and said these words in despair...

arjuna uvāca

dṛṣṭvemaṁ svajanaṁ kṛṣṇa yuyutsaṁ samupasthitam ॥ 28 ॥
sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṁ ca pariśuṣyati ।
vepathuśca śarīre me roma harṣaśca jāyate ॥ 29 ॥

Arjuna said:
O Krishna, seeing my kinsmen present here, eager for battle,
29. my limbs go weak, my mouth dries up, my body trembles and my hair stands on end.

gāṇḍīvaṁ sramsate hastāt tvak caiva pari-dahyate ।
na ca śaknomy-avasthātuṁ bhramatīva ca me manaḥ ॥ 30 ॥

30. The bow Gandiva slips from my hand and my skin is burning, I can stand no longer, my mind seems to reel.

nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni keśava ।
na ca śreyo'nupaśyāmi hatvā svajanam āhave ॥ 31 ॥

31. I see inauspicious omens, O Krishna, I foresee no good in killing my own kinsmen in battle.

na kāṅkṣe vijayaṁ kṛṣṇa na ca rājyaṁ sukhāni ca ।
kiṁ no rājyena govinda kiṁ bhogair jīvitena vā ॥ 32 ॥

32. I desire not victory, nor empire, nor pleasures. Of what use to us is an empire, O Krishna, or enjoyment or even life itself?

yeṣām arthe kāṅkṣitaṁ no rājyaṁ bhogāḥ sukhāni ca ।
ta ime' vasthitā yuddhe prāṇāṁs tyaktvā dhanāni ca ॥ 33 ॥

33. Those for whose sake we desire the empire, enjoyment and pleasures, stand here ready for war, preparing to renounce life and wealth —

ācāryāḥ pitaraḥ putrāṁs tathaiva ca pitāmahāḥ ।
mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ pautrāḥ śyālāḥ sambandhinas tathā ॥ 34 ॥

34. Teachers, fathers, sons and also grandfathers, uncles, fathers-in-law and grandsons, brothers-in-law and other kinsmen —

etān na hantum icchāmi ghnato'pi madhusūdana ।
api trailokya rājyasya hetoḥ kiṁ nu mahīkṛte ॥ 35 ॥

35. These I would not slay, though they might slay me, even for the sovereignty of the three worlds -how much less for this earth O Krishna?

nihatya dhārtarāṣṭrān naḥ kiṁ prītiḥ syāj-janārdana ।
pāpam evāśrayed asmān hatvaitān ātatāyinaḥ ॥ 36 ॥

36. If we kill the sons of Dhrtarashtra, what joy will be ours, O Krishna? Blame alone will accrue to us if we kill these murderous felons[23].

tasmān nārhā vayaṁ hantuṁ dhārtarāṣṭrān svabandhavān ।
svajanaṁ hi kathaṁ hatvā sukhinaḥ syāma mādhava ॥ 37 ॥

37. Therefore, it is not befitting that we slay our kinsmen the sons of Dhrtarashtra. For if we kill our kinsmen, O Krishna , how indeed can we rejoice?

yady-apyete na paśyanti lobhopahata cetasaḥ ।
kula-kṣaya-kṛtaṁ doṣaṁ mitra-drohe ca pātakam ॥ 38 ॥

38. Though these people, whose minds are overpowered by greed, see no evil in the destruction of a clan and no blame in treachery to friends,

kathaṁ na jñeyam asmābhiḥ pāpād asmān nivartitum ।
kula-kṣaya-kṛtaṁ doṣaṁ prapaśyadbhir janārdana ॥ 39 ॥

39. should we who see well the evil of destroying a family not know how to recoil from this crime, O Krishna?

kula-kṣaye praṇaśyanti kula-dharmāḥ sanātanāḥ ।
dharme naṣṭe kulaṁ kṛtsnam adharmo'bhibhavaty-uta ॥ 40 ॥

40. If the family is destroyed, its ancient traditions perish, and when traditions perish, unrighteousness overtakes the whole clan.

adharmābhi-bhavāt kṛṣṇa praduṣyanti kula-striyaḥ ।
strīṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya jāyate varṇa-saṅkaraḥ ॥ 41 ॥

41. When unrighteousness prevails, O Krishna the women of the clan become corrupt; when women become corrupt, there arises intermixture of classes.

saṅkaro narakāyaiva kula-ghnānāṁ kulasya ca ।
patanti pitaro hyeṣāṁ lupta-piṇḍodaka-kriyāḥ ॥ 42 ॥

42. This mixing of classes leads the clan to hell along with its destroyers; for the spirits of their ancestors fall, degraded, deprived of the ritual offerings of rice-balls and water[24].

doṣair etaiḥ kula-ghnānāṁ varṇa-saṅkara-kārakaiḥ ।
utsādyante jāti-dharmāḥ kula-dharmāśca śāśvatāḥ ॥ 43 ॥

43. By the crimes of the clan-destroyers who bring about intermingling of classes, the ancient traditions of the clan and class are destroyed.

utsanna-kula-dharmāṇāṁ manuṣyāṇāṁ janārdana ।
narake'niyataṁ vāso bhavatīty-anuśuśruma ॥ 44 ॥

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[23] *Åtatāyinah* —according to the Commentator Sridhara this term refers to people guilty of six kinds of crimes - arson, poisoning, murder, robbery with violence, appropriating land and kidnapping married women. To kill such people is not a sin according to the Smṛtis (Codes of Law).

[24] Rice balls (*piṇḍas*) and libations of water with sesame seeds (*tarpana*) are the offerings that are made to the dead. Ed.

44. For those whose family virtues are destroyed, dwelling in hell is ordained, O Krishna, thus have we heard.

aho bata mahat pāpaṁ kartuṁ vyavasitā vayam ।
yad rājya sukha lobhena hantuṁ sva-janam udyatāḥ ॥ 45 ॥

45. Alas! we have resolved to commit a great crime in that we are ready to slay our kith and kin out of desire for sovereignty and enjoyments.

yadi mām apratīkāram aśastraṁ śastra-pāṇayaḥ ।
dhārtarāṣṭrā raṇe hanyus tan-me kṣemataraṁ bhavet ॥ 46 ॥

46. If the well-armed sons of Dhrtarashtra should slay me in battle, unresisting and unarmed, that would be better for me.

evam uktvā'rjunaḥ saṅkhye rathopastha upāviśat ।
visṛjya saśaraṁ cāpaṁ śoka saṁvigna mānasaḥ ॥ 47 ॥

Sanjaya said:

47. Having spoken thus on the battle-field, Arjuna threw aside his bow and arrows and sat down on the seat of the chariot, his heart overwhelmed with grief.

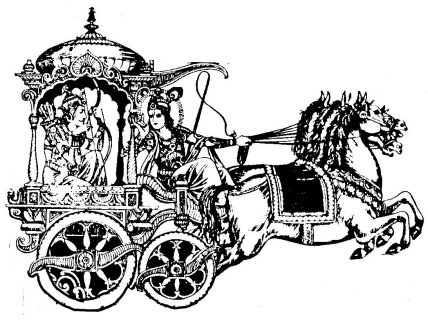
Commentary

Sanjaya said to Dhrtarashtra:— "The high-minded Arjuna is extremely kind, deeply compassionate, dedicated to his family and supremely righteous. In spite of the repeated attempts of your people to destroy him and his brothers through cruel and murderous plots like burning in the lac-house etc., (MB. 1.154 - 163) which justified revenge on his part, with the help of the Supreme Being, nevertheless he declined to fight."

He felt weak, overcome by his love and extreme compassion for his relatives. He was also filled with fear, not knowing what was *Dharma* (righteous) and what was *Adharma* (unrighteous). His mind was distracted by grief at the thought of losing his relatives. So he cast aside his bow and arrow and sat down on the floor of the chariot as if to fast to the death.

hariḥ oṁ tatsat
iti śrīmad-bhagavad-gītāsupaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṁ yoga śāstre
śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna saṁvāde arjuna viśāda yogo nama
prathamo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishad of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
ends the first discourse entitled -
"Arjuna's Grief."



Chapter 2

Saṅkhya Yogaḥ

Communion through Knowledge

sañjaya uvāca

taṁ tathā kṛpayāviṣṭaṁ aśā-pūrṇā-kulekṣaṇam ।
viṣīdantam idaṁ vākyam uvāca madhusūdanaḥ ॥ 1 ॥

Sanjaya said:

1. To him, who was thus overcome with pity, whose eyes were filled with tears, who was despondent and bewildered, Sri Krishna spoke these words:

śrī bhagavān uvāca

kutas tvā kaśmalam idaṁ viṣame samupasthitam ।
anāryājuṣṭam asvargyam akīrtikaram arjuna ॥ 2 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:

2. Whence comes this unworthy weakness in a crisis, O Arjuna? It is unseemly for a noble person, it is disgraceful and obstructive to the attainment of heaven.

klaibyaṁ mā sma gamaḥ pārtha naitat-tvayyupapadyate ।
kṣudraṁ hṛdaya daurbalyaṁ tyaktvottiṣṭha paraṁtapa ॥ 3 ॥

3. Yield not to unmanliness[25], O Arjuna, it does not become you. Cast off this base faint-heartedness and arise, O scorcher of foes!

arjuna uvāca

kathaṁ bhīṣmam ahaṁ saṅkhye droṇaṁ ca madhusūdana ।
iṣubhiḥ pratiyotsyāmi pūjārhāv-arisūdana ॥ 4 ॥

Arjuna said:

4. O Krishna, O Destroyer of enemies, how can I fight with arrows in battle against Bhishma and Drona who are worthy of reverence?

gurūn ahatvā hi mahānubhāvān śreyo bhoktuṁ bhaikṣyam apīha loke ।
hatvārtha kāmāṁs tu gurūn ihaiva bhuñjīya bhogān rudhira-pradigdhān ॥ 5 ॥

5. It is better even to live on a beggar's fare in this world than to slay these most venerable teachers. If I should slay my teachers, even though they may be degraded by desire for wealth, I would be enjoying only blood-stained pleasures.

na caitad vidmaḥ kataran no garīyo yadvā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuḥ ।
yān eva hatvā na jijīviṣāmas te'vasthitāḥ pramukhe dhārtarāṣṭhrāḥ ॥ 6 ॥

6. We do not know, which of the two is better for us— our vanquishing them, the very sons of Dhrtarashtra, or their vanquishing us. After slaying them we would not wish to live, even though they are standing in array against us.

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[25] This is a snide reference to the last year of Arjuna's time in exile - spent living as a *kliba* — a transsexual teaching singing and dancing in the court of king Virata.

kārpaṇya doṣopahata svabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvāṁ dharma samūḍha cetasaḥ ।
yacchreyaḥ syān niścitaṁ brūhi tan me śiṣyas te śādhi māṁ tvāṁ prapannam ॥ 7 ॥

7. With my heart stricken by the weakness of pity, with my mind perplexed about my duty, I request you to teach me conclusively what is good for me. I am your disciple. Instruct me who have taken refuge in you.

na hi prapaśyāmi mamāpanudyād yacchokam ucchoṣaṇam indriyāṇām ।
avāpya bhūmāv-asapatnam-ṛddham rājyaṁ suraṇām api cādhipatyam ॥ 8 ॥

8. Even if I should win unchallenged sovereignty of a prosperous earth or even the kingdom or lordship over the Devas, I do not feel that it would dispel the grief that burns up my senses.

sañjaya uvāca

evam uktvā hṛṣīkeśaṁ guḍakeśaḥ paraṁtapa ।
na yotsya iti govindam uktvā tūṣṇīṁ babhūva ha ॥ 9 ॥

Sanjaya said;
9. Having spoken thus to Sri Krishna, Arjuna, the conqueror of sleep and the scorcher of foes, said, 'I will not fight' and became silent.

tam uvāca hṛṣikeśaḥ prasanniva bhārata ।
senayor ubhayor madhye viṣīdantaṁ idaṁ vacaḥ ॥ 10 ॥

10. O King, to him who was thus grieving between the two armies, Sri Krishna spoke the following words, as if smiling.

śrī bhagavān uvāca

aśocyān anvaśocas tvaṁ prajñāvādāṁśca bhāṣase ।
gatāsūn agatāsūṁśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ ॥ 11 ॥

The Blessed Lord said
11. You grieve for those who should not be grieved for; yet you speak words of apparent wisdom. The wise grieve neither for the dead nor for the living.

na tvevāhaṁ jātu nāsaṁ na tvaṁ neme janādhipāḥ ।
na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayamataḥ param ॥ 12 ॥

12. There never was a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor any of these temporal kings. Nor will there be any time in future when all of us shall cease to be.

dehino'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā ।
tathā dehāntara prāptir dhīras tatra na muhyati ॥ 13 ॥

13. Just as the embodied Self passes through childhood, youth and old age [pertaining to that body], so [at death] it passes into another body. A wise man is not confused thereby.

mātrā sparśās tu kaunteya śītoṣṇa sukha-duḥkhadāḥ ।
āgamāpāyino'nityās tāṁs titikṣasva bhārata ॥ 14 ॥

14. The contact of senses with their objects, O Arjuna, give rise to feelings of cold and heat, pleasure and pain. They come and go, they are impermanent, endure them, O Arjuna.

yaṁ hi na vyathayantyete puruṣaṁ puruṣarṣabha ।
sama duḥkha sukhaṁ dhīraṁ so'mṛtatvāya kalpate ॥ 15 ॥

15. One who is unaffected by these, O chief of men, and to whom pain and pleasure are the same, that steadfast person alone is worthy of immortality.

nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ ।
ubhayor api dṛṣṭo'ntas tvanayos tattva darśibhiḥ ॥ 16 ॥

16. The unreal can never come into being, the real never ceases to be. The conclusion about these two is discerned by the seers of truth.

Commentary

'The unreal' refers to the physical body which can never be eternal. *'The real'* refers to the Self (jīva), which can never cease to exist. The final conclusion about these;— the body and the jīva, which we perceive, has been correctly realised by the seers of the Truth. The analysis has reached a definitive conclusion, therefore the term *'conclusion'* (anta) is used here. The gist is this: — non-existence (ie., perishableness) is the real nature of the body which is in itself insentient matter. Existence (ie., imperishableness) is the real nature of the sentient jīva.

avināśi tu tad viddhi yena sarvam idaṁ tatam ।
vināśam avyayasyāsya na kaścit kartum arhati ॥ 17 ॥

17. Know that to be indestructible by which all this [material universe] is pervaded. None can cause the destruction of that — The Immutable.

Commentary

Know that the jīva, in its essential nature is imperishable. The whole of insentient matter, which is different (from the jīva) is pervaded ie. penetrated by the jīva.

Because of the extreme subtlety & pervasiveness of the jīva[26], it cannot be destroyed; for every substance other than the jīva is capable of being pervaded by the jīva because it is grosser than the jīva. Destructive agents like weapons, water, wind, fire etc., pervade the substances to be destroyed and disintegrate them. Even hammers and such other instruments generate air currents through violent contact with the objects and thereby destroy the objects. So, the essential nature of the Self being more subtle than anything else leads to the conclusion that it is imperishable.

antavanta ime dehā nityasy-oktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ ।
anāśino'prameyasya tasmāt yuddhyasva bhārata ॥ 18 ॥

18. These bodies of the jīva (the embodied Self) are said to have an end, while the jīva itself is eternal, indestructible and incomprehensible. Therefore, fight O Bharata (Arjuna).

Commentary

The jīva is indestructible because it is not composed of any parts. When one perceives:— 'I am the knower' — there is an awareness of unity throughout the body which is composed of different parts. It therefore follows that something other than the body is the perceiver and experiencer of the body and other external objects. Therefore the jīva or Self is considered as eternal because:—

(1) It is not a compound
(2) It is the knowing subject
(3) It pervades everything

The body on the contrary is perishable, because:—

(1) it is a compound,
(2) it is an instrument for experiencing the fruits of Karma
(3) it undergoes constant change, and
(4) it can be pervaded.

[26] According to Visishtadvaita the jīva is a tiny atomic point of consciousness.

ya enaṁ vetti hantāraṁ yaścainaṁ manyate hatam ।
ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate ॥ 19 ॥

19. One who deems the Self a slayer, and one who thinks of it as slain — both are ignorant; for the Self neither slays nor is slain.

mriyate vā kadācin nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ ।
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre ॥ 20 ॥

20. The jīva is never born; it never dies; having been existent in the past, it will never cease to be [in the future]. Unborn, eternal, abiding and primeval, it is not slain when the body is slain.

Commentary

It is *primeval*;— this means that it existed from time immemorial; it is ever new ie, it is capable of being experienced always afresh.

vedāvināśinaṁ nityaṁ ya enam ajam avyayam ।
kathaṁ sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṁ ghātayati hanti kam ॥ 21 ॥

21. If one knows this Self to be indestructible, unborn, unchanging and hence eternal— how and whom, O Arjuna, does he cause to be killed, and whom does one kill?

Commentary

How can a [realised] person be said to cause the death of the Self — be it the jīvātman existing in the bodies of gods, animals or plants? In other words the feeling of remorse:— 'I am the cause of the death of these, I kill these jīvas', is based solely upon ignorance about the true nature of the Self.

Let it be granted for argument's sake, that killing merely achieves a separation of the eternal jīvas from their temporary bodies. Even then, when the bodies, which are instruments for the experiencing of agreeable pleasures, perish, there is still no reason for sorrow at this separation.

vāsāṁsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi ।
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāny-anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī ॥ 22 ॥

22. As a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, so does the embodied Self cast off its worn-out bodies and enter into others that are new.

nainaṁ chindanti śastrāṇi nainaṁ dahati pāvakaḥ ।
na cainaṁ kledayanty-āpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ ॥ 23 ॥

23. Weapons do not cut the jīva, fire does not burn it, waters do not wet it, and wind does not dry it.

acchedyo'yam adāhyo'yaṁ akledyo'śoṣya eva ca ।
nityaḥ sarva-gataḥ sthāṇur acalo'yam sanātanaḥ ॥ 24 ॥

24. It cannot be cut; it cannot be burnt; it cannot be wetted and it cannot be dried, it is eternal, all-pervading, stable, immovable and primeval.

avyakto'yam acintyo'yam avikāryo'yam ucyate ।
tasmād evaṁ viditvainaṁ nānuśocitum arhasi ॥ 25 ॥

25. This jīva is said to be unmanifest, inconceivable and unchanging. Therefore, knowing it thus, it does not befit you to grieve.

Commentary

The jīva cannot be demonstrated by those means of knowledge (*Pramanas*[27]) by which gross objects can be demonstrated; hence it is said to be unmanifest. The jīva is different in kind from objects susceptible to cutting etc., therefore It is inconceivable. Not having any of the nature, elements and constituent parts of any other [known] object, the jīva cannot even be conceived of, therefore it is unchanging and incapable of modifications. Thus, knowing this jīva to be possessed of the above mentioned qualities, it is not proper for you to feel grief for it.

atha cainaṁ nitya jātam nityaṁ vā manyase mṛtam ।
tathāpi tvaṁ mahābāho naivaṁ śocitum arhasi ॥ 26 ॥

26. Or, if you consider this Self to be repeatedly born and repeatedly dying, even then, O Maha-bahu (Mighty-armed-one), it does not become you to feel grief.

jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca ।
tasmād aparihārye 'rthe na tvaṁ śocitum arhasi ॥ 27 ॥

27. For death is indeed certain for everything that is born, and re-birth is certain for that which has died; therefore you should not grieve for what is unavoidable.

avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyakta-madhyāni bhārata ।
avyakta nidhanānyeva tatra kā parivedana ॥ 28 ॥

28. O Arjuna! All beings [in the universe] have a beginning that is unknown, a known middle and an unknown end. Why should there be anguish in relation to any of them?

āścaryavat paśyati kaścid enam āścaryavad vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ ।
āścaryavac cainam anyaḥ śṛṇoti śātvāpy-enaṁ veda na caiva kaścit ॥ 29 ॥

29. One regards this Self as a wonder, likewise another speaks of it as a wonder; still another hears of it as a wonder; and even after hearing of it, one knows it not.

Commentary

Among the innumerable beings of the universe, someone, who by deep meditation has removed the effect of error (karma)[28] and has accumulated great merit, may realise this Self which is wonderful and distinct in kind from every other existing thing. Such a person tells someone else about it. Thus, another person hears of it, and even after hearing of it, no one knows it exactly as it really is. The term *'ca'* (and) implies that even amongst the sages, the preceptors and students, one with authentic realisation, authentic teaching and authentic hearing, is a rarity.

dehī nityam avadhyo'yaṁ dehe sarvasya bhārata ।
tasmāt sarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvaṁ śocitum arhasi ॥ 30 ॥

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[27] There are three means of knowing:— a. *pratyakṣa* — direct personal perception, b. *anumāna* — inference through the process of logical reasoning and c. *śabda* — verbal testimony from a reliable source. The jīva cannot be demonstrated either by direct perception or through inference but can only be known through Scriptural testimony.

[28] According to Yoga psychology all thoughts, speech and actions leave a residue potential in the form of *saṁskāras* which then coalesce to form one's disposition and tendencies to act in particular ways. These actions produce karma in the form of pleasure or pain which again produce reactions which result in the strengthening of already existing *saṁskāras* (subliminal activators) or the creation of new ones. Meditation with a focussed mind has the capacity to destroy one's *saṁskāras* and thus leads to a purification of mind and liberation from the effects of karma.

30. The jīva in all bodies, O Arjuna, is eternal and indestructible, therefore, it is not proper for you to feel grief for any being.

sva-dharmam api cāvekṣya na vikampitum arhasi ।
dharmyāddhi yuddhāc-chreyo 'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate ॥ 31 ॥

31. Furthermore, considering also your own duty, it does not befit you to falter, because to a Kshatriya, there is no greater merit than a righteous war.

yadṛcchayā copapannaṁ svarga dvāram apāvṛtam ।
sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddham īdṛśam ॥ 32 ॥

32. Happy are the Kshatriyas, O Arjuna, to whom a war such as this comes of its own accord; it opens the gates to heaven.

atha-cet tvam imaṁ dharmyaṁ saṅgrāmaṁ na kariṣyasi ।
tataḥ sva-dharmaṁ kīrtiṁ ca hitvā pāpam avāpsyasi ॥ 33 ॥

33. But if you do not fight this righteous war, you will be turning away from your duty and honour, and will be incurring blame.

akīrtiṁ cāpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti te'vyayām ।
saṁbhāvitasya cākīrtir maraṇād-atiricyate ॥ 34 ॥

34. Furthermore, people will for ever recall your everlasting disgrace, and for an honourable man, dishonour is worse than death.

bhayād raṇād uparataṁ mansyante tvāṁ mahārathāḥ ।
yeṣāṁ ca tvaṁ bahu-mato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam ॥ 35 ॥

35. The great warriors will think that you have fled from the battle in fear. These men who held you in high esteem will then speak disparagingly of you.

avācya vādāṁśca bahūn vadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ ।
nindantas tava sāmarthyaṁ tato duḥkhataraṁ nu kim ॥ 36 ॥

36. Your enemies, slandering your prowess, will use words which should never be uttered. What could be more painful than that?

hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṁ jitvā vā bhokṣyase mahīṁ ।
tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛta-niścayaḥ ॥ 37 ॥

37. If slain, you shall gain heaven; if victorious, you shall enjoy the earth. Therefore, arise O Arjuna and resolve to fight.

sukha-duḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau ।
tato yuddhāya yujyasva nainaṁ pāpam avāpsyasi ॥ 38 ॥

38. Considering pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat to be the same, prepare yourself for the battle. Thus, you shall not incur any blame[29].

eṣā te'bhihitā sāṅkhye buddhir yoge tvimāṁ śṛṇu ।
buddhyā-yukto yayā pārtha karma-bandhaṁ prahāsyasi ॥ 39 ॥

39. This knowledge which has been taught to you [so far] concerns *Sankhya*. Now listen to the teaching concerning *Yoga*, endowed with which, O Arjuna, you shall cast off the bonds of Karma.

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[29] The term used is "*pāpa*" – defined as intentionally causing suffering to others, its opposite "*puṇya*" is defined as benefiting other beings.

Commentary

'Sankhya' here means 'intellect'; and the truth about the Self, which is ascertainable by the intellect, is known as *'Sankhyam'*. Concerning the nature of the Self which you should know, all the required teaching has been imparted to you (II.12 — 30). 'Yoga' in this context is the attitude (Buddhi) one should adopt for the performance of works. When this attitude is based upon the realisation of the true nature of the Self, it constitutes the means of attaining Liberation. The insight [Buddhi or attitude] that is required for transforming a [mundane] activity into a spiritual one leading to Liberation [Yoga], is now taught. Endowed with this insight, you will be able to cast off the bondage of Karma —*'Karma-bandha'* ie., the bondage of reincarnation or *Samsara*.

nehābhikrama-nāśo'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate ।
svalpam apyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt ॥ 40 ॥

40. In this [practice], there is no wasted effort, nor any harm [transgression]. Even a little of this practice [Dharma ie. Karma Yoga] protects one from the great terror.

Commentary

In this practice of Karma Yoga there is no loss of initial effort. *'Abhikrama'* means invested effort. *'Nāśa'* means the loss of potential to succeed. In the practice of Karma Yoga, if some activity is begun and left unfinished, and the continuity is thus broken, it does not remain fruitless, as in the case of works undertaken expressly for their rewards. There is no negative result if the work is not continued. Even a little of this practice known as Karma Yoga or *Niṣkāma Karma* (actions done without desire for any reward) gives protection from the great fear, i.e., the fear of [the continuation of] transmigratory existence.

vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana ।
bahu-śākhā hyanantāśca buddhayo'vyavasāyinām ॥ 41 ॥

41. In this [Karma Yoga], O Arjuna, the resolute mind is one-pointed; the thoughts of the irresolute are many-branched and endless.

yām imāṁ puṣpitāṁ vācaṁ pravadanty-avipaścitaḥ ।
veda-vāda-ratāḥ pārtha nānyad astīti vādinaḥ ॥ 42 ॥

42. Flowery speech, O Partha is uttered by the unwise who rejoice in the words of the Vedas, declaring "there is nothing superior to this"!

Commentary

The ignorant, having little understanding, and being motivated only by the attainment of pleasure and power, speak grandiloquent language consisting of 'flowers' only and no fruit; appearing very impressive but lacking substance. They delight in talking *about* the Vedas — they are attached to heaven and such other results [promised in the *Karma-khāṇḍa* section of the Vedas] and thus they consider that there is nothing else, that is, owing to their intense attachment to these results, they declare that there is no goal superior to heaven etc.

kāmātmānaḥ svarga-parā janma-karma-phala-pradām ।
kriyā-viśeṣa bahulāṁ bhogaiśvarya gatiṁ prati ॥ 43 ॥

43. They are full of desires and have heaven for their goal. They teach rebirth as the result of actions and engage in various specific rites for the attainment of pleasure and power.

bhogaiśvarya prasaktānāṁ tayāpahṛta cetasām ।
vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate ॥ 44 ॥

44. Those who cling to pleasure and power are attracted by these teachings [offering heavenly rewards] and are unable to develop the resolute will of a concentrated mind.

Commentary

It may be questioned why the Vedas, which have more love for the jīvas than thousands of parents, and which are endeavouring to Liberate the jīvas, should thus prescribe rites which have trifling results and which produce only rebirth. It can also be asked if it is proper to abandon what is revealed in the Vedas. Sri Krishna replies to these questions:—

trai-guṇya viṣayā vedā nistrai-guṇyo bhavārjuna ।
nir-dvandvo nitya satvastho nir-yoga kṣema ātmavān ॥ 45 ॥

45. The Vedas deal with the three Modes of Material Nature (*Guṇas*), O Arjuna. You must free yourself from these three Guṇas and from the pairs of opposites. Abide in pure *Sattva*; never care to acquire things and to protect what has been acquired, but be established in the ātman.

Commentary

The word *Traigunya* means the three *Guṇas*— *Sattva* (poise), *Rajas* (goal-orientation) and *Tamas* (passivity). Here the term *Traigunya* denotes persons in whom these three qualities are found. The Vedas, in prescribing rituals for the attainment of goals (Kamya-karmas) have such persons in view. Because of their great love, the Vedas teach what is good to all those in whom [either] Tamas, Rajas or Sattva preponderate. If the Vedas had not explained to these persons the means for the attainment of heaven etc., according to their respective dispositions, then those who are not interested in Liberation (owing to absence of Sattva and preponderance of Rajas and Tamas), would become completely lost. They would be confused about legitimate goals and the means for their attainment. Hence the Vedas deal with matters relevant to all the three dispositions.

The purport is:— "do not become controlled by the three Gunas and their state of interplay; do not allow such influence to develop. Be established in Sattva, in its state of purity without the contamination of the other two Gunas."

If it asked how this is possible, the reply is as follows; — "never care to acquire things nor secure what has already been acquired. While abandoning the acquisition of things that do not contribute to Self-realisation, abandon also the conservation of such things already acquired. You can thus develop control and thereby begin aspiring after the realisation of the essential nature of the ātman. *'Yoga'* is acquisition of what has not been acquired; *'Kshema'* is preservation of things already acquired. Abandoning these two is essential for a seeker after enlightenment (Self-realisation). If you conduct yourself in this way, the influence of Rajas and Tamas will be overcome and pure Sattva will develop."

yāvān artha udapāne sarvataḥ saṁplutodake ।
tāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ ॥ 46 ॥

46. For a Brahmin who knows the Self, the Vedas are of as much use as a flooded water reservoir for a thirsty person.

Commentary

All that is taught in the Vedas is not suitable to be practiced by everyone. A reservoir, which is completely overflowing with water is constructed for all kinds of purposes like irrigation etc. The thirsty person will only use enough to quench his thirst and not the entire content. Likewise, an enlightened aspirant seeking liberation will only take from the Vedas that which contributes directly to Liberation, and nothing else.

karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana |
mā karma phala hetur bhū mā saṅgo'stva karmaṇi || 47 ||

47. To work alone you have the right, and not to the fruits. Do not allow rewards to be your motive for action. Nor be attached to inaction.

yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya |
siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate || 48 ||

48. Abandoning attachment and established in Yoga, perform works, viewing success and failure with an even mind. Equipoise is said to be Yoga.

Commentary

Abandoning the attachment to kingdom, relatives etc., establish yourself in Yoga, engage in war and other such activities. Perform these with equanimity as regards success and failure resulting from victory or defeat which are inherent in them. *Yoga* is defined in this verse as "equanimity with regard to success and failure."

Sri Krishna explains why He constantly repeats this teaching: —

dūreṇa hyavaraṁ karma buddhi-yogād dhanañjaya |
buddhau śaraṇam anviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phala-hetavaḥ || 49 ||

49. Action with attachment [to results] is far inferior, O Arjuna, to action done with equanimity. Seek refuge in wisdom. Miserable are they, who act motived by reward.

buddhi-yukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛta duṣkṛte |
tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam || 50 ||

50. Endowed with wisdom [equanimity] one discards here and now [the results] of good and evil deeds. Therefore devote yourself to Yoga — Yoga is skilful action

Commentary

One who has achieved mental equipoise in the performance of actions, relinquishes the results of good and bad Karmas which have accumulated from time immemorial causing endless bondage. *Yoga is skilful action* — that is, it is possible to achieve this state of mental balance when engaged in action, only through great skill.

karmajaṁ buddhi-yuktā hi phalaṁ tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ |
janma bandha vinirmuktāḥ padaṁ gacchanty-anāmayam || 51 ||

51. The wise who possess this mental disposition, having relinquished the fruits of action, are freed from the bondage of rebirth and go to the region beyond all suffering.

yadā te mohakalilaṁ buddhir vyati-tariṣyati |
tadā gantāsi nirvedaṁ śrotavyasya śrutasya ca || 52 ||

52. When your intellect has passed beyond the tangle of delusion, you will feel distaste regarding what you shall hear and what you have already heard.

śruti vipratipannā te yadā sthāsyasi niścalā ।
samādhāv-acalā buddhis tadā yogam avāpsyasi ॥ 53 ॥

53. When your intellect, well enlightened by listening [to Me] and firmly placed, remains unshaken in a concentrated mind, then you will attain the vision of the Self (Yoga).

arjuna uvāca

sthita-prajñāsya kā bhāṣā samādhisthasya keśava ।
sthita-dhīḥ kiṁ prabhāṣata kim āsīta vrajeta kim ॥ 54 ॥

Arjuna said:
54. What is the mode of speech, O Krishna, of one of steady wisdom who is established in the control of the mind? What will one of steady wisdom say? How does he sit? How does he move?

śrī bhagavān uvāca

prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān ।
ātmany-evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthita-prajñās tad-ocyate ॥ 55 ॥

The Lord said:
55. When one relinquishes all the desires arising in the mind, O Arjuna, when one is satisfied in oneself with the Self, then one is said to be of steady wisdom (*sthita-prajña*).

Commentary

This is the highest form of devotion to enlightenment. Then, the lower state, not far below it, of one established in *steady intellect*, is described;—

duḥkheṣv-anudvigna-manāḥ sukheṣu vigata spṛhaḥ ।
vīta-rāga bhaya krodhaḥ sthita-dhīr munir ucyate ॥ 56 ॥

56. One whose mind is not perturbed by pain, who does not hanker after pleasures, who is free from desire, fear and anger — is called a sage of steady intellect (*sthita-dhi*).

Commentary

Even when there are reasons for grief like separation from beloved ones, the enlightened one's mind is not perturbed. He has no craving for sense enjoyment, he has no hankering for them. He is free from desire, fear and anger;— *desire* is craving for objects not yet obtained. *Fear* is mental agitation produced by the awareness of factors which cause separation from objects that one loves, or by encountering that which is undesirable. *Anger* is a disturbed state of mind which produces aggression directed at another sentient being who is perceived as the cause of separation from the beloved object or when confronting what is undesirable. An aspirant of this sort, who constantly meditates on the Self, is said to have attained *steady intellect.*

yaḥ sarvatrān-abhisnehas tat tat prāpya śubhāśubham ।
nābhinandati na dveṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā ॥ 57 ॥

57. He who has no attachment anywhere, who, when encountering the agreeable or the disagreeable feels neither attraction nor aversion — his wisdom is firmly established (*prajñā-pratiṣṭhitā*).

Commentary

One who has no attraction at all for pleasing objects, ie., who is indifferent to them, and who does not feel either attraction nor repulsion when involved with, or separated from attractive or repulsive objects respectively, who neither delights in the former, nor is repulsed by the latter — has attained *established wisdom.*

yadā saṁharate cāyaṁ kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ ।

indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā || 58 ||

58. When one is able to withdraw the senses from the objects of senses on every side, as a tortoise withdraws its limbs, then one's wisdom is firmly established.

Commentary

Thus there are four stages in the progression to enlightenment[30], each stage giving rise to the succeeding stage. Now Sri Krishna speaks of the difficulties of [both] the attainment of resolute dedication to enlightenment and the means of that attainment.

viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ ।
rasa-varjaṁ raso'pyasya paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate || 59 ||

59. The objects of senses turn away from the abstinent one, leaving only the predilection behind. Even this predilection turns away when the Supreme is seen.

Commentary

Predilection (*rasa*) means 'hankering'. The meaning is that the hankering for the sense-objects does not vanish by abstinence alone. But even this hankering will evaporate, when one realises that the essential nature of the ātman is superior to the sense-objects and that this Self-realisation gives greater pleasure than any sense gratification.

yatato hyapi kaunteya puruṣasya vipaścitaḥ ।
indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabhaṁ manaḥ || 60 ||

60. The turbulent senses, O Arjuna, indeed forcefully carry away the mind of even a wise person, even though he is continually striving [to control them].

Commentary

The craving for sense-gratification will not be overcome except by the direct experience of the ātman. While the craving for sense gratification remains, the senses of even a wise person who is continually striving to subdue them, become intractable. Thus, the subduing of the senses depends on the realisation of the ātman, and the realisation of the ātman depends on the subduing of the senses. Consequently, because of this mutual [contradictory] dependence, resolute dedication to enlightenment is difficult to achieve.

tāni sarvāṇi saṁyamya yukta āsīta matparaḥ ।
vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā || 61 ||

61. Having controlled all the senses, one should abide in the state of meditation, having Me as Supreme [goal]; for, one who has controlled his senses, wisdom is firmly established.

Commentary

With a desire to overcome this mutual dependence between the subduing of the senses and Self-realisation, one has to conquer the senses which are difficult to subdue on account of attachment to sense-objects. So, focussing the mind on Me who am the only worthy object for meditation, let one remain steadfast. When the mind is focussed on Me, it becomes purified by the burning away of all mental impurities

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[30] These four stages correspond to Patanjali's four stages of esoteric (*antaraṅga*) Yoga: — *pratyahāra* — withdrawl of the mind from sense objects; *dhāraṇa* — focussing the mind; *dhyāna* — steady contemplation; *samādhi* — absorption, enstacy.

and becomes free from attachment to the senses. It is then able to bring the senses under control. With the senses under control the mind will be able to experience the Self.

dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ saṅgas teṣūpajāyate |
saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmaḥ kāmāt krodho'bhijāyate || 62 ||

62. When one deliberates upon sense-objects, attachment to them arises; from attachment is born desire, from desire arises anger;

Commentary

When a person, attempts to sever attachment to sense-objects, but does not focus the mind on Me, even though he may control the senses, contemplation on sense-objects is unavoidable on account of the sub-liminal activators (*samskāras*) accumulated from time immemorial. Again attachment develops fully in one who deliberates upon sense-objects. *'From attachment arises desire'* — What is termed desire (*kāma*) is indeed, nothing other than a more developed stage of attachment (*sangha*). After reaching that stage, it is impossible for one to refrain from indulgence in sense-gratification. *'From desire arises anger'* — when a desire arises without access to its object, a negative emotion arises against persons nearby, to the effect 'Our desire is thwarted by these persons' — this is anger (*krodha*).

krodhād-bhavati saṁmohaḥ saṁmohāt smṛti-vibhramaḥ |
smṛti-bhramśād buddhi-nāśo buddhir-nāśāt praṇaśyati || 63 ||

63. From anger arises delusion; from delusion, the loss of memory; from the loss of memory, the destruction of discrimination; and with the destruction of discrimination, one is lost.

Commentary

Delusion (confusion) is lack of discrimination between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. In such a state, one does anything and everything. Then follows the *failure of memory* — ie. of the impressions of the earlier successes of sense control — when one attempts again to control the senses.

The destruction of discrimination means that the effect of previous efforts made at Self-realisation will be negated. From the elimination of discrimination one becomes lost, ie., is again immersed in Samsara.

rāga-dveṣa viyuktais tu viṣayān indriyaiś-caran |
ātma-vaśyair vidheyātmā prasādam adhigacchati || 64 ||

64. But one who is self-controlled, moving among the sense-objects with the senses under restraint, free from attraction and aversion, attains tranquillity.

Commentary

Having focussed the mind on Me in the way already described, one who views the sense-objects with indifference; with the senses under control and free from aversion and attraction through the eradication of all impurities of mind[31] — such a person is self-disciplined, and serene.

prasāde sarva-duḥkhānāṁ hānir asyopajāyate |
prasanna-cetaso hyāśu buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate || 65 ||

[31] The eradication of the impurities of the mind refers to the eradication of the *vāsanas* or residue habitual pattern formations which result in aversion and attraction to objects and subsequent actions in their regard.

65. In that state of serenity all sorrow is overcome; for in the case of one with a serene mind, the Buddhi soon becomes well established.

nāsti buddhir-ayuktasya na cāpyuktasya bhāvanā ।
na cābhāvayataḥ śāntir aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham ॥ 66 ॥

66. There is no right disposition (*Buddhi*) for the un-integrated, for him there is no contemplation on the ātman, and for one without contemplation on the ātman there is no peace; and for one lacking peace where is happiness?

Commentary

When one does not focus [and integrate] the mind on Me but engages only in the attempt to control the senses by self-exertion, the *Buddhi* or the right disposition that is associated with the pure ātman cannot arise. Therefore one fails in the practice of meditation. One who does not reflect upon the nature of the pure ātman, again begets the desire for sense gratification. How can eternal and unsurpassed bliss be generated in one who is not serene but is attached to sense-gratification? [32]

indriyāṇāṁ hi caratāṁ yan mano'nuvidhīyate ।
tad asya harati prajñāṁ vāyur nāvam ivāṁbhasi ॥ 67 ॥

67. For, when the mind follows the senses — experiencing their objects, the understanding is carried away by them as the wind carries away a ship on the waters.

tasmād yasya mahābāho nigṛhītāni sarvaśaḥ ।
indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā ॥ 68 ॥

68. Therefore, O mighty-armed one, he whose senses are restrained from pursuing sense gratification in every way, his wisdom is firmly established.

yā niśā sarva bhūtānāṁ tasyāṁ jāgarti saṁyamī ।
yasyāṁ jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ ॥ 69 ॥

69. The self-controlled one is awake during what is night for all beings, when all beings are awake, that is the night to the enlightened one.

Commentary

The enlightened mind which is centred on the ātman is like night — dark and obscure for all other beings. One who has subdued the senses and is serene, is awake to the nature of the ātman; that is — fully enlightened. All beings are "awake" — ie. actively interacting with the objects of the senses like sound and the rest. But such sense awareness is like night — obscure to the enlightened one who has realised the Self.

apūryamāṇam acala pratiṣṭhaṁ samudram āpaḥ praviśanti yadvat ।
tadvat kāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve sa śāntim āpnoti na kāmakāmī ॥ 70 ॥

70. One into whom all desires enter, as the rivers enter the plenitude of the ocean which remains undisturbed, attains to peace, and not one who hankers after objects of desire.

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[32] The gist of this teaching is that without the aid of devotion to and meditation upon Krishna, the effort to control the senses by one's will power alone will end in failure.

Commentary

The river flows into the sea which is already replete and is thus always the same, that is, unchanging in volume. The sea exhibits no perceptible increase or decrease, whether the waters of rivers enter it or not. Even so do all objects of desire enter into a self-controlled one, they produce only sense impressions but no reaction. Such a person will attain peace.

vihāya kāmān yaḥ sarvān pumāṁś-carati niḥspṛhaḥ ।
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntim adhigacchati ॥ 71 ॥

71. The individual who, abandoning all desires, perseveres without longing, devoid of the notion of possession and the sense of egoistic self-importance — he attains peace.

eṣā brāhmī-sthitiḥ pārtha naināṁ prāpya vimuhyati ।
sthitvā'syām antakāle'pi brahma-nirvāṇam ṛcchati ॥ 72 ॥

72. This is called the *Brahmi-state*, O Arjuna, attaining which none is deluded. By abiding in this state even at the hour of death, one attains Nirvana.

Commentary

The *Brahmi-state* which is characterised by immutable wisdom, is defined as the state of performing actions without motivation for rewards, which is preceded by the [theoretical] knowledge of the eternal ātman. It is the *Brahmi-state*, which secures the attainment of the *Brahman* (the ātman). After attaining such a state, one is not deluded, that is, will not again enter into the cycle of transmigration. Reaching this state even during the last years of life, one attains the blissful Brahman (the realisation of the ātman) which is full of beatitude. The meaning is that one attains Self-realisation which consists of pure bliss.

Summary

Thus in the second chapter, the Lord wanted to remove the delusion of Arjuna, who did not know the real nature of the ātman and also did not realise that the enterprise called 'war' [here an ordained duty] is a means for actualising Sankhya or realisation of the Self. Arjuna was under the delusion that the body is the individual Self, and dominated by this delusion, had retreated from battle. He was therefore taught (a) the knowledge called 'Sankhya' — the understanding of the real nature of the Self, and (b) 'Yoga' — the path of action done without attachment to or motivation for rewards. These two together are directed to the attainment of steady wisdom (*Sthita-prajña*)

This has been clarified in the following verse by Sri Yamunacharya: —

"Saṅkhya and Yoga, which comprehend within their scope the understanding of the nature of the eternal Self and the practical way of disinterested action respectively, were imparted in order to remove Arjuna's delusion. Through them the state of steady wisdom can be reached."

hariḥ oṁ tatsat
iti śrīmad-bhagavad-gītāsupaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṁ yoga śāstre
śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna saṁvāde saṅkhya yogo nāma
dvitīyo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishad of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the second discourse entitled —
"**The Yoga of Knowledge (Sankhya)**"

Chapter 3

Karma Yogaḥ

Communion through Action

Summary of the Teaching

The terms cognition (*Vedana*), worship (*Upāsana*), meditation (*Dhyāna*), etc. are synonyms for "Bhakti" [devoted meditation] which is focussed and persistent. This [practice] constitutes the means for realising the Supreme Being who is described in the Veda to be the goal of all seekers of Liberation. The Supreme Being is free from even a vestige of blemish like nescience (ignorance), and is endowed with a plethora of countless auspicious, unsurpassed attributes beyond all limitations. For teaching such Bhakti the [preliminary] doctrines concerning the true nature of the Self have been given in Chapter 2. This Self-realisation is an accessory to Bhakti, as was taught by Prajapati (Chandogya Upanishad 8;7.1) and elsewhere too. The intellectual understanding of the Self leads to Karma Yoga — doing work without attachment to their fruits — which in turn leads to Jñāna Yoga (Meditation) which brings about a complete and direct realisation of the Self.

arjuna uvāca

jyāyasī cet karmaṇaste matā buddhir-janārdana |
tat kiṃ karmaṇi ghore māṃ niyojayasi keśava || 1 ||

Arjuna said:

1. If, O Krishna you consider that Buddhi (mind-development) is superior to Karma (action), why do you urge me to engage in this terrible deed?

Commentary

If the steadfast practice of meditation is the only means to Self-realisation, then how can one accept the idea that commitment to action (Karma Yoga) also leads to Self-realisation? — this is the question. It was taught before that steadfast dedication to mind-development as the means to attain Self-realisation would arise through the cessation of activities of the senses, including mental activity in relation to their respective objects such as sound etc. If Self-realisation is to be attained through the cessation of the activities of the senses, then surely I should be encouraged to relinquish all actions and engage myself solely in the practice of meditation. Why then, do you encourage me to engage in this dreadful deed, which is a sense-activity and is thus an obstacle to Self-realisation?

vyāmiśreṇaiva vākyena buddhiṃ mohayasīva me |
tad ekaṃ vada niścitya yena śreyoham-āpnuyām || 2 ||

2. You confuse me with statements that seem to contradict each other; tell me for certain the one way by which I could reach the highest good.

śrī bhagavān uvāca

loke'smin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayā'nagha |
jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānāṃ karma-yogena yoginām || 3 ||

The Blessed Lord said:

3. In this world there is a two-fold path as I have said before, O sinless one: Jñāna Yoga for the Sankhyans and Karma Yoga for the Yogins.

Commentary

This world, is filled with people with varying degrees of aptitude, I have therefore taught two forms of discipline — the way of meditation (Jñāna Yoga) and the way of action (Karma Yoga), according to the aptitudes of the aspirants. There is no contradiction in this. The ability to meditate does not spontaneously come to everyone in the world in whom the desire for Liberation has arisen. But one who acts, unmotivated by the desire for rewards but purely as a means of worshiping the Supreme Being becomes free of mental impurities, and by restraining the senses, one becomes competent for the practice of meditation.

Consequently, firm commitment to meditation upon the ātman [*Jñāna Yoga*] is taught specifically to the Sankhyans — those persons who are competent to observe the discipline of meditation; and Karma Yoga to Yogins — those qualified for the path of action.

Sankhya means Buddhi (intellectual or mental disposition) and those who are endowed with the mental disposition directed only at Self-realisation are Sankhyans.

Karma Yoga is appropriate for those whose minds (*buddhi*) are agitated by sense-objects, whereas those whose minds are not thus agitated, are qualified for Jñāna Yoga. Therefore nothing contradictory and confusing is taught.

na karmaṇām anārambhān naiṣkarmyaṃ puruṣo'śnute |
na ca saṃnyasanād-eva siddhiṃ samādhigacchati || 4 ||

4. No one achieves freedom from activity (*Naiś-karmyam*) by abstaining from works; and no one ever attains success by mere renunciation of works.

na kaścit kṣaṇam-api jātu tiṣṭhaty-akarma-kṛt |
kāryate hy-avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtair-guṇaiḥ || 5 ||

5. Verily no one can remain even for a moment, without performing action; for everyone is forced to act, helplessly indeed, by the Material Modes [Gunas].

Commentary

Every one, even after resolving not to do anything, is forced to act — impelled to act according to the *Gunas* [Modes] of *Prakrti* [Nature]. The *Gunas* or 'Modes of Nature' are *Sattva* (cohesive tendency — centripetal attraction), *Rajas* (revolving tendency) and *Tamas* (disintegrative tendency — centrifugal attraction). These [tendencies] are pre-determined by one's previous Karma. Consequently, Jñāna Yoga can be practiced only after the mind has been purified by annulling the accumulation of negative tendencies through the practice of Karma Yoga, and by bringing Sattva and other Gunas under control.

Otherwise, one who engages in mind-practice becomes an hypocrite: —

karmendriyāṇi saṃyamya ya āste manasā smaran |
indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate || 6 ||

6. One who, restraining the organs of action, sits contemplating on the objects of senses, is a deluded person and an hypocrite.

Commentary

A hypocrite (*mithyācāraḥ*) is one whose actions do not harmonise with one's resolve. [Such a person] is one whose mind and other five senses are not subdued— having failed to neutralise the accumulated demerit, and is none-the-less struggling for Self-realisation. His mind is dragged away from the Self because it is so attached to sense objects, and thus he allows the mind to dwell upon them — by practising meditation in this way, one becomes perverted and lost.

yastv-indriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhate'rjuna |
karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam asaktasya viśiṣyate || 7 ||

7. But one who, subduing the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, begins to practice Karma Yoga through the organs of action and who is free from attachment — excels.

niyataṃ kuru karma tvaṃ karma jyāyayo hy-akarmaṇaḥ |
śarīra-yātrā'pi ca te na prasiddhayed akarmaṇaḥ || 8 ||

8. You must perform your obligatory duties; for action is superior to non-action (meditation). For not even the maintenance of the body is possible by inaction.

Commentary

Action is superior to the practice of meditation. Even in the case of one qualified for the practice of meditation, unmotivated action indeed is better, because meditation is difficult to perform and susceptible to misadventure, as it is not a natural process and one may not have practiced it previously. Consequently, we should understand that because Self-realisation is included in Karma Yoga — it is superior.

This affirmation of the superiority of Karma Yoga (disinterested work) over Jñāna Yoga (meditation on the Self) remains valid even when one is competent to practice meditation. For, if one abandons all activities to practice meditation, then, while practicing meditation, even the basic maintenance of the body, which is essential even for a meditator will not be achieved. Performing the obligatory pañca-mahā-yajñas with the help of honestly earned wealth, the body should be sustained by consuming the remnants [of food offered] after such performances.

Obligatory rites (*nitya karma*) and periodic rites (*naimitta karma*) and the pañca-mahā-yajñas must be carried out by one who meditates too, as the body must be sustained until perfection is attained. Besides, Self-realisation is an integral part of Karma Yoga, as it involves the contemplation of the ātman as not being an agent. It is also in harmony with the natural order (Prakrti). Karma Yoga, is for these reasons easier and it is free from possibility of failure. Therefore, you must perform Karma Yoga only — this is the purport of the verse.

If it is argued that any action such as earning money implies 'I-ness, 'My-ness' etc. and will therefore distract the senses, and the Karma Yogi will again be bound through the subtle impressions [samskāras] of his acts then;

yajñārthāt karmaṇo'nyatra loko'yaṃ karma bandhanaḥ |
tad-arthaṃ karma kaunteya mukta saṅgas-samācara || 9 ||

9. This world is bound by actions other than those performed as sacrifice. O Arjuna, you must perform work to this end [for sacrifice alone], free from attachment.

Commentary

Sri Krishna stresses the need for sustaining the body only by the remnants of sacrifices in respect of those who are devoted to all [the four approved] goals of human life (1. *Dharma* — social duties, 2. *Artha* — material prosperity. 3. *Kāma* — pleasure, 4. *Mokṣa* — liberation from suffering). He denounces those who nourish the body by things that have not been offered in sacrifice: —

saha yajñāiḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ |
anena prasaviṣyadhvam eṣa vo'stviṣṭa kāmadhuk || 10 ||

10. In the beginning the Lord of all beings, created humans along with the sacrifice, saying: 'By this shall you prosper; this shall be the cow of plenty granting all your desires.'

Commentary

Because of the Vedic text — 'The Lord of Universe…..' (*patim viśvasya ……* M. Nar. Up. 11.3), it is justifiable to take the term Prajāpati (Lord of Beings) in its wider sense and interpret it to mean Nārāyaṇa who is the Lord of all beings, the 'Creator of the Universe' and the 'Self of all beings' and the 'Supreme Abode'. In the beginning, at the time of creation, the Lord of beings, saw all beings submerged within Himself, in a state devoid of the distinctions of name and form. They were helpless due to their total identification with insentient matter and were incapable of attaining the four goals of human existence. The supremely Compassionate One, with a desire to redeem them, projected them into being together with sacrifice in order that they might perform sacrifices as His worship and said:— 'By this sacrifice, shall you prosper', ie. accomplish your development and prosperity. May this institute of sacrifice fulfil your supreme desire of liberation (Moksha) and also the other desires that are in conformity with it. How, then should this be done?

devān bhāvayetānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ ।
parasparaṃ bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ paramavāpsyatha ॥ 11 ॥

11. By this, may you nurture the gods, and the gods will nurture you [in return]. Thus, nurturing one another, you will obtain the highest good.

Commentary

'By this,' ie., by the means of sacrifice, you should propitiate the gods who are my manifestations and have Me as their inner-Self — Sri Krishna will declare later on: —'For I am the only enjoyer and the only Lord of Sacrifices' (9.24). Propitiated by sacrifices, may these gods, nourish you with food, drink and other such items which are also required for their worship. Thus, supporting each other, may you attain the highest good called Moksha (Liberation).

iṣṭān-bhogān-iha vo devā dāsyante yajñā-bhāvitāḥ ।
tair-dattān apradāyaibhyo yo bhuṅkte stena eva saḥ ॥ 12 ॥

12. The gods, pleased by sacrifice, will bestow on you the enjoyments you desire. One who enjoys the bounty of the gods without offering them anything in return, is verily a thief.

Commentary

'Theft' is defined as taking what belongs to another as one's own and using it for oneself when it is really intended for the use of another.

yajñā-śiṣṭāśinaḥ santo mucyante sarva kilbiṣaiḥ ।
bhuñjate te tvaghaṃ pāpā ye pacantyātma kāraṇāt ॥ 13 ॥

13 The righteous who eat the remnants of sacrifices are freed from all sins. But the sinful ones who cook only for their own sake eat only sin.

Commentary

Sri Krishna again points out that everything has its origin in sacrifice; according to both the worldly and the Scriptural views; the performance of the sacrifices is therefore necessary and their non-performance is a failing:

annād-bhavanti būtāni parjanyād-anna-saṃbhavaḥ ।
yajñānād-bhavati parjanyaḥ yajñāḥ karma samud-bhavaḥ ॥ 14 ॥

14. From food arise all beings; from rain food is produced; from sacrifice comes rain; and sacrifice is achieved through activity.

karma brahmod-bhavaṃ viddhi brahmākṣara samudbhavam ।
tasmāt sarva-gataṃ brahma nityaṃ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam ॥ 15 ॥

15. Know that activity springs from Brahman and Brahman arises from the imperishable (Self); therefore the all-pervading 'Brahman' is ever established in sacrifice.

Commentary

Activity arises from 'Brahman', — Brahman here refers to the natural physical body born of Prakrti and consisting of modifications of Prakrti. Therefore, the phrase 'Activity arises from Brahman' is interpreted as activity being produced by the physical body which is comprised of the modifications of Prakrti. "The 'Brahman' arises from the imperishable Self" — in this context the term 'imperishable' indicates the Jīva [individual Self]. The physical body, which is tenanted by the Self and is nourished by food and drink, is designed for action; hence the physical body which constitutes the instrument of activity is said to arise from the imperishable. Therefore the 'all-pervading Brahman' means, in this context, the bodies of all persons of diverse natures which are the products of Prakrti of which all material entities are comprised, and is hence all-pervading. The meaning is that the bodies owe their existence to this process of sacrifice.

evaṃ pravartitaṃ cakraṃ nānu vartayatīha yaḥ ।
aghāyur-indriyā rāmo moghaṃ pārtha sa jīvati ॥ 16 ॥

16. One who does not follow this cycle thus set in motion, lives in error, revelling in the senses, he lives in vain O Arjuna.

Commentary

Thus, this cycle is set in motion by the Supreme Being. From food originate embodied Jīvas which are denoted by the word 'beings'; from rain food is produced; from sacrifice comes rain; sacrifice is achieved by activities which are accomplished by an agent; and activity arises from the embodied Self; and again the body is endowed with life from food. In this manner there is a sequence. which revolves like a wheel through the mutual relation of cause and effect.

Hence, if one who is engaged in spiritual practice — whether qualified for Karma Yoga or Jñāna Yoga — does not keep in motion this wheel which revolves in a cycle through mutual relation of cause and effect— that person, by not maintaining his physical being by means of the remnants of sacrifice, lives in error. The senses become the pleasure -gardens of one whose mind and body are not nourished by the 'remnants of sacrifices.' Rajas and Tamas begin to preponderate. Being thus deflected from Self-realisation, he rejoices only in sense-gratification. Therefore, even if he were to strive for Self-realisation, it would be fruitless. So therefore his life is wasted, O Arjuna.

Sri Krishna now says that the performance of the 'Five Great Sacrifices' etc., according to social status and stage of life, should only be renounced by one who is liberated — whose vision of the ātman does not depend on any external means.

yastvātma-ratir-eva syād-ātma tṛptaśca mānavaḥ ।
ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭas-tasya kāryaṃ na vidyate ॥ 17 ॥

17. But the person whose delight is only in the Self, who is satisfied with the Self, who rejoices in the Self, for him nothing remains to be accomplished.

Commentary

But for one, who is not in need of the means of Jñāna Yoga or Karma Yoga, who has a natural predisposition to achieve Self-realisation, who is satisfied by the Self alone and not by food, drink and other things which are distinct from the Self, who rejoices in the Self alone and not in pleasure gardens, garlands, sandal paste, vocal and instrumental music etc.,

and for whom everything is the Self alone — his subsistence, nourishment and enjoyment, — for him no activity remains to be done in order to achieve Self-realisation, because he is spontaneously and continuously aware of the essential nature of the Self.

naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana ।
na cāsya sarva-bhūteṣu kaścid artha vyapāśrayaḥ ॥ 18 ॥

18. For him there is no interest in what is done or what is left undone, nor has he to rely on any being for anything whatsoever.

Commentary

Thus, for such an individual there is nothing to be gained from any practice undertaken for Self-realisation, nor is he subject to any fault or calamity from not undertaking such spiritual practice, because his Self-realisation does not depend on any external means — for the adoption of the means is only for achieving an aversion to Prakrti and its evolutes.

Spiritual practice for Self-realisation is only proscribed for that person whose vision of the Self is so natural that it no longer depends on any means. But Karma Yoga is a superior practice for attaining Self-realisation for the average seeker, because it is:—

(a) easy to perform,
(b) it is secure from possible error,
(c) the contemplation of the true nature of the ātman is included in it, and
(d) even for a Jñāna Yogin the performance of minimum activity is necessary.

For these reasons, Karma Yoga is better as a practice to achieve Self-realisation.

tasmād asaktaḥ satataṃ kāryaṃ karma samācara ।
asakto hyācaran karma param-āpnoti pūruṣaḥ ॥ 19 ॥

19. Therefore, always perform without attachment, that work which ought to be done. For one who acts without attachment attains to the Supreme.

Commentary

Therefore, considering that all work must be done with detachment, you should act without considering yourself to be an agent — one attains the Supreme Goal by Karma Yoga itself — the meaning [of "attains to the Supreme"] is that one attains Self-realisation.

karmaṇaiva hi saṃsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ ।
loka saṅgraham-evāpi saṃpaśyan kartum arhasi ॥ 20 ॥

20. Verily, by Karma Yoga alone did Janaka and others reach perfection. Indeed, you should act, bearing in mind the welfare of the world.

Commentary

Even royal sages like Janaka and others, who were the foremost among the enlightened ones, preferred Karma Yoga as the means for attaining perfection.
Thus, having first declared that for an aspirant for liberation who is unsuited for Jñāna Yoga, Karma Yoga alone should be practiced, it was next convincingly taught that, even for one who is qualified for Jñāna Yoga, Karma Yoga is still the preferred means. Now it is going to be taught (in verses 20-26) that Karma Yoga must be performed in every way by anyone who is virtuous.

At least for the welfare of all beings (*loka-saṅgraha*), you should do work even if there is no need of it for yourself.

yadyad-ācarati śreṣṭhas-tat-tad-evetaro janaḥ ।
sa yat pramāṇaṃ kurute lokas-tad-anuvartate ॥ 21 ॥

21. Whatever an eminent person does, other people also do, whatever standard he sets, the world follows it.

Commentary

'An eminent person,' (*śreṣṭha*) is one who is recognised for his knowledge of all the Scriptures and for his observance of all the Scriptural injunctions. Whatever he does, others who are unlearned in the Scriptures will also do, following his example. Therefore for the maintenance of the world [order], an eminent person, distinguished for being wise should always perform all [prescribed] duties according to one's station (*varna*) and stage in life (*āśrama*). Otherwise, the demerit generated from setting a bad example to the masses of the world will bring him down, even if he were established in an advanced stage of Jñāna Yoga.

na me parthāsti kartavyaṃ triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana ।
nānavāptam-avāptavyaṃ varta eva ca karmaṇi ॥ 22 ॥

22. For me, O Arjuna, there is nothing in all the three worlds which ought to be done, nor is there anything lacking that ought to be acquired — yet I continually engage in action.

Commentary

For Me, who am the Lord of all, who has all desires fulfilled, who is omniscient, whose will is [unfailingly] true, and who at My own pleasure, choose to remain in the three worlds in the forms of gods, humans and such other beings, there is nothing whatever to achieve. Therefore, even though there is nothing lacking for Me i.e., nothing yet to be achieved by work, yet still I continue working for the maintenance of the world

yadi hyahaṃ varteyaṃ jātu karmaṇyatandritaḥ ।
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ ॥ 23 ॥

23. For if I did not continue to engage Myself in action, unwearied, O Arjuna, humankind would follow my example.

utsīdeyur-ime lokā na kuryaṃ karma ced aham ।
saṅkarasya ca kartā syām upahanyām-imāḥ prajāḥ ॥ 24 ॥

24. These worlds would perish if I did not perform action; I would be the author of confusion and the cause of destruction of these beings.

saktāḥ karmaṇy-avidvāṃso yathā kurvanti bhārata ।
kuryād-vidvāṃs-tathāsaktāś-cikīrṣu loka-saṅgraham ॥ 25 ॥

25. Just as the ignorant act with attachment their work, O Arjuna, so should the wise act without any attachment, and only for the welfare of the world.

na buddhi-bhedaṃ janayed ajñānāṃ karma-saṅginām ।
joṣayet sarva karmāṇi vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran ॥ 26 ॥

26. The wise should not confuse the minds of the ignorant who are attached to work; rather himself performing work with devotion, he should inspire others to do likewise.

Commentary

Do not confuse the neophyte aspirants by saying that there is, besides Karma Yoga, another way to Self-realisation. They are unable to practice meditation on account of their inability to understand the ātman, and their attachment to action. One should thus encourage love for all types of activity among those who do not know the complete truth.

prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ |
ahaṅkāra vimūḍhātmā kartā'ham-iti manyate || 27 ||

27. All actions are being performed in every way by the Gunas of Prakrti. One whose mind is deluded by the notion-of-individuality, thinks, 'I am the doer.'

Commentary

It is the Gunas of Prakrti — Sattva, Rajas & Tamas, that perform all their respective activities. But one whose mind is deluded by the notion-of-individuality (*Ahankāra*), thinks, 'I am the doer of all these action.' Ahankāra is defined as the mistaken identification of 'I' applied to the physical body which is not the real 'I' [*dehātma bhrama*]. Because of this mistaken identity, one who is ignorant of the real nature of the ātman thinks, 'I am the doer' with regard to the activities that are really being done by the Gunas. [Cf. 14;23]

tattva-vittu mahābāho guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ |
guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate || 28||

28. But he who knows the truth about the divisions of the Gunas and their functions, O mighty-armed one, through his awareness that the Gunas operate on their products, is not attached.

prakṛter-guṇa saṃmūḍhāḥ sajjante guṇa-karmasu |
tān-akṛtsna vido mandān kṛtsnavinna vicālayet || 29 ||

29. Those who are deluded by the Gunas of Prakrti are attached to the functions of the Gunas, but one of perfect knowledge should not unsettle the ignorant who do not know the whole truth.

Commentary

An enlightened person should not, while being a practitioner of meditation, unsettle the ignorant. They tend to emulate a great person, when they see him give up Karma Yoga their minds too will be distracted from Karma Yoga. Thus the great person, should assiduously practice Karma Yoga, with complete mindfulness of the Self not being the agent. Thus, one should demonstrate that Karma Yoga by itself is an independent means for Self-realisation.

mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sanyasyādhyātma-cetasā |
nirāśīr-nir-mamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigata-jvaraḥ || 30 ||

30. Dedicating all your actions to Me with a mind centred in the Self, free from desire and selfishness, free from hot-headedness, do you engage in battle.

Commentary

Hence, dedicate all actions to Me, the Supreme Being, considering Me to be the [ultimate] agent, by contemplating on the ātman as activated by Me alone, because it is My manifestation. And do all duties, considering them as acts of worship only; free from the desire for rewards, and therefore free from selfishness, devoid of 'hot-headedness', that is stimulation caused by passions like anger.

ye me matam idaṃ nityam anu-tiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ |
śraddhāvanto'nasūyanto mucyante te'pi karmabhiḥ || 31 ||

31. Those people who, full of faith ever practice this teaching of Mine and those who receive it without caviling — even they will be released from Karma.

ye tvetad abhyasūyanto nānutiṣṭhanti me matam ।
sarva jñāna vimūḍhāṃstān viddhi naṣṭān acetasaḥ ॥ 32 ॥

32. But those who carp at My teaching and those who do not practice this teaching of Mine — know them to be seriously deluded and devoid of reasoning, and therefore lost.

sadṛśaṃ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛter-jñānavān api ।
prakṛtiṃ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṃ kariṣyati ॥ 33 ॥

33. Even an enlightened person acts in conformity to his own nature; beings follow their nature; what will restraint do?

Commentary

The fundamental nature of the ātman is different from Material Nature (*Prakrti*) — this awareness must be constantly maintained. Even one who knows this, continues to act in relation to material objects according to one's own nature; ie. guided by previously acquired subliminal activators (*samskāras*). How is this? All beings act according to their own natures. Beings conjoined with insentient matter, all act according to predispositions which have accrued from time immemorial. What effect can the restraint enjoined by Shastras have on those who simply follow their natural predispositions?

indriyasyendriyasyārthe rāga-dveṣau vyavasthitau ।
tayor-na vaśam āgacchet tau hyasya paripanthinau ॥ 34 ॥

34. Attachment and aversion for sense objects abide in the sense-organs; let none come under their sway; for they are one's foes.

śreyān sva-dharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt ।
sva-dharme nidhanaṃ śreyaḥ para-dharmo bhayāvaḥ ॥ 35 ॥

35. Better is one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well-done. Better is death in one's own duty; the duty of another is fraught with fear.

Commentary

Therefore Karma Yoga [one's own natural duty] is better than Jñāna Yoga [the duty of another]. It is one's personal duty because it is natural and easy to perform, and even if defective, it is free from possibility of interruption and fall. Jñāna Yoga (meditation on the ātman), on the other hand, though performed well for some time, constitutes an alien duty, as it is difficult to practice for one immersed in Material Nature. It is therefore subject to interruption and the possibility of error. For a Karma Yogi — practicing his natural duty, even death without success in one birth does not matter. In the next birth, with the help of the experience already gained in this birth it will be possible to perform Karma Yoga without any impediments.

arjuna uvāca

atha kena prayukto'yaṃ pāpaṃ carati pūruṣaḥ ।
anicchann-api vārṣṇeya balādiva niyojitaḥ ॥ 36 ॥

Arjuna said:

36. But, impelled by what, O Krishna, does one err even against one's own will, constrained as it were, by force?

śrī bhagavan uvāca

kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ ।
mahāśano mahā-pāpmā viddhyenam-iha vairiṇam ॥ 37 ॥

The Blessed Lord said;

37. It is desire, it is anger, born of the Guna of Rajas; all-devouring, an impeller to sin. Know this to be the foe here.

Commentary

The insatiable desire-nature is born of the Rajas Guna arising from subliminal activators. It is an enemy who attracts one towards the objects of the senses. When desire is impeded it creates anger towards those persons [objects or circumstances] which are the cause of such hindrance. It incites the aspirant to harm others. Know this [desire] which is born of Rajas, to be the natural enemy of meditators on the Self (Jñāna Yogins).

dhūmenāvriyate vahnir-yathādarśo malena ca |
yatholbenāvṛto garbhas-tathā tenedam-āvṛtam || 38 ||

38. As a fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror is covered by dust, and as an embryo by the amnion, so is this (world) enveloped by that (desire).

āvṛtaṃ jñānam etena jñānino nitya vairiṇā |
kāma-rūpeṇa kaunteya duṣpūreṇānalena ca || 39 ||

39. Wisdom is obscured by this constant enemy of the wise, O Arjuna, in the form of desire, which is as insatiable as fire.

Commentary

The embodied ātman's fundamental attribute is consciousness, but insight is concealed by this perpetual enemy — desire, which causes attachment to sense-objects. Desire is difficult to gratify, its objects are unworthy of attainment and it is insatiable, ie., can never be satisfied.

indriyāṇi mano buddhir-asyādhiṣṭhānam-ucyate |
etair-vimohayaty-eṣa jñānam-āvṛtya dehinam || 40 ||

40. The senses, the mind and the intellect are said to be its accessories. By these it [desire] deludes the embodied Self by concealing its wisdom.

tasmāt-tvam-indriyāṇyādau niyamya bharatarṣabha |
pāpmānaṃ prajahi hyenaṃ jñāna vijñāna nāśanam || 41 ||

41. Therefore, O Arjuna, controlling the senses first, slay this deluding thing [desire] that destroys both knowledge and discrimination.

indriyāṇi parāṅyāhur-indrebhyaḥ paraṃ manaḥ |
manas-astu parā buddhir-yo buddheḥ paratas-tu saḥ || 42 ||

42. It is said that the senses are supreme: the mind is superior to the senses; the intellect is higher than the mind; but what is greater than intellect is that (the desire-nature).

Commentary

The senses are called the supreme obstacles to enlightenment, because when the senses continue operating on their objects, the pure vision of the Self cannot arise.

'The mind is superior to the senses' — even if the senses are withdrawn [from their objects], if the Manas (mind) ruminates on sense objects, pure vision of the Self cannot arise.

'The intellect (Buddhi) is higher than the mind', ie., even if the mind is indifferent to sense objects, a perverted decision by the intellect can obstruct the dawn of Self-realisation. But even if all of these up to the intellect are quietened from their activity, still, when the

desire-nature, identified with volition originating from Rajas, is operating, it will by itself, obstruct Self-realisation by inducing the senses to operate in their fields. Thus it is said here; what is greater than the intellect is the desire-nature.

evaṃ buddheḥ paraṃ buddhvā saṃstabhyātmānam ātmanā |
jahi śatruṃ mahā-bāho kāma-rūpaṃ durāsadam || 43 ||

43. Thus, knowing that which is greater than the intellect and fixing the mind with the help of the intellect in Karma Yoga, O Arjuna, slay this enemy in the form of desire, which is difficult to overcome.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavadgītāsupaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre
śrīkṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde karmayoga nama
tṛtīyodhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishad of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the third discourse entitled
"The Yoga of Action"

Chapter 4

Jñāna Vibhāga Yogaḥ

Communion through Wisdom

Summary of the Teaching

In the third chapter it was determined that for the spiritual aspirant in whom the physical impulses are strong, the practice of Karma Yoga alone is the recommended practice. People are not naturally capable of the practice of Jñana Yoga; and even if capable, the practice of Karma Yoga alone, preceded by contemplation on the ātman as a non-agent is preferable. It has also been taught that even a person who is distinguished for wisdom (and is expected to act as a role-model for others) should still practice Karma Yoga alone.

Now in the fourth chapter the need for practising Karma Yoga is further stressed because it was taught at the very beginning of the present (*Kalpa*) age[1] of Manu for the liberation of all beings. It is also demonstrated that the science of the Self is included in it. Furthermore, the nature of Karma Yoga with its divisions and the pre-eminence of the wisdom factor in it, is taught. And incidentally the truth about the incarnations of the Lord is also mentioned.

śrī-bhagavān uvāca

imaṃ vivasvate yogaṃ proktavān aham avyayam ।
vivasvān manave prāha manur-ikṣvākave'bravīt ॥ 1 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:

1. I taught this imperishable Yoga to Vivasvan; Vivasvan taught it to Manu; Manu declared it to Ikshvaku.

evaṃ paramparā prāptam imaṃ rāja-rṣayo viduḥ ।
sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ paraṅtapa ॥ 2 ॥

Thus handed down in succession, the royal sages knew this (Karma Yoga). But with long lapses of time, O Arjuna, this Yoga was lost to the world.

sa evāyaṃ mayā te'dya yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ ।
bhakto'si me sakhā ceti rahasyaṃ hyetad-uttamam ॥ 3 ॥

3. It is that same ancient Yoga which I now teach to you, as you are My devotee and My friend; it is indeed the highest mystery.

arjuna uvāca

aparaṃ bhavato janma paraṃ janma vivasvataḥ ।
katham etad vijānīyāṃ tvam ādau proktavān iti ॥ 4 ॥

Arjuna said:

4. Your birth was recent, and the birth of Vivasvan long ago. How then am I to understand that you taught it in the beginning?

Commentary

According to the regular calculation of time, Krishna's birth was indeed later, contemporaneous with Arjuna's. And the birth of Vivasvān was at an earlier aeon, reckoned as twenty-eight cycles of units of four Yugas each [3] . How can Arjuna accept the truth of His statement that He taught it in the beginning?

Now, there is no contradiction here, for it was quite possible that Sri Krishna had taught Vivasvān in a former birth. The memory of what was done in former births is quite natural for highly evolved persons. This should not be taken to mean that Arjuna does not know that the son of Vasudeva, the speaker, is the Lord of all.

This apparent contradiction may be resolved as follows; — Arjuna surely knows that Krishna the son of Vasudeva is the Supreme Being. Though knowing Him as such, he questions as if he did not know Him. The reasoning was this; the Lord of all is absolutely pure and totally auspicious and omniscient, His resolve is perfect and His desires fulfilled — can the birth of such a Being be of the same nature as that of the gods, humans etc., who are subject to Karma? Or is it false like the illusions of a magical show? Or could it be real? If His birth is real, what is the manner of His birth? What is His body composed of? What is the cause of His birth? What is the purpose of the Incarnation ?

śrī-bhagavān uvāca

bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna ।
tānyahaṃ veda sarvāṇi na tvaṃ vettha parantapa ॥ 5 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:

5. Many births of Mine have passed, O Arjuna, and so is it with you also. I know them all, but you do not know them.

ajo'pi sann-avyayātmā bhūtānām īśvaro'pi san ।
prakṛtiṃ svām-adhiṣṭhāya saṃbhavāmy-ātma māyayā ॥ 6 ॥

6. Though I am unborn and immutable by nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet by employing My own Nature (Prakrti) I am born by My own free will.

yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir-bhavati bhārata ।
abhyutthānam-adharmasya tadā'tmānaṃ sṛjāmy-aham ॥ 7 ॥

7. Whenever there is a decline of Dharma, O Arjuna, and an increase of Adharma, then I incarnate Myself.

paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṃ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām ।
dharma saṃsthāpan-ārthāya saṃbhavāmi yuge yuge ॥ 8 ॥

8. For the protection of the good and for the destruction of the wicked, for the establishment of Dharma, I advent myself from age to age.

Commentary

The main purpose of the incarnation is to reveal the adorable [divine] form in order to foster devotion. The destruction of the wicked is the secondary purpose only. There is no specific restrictions of Yugas like Kṛta, Treta etc., for the appearance of Divine Incarnations.

janma karma ca me divyam evaṃ yo vetti tattvataḥ ।
tyaktvā dehaṃ punar-janma naiti māmeti so'rjuna ॥ 9 ॥

9. Whosoever thus knows in truth My divine birth and deeds O Arjuna, is not reborn again, and after leaving the body comes to Me.

vīta rāga-bhaya-krodhā man mayā mām upāśritāḥ ।
bahavo jñāna tapasā pūtā mad-bhāvam āgatāḥ ॥ 10 ॥

10. Freed from desire, fear and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, purified by the austerity of knowledge, many have attained My state.

ye yathā māṃ prapadyante tāṃs-tathaiva bhajāmy-aham ।
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ ॥ 11 ॥

11. Whosoever takes refuge in Me in any manner whatsoever, in the same manner do I favour them; beings experience Me alone in different ways, O Arjuna.

Commentary

In whatever manner seekers of refuge think of Me, according to their natural dispositions and surrender to Me — I favour them by revealing Myself to them in the form of their choice. The sincere spiritual aspirants will certainly experience an epiphany, that is, my essential nature however indescribable and inconceivable by the Yogins it may be.

kāṅkṣantaḥ karmaṇāṃ siddhiṃ yajanta iha devatāḥ |
kṣipraṃ hi mānuṣe loke siddhir-bhavati karmajā || 12 ||

12. Those who hanker for success in action in this world, sacrifice to the gods; for in this human world, success is quickly attained by religious rites

cātur-varṇyaṃ mayā sṛṣṭaṃ guṇa karma vibhāgaśaḥ |
tasya kartāram api māṃ viddhy-akartāram avyayam || 13 ||

13. The [social] system of four castes was generated by Me according to division of Gunas and Karma. Though I am the generator, know Me as a non-agent and immutable.

Commentary

The whole universe from Brahma down to a clump of grass, together with the system of four social divisions divided according to the Gunas [5] and by actions like self-control in accordance with the Gunas, was projected into being by Krishna. The mention of "generation" is for illustration.

na māṃ karmāṇi limpanti na me karma phale spṛhā |
iti māṃ yo'bhijānāti karmabhir-na sa badhyate || 14 ||

14. Actions do not taint Me, nor do I have a desire for the fruits of actions. One who understands Me thus, is not bound by karma.

Commentary

I am not subjected to Karma through these various actions like projection, sustentation and dissolution [of the universe]. For the distinctions [among sentient beings] of gods, humans, Pretas[6] and animals, are not specifically caused by Me, but by each individual's particular Karma. Therefore, by the process of discriminating between the acquired and the inherent, it will be found that I am not the Originator of specific differences in the universe. The Jīvas (Selves) are endowed with bodies at the time of [the initial] universal projection in accordance with their own Karmas arising from attachment to results etc., In conformity with their own Karma they experience all the enjoyments available in the universe. Thus for them (the embodied Selves) alone is there desire for worldly achievements etc., and for the results of their actions, but for Me there is no such desire.

The Supreme Being is only the operative cause with regard to the projection of beings the actual cause for the differences is the potentiality in the form of previous Karmas, of the Jivas themselves.

evaṃ jñātvā kṛtaṃ karma pūrvair-api mumukṣubhiḥ |
kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvaṃ pūrvaiḥ pūrvataraṃ kṛtam || 15 ||

15. Having known this, the ancient seekers for liberation also performed action, therefore you also should engage in action alone, as the ancients did in days of yore.

kiṃ karma kim akarmeti kavayo'py-atra mohitāḥ ।
tatte karma pravakṣyāmi yaj-jñātvā mokṣyase'śubhāt ॥ 16 ॥

16. What is action? What is inaction? Even the wise are confused in this respect. I shall declare to you that kind of action by knowing which, you will be freed from suffering.

Commentary

What is the type of action which should be done by an aspirant for liberation? And what is inaction? Realisation of the true nature of the agent [of action], is spoken of as 'inaction'. The wise, even the learned scholars, are puzzled about these two — the proper form of the actions to be performed and the true realisation that goes with it. I shall teach you that activity which also includes wisdom. Knowing, that is, practicing it, you will be released from suffering (inauspiciousness), which is the bondage of Samsara. Knowledge about the work to be performed leads to its performance.

karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyaṃ boddhavyaṃ ca vikarmaṇaḥ ।
akarmaṇaśca boddhavyaṃ gahanā karmaṇo-gatiḥ ॥ 17 ॥

17. For verily one must understand the nature of action (*karma*), and the nature of diversified action (*vikarma*) as also the nature of non-action (*akarma*) — profound indeed is the way of action.

Commentary

There is a need to understand what is meant by 'action' (*karma*) – that is action which leads to Liberation. There is also a need to understand 'diversified action' (*vikarma*) — these are actions [7] which are classified as obligatory, periodical and desiderative works requiring various accessories. One also needs to understand 'non-action' (*akarma*)— that is, the knowledge of the Self. Therefore the path of action to be pursued by the seeker after Liberation is indeed mysterious, difficult to understand.

karmaṇya karma yaḥ paśyed akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ ।
sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsna karma-kṛt ॥ 18 ॥

18. He who sees non-action in action and also action in non-action is wise among people. He is fit for liberation and has concluded all actions.

Commentary

One can perceive, by constant reflection on the true nature of the ātman, that the work being done, is in itself a form of wisdom-practice. One can also perceive that this wisdom-practice is an integral part of Karma Yoga. Both these (ie., action as the practice of wisdom and wisdom manifest in actions) are accomplished through reflection on the true nature of the ātman, even while acting. Thus, one who can see action as being included in contemplation on the ātman, is wise, — he has realised the full meaning of the Śāstras; he is worthy and fit to attain Mokṣa. He alone has concluded all actions, that is, has actualised the goal of the entire Shastric teaching.

yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāma saṅkalpa varjitāḥ ।
jñānāgni dagdha karmāṇāṃ tam āhuḥ paṇḍitaṃ budhāḥ ॥ 19 ॥

19. He whose every undertaking is free from desire for personal gain and the delusive identification [of the body with the Self], whose karmas are burnt up in the fire of knowledge — him the wise describe as a sage.

tyaktvā karma phalā-saṅgaṃ nitya tṛpto nirāśrayaḥ ।
karmaṇy-abhi-pravṛtto'pi naiva kiñcit karoti saḥ ॥ 20 ॥

20. Having renounced attachment to the fruits of one's actions, ever contented with the eternal (Self), and dependent on none, one does not verily act, even though engaged in activity.

Commentary

'dependent on none' — devoid of dependence on the transient Prakṛti (body and external environment) — such a person, even though fully engaged in activity, does not, in essence act at all. He is engaged in wisdom-practice under the form of activity.

nirāśīr yatacitt-ātmā tyakta sarva parigrahaḥ |
śarīraṃ kevalaṃ karma kurvan-nāpnoti kilbiṣam || 21 ||

21. Free from expectation, with the mind controlled, relinquishing all notions of possessiveness, and merely doing physical activity, one does not incur blame.

yadṛcchālābha santuṣṭo dvandvātito vimatsaraḥ |
samaḥ siddhāvasiddhau ca kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate || 22 ||

22. Content with what comes without effort, transcending the pairs of opposites, free from ill-will, balanced in success and failure, though acting, one is not bound.

gata-saṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthita cetasaḥ |
yajñāyā-carataḥ karma samagraṃ pravilīyate || 23 ||

23. The Karma of one who is free from attachments, who is liberated, whose mind is established in wisdom, who acts only for sacrifice, is entirely dissolved.

brahmārpaṇaṃ brahma-havir brahm-āgnau brahmaṇā hutam |
brahmaiva tena gantavyaṃ brahma karma samādhinā || 24 ||

24. Brahman is the instrument, Brahman is the oblation; by Brahman is the oblation offered into the fire of Brahman; Brahman alone is to be reached by one who meditates on Brahman in one's works.

Commentary

The purport is that the individual Self— which is [called] 'Brahman' because of its having Brahman as its Over-Self — has to realise its own true nature. All actions performed by an aspirant for Liberation are wisdom-practice because they are associated with the awareness of the Supreme Brahman as their pervading essence. Actions done in this way are a direct means for Self-realisation without the meditation of Jñana Yoga.

Thus, Sri Krishna, after explaining how Karma takes the form of wisdom-practice, now speaks of the various kinds of Karma Yoga.

daivam-evāpare yajñāṃ yoginaḥ paryupāsate |
brahmāgnāv-apare yajñāṃ yajñenaivopa-juhvati || 25 ||

25. Some Yogins resort only to sacrificing to the gods. Others offer sacrifice into the fire of Brahman solely by means of sacrifice.

Commentary

'Others offer sacrifice into the fire of Brahman solely by means of sacrifice.' — these Yogins are devoted to the sacrifice and to the offering of oblations into the sacred fire [as duty alone].

śrotrādīn-indriyāṇy-anye saṃyamāgniṣu juhvati |
śabdādīn-viṣayān-anya indriyāgniṣu juhvati || 26 ||

26. Others offer hearing and the other senses into the fires of restraint. Others offer as oblations the objects of the senses, such as sound and the rest, into the fires of their senses.

Commentary

Some strive to perfect restraint of the sense such as hearing and the rest, that is, they avoid indulging in pleasing sense-objects. Other Yogins endeavour to prevent the attachment to sense-objects by abstaining from sense-gratification, through the discriminative process of deprecating their value and enjoyable nature.

sarvāṇ-īndriyāṇi prāṇa karmāṇi cāpare |
ātma-saṃyama yogāgnau juhvati jñāna-dīpite || 27 ||

27. Some again offer as oblation the functions of the senses and the activity of the vital energy (prāṇa) into the fire of the Yoga of restraint of the mind kindled by knowledge.

Commentary

The meaning is that some Yogins endeavour to prevent the mind from becoming attached to the functions of the senses and vital-breaths. By contemplating on the Self, they sublimate these energies and overcome even the subtle residual craving for them.

dravya yajñās-tapo yajñā yoga yajñās-tathā'pare |
svādhyāya-jñāna yajñāśca yatayaḥ saṃśita vratāḥ || 28 ||

28. Others again offer material objects, Tapas and Yoga as sacrifice, while others being self-restrained and of rigid vows offer their scriptural study and knowledge as sacrifice

Commentary

Some Karma Yogins perform sacrifice to the gods with materials honestly acquired. Some practice charity, some engage in making oblations into the sacred fire, all these perform sacrifice with material objects. Some perform the sacrifice of austerity — Tapas — by devoting themselves to vows and fasts such as Krcchra, Chandrāyana etc. Others perform the sacrifice of Yoga — here the term Yoga indicates pilgrimages to sacred sanctuaries and holy places as the context relates to aspects of Karma Yoga. Some are devoted to recitation of the Scriptures and some to learning their meaning. They are all devoted to the practice of self-control and of strict vows, ie., they are people of steady resolution.

apāne juhvati prāṇaṃ prāṇe'pānaṃ tathā'pare |
prāṇāpāna-gatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāma parāyaṇāḥ || 29 ||

29. Some sacrifice exhalation into inhalation. Similarly others sacrifice the inspiration into expiration. Some others, holding their breath sacrifice both the inspiration and expiration.

Commentary

Other Karma Yogins are devoted to the practice of breath control (*prāṇāyāma*) which has three actions — *Pūraka* (inspiration) is that [sacrifice] in which the inward breath is sacrificed into the outward breath. *Recaka* (expiration) is that in which the outward breath is sacrificed in the inward breath. *Kumbhaka* (retention of breath) is the sacrifice when the flow of both inward and outward breaths is stopped.

apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇān prāṇeṣu juhvati |
sarve'pyete yajñā-vido yajñā kṣapita kalmaṣāḥ || 30 ||

30. Others, with regulated diet, are devoted to the practice of breath-control (prāṇāyāma). All these [yogins] know the meaning of sacrifices and through sacrifices are absolved of their transgressions.

Commentary

The clause *'regulated diet'* applies to everyone engaged in the threefold practice of breath control. All these, according to their liking and capacity are engaged in performing the various kinds of Karma Yoga beginning from the sacrifice of material objects up to breath-control.

yajñā-śiṣṭāmṛta bhujo yānti brahmā sanātanam |
nāyaṃ loko'sty-ayajñāsya kuto'nyaḥ kurusattama || 31 ||

31. Those who subsist on the ambrosial remnants of sacrifice, go to the eternal Brahman. This world is not for one who makes no sacrifice, how then the other, O Kurusattama (Arjuna)?

Commentary

Those Karma Yogins who sustain their bodies only on the remains of sacrifice which is like ambrosia, will go to the eternal Brahman. 'Go to Brahman' here means attaining the realisation of the Self of which Brahman is the 'Over-Self'.

'One who makes no sacrifices,' is one who is not devoted to any obligatory and periodic rites etc., One will be unable to achieve the material goals of human existence known as right living (*Dharma*), prosperity (*Artha*) and pleasure (*Kāma*); how then can the Supreme goal — liberation (*Mokṣa*) be attained? As Mokṣa has been mentioned as the ultimate goal, the other three objectives are indicated by 'this world' that is, the material realm in which they are accomplished.

evaṃ bahu vidhā yajña vitatā brahmaṇo mukhe |
karmajān viddhi tān sarvān evaṃ jñātvā vimokṣyase || 32 ||

32. Thus many forms of sacrifices have been laid down as means of reaching Brahman. Know them all to be based on the (daily) rites. Knowing this, you shall be liberated.

Commentary

Reaching Brahman — means that they lead to the realisation of the true nature of the ātman. *Based on rites* — means resulting from periodical and obligatory rites performed day by day. *Knowing this* — observing them in the manner prescribed, you will be liberated.

It has been taught that work is a form of wisdom when done with awareness. Now Sri Krishna explains the predominance of the wisdom component in such actions.

śreyān dravyamayād yajñāj-jñāna yājñāḥ paraṅtapa |
sarvaṃ karmākhilaṃ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate || 33 ||

33. The sacrifice of wisdom is superior to material sacrifice, O Parantapa (Arjuna), all actions and everything else culminate in wisdom.

Commentary

Karma Yoga has two aspects— awareness/wisdom and material accessories. Of these two, the component of awareness/wisdom is superior to the physical component. Wisdom is the culmination of all ritual and of all its accessories and

other things that are helpful to it. Thus wisdom alone, which is the ultimate goal is practically applied in Karma Yoga. And this wisdom being regularly practiced, contributes ultimately to Self-realisation.

tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā |
upadekṣayanti te jñānaṃ jñāninas-tattva-darśinaḥ || 34 ||

34. Know that by full prostration, by extensive questioning and by service, the wise, who have realised the truth, will instruct you in [that] teaching.

yaj-jñātvā na punar-moham eva yāsyasi pāṇḍava |
yena bhūtāny-aśeṣeṇa drakṣyasy-ātman-yatho mayi || 35 ||

35. Knowing that, O Pandava (Arjuna), you will not again become deluded thus — by that knowledge you will see all beings, without exception in your Self and then in Me.

api ced-asi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpa-kṛtamaḥ |
sarvaṃ jñāna plavenaiva vṛjinaṃ santariṣyasi || 36 ||

36. Even if you are the most culpable of all criminals, you will cross over all wrong-doing by the raft of knowledge alone.

Commentary

'with the raft of the knowledge' concerning the true nature of the ātman.

yathaidhāṃsi samiddho'gnir-bhasmāt kurute'rjuna |
jñānāgniḥ sarva karmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute yathā || 37 ||

37. Just as blazing fire turns fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge turn all Karma to ashes.

na hi jñānena sadṛśaṃ pavitram iha vidyate |
tat-svayaṃ yoga saṃsiddhiḥ kālenātmani vindati || 38 ||

38. Verily, there is no purifier in this world equal to knowledge; one that is perfected in Karma Yoga discovers this (knowledge) spontaneously, in oneself in due time.

Commentary

Knowledge = Self-realisation, for the knowledge of the ātman destroys all evil. When one has reached perfection by the constant practice of Karma Yoga with awareness, in the manner previously taught, in due course, the wisdom concerning the ātman arises spontaneously.

śraddhāvāllabhate jñānaṃ tatparaḥ saṃyatendriyaḥ |
jñānaṃ labdhvā parāṃ śāntim acireṇādhigacchati || 39 ||

39. One who has faith, who is dedicated to it, and who has controlled the senses, attains enlightenment. Having attained enlightenment, one obtains Supreme Peace.

ajñāś-cāśraddhānaśca saṃśayātmā vinaśyati |
nāyaṃ loko'sti na paro na sukhaṃ saṃśayātmanaḥ || 40 ||

40. The ignorant, the faithless and the cynic perish; for the cynic there is neither this world, nor that beyond, nor happiness.

Commentary

'The ignorant' is one that has not received knowledge through instruction, *'the faithless'* is one who does not develop any faith in this teaching i.e., who does not strive for immediate improvement, and *'the cynic'* is one who is full of scepticism

in regard to the teaching — such persons perish, they are lost. When this teaching about the real nature of the Self is treated with scepticism, then one fails in this material world as also the spiritual world. The meaning is that the goals of human endeavour, such as *Dharma* (right living), *Artha* (prosperity) and *Kāma* (pleasure) which constitute the material goals or aims of life [in this world], are not fully achieved by such a cynic. How then can the Supreme Goal — *Moksha* (liberation) be achieved by him? For all the goals of life can be achieved by doing the works which are prescribed by the Shastras, but their correct performance requires the firm conviction that the Self is different from the body. Therefore, even a little happiness cannot be achieved by one who has doubts concerning the true nature of the Self.

yoga-saṃnyasta karmāṇaṃ jñāna saṃcchinna saṃśayam ।
ātmavantaṃ na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya ॥ 41 ॥

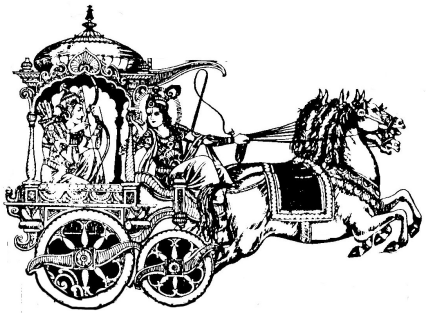
41. O Dhananjaya (Arjuna), actions do not bind one who has renounce them through Karma Yoga and whose doubts are dispelled by knowledge, and who therefore possesses a steady mind.

tasmād-ajñāna saṃbhūtaṃ hṛtsthaṃ jñānāsināātmanaḥ ।
cchittvainaṃ saṃśayaṃ yogam-ātiṣṭhottiṣṭha bhārata ॥ 42 ॥

42. Therefore, with the sword of knowledge, cut asunder this doubt present in your heart, arising from ignorance concerning the Self. Arise and practice this [Karma] Yoga, O Bharata (Arjuna).

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavadgītāsupaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde
jñāna-vibhāga yoga nāma
caturtho'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishad of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the fourth discourse entitled
Communion through Wisdom



Chapter 5

Karma Sanyāsa Yogaḥ

Communion through Renunciation

Summary of the Teaching

In the third Chapter it was taught that even one who qualifies for Wisdom Yoga, should rather practice Action Yoga because it includes Self-awareness and in addition, it is free from liability to lapses. It is therefore easier to practice as well as being an independent means. In the fourth chapter, the wisdom aspect of Action Yoga, and its importance has been discussed. Now, it will be shown that Action Yoga is a far quicker means of attaining Self-realization than Wisdom Yoga. Thereafter the method of contemplating upon the Self as a non-agent which is a feature of Action Yoga is described. This knowledge founded in Action Yoga is then investigated.

arjuna uvāca

saṃnyāsaṃ karmaṇāṃ kṛṣṇa punar-yogaṃ ca śaṃsasi |
yac-chreya etayor-ekaṃ tan-me brūhi suniścitam || 1 ||

Arjuna said:
1. You commend, O Krishna, the renunciation of actions and then again commend Karma Yoga. Tell me conclusively that which is the better of the two.

Commentary

> The objection raised [by Arjuna] is this:— "in the second chapter, you said that Action Yoga alone should be practiced first, by one aspiring for liberation, and that the vision of the ātman should be achieved through meditation after the mind has been purified by Action Yoga. Again, in the third and fourth chapters, you praised Action Yoga as being better than Meditation (Wisdom Yoga) even for one who has attained the level of competency for meditation. And that, as a means of attaining the Self, Action Yoga is independent of Wisdom Yoga. Therefore, of these two, Wisdom Yoga and Action Yoga — tell me precisely which single method is superior, and easier to practice, and quicker to confer Self-realization."

śrī bhagavān uvāca

saṃnyāsaḥ karma yogaśca niḥśreyasakarāv-ubhau |
tayos-tu karma saṃnyāsāt karma-yogo viśiṣyate || 2 ||

The Blessed Lord said:
2. Renunciation of actions and Karma Yoga, both lead to the highest beatitude. But, of these two, Karma Yoga is superior to the renunciation of actions.

jñeyaḥ sa nitya saṃnyāsī yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati |
nir-dvandvo hi mahābāho sukhaṃ bandhāt-pramucyate || 3 ||

3. One who neither resents nor desires is to be known as a perpetual renunciate: verily one who is free from the pairs of opposites is easily liberated from bondage, O Mighty-Armed (Arjuna).

sāṅkhya-yogau pṛthag-bālāḥ pravadanti na paṇḍitāḥ |
ekam-apy-āsthitaḥ samyag-ubhayor-vindate phalam || 4 ||

4. Children, not the learned, speak of Sankhya (Jñana Yoga) and Yoga (Karma Yoga) as distinct; one who is firmly established in either, attains the fruit of both.

yat-sāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṃ tad-yogair-api gamyate ।
ekaṃ sāṅkhyaṃ ca yogaṃ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ॥ 5 ॥

5. That state which is attained by the Sankhyans [Jñana Yogis], is also attained by the Yogins, [Karma Yogins]. He alone is wise who sees that the Sankhya and the Yoga are really one.

saṃnyāsas-tu mahābāho duḥkham-āptum-ayogataḥ ।
yoga-yukto munir -brahma na cireṇādhigacchati ॥ 6 ॥

6. But renunciation, O Mighty-Armed, is hard to achieve without [Karma] Yoga. The contemplating sage who follows [Karma] Yoga reaches Brahman (the Self or ātman) soon.

Commentary

Jñana Yoga — Renunciation, cannot be achieved without *Karma Yoga* — Action. A person practicing Karma Yoga, being a Muni (one mindful of the Self) easily attains the Brahman (Self) in a short time. But one following Jñana Yoga alone, attains the goal with great difficulty — after a long time.

yoga-yukto viśuddh-ātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ ।
sarva-bhūtātmā bhūtātmā kurvann-api na lipyate ॥ 7 ॥

7. One who is devoted to the path of Action and is pure of mind, who is self-control, has conquered the senses and has realized identity with all beings, even while acting, remains untainted.

Commentary

The gist of this is that when dissociated from the physical body, the ātman is of the same essence in all beings; gods, humans and animals. It is of the same form of consciousness. One who has attained enlightenment, active though he may be, is not tainted [by karma] on account of erroneously identifying the body as the Self.

naiva kiñcit karomīti yukto manyeta tattva-vit ।
paśyaṅ-śṛṇvan spṛśan jighrann-aśnan gacchan svapaṅ-śvasan ॥ 8 ॥

8. "I do nothing at all" — this would be the attitude of a focussed knower of the truth, even while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing;

pralapan visṛjan gṛhṇann-unimiṣan nimiṣann-api ।
indriyāṇīndriyārtheṣu vartanta iti dhārayan ॥ 9 ॥

9. Speaking, releasing, grasping, opening, closing the eyes etc., always aware that the senses operate among sense-objects.

Commentary

Thus, one who is Self-realised should reflect that all the sensory organs (Jñanendriyas) as also organs of action (Karmendriyas) and the vital energies (the Prāṇas) are merely occupied automatically with their own respective objects. One should therefore think:— 'I do nothing at all' — 'My essential nature is pure consciousness'. The sense of agency arises because of the association of the Self with the senses and the Prāṇas which originate from one's Karma — it does not arise from one's essential nature."

brahmaṇyādāya karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā karoti yaḥ ।
lipyate na sa pāpena padma-patram ivāmbhasā ॥ 10 ॥

10. One who acts without attachment, reposing all action on Brahman (Nature), is not tainted by unskillful deeds, as a lotus leaf by water.

kāyena manasā buddhyā kevalair-indriyair-api ।
yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṃ tyaktvā'tma śuddhaye ॥ 11 ॥

11. By means of the body, the mind, the intellect and the senses, do Yogins, renouncing attachment perform actions — merely for self- purification.

Commentary

Giving up attachment to heaven etc., Yoga practitioners perform such actions through means of the body, mind and the intellect for purifying themselves, that is, for annulling the bonds of previously accumulated Karma which has affected the Self by way of obscuring its true nature and entangling it in Samsara.

yuktaḥ karma phalaṃ tyaktvā śāntim-āpnoti naiṣṭhikīm ।
ayuktaḥ kāma-kāreṇa phale sakto nibadhyate ॥ 12 ॥

12. The focused-one, renouncing the fruits of actions, attains everlasting peace. But the unsteady one who is attached to the results of actions, being impelled by desire is subject to bondage.

Commentary

'The focused one' — is one who is focused upon the Self and has no hankering for anything else, being exclusively devoted to the Self. If a person renounces the fruits of actions and performs actions merely for the purpose of self-purification, everlasting peace will be obtained, which is the lasting experience of the ātman. *'The unsteady one'* — is one who is inclined towards material goals rather than Self-realization. Being impelled by desire, one becomes motivated by rewards and attached to the results of actions which keep one bound forever — in other words one becomes perpetually involved in the transmigratory cycle.

sarva karmāṇi manasā saṃnyasyāste sukhaṃ vaśī ।
nava-dvāre pure dehī naiva kurvan-na kārayan ॥ 13 ॥

13. Mentally renouncing all actions and self-controlled, the embodied ātman, dwells happily in the city of nine gates (i.e., the body), neither acting nor causing the body to act.

Commentary

One rationalizes that all actions are based upon the interconnectedness of the ātman with the body which is the result of previous Karma, and not due its own essential nature. Being master of itself, it [the Self] dwells at ease, being neither mentally active nor causing the body to work.

Sri Krishna now teaches the natural condition of the Self as it really is:

na kartṛtvaṃ na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ ।
na karma phala saṃyogaṃ svabhāvastu pravartate ॥ 14 ॥

14. The master [of the body—the ātman] does not initiate agency, nor actions, nor union with the fruits of actions in relation to the world (of embodied beings); it is the inherent tendencies alone that function.

Commentary

The "master" (*Prabhu* — that is, the Jīva who is the master of the body), in its own essential nature is not subject to Karma and therefore does not initiate

(a) the agency that is characteristic of sentient beings or
(b) their various and particular activities and

(c) is not responsible for the results of those actions (*Karma*) which bring about its embodiment as a sentient being.

What then is responsible for agency and its results? It is the natural tendencies alone that act. Tendencies (*svabhāva*) are comprised of subliminal activators (*saṃskāras*) originating from engagement with Prakrti. In other words agency and its results do not originate from the natural or pure state of the Self, but are generated by subtle subliminal activators created by the error of identifying the body as the Self.

nādatte kasyacit-pāpaṃ na caiva sukṛtaṃ vibhuḥ ।
ajñānenāvṛtaṃ jñānaṃ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ ॥ 15 ॥

15. The all-pervading Self appropriates neither the demerit nor even the merit of any. Knowledge is enveloped by ignorance, thereby beings are deluded.

Commentary

The ātman is 'all-pervading', and not limited to a particular space. It cannot be restricted to the bodies of gods, humans, or animals and hence it is not the kinsman nor the enemy of any one. For this reason it does not appropriate the demerit or suffering of anyone else such as a son who is a relative and therefore dear to one; nor does it appropriate the happiness of anyone whom it regards with aversion. All this is the effect of *samskāras* or subliminal activators.

How then do these contrary *samskāras* originate? The answer is that knowledge is enveloped by the darkness of ignorance. The ātman's consciousness is enveloped or 'contracted' by previous Karmas which obstruct wisdom, so that one may experience the results of one's own actions. This Karma, which is like a veil obscuring wisdom, causes the Self to incarnate in the various bodies of gods etc. and generates the misconception that the body is the Self. It is through this misconception that more actions are performed which in turn produce more *samskāras* — sub-conscious impressions which in their turn predispose one to act in a certain manner.

jñānena tu tad-jñānaṃ yeṣāṃ nāśitam ātmanaḥ ।
teṣām ādityavad-jñānaṃ prakāśayati tat param ॥ 16 ॥

16. But to those whose ignorance is destroyed by Self-realisation, their enlightenment is supreme and illumines like the sun.

Commentary

In the case of the enlightened ones, their delusion is destroyed by wisdom. This enlightenment arises from [studying] the teachings about the real nature of the ātman, and is then realized by daily practice. The purity of this wisdom is unsurpassed, and in the case of those Jīvas who regain the expansive consciousness that is natural to them, it is found to be unlimited and un-contracted and illumines everything like the sun.

tad-buddhayas tad-ātmānas-tan-niṣṭhās tat-parāyaṇāḥ ।
gacchanty-apunarāvṛttiṃ jñāna nirdhūta kalmaṣāḥ ॥ 17 ॥

17. Those who intellectually pursue That (ātman), whose minds are absorbed in That, who strive for That, and who hold That as their supreme goal, have their karmic hindrances destroyed by wisdom and go whence there is no return.

Commentary

'Those who intellectually pursue That,' — are those who are determined to attain Self-realization; *'those whose minds are absorbed in That,'* — are those whose minds are fully directed to [contemplation on] the ātman, and those *'who strive for That'*, — are those who are fully engaged in the practice of sādhana leading to Self-realization; *'those who hold That as their supreme goal'* — are those who consider Self-realization as the highest goal of life — such persons, having their accumulated

[mental] impurities cleansed by the wisdom which arises in this way, attain the Self as taught:— *'Whence there is no return'* — means the state of enlightenment; ie. they attain the immaculate nature of Self which is its own.

vidyā vinaya saṃpanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini ।
śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ ॥ 18 ॥

18. The sages regard with equality one well-endowed with learning and humility, a Brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater.

ihaiva tair-jitaḥ sargo yeṣāṃ sāmye sthitaṃ manaḥ ।
nir-doṣaṃ hi samaṃ brahma tasmād-brahmaṇi sthitāḥ ॥ 19 ॥

19. Even here and now Samsāra is overcome by those whose minds rest in equanimity. For the Brahman (individual Self), when uncontaminated by Prakrti, is the same everywhere, therefore they are established in Brahman.

na prahṛṣyet priyaṃ prāpya nodvijet prāpya cāpriyam ।
sthira-buddhir-asaṃmūḍho brahma-vid brahmaṇi sthitaḥ ॥ 20 ॥

20. One who having learnt of the Brahman (ātman) seeks to abide in Brahman, one whose mind is steadfastly fixed on That (ātman), undeluded — neither rejoices at gaining what is pleasant, nor grieves on obtaining what is unpleasant.

bāhya-sparśeṣv-asaktātmā vindaty-ātmani yat sukham ।
sa brahma-yoga-yuktātmā sukham akṣayam aśnute ॥ 21 ॥

21. With the mind detached from external contacts, one finds happiness in the Self — with the mind engaged in the contemplation of Brahman [ātman] one enjoys endless bliss.

ye hi saṃsparśajā bhogā duḥkha-yonaya eva ca ।
ādy-antavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ ॥ 22 ॥

22. For those pleasures that arise from contact (with external factors) are sources of suffering. They have a beginning and an end, O Arjuna, the wise do not rejoice in them.

śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhuṃ prāk-śarīra vimokṣaṇāt ।
kāma krodhodbhavaṃ vegaṃ sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ ॥ 23 ॥

23. One who is able, even here, before one is released from the body, to resist the impulses arising from desire and anger, is a Yogi (competent for Self-realization); and a happy person.

yo'ntaḥ sukho'ntarā rāmas-tathāntar jyotir-eva yaḥ ।
sa yogī brahma-nirvāṇaṃ brahma-bhūto'dhigacchati ॥ 24 ॥

24. One who is joyful within, whose pleasure is within, and similarly is illumined within — that Yogi, who having become the Brahman, attains the bliss of the Brahman.

Commentary

Illumined within — Self-qualities like joy, bliss, knowledge, purity, etc. increase spontaneously; *having become the Brahman* — becomes freed from the identification with the body/mind complex, *attains the bliss of Brahman* — that is; Self-realization.

labhante brahma-nirvāṇam ṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇa kalmaṣāḥ ।
chinna-dvaidhā yatātmanaḥ sarva bhūta hite ratāḥ ॥ 25 ॥

25. The sages who are free from the pairs of opposites, whose minds are well directed and who are devoted to the welfare of all beings, become cleansed of all impurities and attain the bliss of the Brahman.

kāma krodha viyuktānāṃ yatīnāṃ yata-cetasām ।
abhito brahma-nirvāṇaṃ vartate viditātmanām ॥ 26 ॥

26. To those who are free from desire and anger, who aspire [for realisation] whose minds are controlled, and who have attained self-mastery — the Great Nirvana is close at hand.

sparśān kṛtvā bahir-bāhyāṃś-cakṣuś-caivāntare bhāvoḥ ।
prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantara cāriṇau ॥ 27 ॥

27. Shutting out all external contacts, focussing the gaze between the eye-brows, harmonizing the flow of the breath — inspiration and expiration,

yatendriya mano-buddhir-munir mokṣa parāyaṇaḥ ।
vigat-ecchābhaya krodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ ॥ 28 ॥

28. — having controlled the senses, mind and intellect, the sage who is intent on Liberation as the final goal, freed forever from desire, fear and anger — is indeed liberated forever.

Commentary

The method of meditation is here taught — shut out all contact with outside stimuli — that is, stop the external activity of the senses; sit with the back straight; focus the concentration between the eye-brows, breath evenly, the senses, mind and intellect should no longer be involved with anything other than focusing on the Self. One should be completely free from desire, fear and anger; and should be intent on achieving Liberation (*Mokṣa*) as the supreme goal — the sage who is thus intent on Self-realisation will indeed be liberated for ever, i.e., is almost liberated, as by virtue of this dedication one would soon be in the ultimate stage of enlightenment.

Sri Krishna now teaches that Action Yoga, described above, which is facilitated by the performance of obligatory and periodical duties and which culminates in meditation is easy to practice:

bhoktāraṃ yajñā tapasāṃ sarva loka maheśvaram ।
suhṛdaṃ sarva-bhūtānāṃ jñātvā māṃ śāntim-ṛcchati ॥ 29 ॥

29. Knowing Me as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds, as the Friend of every being, one attains peace.

Commentary

The gist is that knowing Me as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds and the 'friend' of all, and considering all works as service (*kainkarya*) to Me, one gladly engages oneself, because all creatures indeed strive to please a friend.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavadgītāsupaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde
karma-sanyāsa yogo nāma pañcamo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the fifth discourse entitled
"Communion through Renunciation"

Chapter 6

Dhyāna Yogaḥ

Communion through Meditation

śrī bhagavān uvāca

anāśritaḥ karma-phalaṃ kāryaṃ karma karoti yaḥ ।
sa saṃnyāsī ca yogī ca na nir-agnir-na cākriyaḥ ॥ 1 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:

1. One who performs obligatory works without expecting their fruits — is a Sanyāsin and Yogi, and not one who does not maintain sacred fires and performs no (prescribed) actions.

Commentary

One who performs actions without motivation for their rewards such as heaven, etc., with the conviction that it is one's duty, and sole aim, because they are forms of worship of the Supreme Being who is one's friend in every way and one's only goal — such a person is a real *Sanyāsin*, (a practitioner of *Jñāna Yoga*), and also a Karma Yogi, (practitioner of Karma Yoga). And not one who is disinclined to perform the enjoined works such as sacrifices, etc., nor one who is devoted to mere knowledge alone [without any practice]..

yaṃ saṃnyāsam-iti prāhur-yogaṃ taṃ viddhi pāṇḍava ।
na hy-asaṃnyasta saṅkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana ॥ 2 ॥

2. That which is called Sannyāsa (Renunciation) O Arjuna, know to be Yoga (Karma Yoga). For no one becomes a true Karma Yogin without relinquishing the delusive identification of the body with the Self.

ārurukṣor-muner-yogaṃ karma kāraṇam ucyate ।
yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate ॥ 3 ॥

3. For the sage who seeks to ascend to the heights of Yoga, action is said to be the means; but when one has reached the summit of Yoga, quiescence is said to be the means.

Commentary

In the case of one who aspires for Moksha, who desires Self-realisation, Karma-Yoga is declared to be the preferable means. For the same person, who has once become established in [the practice of] Yoga— quiescence, or abstinence from actions, is said to the means. One should continue to perform actions until one has attained liberation (Moksha) in the form of Self-realisation.

yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasv-anuṣajjate ।
sarva saṅkalpa saṃnyāsī yogārūḍhas-tad-ocyate ॥ 4 ॥

4. When one loses all attachment for the sense-objects and to works, then one indeed has abandoned all desires and is considered to have reached the heights of Yoga.

uddhared-ātman-ātmānaṃ nātmānam avasādayet ।
ātmaiva hy-ātmano bandhur-ātmaiva ripur-ātmanaḥ ॥ 5 ॥

5. One should raise one's Self by one's own mind and not allow one's Self to sink; for the mind alone is the friend of the Self, and the mind alone is the adversary of the Self.

bandhur-ātmā'tmanas tasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ ।
anātmanastu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatruvat ॥ 6 ॥

6. The mind is the friend of one who has conquered the mind. But for one whose mind is uncontrolled, the mind, like an adversary, remains hostile.

jitātmanaḥ praśāntasya paramātmā samāhitaḥ ।
śītoṣṇa sukha-duḥkheṣu tathā mānāpamānayoḥ ॥ 7 ॥

7. Of the self-controlled and serene, the Over-Self is perfectly balanced in heat and cold, in pleasure and pain, and in honour and dishonour,

Commentary

Here the individual Self (*Pratyag-ātman*) is called 'the Over-Self' (Param-ātman), — this interpretation is justified by the context. The individual Self can also be called 'great', because it is at a higher state relative to previous successive stages. Or the sentence may construed as follows: — *atma param samāhitah.* — The Self is exceedingly well balanced.

jñāna vijñāna tṛptātmā kūṭastho jitendriyaḥ ।
yukta ity-ucyate yogī sama-loṣṭāśma kāñcanaḥ ॥ 8 ॥

8. The Yogi who is content with the knowledge of the Self and also of knowledge of the difference (between the Self and the physical body), who is established in the Self, whose senses are subdued and to whom earth, stone and gold seem all alike is said to be well-adjusted.

Commentary

That Karma Yogi whose mind is satisfied with reasoned knowledge (*Jñāna*) of the Self and the specific knowledge (*vijñāna*) of the difference of its intrinsic nature from Material Nature (*Prakṛti*); who remains in a state of unshaken (*Kuṭastham*) awareness of the oneness of the Self in all beings. To whom earth, stone and gold are of equal value — because of the lack of interest in any material objects of enjoyment on account of an intense earnestness to realise /experience the real nature of the Self — such a one is called well-adjusted or integrated i.e., fit for the practice of meditation.

suhṛn mitrāry-udāsīna madhyastha dveṣya bandhuṣu ।
sādhuṣv-api ca pāpeṣu sama-buddhir viśiṣyate ॥ 9 ॥

9. One who regards with equality, well-wishers, friends, foes, the indifferent, neutrals, the hateful, relatives, and even the righteous and the unrighteous — excels.

Commentary

'Well-wishers' (*suhrt*) are those who care about one, regardless of differences in age. *'Friends'* (*mitra*) are well-wishers of equal age. *'Foes'* (*ari*) are those who wish ill to one because of some particular cause. *'The indifferent'* (*udāsin*) are those who are neither friendly nor hostile because of there being no reason for either type of feeling; *'neutrals'* (*madhyastha*) are those who by their very nature are incapable of either friendship or hostility. *'The hateful'* (*dveṣi*) are those who wish ill to one even from birth. 'Relations' (*bandhu*) those who bear goodwill from birth. *'The righteous'* (*sādhu*) are those devoted to the practice of virtue. *'The unrighteous'* (*pāpi*) are those given to wickedness.

Self-realisation being the only goal of meditation, and because all the well-wishing friends and the others, cannot contribute anything to this goal and enemies cannot detract from it, one who regards them all with an equal eye as pure Jīvas, excels in respect of fitness for the practice of meditation.

yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṃ rahasi sthitaḥ ।
ekākī yatacittātmā nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ ॥ 10 ॥

10. The Yogi should constantly apply the mind to Yoga, remaining alone in a solitary place, controlling discursive thinking, free from desire and the sense of possession,

śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthitam-āsanam ātmanaḥ ।
nāty-ucchritaṃ nāti-nīcaṃ cailājina kuśottaram ॥ 11 ॥

11. In a clean place, having established for oneself a firm seat which is neither too high nor too low, and covering it with cloth, deer-skin and kusha grass one over the other,

tatraikāgraṃ manaḥ kṛtvā yata-cittendriya kriyaḥ ।
upaviśyāsane yuñjyād-yogam-ātma viśuddhaye ॥ 12 ॥

12. there, sitting on the seat, focusing the mind in concentration, with the thoughts and the senses restrained, one should practice Yoga for the purification of the self.

samaṃ kāya-śiro-grīvaṃ dhārayann-acalaṃ sthiraḥ ।
saṃprekṣya nāsikāgraṃ svaṃ diśaś-cānavalokayan ॥ 13 ॥

13. Holding the trunk, head and neck erect, motionless and steady, focusing [the attention] at the tip of the nose, and without looking around;

praśāntātmā vigata-bhīr-brahmacāri vrate sthitaḥ ।
manaḥ saṃyamya mac-citto yukta āsīta mat-paraḥ ॥ 14 ॥

14. Serene and fearless, firm in the vow of celibacy, holding the mind in check and fixing the thoughts on Me, one should sit in meditation, holding Me to be Supreme.

yuñjann-evaṃ sadā'tmānaṃ yogī niyata-mānasaḥ ।
śāntiṃ nirvāṇa paramāṃ mat-saṃsthām adhigacchati ॥ 15 ॥

15. Applying the mind constantly in this way, the Yogi, with a controlled mind, attains the peace which is the summit of beatitude and which abides in Me forever.

nāty-aśnatas-tu yogo'sti na caikāntam-anaśnataḥ ।
na cāti svapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna ॥ 16 ॥

16. Yoga is not for one who over-eats, nor for one who fasts excessively; nor for one who sleeps too much, nor for one who stays awake for lengthy periods, O Arjuna.

yuktāhāra vihārasya yukta ceṣṭasya karmasu ।
yukta svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥsvahā ॥ 17 ॥

17. Yoga becomes the destroyer of sorrow for one who is moderate in food and recreation, who is temperate in actions, who is moderate in sleep and wakefulness.

yadā viniyataṃ cittam-ātmany-evāvatiṣṭhate ।
niḥspṛhaḥ sarva-kāmebhyo yukta ity-ucyate sadā ॥ 18 ॥

18. When the subdued mind rests in the Self alone, then, free from all craving for objects of desire, one is said to be 'harmonised'.

yathā dīpo nivātasthe neṅgate sopamā smṛtā ।
yogino yata-cittasya yuñjato yogam-ātmanaḥ ॥ 19 ॥

19. The controlled mind of a Yogi who practices Yoga is compared to a lamp which does not flicker when placed in a windless spot.

yatroparamate cittaṃ niruddhaṃ yoga-sevayā ।
yatra caivātmanā'tmānaṃ paśyann-ātmani tuṣyati ॥ 20 ॥

20. When the mind, restrained by the practice of Yoga, attains that Infinite Bliss, and when seeing the ātman by the mind, one is satisfied by the ātman alone;

sukham-ātyantikaṃ yat-tad-buddhi-grāhyam-atīndriyam ।
vetti yatra na caivāyaṃ sthitaś-calati tattvataḥ ॥ 21 ॥

21. when one knows that intense joy which can be experienced by the intellect but is beyond the grasp of the senses, wherein established one departs not from that condition;

yaṃ labdhvā cāparaṃ lābhaṃ manyate nādhikaṃ tataḥ ।
yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇā'pi vicālyate ॥ 22 ॥

22. having gained which, one considers that there is no greater gain than it; wherein established, one is not moved even by the heaviest sorrow—

taṃ vidyād duḥkha saṃyoga viyogaṃ yoga saṃjñitam ।
sa niścayena yoktavyo yogo 'nirviṇṇa cetasā ॥ 23 ॥

23. know this [state] of deliverance from association with suffering to be Yoga. This Yoga must be practiced with determination and with a mind free from despondency.

Commentary

Yoga is here defined as 'freedom from all involvement with suffering' and is achieved through the practice of the discipline of meditation. Through the practice of meditation the mind becomes completely subdued and rejoices by being in a state of unsurpassed bliss, one then directly perceives 'the Self (ātman)' by 'the mind (ātman)', one becomes delighted by the ātman and indifferent to all other objects. Having once achieved that state, one does not digress there from, because of the overwhelming bliss that is being

experienced. Yoga [the highest meditative state] has been achieved when one is not emotionally moved even by 'the heaviest sorrow' caused by a bereavement like the death of a virtuous son — this Yoga must be practiced with dedication and a mind free from despondency, through the conviction even at the initial stage, that this practice is in itself enjoyable.

saṅkalpa prabhavān kāmāṃs-tyaktvā sarvān-aśeṣataḥ ।
manasaivendriya-grāmaṃ viniyamya samantataḥ ॥ 24 ॥

24. Renouncing without reserve, all desires born of imagination (sankalpa) and completely restraining the whole group of senses by the mind from all directions;

śanaiḥ śanairu-paramed buddhyā dhṛti-gṛhītayā ।
ātma-saṃsthaṃ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcid-api cintayet ॥ 25 ॥

25. — very gradually, one should attain tranquility with the help of the intellect held by a firm resolution; having focused the mind upon the ātman one should think of nothing else.

Commentary

There are two kinds of desires:—

(1) those which arise from contact between the senses and their objects like heat, cold etc. and

(2) those which are generated by the mind (*sankalpa* is the will or imagination) like those for offspring, property etc.

Of these, the latter category, because of their nature, can easily be given up — one should mentally relinquish all these by contemplating on their lack of real connection with the Self. In respect of unavoidable desires resulting from contact with sense objects; relinquish the idea that pleasure and pain affect the Self; and withdraw all the senses from contact with their sense-objects — one should think of nothing else but the ātman. Little by little, through the power of discrimination, one should focus the mind on the ātman alone.

yato yato niścarati manaś-cañcalam asthiraṃ ।
tatas-tato niyamyaitad-ātmanyeva vaśaṃ nayet ॥ 26 ॥

26. Wherever the fickle and unsteady mind wanders, one should subdue it then and there, and bring it back under the control of the Self alone.

praśānta manasaṃ hyenaṃ yoginaṃ sukham-uttamam ।
upaiti śānta rajasaṃ brahma-bhūtam akalmaṣam ॥ 27 ॥

27. For supreme bliss indeed, comes to this Yogi whose mind is at peace, who is free from unskillful action, from whom the quality of Rajas has departed, and who has become the Brahman.

Commentary

Supreme bliss — direct experience of the ātman in its essential state, is achieved by the practitioner whose mind abides in the ātman; whose impurities thereby are completely burnt up.

"Who has become the Brahman", means who remains steady in the realisation of one's essential nature as being the blissful ātman [and not the body].

yuñjann-evaṃ sadā'tmānaṃ yogī vigata kalmaṣaḥ ।
sukhena brahma saṃsparśam atyantaṃ sukham-aśnute ॥ 28 ॥

28. Thus devoting oneself to the Yoga of the Self-realisation, freed from mental impurities, the Yogi easily attains the supreme bliss of contact with the Brahman.

sarva-bhūtastham ātmānaṃ sarva-bhūtāni cātmani ।
īkṣate yoga-yuktātmā sarvatra sama-darśanaḥ ॥ 29 ॥

29. With the mind harmonised by Yoga one sees equality everywhere; one sees one's Self as abiding in all beings and all beings in one's own Self.

yo māṃ paśyati sarvatra sarvaṃ ca mayi paśyati ।
tasyāhaṃ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati ॥ 30 ॥

30. He who sees Me everywhere and everything in Me; I am not separated from him and he is never separated from Me.

sarva-bhūta-sthitaṃ yo māṃ bhajaty-ekatvam-āsthitaḥ ।
sarvathā vartmāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate ॥ 31 ॥

31. The Yogi who, established in unity, worships Me dwelling in all beings, he abides in Me, howsoever he may live.

Commentary

The Yogi who is established in a state of harmony because of having the same form of expanded consciousness (as Myself), worships Me steadfastly by disregarding the differences of Prakrti (i.e., of the physical bodies). That Yogi, regardless of his mode of living, even while coming out of the state of meditation, continues to perceive Me only, in his own ātman as well as when seeing all other beings. The meaning is that he is [constantly] aware of the similarity to Me in his own Jīva and in the Jīvas of all other beings.

Now Sri Krishna proceeds to speak of the highest stage beyond this: —

ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṃ paśyati yo'rjuna ।
sukhaṃ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṃ sa yogī paramo mataḥ ॥ 32 ॥

32. One who, by reason of the identity of Jīvas, sees that pleasure or pain is the same everywhere; that Yogi, O Arjuna, is deemed as the highest.

Commentary

One who sees all Jīvas as constituted similarly of expanded consciousness in their essential being — regards pleasures in the form of the birth of a son etc. and grief in the form of the death of one's son, as the same as that of others — on account of all these experiences being unrelated to the true Self. In other words viewing one's own personal pleasures and pains of the above description, as being non-different from those of others, of the same kind. This Yogi is considered to be the highest; having reached the summit of Yoga.

arjuna uvāca

yo'yaṃ yogas-tvayā proktaḥ sāmyena madhusūdhana ।
etasyāhaṃ na paśyāmi cañcalatvāt sthitiṃ sthirām ॥ 33 ॥

Arjuna said:

33. This Yoga of equanimity, which has been taught by You, O Krishna, I can not imagine it's steady continuance, because of the restlessness of the mind.

cañcalaṃ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad-dṛḍham ।
tasyāhaṃ nigrahaṃ manye vāyoriva suduṣkaram ॥ 34 ॥

34. For the mind is fickle, O Krishna, turbulent, powerful and stubborn. I deem it as difficult to control as to control the wind.

śrī bhagavān uvāca

asaṃśayaṃ mahābāho mano dur-nigrahaṃ calam ।
abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate ॥ 35 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:
35. The mind is undoubtedly hard to subdue and fickle, O mighty-armed one, but, O son of Kunti, by repeated practice and by the exercise of dispassion it can be brought under control.

Commentary

No doubt, the mind is fickle and hard to subdue, however, it can be subdued with difficulty by cultivating a favourable attitude towards the ātman by repeated contemplation of its being a repository of auspicious attributes [these being eternity, self-luminosity, bliss, freedom from Karma, purity etc.], and by the avoiding the [sensual] hankering produced, by reflecting upon the magnitude of negativity in [material] objects.

asaṃyatātmanā yogo duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ ।
vaśyātmanā tu yatatā śakyo'vāptum upāyataḥ ॥ 36 ॥

36. In my opinion Yoga [harmony] is hard to attain by a person of unrestrained mind. However, it can be attained through skilful means by one, who strives for it and has a subdued mind.

Commentary

Yoga of equality of vision can be attained by proper means, by one who constantly practices, whose mind is subdued by Right Actions (Karma Yoga) as taught before.

arjuna uvāca

ayatiḥ śraddhayopeto yogāc-calita-mānasaḥ ।
aprāpya yoga-saṃsiddhiṃ kāṃ gatiṃ kṛṣṇa gacchati ॥ 37 ॥

Arjuna said:
37. What becomes of that person, O Krishna, who has conviction, but due to the wandering of the mind and the lack of diligent effort, fails to attain perfection in [meditation] Yoga?

kaccin-nobhaya-vibhraṣṭaś-chinnābhram iva naśyati ।
apratiṣṭho mahābāho vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ pathi ॥ 38 ॥

38. Having no support, confused in the path leading to Brahman, and thus fallen from both, does one not perish, O mighty armed, like a broken cloud?

etan-me saṃśayaṃ kṛṣṇa chettum arhasy-aśeṣataḥ ।
tvad-anyaḥ saṃśayasyāsya chettā na hy-upapadyate ॥ 39 ॥

39. This doubt of mine, O Krishna, you should remove completely for there is no other than you who can dispel it.

śrī bhagavān uvāca

pārtha naiveha nāmutra vināśas tasya vidyate ।
na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścid durgatiṃ tāta gacchati ॥ 40 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:
40. Neither here [in this world] nor there [in the next], O Arjuna, is there destruction for him. For verily, no one who does good, my son, ever comes to grief.

prāpya puṇya-kṛtāṃ lokān uṣitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ ।
śucināṃ śrīmatāṃ gehe yoga-bhraṣṭo 'bhijāyate ॥ 41 ॥

41. Having attained to the realms of the righteous and dwelt there for many long years, one who has fallen from Yoga is born again in the house of the pure and prosperous.

Commentary

This person, who has drifted away from the path of Self-realisation because of desire for any kind of material enjoyment whatsoever, will gain those very enjoyments through the excellence of Yoga alone. Having attained to the realms attained by those who do meritorious acts, one dwells there for a long time, until all desire for such enjoyments is exhausted. Then, free of desire this person who has fallen from Yoga at the very beginning, is born, by virtue of the excellence of Yoga, in a family of those who are competent in their practice of Yoga.

athavā yoginām eva kule bhavati dhīmatām ।
etaddhi durlabhataraṃ loke janma yadīdṛśam ॥ 42 ॥

42. Or one is born into a family of wise Yogis; but verily such a birth in this world is very difficult to obtain.

tatra taṃ buddhi saṃyogaṃ labhate paurva-dehikam ।
yatate ca tato bhūyaḥ saṃsiddhau kurunandana ॥ 43 ॥

43. There, O Arjuna, one regains the disposition of mind which one had acquired in the former body, and from there one strives more than before for success in Yoga.

pūrvābhyāsane tenaiva hriyate hyavaśo'pi saḥ ।
jijñāsur-api yogasya śabda-brahmātivartate ॥ 44 ॥

44. By that very former practice one is borne on in spite of oneself. Even one who merely enquires about Yoga, transcends the Sabda-Brahman.

Commentary

The person who has fallen away from meditation is carried on towards the summit of Yoga alone by the virtue of previous practice. Even a person, who has not actually engaged in meditation but has only been desirous of knowing about it; in other words, has failed to follow it up, acquires once again the same desire to practice Yoga. One then begins the practice of Yoga, the first stage of which is Karma Yoga, and thus transcends Sabda-Brahman (sonic vibration) which is that [energy] aspect of Brahman which manifests as gods, humans, earth, sky, heaven etc., namely; Prakrti or Material Nature. The meaning is that having been liberated from the bonds of Prakrti, one attains the ātman which is incapable of being described by words and which comprises solely of consciousness and bliss.

prayatnād yatamānastu yogī saṃśuddha-kilbiṣaḥ ।
aneka-janma saṃsiddhas tato yāti parāṃ gatim ॥ 45 ॥

45. But the Yogi striving earnestly, purified of all negative karma, and perfected gradually through many births, reaches the supreme goal.

tapasvibhyo'dhiko yogī jñānibhyo'pi mato'dhikaḥ ।
karmibhyaścādhiko yogī tasmād yogī bhavārjuna ॥ 46 ॥

46. The Yogi is considered to be superior to the ascetics, superior to the intellectuals, and even superior to the ritualists; therefore, O Arjuna, become a Yogi.

Commentary

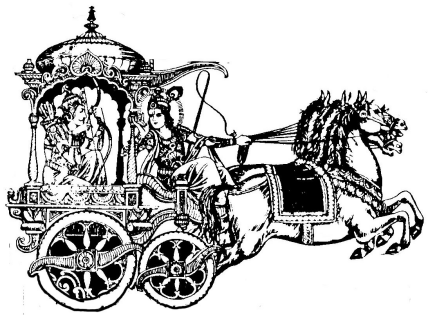
Whatever object of human endeavour is attained by mere austerity (self-control), by knowledge of different subjects (other than Self-realisation) and by mere rituals like the horse-sacrifice etc.,— greater than all of these is the goal achieved through Yoga. Consequently the Yogi is superior to those who practice austerity, to those who possess learning and to those who perform rituals. Therefore, O Arjuna, become a Yogi.

yoginām api sarveṣāṃ mad-gatenāntarātmanā ।
śraddhāvān bhajate yo māṃ sa me yuktatamo mataḥ ॥ 47 ॥

47. And among all the Yogis and also with all others, one whose inner self is directed to Me, who worships Me with faith — such a one is deemed by Me to be the most accomplished.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavadgītāsupaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde
dhyāna-yogo nāma
ṣaṣṭho'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the sixth discourse entitled
"Communion through Meditation"



Chapter 7

Adhyātma Yogaḥ

Communion through Knowledge & Realization

Summary of the Teaching

Now, the means — worship/meditation (*upāsana*) for attaining Nārāyaṇa the Consort of Sri is introduced. The first group of six chapters dealt with the knowledge of the true nature of the Self, which is the pre-requisite for upāsana, which is then accomplished through Right Action (*Karma Yoga*).

In this group of six chapters the nature of the Supreme Being (*Para-Brahman*) and His worship (*upāsana*) designated by the term '*Bhakti*', (loving devotion) are taught. This same teaching will be summarised later on in chapter 18 verses 46 — 54.

śrī bhagavān uvāca

mayyāsakta manāḥ pārtha yogaṃ yuñjan madāśrayaḥ ।
asaṃśayaṃ samagraṃ māṃ yathā jñāsyasi tacchṛṇu ॥ 1 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:
1. With your mind focused on Me, having Me for your support and practising Yoga — listen, O Arjuna, to how you can, without doubt, know Me fully.

jñānaṃ te'haṃ savijñānam idaṃ vakṣyāmy-aśeṣataḥ ।
yajjñātvā neha bhūyo'nyajjñātavyam avaśiṣyate ॥ 2 ॥

2. I will declare to you in full, this knowledge along with the differentiating insight (Vijñana), knowing which nothing else remains to be known.

Commentary

Vijñāna (differentiating insight) is that knowledge of the Godhead in which His nature is clearly distinguished from all other things. The Supreme Being is distinguished from all things, animate and inanimate, as the only Being that is devoid of all negativity and is endowed with innumerable, infinitely varied, positive and unsurpassed attributes.

Sri Krishna declares that this teaching is difficult to attain: —

manuṣyāṇāṃ sahasreṣu kaścid yatati siddhaye ।
yatatām-api siddhānāṃ kaścin māṃ vetti tattvataḥ ॥ 3 ॥

3. Among thousands of men, perhaps one strives for perfection; even among those who strive for perfection, one only may know Me; and among those who know Me, one alone perhaps, knows Me in reality.

Commentary

'Men', — those who are qualified to observe the meditative techniques enjoined in the Shastras — among thousands of such qualified practitioners, only a few persist until the attainment of perfection (in yoga). Among the thousands who strive till the attainment of perfection, a very few only, knowing Me, strive to attain success through Me [ie., through My Grace]. Among thousands of those who might know

Me, one alone may know Me in reality, as I am. The point is: there is no one who is capable of knowing Me as I am. It will be declared later on:— 'It is very hard to find such a great person' (7.19), and 'But no one knows Me' (7.26).

bhūmir-āpo'nalo vāyuḥ khaṃ mano buddhir-eva ca ।
ahaṅkāra itīyaṃ me bhinnā prakṛtir-aṣṭadhā ॥ 4 ॥

4. Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and the principle of ego; thus My material nature [Prakṛti] is divided eightfold.

apareyamitastvanyāṃ prakṛtiṃ viddhi me parām ।
jīvabhūtāṃ mahābāho yayedaṃ dhāryate jagat ॥ 5 ॥

5. This is My Inferior Nature [Prakṛti]. But, O mighty-armed One, know that My Superior Nature is different. It is the life-principle [Jīva-bhuta], by which this universe is sustained.

Commentary

The 'Higher Nature' is totally different from this inanimate material nature comprised of the objects of enjoyment for sentient beings. It is 'higher', because it is more pre-eminent compared to the insentient 'lower' nature. This higher Nature is the individual Self (Puruṣa) by which the whole inanimate material universe is sustained.

etad-yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇītyupadhāraya ।
ahaṃ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā ॥ 6 ॥

6. Know that all beings originate from these two. Therefore, I am the origin and the dissolution of the whole universe.

mattaḥ parataraṃ nānyat kiñcid-asti dhanañjayaḥ ।
mayi sarvam idaṃ protaṃ sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva ॥ 7 ॥

7. There is nothing whatsoever higher than Me, O Arjuna. All this is strung on Me, as clusters of gems on a thread.

raso'ham-apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśi-sūryayo ।
praṇavaḥ sarva vedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣaṃ nṛṣu ॥ 8 ॥

8. I am the sapidity in the water, O Arjuna! I am the radiance in the sun and the moon; the sacred syllable Om in all the Vedas; sound in the ether, and valour in men am I.

puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyāṃ ca tejaścāsmi vibhāvasau ।
jīvanaṃ sarva bhūteṣu tapaścāsmi tapasviṣu ॥ 9 ॥

9. I am the pure fragrance in the earth; I am the brilliance in the fire; I am the life-principle in all beings, and Inner Heat engendered by spiritual practitioners.

bījaṃ māṃ sarva bhūtānāṃ viddhi pārtha sanātanaṃ ।
buddhir-buddhimatām asmi tejas-tejasvinām aham ॥ 10 ॥

10. Know Me, O Arjuna (son of Partha), to be the primeval seed of all beings. I am the intelligence of the discerning, and the brilliance of the brilliant.

balaṃ balavatāṃ cāhaṃ kāma-rāga vivarjitam ।
dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo'smi bharatarṣabha ॥ 11 ॥

11. I am strength in the strong disassociated with craving and attachment. In all beings, I am that desire which is not contrary to Dharma, O Arjuna (Bull of the Bharatas),

ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasāstāmasāśca ye ।
matta eveti tān-viddhi na tvahaṃ teṣu te mayi ॥ 12 ॥

12. Know that all those states of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas have their origin in Me alone. But I am not in them; they are in Me.

Commentary

Why indeed should this be declared with particular illustrations! The reason is as follows: — "All existing entities in the universe possesses the properties of Sattva (harmony), Rajas (activity) and Tamas (inertia) in the forms of their bodies, senses, objects of enjoyment and their causes — know them all to have originated from Me alone, and they abide in Me alone, as they constitute My 'corporeality'. I am not in them in so far as I do not depend on them for My existence at any time. In the case of sentient beings, though, the physical body depends for its existence on the Self. The Self in turn depends on the physical body for its embodiment. In My case, however, there is no need for any assistance in my "embodiment." They [all entities] merely serve the purpose of My Lila" [cosmic recreation] — this is the meaning.

tribhir-guṇa-mayair-bhāvair-ebhiḥ sarvam idaṃ jagat ।
mohitaṃ nābhijānāti māmebhyaḥ param-avyayam ॥ 13 ॥

13. The entire universe is deluded by these three conditions originating from the Gunas, and fails to recognise Me, who am beyond them and immutable.

daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā ।
māmeva ye prapadyante māyāmetāṃ taranti te ॥ 14 ॥

14. For this divine Māya of Mine consisting of the three Gunas is hard to overcome. But those who take refuge in Me alone, shall be able to transcend this Māya.

Commentary

The word Māya is used to describe the effects of the three Gunas, because it has the power to generate amazing effects like the magical tricks of Asuras and Rakshasas.

Here the term Māya does not convey the sense of 'false'. Even in the case of magicians, who are called Māyavin (those who possess Māya). With the aid of certain incantations, drugs etc., they can produce illusory objects but the perceptions of those objects are actually real. The term 'Māya' refers to the incantations, drugs etc. which have the power of creating real impressions. Because [grammatically speaking] the meaning of a word, should be the same in all contexts – the term 'Māya' can be applied to the illusory objects that are produced, only in a secondary sense. Its primary sense is in regard to the 'real impressions' created in the mind. It is just like in the statement 'The platform groans.' (a figurative expression having reference to the sound that is produced)

Māya not only obscures the essential nature of the Lord but also creates the condition of the mind that sees the created objects as enjoyable. Therefore, the entire universe, deluded by the Lord's Māya, does not know the Lord of boundless bliss.

na māṃ duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ ।
māyayāpahṛta jñānā āsuraṃ bhāvam āśritāḥ ॥ 15 ॥

15. The malefactors, the foolish, the lowest of people, those persons deprived of wisdom by delusion (Māya) and those who are dominated by demoniac nature they do not seek refuge in Me.

Commentary

'malefactors', (*duṣkṛtina*) those who act in a wrongful manner and do not seek refuge, they are of four types, according to the degree of their immoral deeds:—

'The foolish' (*mūḍhah*) are those who are confused. Right Knowledge consists in understanding that the Self is dependent on the Lord and exists for Him. But 'the foolish' think they are independent and also that all enjoyable things of the world are

their own and exist for their personal enjoyment.

'The lowest of people' (*narādhamāḥ*) are those who are incapable of turning towards Krishna, even though they have a general knowledge of His essential nature.

'Persons who are deprived of insight by Māya' (*Māyayā'pahrta-jñāna*) are those who know about Krishna and His manifestations, but due to deceitful reasoning they contend that such teachings are inconsistent and impossible.

'Those of demoniac nature' (*āsuram*) are those who have definitive knowledge about Krishna and His manifestations but hate Him.

The intensity of sinfulness increases in these types in the order in which they are successively placed.

catur-vidhā bhajante māṃ janāḥ sukṛtino'rjuna ।
ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha ॥ 16 ॥

16. Four types of benefactors worship Me, O Arjuna (Bull of the Bharatas). These are the distressed, the seekers after knowledge, the ambitious, and the wise.

Commentary

'Benefactors' — people of good deeds, are those who have meritorious Karmas to their credit, and who take refuge and worship Krishna alone. They too are divided into four categories according to the degree of their good deeds, each subsequent type being better than the preceding, because of the [increasing] positivity of their good deeds and their knowledge.

- *The distressed* — are those who have lost status and prosperity, and who wish to regain them.
- *The ambitious* — are those who aspire for prosperity which they have never had. Between them the difference is only nominal, as both of them seek prosperity alone.
- *The seekers after knowledge* — are those one who wish to know the real nature of the Self [in its pure state] as an entity different from the Prakṛti. They are called 'the seekers after knowledge,' because consciousness alone is the essential nature of the Self.
- *The wise* — are those who know that the essential nature of the Self is to find happiness only in the acceptance of being the shesha (dependant) of the Lord, as taught in the verse 7:5. The wise are not satisfied with the knowledge that the Self is different from Material Nature, but desire to attain the Lord — considering that the Lord alone is the highest goal.

teṣāṃ jñānī nitya-yukta eka bhaktir-viśiṣyate ।
priyo hi jñānino'tyartham ahaṃ sa ca mama priyaḥ ॥ 17 ॥

17. Of these, the wise, being ever steadfast and devoted to the One only, is the foremost; for I am inexpressibly dear to the wise and he too is dear to Me.

udārāḥ sarva evaitaṃ jñānī tvātmaiva me matam ।
āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā māmevānuttamāṃ gatim ॥ 18 ॥

18. Noble indeed, are all these, but I deem the wise to be My very Self; for he, being fully integrated, is devoted exclusively to Me as the highest goal.

Commentary

"Because they worship Me alone, all these are noble i.e, magnanimous. For, those who accept anything from Me, however small, I consider them as contributing everything to

Me [and thus as My benefactors]. But I consider the wise to be My very Self — I consider Myself to be dependent on the wise for My support. How come? Because the wise consider Me to be the highest and find it impossible to support themselves without Me; I also find it impossible to be without them."

bahūnāṃ janmanām ante jñānavān māṃ prapadyate ।
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ ॥ 19 ॥

19. At the end of many births, the enlightened one takes refuge in Me, realising that 'Vasudeva is everything'— It is very hard to find such a great-person.

kāmais tais tair hṛta-jñānāḥ prapadyante'nya-devatāḥ ।
taṃ taṃ niyamam āsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā ॥ 20 ॥

20. Controlled by their inherent nature, and deprived of insight by various desires, the worldly-minded resort to other gods, observing various disciplines.

yo yo yāṃ yāṃ tanuṃ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitum icchati ।
tasya tasyācalāṃ śraddhāṃ tām-eva vidadhāmy-ahaṃ ॥ 21 ॥

21. Whichever manifestation (of the Divine) any devotee desires to worship with faith — that faith I make unshakeable and firm.

Commentary

These divinities too are Krishna's manifestations as taught in the Vedic texts.

"Although an individual may choose to worship some deity such as the Sun with faith, unaware that all deities are My manifestations, I understand that he is worshipping Me alone, and therefore I make his faith firm and unflinching, that is, free from hindrances."

sa tayā śraddhayā yuktas tasyārādhanam īhate ।
labhate ca tataḥ kāmān mayaiva vihitān hi tān ॥ 22 ॥

22. Endowed with that faith, one engages in the worship of that [particular] manifestation and thence obtains the desired objects, which are in fact bestowed by Me alone.

antavattu phalaṃ teṣāṃ tad bhavaty-alpa medhasām ।
devān devayajo yānti mad-bhaktā yānti mām api ॥ 23 ॥

23. But verily the reward gained by these persons of limited understanding is finite. The worshippers of the gods will go to the gods but My devotees will come to Me.

avyaktaṃ vyaktim āpannaṃ manyante mām abuddhayaḥ ।
paraṃ bhāvam ajānanto mamāvyayam anuttamam ॥ 24 ॥

24. Not knowing My higher nature, immutable and unsurpassed, the ignorant think of Me as an unmanifest entity who has now become manifest.

nāhaṃ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yoga māyā samāvṛtaḥ ।
mūḍho'yaṃ nābhijānanti loko mām ajam avyayam ॥ 25 ॥

25. Veiled by Māya, I am not clearly evident to all. This deluded world does not recognise Me as the unborn and immutable.

vedāhaṃ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna ।
bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni māṃ tu veda na kaścana ॥ 26 ॥

26. I know all beings, O Arjuna, that have been in the past, those now in the present and those yet to come; but no one knows Me.

icchā-dveṣa samutthena dvandva mohena bhārata ।
sarva bhūtāni saṃmohaṃ sarge yānti paraṅtapa ॥ 27 ॥

27. By the phantasm of the pairs of opposites arising from desire and aversion, O Arjuna, all beings are subject to delusion as soon as they are born.

Commentary

Desire for pleasure and aversion from suffering is the dichotomy caused by the Gunas. They have their origin in the experiences of previous births. These experiences create subtle impressions (*samskāras*) in the mind and manifest again, in every succeeding birth as an instinctive attraction and aversion towards those similar objects. These mental habitual tendencies (*vāsanas*) are a delusive force acting from the very moment of birth. One develops an inherent fondness or aversion for specific [material] things, instead of feeling joy in communion with Krishna and misery at separation from Him — as does the wise.

yeṣāṃ tvanta-gataṃ pāpaṃ janānāṃ puṇya-karmaṇām ।
te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā bhajante māṃ dṛḍha-vratāḥ ॥ 28 ॥

28. But the doers of virtuous deeds, whose sins have ceased, are freed from the delusion of the pairs of opposites. They worship Me, steadfast in their determination.

jarā-maraṇa-mokṣayā mām-āśritya yatanti ye ।
te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṃ karma cākhilam ॥ 29॥

29. Those who take refuge in Me and strive for liberation from old age and death, fully understand Brahman [ātman], Self-realisation, and Karma.

Commentary

Brahman is the Self in it's immaculate and essential state.

Self-realisation is freedom from the identification with Material Nature — Prakṛti.

Karma are those activities leading to rebirth.

sādhibhūtādhidaivaṃ māṃ sādhi yajñāṃ ca ye viduḥ ।
prayāṇa kāle'pi ca māṃ te vidur yukta cetasaḥ ॥ 30 ॥

30. And those who know Me associated with the Adhibuta, Adhidaiva and the Adhiyajña, they too, with their minds fixed in meditation, know Me even at the hour of death.

Commentary

Here, other practitioners distinct from those already mentioned in the previous verse are to be understood, because of the repetition of the term 'those' (ye).

The declaration — *"those who know Me as being associated with the higher material entities'* (*adhibhūta*) and '*with that which is superior to the gods'* (*adhidaiva*) that is, the ātman in its sovereignty "— appears to be a repetition, but it is really an injunction, because there is no other way of understanding it.

The statement of knowing Krishna as being '*connected with the sacrifice'* (*adhiyajña*) is also a clear injunction directed at all the three classes of spiritual aspirants (1. the distressed, 2. the ambitious and 3. the seekers of knowledge) without any exception, because of the perpetual nature of the subject (ie. the sacrifice). None of these three types of aspirants should ever give up the performance of the Five Great Sacrifices (pañca-mahā-yajña) as well as the daily and periodical ritual obligations.

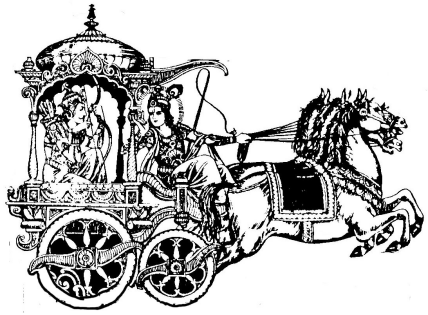
'They will realise Me also at the hour of death' — in a way corresponding with their

desired objectives.

Because of the use of the term '*ca'* (too) in 'they too' — those who have been mentioned before in the previous verse as *'striving for release from old age and death'* are also included among those knowing Krishna at the hour of death. By this it may be understood that even the wise (Jñanin) know Krishna as associated with the sacrifice on account of the subject under discussion (ie., sacrifice).

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavadgītāsupaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrī kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde
jñāna vijñāna yoga nāma
saptamo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the seventh discourse entitled
"Communion through Knowledge & Realisation"



Chapter 8

Tāraka Brahma Yogaḥ

The Way to the Immutable Brahman

Summary of the Teaching

In the seventh chapter, Sri Krishna taught that [He Himself as] Vāsudeva, the Supreme Brahman, is the object of meditation and that He is the ruler and the proprietor of all things, animate and animate. He explained how He is the cause [of all things], how He is the support of everything; how He is denoted by all words on account of all beings being His 'corporeality' or 'modes of expression'. He taught how He is the controller of all; and how He alone is supreme over all on account of His multitude of auspicious attributes. He also taught how He is obscured by Sattva, Rajas and Tamas in the form of bodies and senses and as the objects of experience arising from the stream of negative Karma from beginingless time. He also taught how this obscuration can be removed by taking refuge in Him, and through the performance of virtuous deeds. He also taught the gradation among the practitioners based upon their personal goals which are generated by the relative proportions of accumulated merit; these goals being material prosperity, self-knowledge and the attainment of God. He extolled the greatness of the aspirant who seeks attainment of God with single-minded devotion on account of His inexpressible love for such a devotee. He referred to the rarity of such a devotee and also mentioned the differences among the things that should be known and those that should be practiced by the three classes of aspirants.

Now, in the eighth chapter Sri Krishna gives a detailed description of certain principles and practices that have already been treated in brief earlier:—

Arjuna uvāca

kiṃ tad-brahma kim-adhyātma kiṃ karma puruṣottama ।
adhi-bhūtaṃ ca kiṃ proktam adhi-daivaṃ kim-ucyate ॥ 1 ॥

Arjuna said:

1. What is that *Brahman* (Ultimate Reality)? What is *Adhyātma* (that which is associated with the Self) ? What is *Karma* (action)? What is said to be *Adhibhūta* (pertaining to matter) ? O Supreme Being, who is said to be *Adhidaiva* (pertaining to the gods)?

adhi-yajñāḥ kathaṃ ko'tra dehe'smin madhusūdana ।
prayāṇa-kāle ca kathaṃ jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ ॥ 2 ॥

2. Who is Adhiyajña (principle of sacrifice) in this body, and how is He the Adhiyajña, O Krishna? And how are You to be known at the time of death by the self-controlled?

Commentary

What is said to be *Adhibhūta* — "What are the superior material objects?",

Who is said to be *Adhidaiva* — "Who is the Being who is superior to the gods who should be known by those who aspire for prosperity?"

Who is *Adhiyajña* — "Who is denoted by the word *Adhi-yajña* (principle of sacrifice)?

How is He the *Adhiyajña* — "And how does the state of *Adhi-yajña* arise?"

śrī bhagavān uvāca

akṣaraṃ brahma paramaṃ svabhāvo'dhyātmam-ucyate ।
bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo visargaḥ karma-saṃjñitaḥ ॥ 3 ॥

The Blessed Lord said;
3. The Brahman is the supreme, indestructible Self (*akṣara*). One's own material nature (*svabhāva*) is said to be that which dwells with the Self. The externalised creative force which gives rise to material entities is known as Karma.

Commentary

That which is the Supreme and Imperishable (*akṣara*) has been called '*that Brahman'*. The *akṣara* is that which cannot be destroyed and forms the totality of all individual Selves.

Karma is that force which produces all mundane beings. 'Beings' here means entities such as humans and animals. The creative force which produces them is sexual intercourse. That procreative force is here called 'Karma'. All the acts associated with procreation should be assiduously avoided by aspirants after Moksha. This abstention will also be taught immediately in the verse, 'Desiring which they practice the vow of celibacy' (8.11).

adhibhūtaṃ kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś-cādhidaivataṃ ।
adhiyajño'hamevātra dehe deha-bhṛtāṃ vara ॥ 4 ॥

4. *Adhibhūta* (pertaining to matter) are those perishable things, O best of the embodied beings; the *Adhidaivata* (that which is superior to the gods) is the *Puruṣa* (individual Self). I Myself am the *Adhiyajña* (Principle of Sacrifice), here in this body.

Commentary

Adhidaivata connotes the individual Jīvātma which is superior to the gods like Indra, Prajāpati and other divinities. The Jīva is the experiencer of sound and the other sense pleasures, which originate from Indra, Prajāpati and the other gods. The seekers after prosperity and power should contemplate upon this state of being such an (absolute) enjoyer, as the end to be attained. But these higher material goals of wealth, power, etc., are all [still] impermanent.

"*Adhiyajña* denotes one who is propitiated in sacrifices. Indra and others, to whom sacrifices are offered, are My manifestations. I dwell in them as their inner Self and I alone am the goal of sacrifice. The three groups of qualified aspirants should contemplate in this manner at the time of the performance of daily (*nitya*) and periodical (*naimittika*) rituals such as the Five Great Sacrifices (*pañca mahā yajña*)."

antakāle ca mām-eva smaran-muktvā kalevaram ।
yaḥ prayāti sa mad-bhāvaṃ yāti nāsty-atra saṃśayaḥ ॥ 5 ॥

5. And the one who, at the last moment, while leaving the body, departs, contemplating upon Me alone, attains My being; of this, there is no doubt.

yaṃ yaṃ vāpi smaran-bhāvaṃ tyajaty-ante kalevaram ।
taṃ tam-evaiti kaunteya sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitaḥ ॥ 6 ॥

6. Whatsoever concept (*bhāvam*) one thinks of while leaving the body at the end, to that alone one attains, O Arjuna, having ever been in the contemplation thereof.

Commentary

The thought that occupies the mind while dying, is that which determines the state attained after death. The final thought arises only with reference to objects [and experiences] that were previously the most frequently contemplated upon during one's

life.

tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām-anusmara yudhya ca ।
mayyarpita mano-buddhir-mām evaiṣyasy-asaṃśayaḥ ॥ 7 ॥

7. Therefore, ever mindful of Me at all times, fight; with your mind and intellect dedicated to Me, you shall surely come to Me, there is no doubt.

Commentary

"Because the last thought arises only in regard to matters previously contemplated upon, therefore at all times until you die, day after day, be continuously mindful of Me. Engage yourself in actions appropriate to your station and stage in life, which would make you mindful of Me."

Thus, having laid down the general principle that the attainment of one's goal is dependent on one's last thought, Sri Krishna proceeds to describe different modes of contemplation (*upāsana*) to be practiced by the three groups of aspirants for acquiring their objectives. The first is the seeker of *aiśvarya* (power & prosperity in a divine realm.)

abhyāsa-yoga-yuktena cetasā nānya-gāminā ।
paramaṃ puruṣaṃ divyaṃ yāti pārthānucintayan ॥ 8 ॥

8. Constantly meditating with a mind made steadfast by habitual practice, without thinking of anything else, one reaches the Divine Supreme Being, O Arjuna!

Commentary

Abhyāsa (habitual practice) is the training of the mind to be steadily focused on the object of meditation at all times without omitting the performance of one's daily duties.

Yoga is the meditation practiced every day at the time most suitable for practice [in the evening].

kaviṃ purāṇam anuśāsitāram, aṇoraṇīyāṃsam anusmared yaḥ ।
sarvasya dhātāram acintya-rūpam, āditya varṇaṃ tamasaḥ parastāt ॥ 9 ॥

9. One who meditates upon the Omniscient, Primeval One, Ruler and Creator of all, who is more subtle than an atom, whose nature is inconceivable, who is as refulgent as the sun, and who is beyond *Tamas* (primordial state of undifferentiated matter) —

prayāṇa-kāle manasācalena, bhaktyā yukto yoga-balena caiva ।
bhāvor-madhye prāṇam-āveśya samyak, sa taṃ paraṃ puruṣam upaiti divyam ॥ 10 ॥

10. — at the time of death, with a mind unwavering by the power of Yoga, being possessed of devotion, having focused the Vital Force (*Prāṇa*) between the eyebrows — reaches that same Divine Supreme Being.

Commentary

One who focuses the Vital-Force [on the ajña cakra] between the eyebrows at the time of death with a mind made steady through [mental] purification achieved by the perpetual practice of Yoga together with Devotion (Bhakti); and who contemplates on the Kavi — 'the One who knows everything', *Purāṇam* — the 'Primeval One', i.e., One who has always existed; *anuśāsitāram* — 'the Ruler', i.e., 'the One who governs the universe'; *anoraniyan* — 'One who is more subtle than the most subtle', ie., One who is more subtle than the individual Self; *Dhataram* — 'the creator of all'; *acintya-rūpam* — 'whose nature is inconceivable', ie., whose nature is different to everything else [that can be known], *āditya-varṇam tamasaḥ-parastāt* — 'who is as brilliant as the Sun and beyond darkness', i.e., who possesses a unique divine form — one who

meditates on the Divine Being described thus, focusing the mind between the eyebrows, attains Him alone. One attains His state and receives power and glory similar to His — such is the meaning.

yad-akṣaraṃ deva-vido vadanti viśanti yad-yatayo vītarāgāḥ |
yad-icchanto brahmacaryaṃ carantitat-te padaṃ saṅgraheṇa pravakṣye || 11 ||

11. I shall declare to you briefly that goal, which the knowers of the Veda call the Imperishable, which ascetics, free from desire enter, and for attaining which, they practice the vow of continence (Brahmacarya).

Commentary

That which is the focus [of contemplation] is here called *padam* — the 'goal'. "I shall reveal to you briefly My essential nature which is actually indescribable and which is alluded to in the Vedānta and which is to be meditated upon" — such is the meaning.

sarva-dvārāṇi saṃyamya mano hṛdi nirudhya ca |
mūrdhny-ādhāyātmanaḥ prāṇam-āsthito yoga-dhāraṇam || 12 ||

12. Having restrained all the gates [of the senses], focusing the mind within the heart, fixing the vital force within the head, engaged in the practice of steady concentration;

om-ity-ekākṣaraṃ brahma vyāharan mām-anusmaran |
yaḥ prayāti tyajan-dehaṃ sa yāti paramāṃ gatim || 13 ||

13. uttering the sacred syllable 'Om' which denotes the Absolute (Brahman), thinking of Me constantly — one who abandons the body and departs thus, reaches the supreme goal.

ananya-cetāḥ satataṃ yo māṃ smarati nityaśaḥ |
tasyāhaṃ sulabhaḥ pārtha nitya-yuktasya yoginaḥ || 14 ||

14. I am easily attainable by that ever steadfast Yogi, O Partha, who constantly and daily is mindful of Me, not thinking of anything else.

Commentary

Not thinking of anything else — continuously; that is (*nityaśaḥ*) at the time of meditation and also during all other times (*satatam*). "He does not desire to share My attributes like sovereignty, power, etc., but I alone am his goal of attainment because of profound love and devotion. Unable to bear the separation, I Myself grant him the capacity to attain full maturity in the devotional practice necessary for attaining Me — namely, the annulment of all obstacles and the establishment of the state of mind that reinforces the bond of love between us."

mām-upetya punar-janma duḥkh-ālayam aśāśvatam |
nāpnuvanti mahātmanaḥ saṃsiddhiṃ paramāṃ gatāḥ || 15 ||

15. Having attained Me, great ones are never again subject to rebirth in this world which is transient and the abode of sorrow — they have found the highest perfection.

Commentary

Rebirth, in an embodied condition is a state of impermanence and a source of suffering. These noble-minded ones, who seek and worship Krishna as the supreme goal, with profound attachment and complete dependence on Him, attain Him.

Sri Krishna next teaches the reason for the return to Samsāra (cycle of rebirth) of those who aspire for power & wealth (aiśvarya) and for the non-return to Samsāra of those who have reached Him: —

ābrahma bhuvanāllokāḥ punar-āvartino'rjuna |
mām-upetya tu kaunteya punar-janma na vidyate || 16 ||

16. All the worlds, from the realm of Brahma down, are subject to return, O Arjuna, but after attaining Me, O Son of Kunti, there is no rebirth.

Commentary

"All the realms of the universe, from the realm of Brahma downwards are spheres in which enjoyment and power are experienced, but they are all impermanent, and those who attain them are [eventually] subjected to rebirth. Therefore return is unavoidable for those who aspire for [spiritual] enjoyment (*bhoga*) and power (*aiśvarya*), as the realms in which these things are attained are transient. On the other hand, there is no rebirth to those who attain Me.

Sri Krishna now clarifies the Divine time-frame determined in regard to the evolution and dissolution of the realms of existence including the realm of Brahma and those who are within them.

sahasra-yuga-paryantam aharyad brahmaṇo viduḥ |
rātriṃ yuga sahasrāntāṃ te'horātra-vido janāḥ || 17 ||

17. Those who know the duration of the [Cosmic] day and night understand a day of Brahma to last for a thousand Yugas and a night of Brahma to last for another thousand Yugas.

Commentary

Those who know the Divinely established order of Cosmic Time which affects all beings from humankind to Lord Brahma, understand that Lord Brahma's day is comprised of a unit period of one thousand four Yuga cycles and a night is a unit of equal duration.

Catur Yuga — Tetrad of Ages

Kali Yuga — 432,000 human years
Dvāpara Yuga — 864,000
Treta Yuga — 1,296,000
Krta Yuga — 1,728,000

1 tetrad of Yugas = 1 Mahā Yuga = 4,320,000 human years.
71 Mahā Yugas = 1 Manvantara = 308,448,000 human years
14 Manvantaras = 1 Kalpa = 4,320,000,000 human years
2 Kalpas = one day and night of Brahma = 8,640,000,000 human years
360 Brahma days = 1 Brahma year = 3,110,400,000,000 human years
100 such years = 1 lifetime of Brahma = 311,040,000,000,000 human years

avyaktād-vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavanty-ahar-āgame |
ratry-āgame pralīyante tatraivāvyakta saṃjñake || 18 ||

18. All the manifested entities come forth from the unmanifest (*Avyakta*) at the coming of the day of Brahma, at the coming of the night they are dissolved into that alone which is known as the Unmanifest.

Commentary

Thus, at the dawn of a 'day of Brahma', all the entities existing in all the three realms [physical, astral and transcendental], possessing physical manifestations, senses, objects

and places of enjoyment, appear from the Unmanifest state (*Avyakta*), which is the ontological condition of Brahma at that time, and at the beginning of the night they are dissolved back into the condition of the Unmanifest.

bhūta-grāmaḥ sa evāyaṃ bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate ।
ratry-āgame'vaśaḥ pārtha prabhavaty-ahar-āgame ॥ 19 ॥

19. The same multitude of beings comes forth again and again irresistibly, and is withdrawn at the coming of the night. Once again it comes forth at the coming of the day.

Commentary

The same array of beings, under the sway Karma, is projected at the coming of the cosmic day and is withdrawn at the coming of night. This process continues to repeat itself over and over again. Similarly, at the end of the life span of Brahma which consists of a hundred years of three hundred and sixty days each (311,040,000,000,000 human years) all the worlds including that of Brahma and even Brahma himself are absorbed into Nārāyaṇa in accordance with the order described in the Veda.

The process of involution terminates after passing through all the other stages of dissolution, ending with the Avyakta, Akṣara and Tamas. Therefore, for every other entity except Krishna, origination and annihilation are unavoidable. So for those who seek Aiśvarya (prosperity and power) birth and dissolution according to the above mentioned time scheme are unavoidable. But in the case of those who attain Krishna, there is no return again to Samsāra. Now Sri Krishna again states that there is no return to Samsāra even for those who have attained Kaivalya (self-realisation or isolation):—

paras-tasmāt tu bhavo'nyo'vyakto'vyaktāt-sanātanaḥ ।
yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati ॥ 20 ॥

20. There is, however, another Unmanifest Being superior to this unmanifest phase, which is eternal and does not pass away when all entities pass away.

avyakto'kṣara ity-uktas-tamāhuḥ paramāṃ gatim ।
yaṃ prāpya na nivartante tad-dhāma paramaṃ mama ॥ 21 ॥

21. This has [also] been called the Unmanifest (*Avyakta*) and Imperishable (*Akṣara*). This, is said to be the highest goal; My ultimate state, reaching which Jīvas do not return to Samsāra.

Commentary

The *'inferior Unmanifest'* entity is the insentient Material Nature (Prakrti) in which beings are totally entangled. The *'Superior Unmanifest'* is the *Avyakta* which is comprised of consciousness and is also non-apparent. It is the Self — ātman (puruṣa). It is unmanifest (non-apparent) because it cannot be conclusively demonstrated by any of the three means of knowing (perception, inference or testimony). In other words its nature is unique and it can be known comprehensively only by and of itself. It can be explained only vaguely by ordinary terms of reference. It is eternal because it is not subject to origination and annihilation.

This, is said to be the highest goal; — the Jīva in it's essential pristine state unassociated with material nature is declared to be the supreme goal. Once the Jīva attains this essential state, it does not return to Samsāra — this is the highest sphere of Krishna's dominion.

In other words; the insentient Material Nature (Prakrti) is the first sphere of Krishna's dominion. The sentient Jīva conjoined with this Material nature is the second sphere of Krishna's dominion and control. The pristine state of the liberated Jīva, free from association with Nature, is the highest sphere of Krishna's dominion — such is the meaning. This state is also one of non-return to Samsāra.

On the other hand the term '*Dhāma'* may be interpreted as 'light'. Luminosity indicates knowledge or consciousness — the essential nature of the liberated Self is boundless consciousness, or supreme light, which stands in contrast to the contracted consciousness of the Self, when conditioned by Material Nature.

puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyas-tv-ananyayā ।
yasyāntaḥ sthāni bhūtāni yena sarvam idaṃ tatam ॥ 22 ॥

22. But the Supreme Being in whom all beings abide and by whom all this [universe] is pervaded is to be attained by unswerving devotion, O Arjuna.

yatra kāle tvanāvṛttim āvṛttiṃ caiva yoginaḥ ।
prayātā yānti taṃ kālaṃ vakṣyāmi bharatarṣabha ॥ 23 ॥

23. Now, I declare to you the time departing at which, the Yogis do not return and also the time, departing in which, they return, O Bull of the Bharatas.

agnir-jyotir-ahaḥ śuklaḥ ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyaṇam ।
tatra prayātā gacchanti brahma brahma-vido janāḥ ॥ 24 ॥

24. Light in the form of fire, the day, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern course of the sun — the knowers of Brahman who take this path go to the Brahman.

Commentary

Here, the term 'time' is used in the sense of a path, having many presiding deities beginning with day and ending with year. Fire and light are the deities who preside over divisions of time. The meaning is — "*I declare to you the path, departing by which, Yogis do not return and also the path departing by which, the doers of good actions return.*" By the clause, '*Light in the form of fire, the day, bright fortnight, six months of the northern course'* a period of a year also is denoted.

dhūmo rātris-tathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam ।
tatra cāndramasaṃ jyotir-yogī prāpya nivartate ॥ 25 ॥

25. Smoke, night, the dark fortnight, the six months of the southern course of the sun — the Yogi who takes this path reaches the light of the moon and returns.

Commentary

The path described here is the one that leads to the realm of the manes (ancestors) and other such realms. Here the term 'Yogi' refers to one who performs good deeds.

śukla-kṛṣṇe gatī hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate ।
ekayā yāty-anāvṛtim anyāyāvartate punaḥ ॥ 26 ॥

26. These two paths, the bright and the dark, are said to be everlasting. By the former, one attains the state of non-return, by the other, one returns again.

Commentary

The '*Path of Light'* is described in verse 24 and the '*Path of Darkness'* is described in verse 25. In the Vedas both the bright and dark paths are said to be everlasting in relation to both the enlightened ones and those who simply do various good deeds.

naite sṛtī pārtha jānan yogi muhyati kaścana ।
tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu yoga-yukto bhavārjuna ॥ 27 ॥

27. No Yogi, O Partha, who knows these two paths is ever deluded. Therefore, O Arjuna, at all times engage yourself in Yoga.

Commentary

No enlightened person who fully understands these two paths is deluded by doubt at the time of death. On the contrary, he goes by the path of the gods, his own path. Therefore, every day you should reflect upon these two paths.

Next Sri Krishna speaks of the result of knowing the import of the Shastras, as taught in this and the previous chapters.

vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapaḥsu caiva dāneṣu yat puṇya-phalaṃ pradiṣṭam ।
atyeti tat sarvam idaṃ viditvā yogī paraṃ sthānam upaiti cādyam ॥ 28 ॥

28. Whatever meritorious results are declared to accrue from the study of the Vedas, from the performance of sacrifices, from the practice of austerities and charity, all this is transcended by the Yogi who knows this teaching of Mine, he reaches the Supreme, Primeval abode.

Commentary

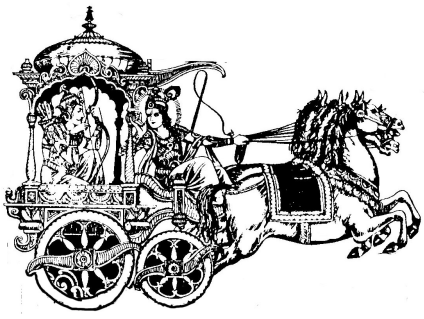
Whatever gain is said to be obtained from the four meritorious actions:—

(a) *adhyayana* — the regular study of the Vedas,
(b) *yajña* — the performance of sacrifices,
(c) *tapa* — self-restraint,
(d) *dāna* — charity

all this is transcended by knowing this teaching, namely the greatness of the Lord as taught in these two chapters (7 and 8). By the immense joy arising from the knowledge of the greatness of the Divine, one regards all these merits as insignificant as straw. By being a Yogi, that is, an enlightened person one reaches the Supreme, Original State which is eternal — beyond time.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavadgītāsupaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ yoga-śāstre
śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde tāraka-brahma-yogo
nāmāṣṭamo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the eighth discourse entitled
"The Way to the Immutable Brahman"



Chapter 9

Rāja-vidyā Rāja-guhya Yogaḥ

The Regal Science & the Royal Secret

Summary of the Teaching

In the previous chapter the details about the differences among the various kinds of devotees have been dealt with. Now, after investigating the eminence of the Supreme Being who is the focus of devotion, the nature of meditation [*upāsana*], in the form of Loving Devotion [*bhakti*], is taught. The superiority of the wise [*jñāni*] is also elaborated upon.

śrī-bhagavān uvāca

idaṃ tu te guhyatamaṃ pravakṣyāmy-anasūyave |
jñānaṃ vijñāna sahitaṃ yat-jñātvā mokṣyase'śubhāt || 1 ||

The Blessed Lord said:

1. I shall declare to you, who do not cavil, this most secret knowledge together with its practical application, knowing which you shall be freed from that which is unhelpful.

Commentary

This most secret knowledge — *upāsana* (meditation), which consists of *bhakti* (loving devotion). In other words — "I have told you about My pre-eminence, which is distinct from all other forms of greatness and is unlimited in its expression. You should be convinced by now of this, and so, being thus prepared, I shall now teach you that knowledge by acquiring which, and applying it, you will be freed from all things that stand in your way and prevent you from attaining Me."

rāja-vidyā rāja-guhyaṃ pavitram idam uttamam |
pratyakṣāvagamaṃ dharmyaṃ su-sukhaṃ kartum avyayam || 2 ||

2. This is the regal science, a regal mystery, the supreme purifier. It is realised by direct experience. It is in accord with Dharma, it is easy to practice and is abiding.

Commentary

This teaching is the greatest among all sciences; and the greatest among mysteries. Alternatively "regal science" may also mean the science known and practiced by kings, and indeed kings are those who have broad and profound minds. In other words this is the science of great minds. This is a great mystery, because the great-minded alone are skilled in keeping secrets. This is the "supreme purifier"; for it removes completely all karmic obstructions which obstruct the attainment of the Supreme Being.

It is realised by "direct perception" — *avagama* is that which is apprehended: the subject of knowledge — the meaning is that Krishna, when meditated upon with loving devotion, becomes immediately directly perceptible.

Even so, it is inseparable from Dharma. Dharma here indicates that which constitutes the means for attaining the highest good. Though meditation (*upāsana*) is of itself, supremely good, as it brings about the vision of the Supreme Being, yet it is also the means for completely attaining Him, which is the final goal and the Supreme Beatitude.

Because of these reasons, it is "easy to practice"; and pleasurable to perform. It is "abiding" or imperishable because it does not perish even after leading to the attainment of Krishna. That is, Krishna gives Himself totally to one who performs this form of meditation; even then it appears to Krishna that He has done nothing for the devotee — such is the meaning.

aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā dharmasyāsya parantapa ।
aprāpya māṃ nivartante mṛtyu-saṃsāra vartmani ॥ 3 ॥

3. Those who have no faith in this Dharma, O Scorcher-of-foes, ever remain in this cycle of death (Samsara), without ever attaining Me.

mayā tatam idaṃ sarvaṃ jagad avyakta mūrtinā ।
mat-sthāni sarva bhūtāni na cāhaṃ teṣv-avasthitaḥ ॥ 4 ॥

4. This entire universe is pervaded by Me, in an unmanifest form. All beings abide in Me, but I do not abide in them.

na ca mat-sthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogam aiśvaram ।
bhūta-bhṛnna ca bhūtastho mamātmā bhūta-bhāvanaḥ ॥ 5 ॥

5. And yet beings do not abide in Me. Behold My divine Yoga, I am the upholder of all beings and yet I am not in them. My will alone causes their existence.

Commentary

"I am not in them" means — "I do not depend on them for My existence. I do not need any help from them to exist. And yet beings do not abide in Me, as I do not support them as a jug or any other kind of vessel supports the water contained in it. How then are they contained? By My will. Behold My divine Yogic Power, namely, My wonderful Divine qualities, unique to Me alone and having no comparison elsewhere. What are these qualities? I am the sustainer of all beings and yet I am not in them — My will alone keeps them in existence."

The gist is that Krishna is the supporter of all beings, and yet He derives no personal assistance whatever from them. His will alone projects, sustains and controls all beings.

Sri Krishna gives an illustration to show how all beings depend on His will for their existence and activity;

yathākāśa-sthito nityaṃ vāyuḥ sarvatrago mahān ।
tathā sarvāṇi bhūtāni mat-sthānīty-upadhāraya ॥ 6 ॥

6. As the mighty wind moving everywhere, ever remains in space, even so, know that all beings abide in Me.

Commentary

The mighty wind exists and moves everywhere in space without any perceivable support. So it has to be admitted that the powerful air-current is dependent on Me for its existence and is being upheld by Me alone. Even so, know that all entities abide in Me, who am invisible to them, and that they are upheld by Me alone.

sarva bhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtiṃ yānti māmikām ।

kalpa-kṣaye punas-tāni kalpādau visṛjāmy-aham ॥ 7 ॥

7. All beings, O Arjuna, are assimilated into My Nature (Prakrti) at the end of a cycle of time (kalpa). Again I send them forth at the beginning of a new cycle.

prakṛtiṃ svām-avaṣṭabhya visṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ ।
bhūta-grāmam imaṃ kṛtsnam avaśaṃ prakṛter-vaśāt ॥ 8 ॥

8. Animating my own Nature [Prakrti], I send forth again and again all this multitude of beings, helpless under the sway of Prakrti.

na ca māṃ tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya ।
udāsīnavad-āsīnam asaktaṃ teṣu karmasu ॥ 9 ॥

9. But these actions do not bind Me, O Dhanañjaya, for I remain detached from them, remaining like one indifferent.

Commentary

"But results like the inequality of creation do not bind Me. I cannot be accused of such negative qualities as cruelty, partiality etc, because the differences of conditions like being born as a god, human being, animal or vegetable are all caused by the previous actions (Karmas) of individual Jīvas themselves. I am unaffected by these inequalities."

mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram ।
hetunānena kaunteya jagad viparivartate ॥ 10 ॥

10. Under My supervision, Prakrti produces all beings that move and move not. Indeed, because of this, O Kaunteya, does the world revolve.

Commentary

Behold in this wonderful phenomena the cosmic dominion inherent in Krishna, and personal characteristics such as sovereignty, true resolve and being free from cruelty and similar defects!

avajānanti māṃ mūḍhā mānuṣīṃ tanum-āśritam ।
paraṃ bhāvam ajānanto mama bhūta-maheśvaram ॥ 11 ॥

11. Fools disregard Me, appearing in a human form, not knowing My transcendental nature, as the Supreme Lord of all beings.

moghāśā mogha-karmāṇo mogha-jñānā vicetasaḥ ।
rākṣasīm-āsurīṃ caiva prakṛtiṃ mohinīṃ śritāḥ ॥ 12 ॥

12. Of vain hopes, of vain works and vain knowledge and insensible, verily they have a deceitful nature like that of the night-wanderers (*Rakṣasas*) and jealous-gods (*Asuras*).

mahātmān-astu māṃ pārtha daivīṃ prakṛtim-āśritāḥ ।
bhajanty-ananya-manaso jñātvā-bhūtādim-avyayam ॥ 13 ।

13. But the magnanimous ones, O Arjuna, who share My divine nature, adore Me with a single mind, knowing Me to be the immutable source of beings.

satataṃ kīrtayanto māṃ yatantaśca dṛḍha-vratāḥ ।
namasyantaśca māṃ bhaktyā nitya-yuktā upāsate ॥ 14 ॥

14. Always glorifying Me, striving with steadfast resolution and prostrating to Me in devotion, aspiring for eternal communion with Me, they adore Me.

jñāna yajñena cāpyanye yajanto mām-upāsate ।
ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśvato-mukham ॥ 15 ॥

15. Others, too, besides offering the sacrifice of wisdom, worship Me as One, who is characterised by diversity in various ways, and is multiform (in My Cosmic aspect).

ahaṃ kratur-ahaṃ yajñāḥ svadhāham aham auṣadham ।
mantro'ham aham-evājyam aham-agnir-ahaṃ hutam ॥ 16 ॥

16. I am the Kratu; I am the Yajña; I am the offering to the manes; I am the herbs; I am the Mantra; I alone am the clarified butter; I am the fire; I am the act of oblating.

Commentary

I am the Kratu; which is the category of all the Vedic sacrifices such as the Jyotiṣṭoma and all the others. *I am the Yajña* — this refers to the fivefold daily sacrifices. *I am the offering to the manes* (*Svadhā*) — the libation offered to nourish the hosts of manes (Ancestors). *I am the herbs* — the grains that are offered into the fire. *I am the Mantra* — the formulae with which offerings are made. *I alone am the clarified butter* — which also implies other examples of offering too, such as the oblation of Soma juice etc. *I am the fire* — the three ritual Vedic fires known as *Āhavaniya, Gārhapatya* and *Dakṣina*. *I am the act of oblating* — the act of offering liquid into fire.

pitāham-asya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ ।
vedyaṃ pavitram oṃkāra ṛk-sāma yajur-eva ca ॥ 17 ॥

17. I am the father, mother, mid-wife and grandfather of this universe. I am the object of knowledge; I am the purifier. I am the syllable Om and also the Rigveda, Samaveda and the Yajurveda.

Commentary

Here the term Dhaṭṛ (creator) stands for a person other than the parents, who helps in one's birth (ie. a mid-wife). Whatever the supreme goal is, that is taught by the Vedas and is [mentally] purifying, "I alone am that. I am the syllable AUM, which is the origin of knowledge and is the seed of the entire Veda comprising of the three divisions — Rik, Saman and Yajus."

gatir-bhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī nivāsaḥ śaraṇaṃ suhṛt ।
prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānaṃ nidhānaṃ bījam avyayam ॥ 18 ॥

18. I am the Goal, the Supporter, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, the Refuge and the Friend [of the universe]. I am the Seat of origin and dissolution, that which is preserved and the imperishable seed.

Commentary

The Goal — that which is reached; it means that ultimate state to which all paths lead. *The Supporter* — one who upholds. *The Lord* — the one who rules the universe. *The Witness* — one who directly perceives everything that is going on. *The Abode* — that in which one resides such as a house etc. *The Refuge* — the intelligent being who has to be resorted to, who leads one to the attainment of desirable things and avoidance of evils. *The Friend* — one who desires one's welfare. *The Seat* — that focal point [substrata] in which origin and dissolution takes place. *That which is preserved* (*nidhanam*) — that which comes into being and is again dissolved. *The imperishable seed* — that supreme cause which is never extinguished.

tapāmyaham ahaṃ varṣaṃ nigṛhṇāmy utsṛjāmi ca ।
amṛtaṃ caiva mṛtyuśca sadasac-cāham arjuna ॥ 19 ॥

19. I give heat; I am the rain which I send forth and hold back; I am immortality as well as death, O Arjuna, I am being, and also non-being.

Commentary

"In the form of fire and the sun it is I alone that send out heat. I alone am both that by which the world lives and dies. Why say more? I am being and non-being." — Being is that which exists in the present time. Non-being is that which existed in the past and that which may exist in the future, but does not exist at the present moment.

The gist is that, "I alone am existent, all the entities exist as My self-expression; all sentient and insentient beings existing in all states, constitute My corporeal manifestation. In this way, they (the wise) adore Me, contemplating upon My essential unity with the entire universe distinguished by names and forms and characterised by varied pluralities — all the diversities being only modalities of My self-expression."

traividya māṃ somapāḥ pūta-pāpa yajñāir iṣṭvā svargatiṃ prārthayante |
te puṇyam āsādya surendra-lokam aśnanti divyān divi deva-bhogān || 20 ||

20. Those who are versed in the three Vedas, being purified from sin by drinking the Soma juice, pray for the way to heaven and worship Me by sacrifices. Reaching the holy realm of the King of the gods, they enjoy in heaven the celestial pleasures of the gods.

Commentary

The followers or knowers of the three Vedas are called *Trai-vidya* they are to be distinguished from those who follow Vedanta (*Trayyanta*). "Those who study the Vedanta (Science of the Self), know Me as the only subject to be known from the study of the Vedas. Considering Me as the highest goal of attainment, they adore Me through chanting My names etc., induced by deep devotion to Me, and also through spiritual study."

But [in contrast] the followers of the three Vedas (*Trai-vidya*) drink the Soma beverage remaining from the sacrifices in honour of Indra and other devas, as prescribed by the Vedas. They are thereby purified of the sins that stand in the way of attainment of heaven. In these sacrifices, in which Indra and the other deities are regarded as God they actually worship Krishna through them. They however do not know that Krishna abides within these devas and so they pray for access to heaven. After attaining the world of Indra, which is free from suffering, they enjoy the divine pleasures in abundance.

te taṃ bhuktvā svarga-lokaṃ viśālaṃ kṣīṇe puṇye marta-lokaṃ viśanti |
evaṃ trayī-dharmam anuprapannā gatāgataṃ kāmakāmā labhante || 21 ||

21. Having enjoyed the vast realm of heaven, they return to the realm of mortals when their merit is exhausted. Thus, those who follow the Vedic rituals and are motivated by desire, come and go.

ananyāś-cintayanto māṃ ye janāḥ paryupāsate |
teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānāṃ yoga-kṣemaṃ vahāmyaham || 22 ||

22. There are those who, not being mindful of anything else, adore Me alone, aspiring after eternal union with Me. I Myself take charge of their prosperity and welfare (*Yoga* and *Kṣema*).

Commentary

"Those who, excluding everything else and having no other purpose, meditate on Me as their only goal, because without Me they are unable to sustain themselves. In the case of such devotees aspiring after eternal unification with Me, I Myself undertake the responsibility of bringing them to Myself — *Yoga* (prosperity) and of preserving them in that state for ever — *Kṣema* (welfare)." The meaning is that they do not return to *Samsara*.

ye'pyanya-devatā-bhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ |
te'pi mām-eva kaunteya yajanty-avidhi-pūrvakam || 23 ||

23. Even those who, endowed with faith are devoted to other gods, they worship Me alone, O Kaunteya, in an indirect manner.

ahaṃ hi sarva-yajñānāṃ bhoktā ca prabhur-eva ca |
na tu mām-abhijānanti tattvenātaś-cyavanti te || 24 ||

24. For, I alone am the enjoyer and the only Lord of all sacrifices. They do not recognise Me in My true nature; hence they fall.

Commentary

I am the only Lord means that "I alone am the bestower of the rewards of all sacrifices."

How wonderful indeed, that exactly the same type of [ritual] action, yields totally different results through the difference in intention (*saṅkalpa*); some experience a very trifling reward with the return [to Samsāra], while others receive a reward in the form of attainment of the Supreme Being which is absolute, limitless, and incomparable! Sri Krishna explains this: —

yānti deva-vratā devān pitṛn-yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ ।
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti madyājino'pi mām ॥ 25 ॥

25. Devotees of the gods go to the gods. The ancestor worshippers go to the manes; the worshippers of inferior forces go to them; and those who worship Me come to Me.

Commentary

The term *Vrata* (votary rites) in the text denotes will, intention or motive (*saṅkalpa*). Those who are motivated with firm resolution (*saṅkalpa*) to worship the gods, like Indra and go to them, as do those who worship the ancestors, Yakṣas, Rakṣasas, Piśācas and other inferior forces — they all go to them. But those who, with the same liturgical acts, worship Krishna with the understanding that He is Vāsudeva, the Supreme Self, who manifests Himself through the gods, the manes and the lower forces — they are devotees and they reach Krishna only — they do not return to Samsāra. Such is the meaning.

patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyaṃ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati ।
tad-ahaṃ bhakty-upahṛtam-aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ ॥ 26 ॥

26. Whoever offers to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or some water, I accept this offering made with devotion by one who is pure of heart.

yat-karoṣi yad-aśnāsi yaj-juhoṣi dadāsi yat ।
yat-tapasyasi kaunteya tat-kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam ॥ 27 ॥

27. Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, whatever austerity you practice, O Kaunteya, do that as an offering to Me.

śubhāśubha phalair-evaṃ mokṣyase karma-bandhanaiḥ ।
saṃnyāsa yoga-yuktātmā vimukto mām-upaiṣyasi ॥ 28 ॥

28. Thus imbued with a mind steadfast in the Yoga of renunciation, you will free yourself from the bonds of Karma, productive of auspicious as well as inauspicious results — thus liberated, you will come to Me.

samo'haṃ sarva-bhūteṣu na me dveṣyo'sti na priyaḥ ।
ye bhajanti tu māṃ bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpyaham ॥ 29 ॥

29. I am the same to all beings; to Me there is none hateful or dear; but those who worship Me with devotion abide in Me and I in them.

Commentary

"Being the refuge for all, I am the same to all beings, be they gods, animals, humans or plants in their multitude of forms from the highest to the lowest, being differentiated according to birth, form, character and consciousness. With regard to those seeking refuge, none is offensive to Me because of inferiority in status, birth, form, character,

consciousness etc. No one is discarded as an object of abhorrence. Likewise, those who do take refuge in Me are not esteemed on account of any consideration like birth, status etc. — the fact that one has surrendered to Me is the only consideration."

The meaning is no one is chosen for Liberation for reasons like birth, status, character etc. But Krishna appreciates those who adore Him as their only exceedingly beloved objective, and because they find it impossible to sustain themselves without worshipping Him. So they abide in Him, irrespective of their qualities such as high or low birth, etc. They remain with Krishna at ease, as if they possess qualities equal to His. He also abides in them, as if they are His superiors.

api-cet sudurācāro bhajate mām-ananyabhāk |
sādhur-eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag-vyavasito hi saḥ || 30 ||

30. If even the most sinful person worships Me with devotion to no other, he must be regarded as righteous, for he has rightly resolved.

Commentary

"Even though one has transgressed the rules pertaining to one's social situation or failed to avoid forbidden things; if one has begun to adore Me in the manner described above with undivided devotion, namely, worship as an end in itself — such a person must be considered highly righteous. He is pre-eminent among devotees and must be esteemed as worthy of honour." The meaning is that such a person is equal to those enlightened ones [Jñanins] mentioned earlier.

kṣipraṃ bhavati dharmātmā śāśvacchāntiṃ nigacchati |
kaunteya prati-jānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati || 31 ||

31. Speedily he becomes righteous and obtains everlasting peace, affirm on My behalf, O Kaunteya, that My devotee never perishes.

Commentary

"Very soon the qualities (Gunas) of Rajas and Tamas are eradicated along with their roots, as he has been purified of all sins through worshipping Me without any ulterior motive. Quickly his mind becomes especially attuned to meditating on Me with all the ancillaries [of Karma Yoga] and overcomes all impediments. It is this kind of adoration which was alluded to by the term 'Dharma' at the commencement of this chapter. Such a person obtains enduring peace, ie., attains to an eternal state, free from any conduct which hinders access to Me and from which there will be no backsliding."

"O Arjuna, you may affirm to others that one who has taken the first steps to meditate upon Me in this way, will not perish, even though tainted by some misconduct in the past. On count of devotion to Me, one will be able to conquer the entire host of impediments [to spiritual progress]. After becoming completely free from impediments one quickly obtains perfection in Bhakti (Devotion/meditation)."

māṃ hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye'pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ |
striyo vaiśyās-tathā śūdrās-te'pi yānti parāṃ gatim || 32 ||

32. By taking refuge in Me even those of unfavourable birth, women, vaiśyas and also śūdras attain the supreme state.

kiṃ punar-brāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayas-tathā |
anityam asukhaṃ lokam imaṃ prāpya bhajasva mām || 33 ||

33. How much more [easily] then the Brahmanas and royal sages who are pure and are devoted to Me! Having come into this transient world of suffering, do you worship Me.

Commentary

"Women, farmers and peasants, and even those who are born into marginalised social circumstances (*pāpa-yoni*), can attain the supreme state by taking refuge in Me. How much more then the well-born Brahmanas and royal sages who are naturally devoted to me! Therefore, royal sage that you are, having been born into this impermanent and unhappy world, stricken by the threefold affliction meditate upon Me, as you traverse the path of life."

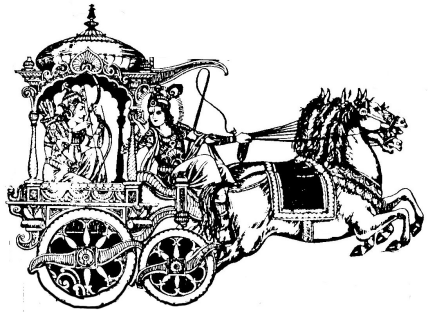
Sri Krishna now describes the nature of Bhakti:

manmanā bhāva mad-bhakto mad-yājī māṃ namas-kuru ।
māmevaiṣyasi yuktvaivam ātmānaṃ mat parāyaṇam ॥ 34 ॥

34. Focus your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, offer worship to Me, bow down to Me. Engaging your mind in this manner and regarding Me as the supreme goal, you will come to Me.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavadgītāsupaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre
śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde rāja-guhya-yogo
nāma navamo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the ninth discourse entitled
"The Royal Secret"



Chapter 10

Vibhūti Yogaḥ

Manifestation of Divine Glories

Summary of the Teaching

In order to generate and to foster the development of Bhakti Yoga, Krishna taught that He is the Over-Self of all beings. A narration of His unique characteristic auspicious attributes was given. Bhakti Yoga with its preparatory disciplines was taught. Now, in order to further cultivate and nurture devotion, it will now be taught that the totality of the Lord's auspicious attributes are infinite, that His sovereignty over the whole universe is unrivalled, and that the universe is governed by His will as it constitutes His corporeal manifestation (*śarīra*), with Him for its Self.

śrī bhagavān uvāca

bhūya eva mahā-bāho śṛṇu me paramaṃ vacaḥ ।
yatte'haṃ prīyamāṇāya vakṣyāmi hita-kāmyayā ॥ 1 ॥

The Blessed Lord said;

1. Further, O Arjuna, listen to My supreme teaching, which, desirous of your welfare, I shall impart to you who love Me.

na me viduḥ sura-gaṇāḥ prabhavaṃ na maharṣayaḥ ।
aham-ādir-hi devānāṃ maharṣīṇāṃ ca sarvaśaḥ ॥ 2 ॥

2. Neither the hosts of gods nor the great seers know My glory. Indeed, I am the sole source of the gods and of the great seers.

yo mām ajam anādiṃ ca vetti loka-maheśvaram ।
asamūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu sarva-pāpaiḥ pramucyate ॥ 3 ॥

3. One who knows Me as unborn and without a beginning; the great Lord of the worlds — is undeluded among mortals and is liberated from all negative acts.

Commentary

The gist of what is said is this: — In this world, the king who rules over others is only like all other men. He has become a ruler by virtue of some good Karma. Such is also the case with the king of the gods (Indra). Even the Creator (Brahma) of the World (Brahmanda) is of the same class as other beings involved in Samsara, because he too is a created being, coming within the threefold classification of beings according to the three innate tendencies for growth. The Veda also says;— He who creates Brahma' (Sve. Up. 6:18). [which indicates that Brahma is a created being].

The same is the case with all those who have acquired the eight supernatural psychic powers. But I, the Supreme Being, am the great Lord of the worlds. The un-deluded person knows Me as essentially different from insentient matter in its sequential state of cause and effect, and also from the Jivatman whether conjoined with material nature or liberated from it, and from everything else, because everything in the universe is subject to My control.

Thus, after teaching the method of annihilating all negativity impeding the rise of Bhakti, by contemplation on His essential nature, and also affirming the development

of devotion by the destruction of such opposing factors, Sri Krishna now explains the way in which Bhakti develops by contemplation on His sovereign power and boundless positive attributes: —

buddhir-jñānam asammohaḥ kṣamā satyaṃ damaḥ śamaḥ ।
sukhaṃ duḥkhaṃ bhavo'bhāvo bhayaṃ cābhyam-eva ca ॥ 4 ॥

4. Intelligence, knowledge, non-delusion, forbearance, truth, restraint, self-control, pleasure and pain, exaltation and depression, fear and fearlessness;

ahiṃsā samatā tuṣṭis-tapo dānaṃ yaśo'yaśaḥ ।
bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānāṃ matta eva pṛthag-vidhāḥ ॥ 5 ॥

5. Non-violence, equanimity, cheerfulness, austerity, beneficence, fame and infamy — these different [psychological] qualities arise from Me alone.

Commentary

'*Intelligence*' — is the power of the mind to investigate and ascertain. '*Knowledge*' — is the power of determining the difference between the two entities: insentient matter and the sentient Self. '*Non-delusion*' — is freedom from deception like that of perceiving the mother-of-pearl in a shell as silver — a delusion which arises from the superimposition of the memory of a thing once seen on another thing now being perceived. '*Forbearance*' — is a state of mind in which one remains calm even when there is a [valid] cause for becoming disturbed. '*Truth*' — is the describing of things as they actually are, and is also meant for the welfare of all beings. In this context the acting of the mind in conformity with this ideal is intended, because the content is with reference to the thought processes. '*Restraint*' — is refraining from activity which results in causing suffering to others. '*Self-control*' — is the restraint of the mind in the same manner. 'Pleasure' — is the experience of that which is agreeable to oneself. '*Pain*' — is the experience of what is disagreeable. '*Exaltation*' — is the mental state of elation caused by experiences which are agreeable to oneself. '*Depression*' — is the feeling of hopelessness caused by disagreeable experiences. '*Fear*' — is the stress caused by the expectation of future suffering. '*Fearlessness*' — is the absence of such feelings. '*Non-violence*' — is refraining from being the cause of suffering to other beings. '*Equanimity*' — is being mentally balanced in whatever comes; good or bad and to look with neutrality on whatever happens to oneself, one's friends and one's enemies. '*Cheerfulness*' — is the natural feeling of joy with the perceived universe. '*Austerity*' — is self-discipline by denying oneself pleasures, as enjoined by the Scriptures. '*Beneficence*' — is giving to another whatever objects one personally enjoys. '*Fame*' — is the [generation of the] reputation of possessing good qualities. '*Infamy*' — is the bad reputation arising from possessing negative qualities. The mental processes which lead to the generation of fame and infamy must be understood here, because psychology is the subject-matter of the context [of this verse]. Austerity and beneficence are also to be understood in the same way. All these psychological processes which lead to either activity or inactivity, arise from Me alone, ie., they are dependent on My volition.

maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve catvāro manavas-tathā ।
mad-bhāvā mānasā jātā yeṣāṃ loka imāḥ prajāḥ ॥ 6 ॥

6. The seven great seers [Rishis] of yore and similarly the four Manus, all are my mental expansions empowered by Me. All these creatures of the world are descended from them.

Commentary

'*The seven great Rishis of yore*', namely, those seven great Rishis like Bhrgu etc., who were born from the mind of Brahma in the cycle of the previous Manu [Universal administrator] to perpetuate the creation; and the four Manus who are the sons of

Savarna were created in order to supervise the work of sustentation. All creatures in the world are their progeny. So they are the progenitors as well as the sustainers of all beings until the time of cosmic dissolution [Pralaya]. The Rishis and the Manus, derive their empowerment from Me. Their disposition is My disposition — they do what I want them to do — this the meaning.

etāṃ vibhūtiṃ yogaṃ ca mama yo vetti tattvataḥ ।
so'vikalpena yogena yujyate nātra saṃśayaḥ ॥ 7 ॥

7. He who in truth knows My sovereignty and splendour of auspicious attributes, becomes imbued with the unshakeable Yoga of Bhakti; of this, there is no doubt.

Commentary

Sovereignty (*Vibhuti*) is the condition of being the Supreme Lord. The one who in truth knows this Vibhuti which displays itself through My being the basis of origination, sustentation and activity of everything, and also that I have absolute auspicious attributes; antithetical to all that is negative — such a person becomes firmly established in Bhakti Yoga.

Sri Krishna now shows how the learning about His sovereignty increases devotion.

ahaṃ sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṃ pravartate ।
iti matvā-bhajante māṃ budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ ॥ 8 ॥

8. I am the source of all; everything emerges from Me — realising this the enlightened ones adore Me with complete devotion (*Bhāva*).

mac-cittā mad-gata-prāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam ।
kathayantaśca māṃ nityaṃ tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca ॥ 9 ॥

9. With their minds focussed on Me, with their life-force centred in Me, confiding in one another and always speaking of Me, they live in contentment and bliss at all times.

Commentary

With their 'Prāṇa', ie. the life-force centred on Me — the meaning is that they are unable to sustain themselves without Me. They 'confide in one another' by revealing their personal spiritual experiences and by discussing My divine and adorable pastimes. The speakers are delighted by their own narration, because it is spontaneous, without any ulterior motive; the listeners too, feel the narration to be peerless and incomparably cherishable. They thus live in bliss.

teṣāṃ satata-yuktānāṃ bhajatāṃ prīti-pūrvakam ।
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṃ taṃ yena mām-upayānti te ॥ 10 ॥

10. To those, who are constantly harmonised with Me and who worship Me with intense love, I fondly grant the mental disposition (Buddhi-yoga) by which they attain to Me.

teṣām evānukam pārtham aham ajñānajaṃ tamaḥ ।
nāśayāmy-ātmabhāvastho jñāna-dīpena-bhāsvatā ॥ 11 ॥

11. Out of compassion for them alone, I, being the focus of their thought processes, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the brilliant lamp of wisdom.

arjuna uvāca

paraṃ brahma paraṃ dhāma pavitraṃ paramaṃ bhavān ।
puruṣaṃ śāśvataṃ divyam ādidevam ajaṃ vibhum ॥ 12 ॥

Arjuna said:
12. You are Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Light, and the Supreme Purifier. All the seers proclaim You as the eternal, divine Being, the Primal Lord, the unborn and all-pervading.

ahus-tvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve devārṣir-nāradas -tathā ।
asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayaṃ caiva bravīṣi me ॥ 13 ॥

13. So also declare all the divine sages Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyasa, now You Yourself also proclaim this.

Commentary

Krishna Himself says so in the passage beginning with— 'Earth, water, fire, ether, mind, intellect and Ahamkara; this Prakrti, which is divided eightfold, is Mine' (7.4) and ending with 'I am the origin of all; from Me proceed everything' (10.8).

sarvam etad ṛtaṃ manye yan-māṃ vadasi keśava ।
na hi te bhagavan vyaktiṃ vidur-devā na dānavāḥ ॥ 14 ॥

14. O Krishna, I am convinced of all this that You say to Me, verily O Lord, neither the gods nor the anti-gods know Your identity.

svayam evātmanātmānaṃ vettha tvaṃ puruṣottama ।
bhūta-bhāvana bhūteśa deva-deva jagat-pate ॥ 15 ॥

15. O Supreme Being, O Creator of beings, O Lord of beings, O God of gods, O Ruler of the universe, You Yourself know Yourself by Yourself.

vaktum arhasy-aśeṣeṇa divyā hyātma vibhūtayaḥ ।
yābhir-vibhūtibhir lokān imāṃs tvaṃ vyāpya tiṣṭhasi ॥ 16 ॥

16. Kindly tell Me without reserve, of Your divine supernal manifestations whereby You abide pervading all these worlds.

What is the need for such description? The answer follows: —

katham vidyām ahaṃ yogiṃs tvāṃ sadā paricintayan ।
keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyo'si bhagavan mayā ॥ 17 ॥

17. O Almighty Lord, How can I, a Yogi, know You by constantly meditating on You? And in what forms are you to be contemplated upon by Me.

Commentary

How am I, as a Yogi engaged in the meditation of Bhakti Yoga, to know You, as the object of meditation, as fully possessing a multitude of auspicious attributes like sovereignty etc.? And what are the various psychological characteristics, which You have not yet mentioned, and which are different from the intelligence, discriminatory knowledge etc., mentioned previously?

vistareṇātmano yogaṃ vibhūtiṃ ca janārdana ।
bhūyaḥ kathaya tṛptir hi śṛṇvato nāsti me'mṛtam ॥ 18 ॥

18. Tell me again in detail, O Krishna, about Your attributes and glories. For I am never satiated by hearing Your ambrosial words.

Commentary

"You briefly referred to your sovereignty and dominion in verse 10.8 — 'I am the origin of all; from Me proceed everything'. Please elaborate now on this and describe in what way You are the Creator and Controller of all".

śrī bhagavān uvāca

hanta te kathayiṣyāmi divyā hyātma vibhūtayaḥ ।
prādhānyataḥ kuru-śreṣṭha nāsty-anto vistarasya me ॥ 19 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:
19. Gladly shall I relate to you, O Arjuna (Best of the Kurus), the most prominent of My divine personal expansions (Vibhūtis)— There is indeed no limit to their extent.

Commentary

The term '*pradhānya'* (most important) means those which are most pre-eminent, I shall reveal to you only those manifestations that are prominent because it would be impossible to recount or to listen to them in detail, because there is no limit to them.

A *Vibhuti* or manifestation referred to, is defined as "something under the control of the Lord"; because of the expository statement — 'He who in truth knows this supernal manifestation and the seat of auspicious attributes' (10.7), — made after listing the various kinds of psychological factors like intelligence etc., of all beings which arise from Krishna alone.

Similarly it has been stated there [in the commentary on 10:7] that the term Yoga refers to Krishna being the Supreme Creator and that the term Vibhuti refers to things 'being impelled' by Krishna. It is also confirmed by the statement: — 'I am the origin of all; from me proceed everything; thinking thus, the wise worship Me with all devotion' (10.8).

aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarva bhūtāśaya sthitaḥ ।
aham ādiśca madhyaṃ ca bhūtānām anta eva ca ॥ 20 ॥

20. I am the Self, O Gudakesha (Arjuna —Conqueror-of-sleep), dwelling in the hearts of all beings. I verily am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings.

Commentary

I am the ātman seated in the hearts of all beings who constitute My corporeal manifestation (*sharira*). This is later confirmed in verses 15:15 & 18:61.

The Vedas also declare this (Br.Up., 3.7.21, 22).

Thus, I exist as the Self of all beings and I am their beginning, their middle and also their end which means I am the cause of their origination, sustentation and dissolution.

ādityānām ahaṃ viṣṇur jyotiṣāṃ ravir-aṃśumān ।
marīcir marutām asmi nakṣatrāṇām ahaṃ śaśī ॥ 21 ॥

21. Among the Adityas I am Vishnu, of luminaries I am the radiant Sun. Of the Maruts I am Marici, and among the constellations I am the Moon.

Commentary

Of the 27 lunar mansions (sub-divisions of the Zodiac), I am the Moon. The genitive case used here is not to specify one out of many included in a group; its use is the same as in statement— 'I am the consciousness in all beings' (10.22), I am the Moon who is the Lord of the lunar mansions [but not one of them].

vedānāṃ sāma-vedo'smi devānām asmi vāsavaḥ ।
indriyāṇāṃ manaścāsmi bhūtānām asmi cetanā ॥ 22 ॥

22. Of the Vedas I am the Samaveda; I am Indra among the gods. Among sense-organs I am the Mind, and of sentient beings I am consciousness.

rudrāṇāṃ śaṅkaraścāsmi vitteśo yakṣa-rakṣasām ।
vasūnāṃ pāvakaścāsmi meruḥ śikhariṇām aham ॥ 23 ॥

23. Of the Rudras I am Sankara; among the Yakshas and Rakshasa, I am the Lord of wealth (Kubera). Of the Vasus I am Agni; of the peaked mountains, I am Meru.

purodhasāṃ ca mukhyaṃ māṃ viddhi pārtha bṛhaspatim ।
senānīnām ahaṃ skandaḥ sarasām asmi sāgaraḥ ॥ 24 ॥

24. Among domestic priests, O Arjuna, know Me to be their chief — Brhaspati. Among army generals, I am Skanda; among reservoirs of water, I am the ocean.

maharṣīṇāṃ bhṛgur ahaṃ girām-asmy-ekam akṣaram ।
yajñānāṃ japa-yajño'smi sthāvarāṇāṃ himālāyaḥ ॥ 25 ॥

25. Among the great sages, I am Bhrgu; among words, I am the single syllable Om. Among sacrifices, I am the sacrifice of Japa and among immovable things I am the Himalayas.

Commentary

Of great seers like Marici (see note 3) etc., I am Bhrgu. Words are sounds that convey meaning, and of such words, I am the single syllable AUM. Of all sacrifices, I am the sacrifice of Japa (repetition of sacred formulae) which is the most prominent part of the sacrificial liturgy.

aśvatthaḥ sarva vṛkṣāṇāṃ devārṣīṇāṃ ca nāradaḥ ।
gandharvāṇāṃ citrarathaḥ siddhānāṃ kapilo muniḥ ॥ 26 ॥

26. Of trees I am the Ashvattha; among celestial seers (deva-Rishis) I am Narada. Of the Gandharvas I am Citraratha and among the perfected beings, I am Kapila.

uccaiḥśravasam aśvānāṃ viddhi mām amṛtodbhavam ।
airāvataṃ gajendrāṇāṃ narāṇāṃ ca narādhipam ॥ 27 ॥

27. Of horses know Me to be Uccaihshravas the nectar-born. Of lordly elephants, I am Airavata, and among humankind, I am the monarch.

Commentary

Uccaihshravas was the celestial horse born from the churning of the ocean of ambrosia. The king of elephants Airavata was also produced from the churning of the ocean [and given to Indra].

āyudhānām ahaṃ vajraṃ dhenūnām asmi kāmadhuk ।
prajanaścāsmi kandarpaḥ sarpāṇām asmi vāsukiḥ ॥ 28 ॥

28. Among weapons, I am the Vajra (thunderbolt). Among cows, I am Kamadhuk; among progenitors, I am Kandarpa (the god of love). Of dragons, I am Vasuki .

Commentary

Kāmadhuk (or Kāma-dhenu) is the celestial wish-fulfilling cow Surabhi the greatest among the produces of milk for use in sacrifice. The god of love Kāma-deva is the cause of procreation. Sarpas are one-headed dragons.

anantaścāsmi nāgānāṃ varuṇo yādasām aham ।
pitṛṇām aryamā cāsmi yamaḥ saṃyamatām aham ॥ 29 ॥

29. Amongst Nāgas, I am Ananta. Of aquatic-deities I am Varuna; of the manes, I am Aryama and among subduers, I am Yama.

Commentary

Nāgas are many-headed dragons. Yadamsi are the deities connected with water. Subduers are law-enforcers — Yama (the god of death) is the son of the sun-god Vivasvata.

prahlādaścāsmi daityānāṃ kālaḥ kalayatām aham ।
mṛgāṇāṃ ca mṛgendro'haṃ vainateyaśca pakṣiṇām ॥ 30 ॥

30. Among Daityas, I am Prahlada and among reckoners I am Time [Kāla]. Of beasts, I am the lion, and of birds I am Garuda the son of Vinata.

Commentary

Of those who reckon with the desire to cause harm I am *Kāla*— here an emissary of Yama who records the time of death of creatures is meant.

pavanaḥ pavatām asmi rāmaḥ śastra-bhṛtām aham ।
jhaṣāṇāṃ makaraś-cāsmi srotasām-asmi jāhnavī ॥ 31 ॥

31. Of moving things, I am the wind. Among warriors I am Rama; among fishes, I am the shark, and amongst rivers, I am Ganga.

Commentary

Among those who bear arms, I am Rama. Here the quality of "bearing weapons" is the actual Vibhuti, as no other sense is possible. Aditya and the others, being jivas, are 'attributes' of the Lord, who is their Over-Self as they constitute His corporeality. Therefore they stand in the same position of the attribute as that of bearing weapons.

sargāṇām ādir-antaśca madhyaṃ caivāham arjuna ।
adhyātma vidyā vidyānāṃ vādaḥ pravadatām aham ॥ 32 ॥

32. In relation to beings, I am the beginning and the end, and also the middle, O Arjuna. Among sciences I am the science of the Self. In the discipline of debate, I am logical reasoning.

Commentary

Beings are all created things and I am their beginning or cause because I Myself am continually creating them. Similarly, I am the end, namely the destroyer of everything that is in the process of disintegration at all times. Similarly I am the middle, that is to say the sustainer of things that are being sustained at all times. Of those who investigate the truth through means of debate using the techniques of *Jalpa* (argument) and *Vitaṇḍa* (perverse criticism) etc., l am the technique of logical reasoning which determines the truth.

akṣarāṇām akāro'smi dvandavaḥ sāmāsikasya ca ।
aham evākṣayaḥ kālo dhātā'haṃ viśvato mukhaḥ ॥ 33 ॥

33. Among the letters of the alphabet I am 'A'. I am the dual among compound words; I am Myself everlasting Time and I am the Creator, facing every direction.

Commentary

Samasika means the entire collection of compound words of which I am the *Dvandva* (dual) compound; it is pre-eminent because the meanings of both constituent terms are equally important. I am Myself everlasting Time (Kāla) composed of divisions like hours and minutes etc. I am the four-faced Brahma who is the creator of all.

mṛtyuḥ sarva-haraś-cāham udbhavaśca bhaviṣyatām ।
kīrtiḥ śrīr-vāk ca nārīṇāṃ smṛtir-medhā dhṛtiḥ kṣamā ॥ 34 ॥

34. I am Death among plunderers. I am the origin of all that shall be born. In women I am fame, prosperity, eloquence, memory, intelligence, endurance and forgiveness.

Commentary

I am also Death or *Mrtyu* [a servant of Yama] who snatches away the life of all beings. Of those beings that shall be born I am that activity called birthing. In women [ie among goddesses who are the Shaktis of the Lord] I am prosperity (*Śrī*); fame (*Kīrti*); eloquence (*Vāk*); memory (*Smṛti*); intelligence (*Medhā*); endurance (*Dhṛti*) and forgiveness (*Kṣamā*).

bṛhatsāma tathā sāmnāṃ gāyatrī chandasām aham ।
māsānāṃ mārgaśīrṣo'ham ṛtūnāṃ kusumākaraḥ ॥ 35 ॥

35. Of the Sama hymns, I am the Brhatsaman hymn and I am the Gāyatri among meters. Of months, I am Margashirsha (November-December): and of seasons I am the season of flowers (spring).

dyūtaṃ chalayatām asmi tejas tejasvinām aham ।
jayo'smi vyavasāyo'smi sattvaṃ sattvavatām aham ॥ 36 ॥

36. Of the fraudulent [activities], I am gambling. I am the brilliance of the brilliant, I am victory, I am effort, I am the magnanimity of the magnanimous.

vṛṣṇīnāṃ vāsudevo'smi pāṇḍavānāṃ dhanañjayaḥ ।
munīnām apy-ahaṃ vyāsaḥ kavīnām uśanā kaviḥ ॥ 37 ॥

37. Of the Vrshni [clan] I am Vasudeva. Of the Pandava [family] I am Arjuna. Among sages I am Vyasa and among seers, I am Ushana (Sukra).

Commentary

Here the pre-eminent *Vibhūti* (distinction) is that of being the son of Vasudeva, because no other meaning is possible. Of sons of Pandu, I am Dhanañjaya or Arjuna. Among those sages who achieve enlightenment through the process of meditation, I am Vyasa. The seers are those who are wise and learned — among them I am Sukra (Venus).

daṇḍo damayatām asmi nītir-asmi jigīṣatām ।
maunaṃ caivāsmi guhyānāṃ jñānaṃ jñānavatām aham ॥ 38 ॥

38. Of disciplinarians, I am the principle of punishment. Among conquerors, I am diplomatic policy. Of secrets, I am verily silence; and of those who are wise, I am wisdom.

Commentary

I am the power of punishment of those who punish for law enforcement. In regard to those who seek ascendancy I am the diplomatic policy which is the [best] means of attaining success. Of factors associated with keeping secrecy, I am silence.

yaccāpi sarva bhūtānāṃ bījaṃ tad aham arjuna ।
na tadasti vinā yat syān mayā bhūtaṃ carācaram ॥ 39 ॥

39. Whatever is the essence of all beings, O Arjuna, I am that. There is nothing mobile or immobile that can exist without Me.

nānto'sti mama divyānāṃ vibhūtīnāṃ paraṅtapa ।
eṣa tūddeśataḥ prokto vibhūter vistaro mayā ॥ 40 ॥

40. There is no limit to My divine glories O Arjuna (Scorcher-of-foes). Here I have only briefly adumbrated My Divine Manifestations.

yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṃ śrīmad ūrjitam eva ca ।
tat tad evāvagaccha tvaṃ mama tejo'ṃśa saṃbhavam ॥ 41 ॥

41. Know for certain that whatever has sovereignty, splendour and brilliance is produced by a mere fraction of My potency.

Commentary

Sovereignty is the capacity and means to control others; splendour refers to that which has beauty or prosperity in terms of wealth, grains etc., or has brilliance namely, is engaged in actions for the benefit of others — know such manifestations as coming from a mere fragment of My *'tejas'*. *Tejas* or Might is the capacity to overcome all opposition. The meaning is, know them as arising from a fraction of My inconceivable power of subjugation.

athavā bahunaitena kiṃ jñānena tavārjuna |
viṣṭabhyāham-idaṃ kṛtsnam ekāṃśena sthito jagat || 42 ||

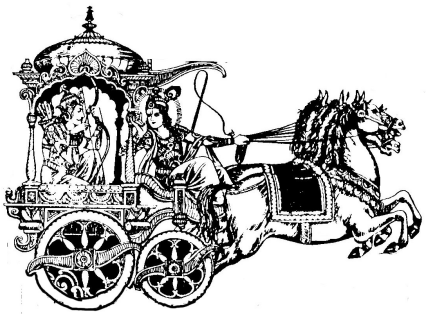
42. But of what use to you is all this extensive knowledge, O Arjuna? I abide, sustaining this whole universe with but a fraction of Myself.

Commentary

As said by venerable Parashara:— 'On a fraction of the ten thousandth part of a ten thousandth part of this energy, the universe rests' (V.P., 1:9:53).

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavadgītāsupaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ yoga-śāstre
śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde vibhūti-yogo nāma
daśamo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the tenth discourse entitled
"Manifestation of Divine Glories"



Chapter 11

Viśvarūpa Darśana Yogaḥ

The Vision of the Cosmic Form

Summary of the Teaching

Thus, for engendering Bhakti Yoga and helping to develop it, Sri Krishna taught that He is the Over-Self of all beings. He gave a narration of His unique auspicious attributes which characterize Him as different from all other entities. He also taught that the entire range of sentient and insentient beings which are likened to the corporeality or "body" of God, are completely dependant upon Him for their origin, existent and activity.

Having heard from Krishna of His marvelous and unique nature and activity; and being convinced of the truth of this revelation, Arjuna became desirous of directly perceiving these things and conveyed his longing to Krishna. By His grace, Arjuna was able to see Him as described in this chapter.

śrī arjuna uvāca

mad-anugrahāya paramaṃ guhyam adhyātma saṃjñitam |
yat tvayoktaṃ vacas tena moho-yaṃ vigato mama || 1 ||

Arjuna said.

1. Out of compassion for Me, You have personally revealed the most profound mystery concerning the jivatman; thereby this delusion of mine is completely dispelled.

bhavāpyayau hi bhūtānāṃ śrutau vistaraśo mayā |
tvattaḥ kamala-patrākṣa mahātmyam api cāvyayam || 2 ||

2. Indeed, I have heard in great detail about the origination and dissolution of all beings, O Krishna (Lotus-eyed-one), as issuing forth from You; as also about Your inexhaustible excellence.

evam etad yathāttha tvam-ātmānaṃ parameśvara |
draṣṭum icchāmi te rūpam aiśvaraṃ puruṣottama || 3 ||

3. O Supreme Lord, I long to actually see Your Sovereign form, exactly as You Yourself have described it, O Supreme-person.

manyase yadi tacchakyaṃ mayā draṣṭum iti prabho |
yogeśvara tato me tvaṃ darśayāmānam avyayam || 4 ||

4. If you consider, O Lord, that I am capable, then reveal Yourself completely to me, O Lord of Yoga in that imperishable form.

śrī bhagavān uvāca

paśya me pārtha rūpāṇi śataśo'tha sahasraśaḥ |
nānā vidhāni divyāni nānā varṇā kṛtīni ca || 5 ||

The Blessed Lord said:

5. Behold My forms, O Arjuna (Partha), hundreds upon thousands of them, manifold, divine, varied in hue and shape,

paśyādityān vasūn rudrān aśvinau marutas tathā |
bahūny-adṛṣṭa-pūrvāṇi paśyāścaryāṇi bhārata || 6 ||

6. Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the two Ashvins and the Maruts. Behold, O Arjuna, many marvels never seen before.

Commentary

"Behold in My single form the twelve Adityas, eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, the two Ashvins and forty-nine Maruts." — this is merely illustrative the meaning being — "Behold all those things directly perceived in this world and those described in the Scriptures, and also many marvels, not seen before in all the worlds and not mentioned in any of the Scriptures."

ihaikasthaṃ jagat kṛtsnaṃ paśyādya sacarācaram ।
mama dehe guḍākeśa yac cānyad draṣṭum icchasi ॥ 7 ॥

7. Behold here, O Arjuna (Conqueror-of-sleep), the whole universe with its mobile and immobile things centered in My body and whatever else you desire to see.

Commentary

'Here' — in this single "body" of Mine, and even here, gathered together in a single spot, behold the universe with all moving and non-moving entities. Whatever else you desire to see (ie., Arjuna's chances of victory), behold that also in one part of this single body.

na tu māṃ śakyase draṣṭum anenaiva sva-cakṣuṣā ।
divyaṃ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ paśya me yogam aiśvaram ॥ 8 ॥

8. But you will not be able to see Me with your physical eye. I (therefore) give you clairvoyance — behold My Sovereign Glory!

sañjaya uvāca

evam uktvā tato rājan mahāyogeśvaro hariḥ ।
darśayāmāsa pārthāya paramaṃ rūpam aiśvaram ॥ 9 ॥

Sañjaya said:

9. Having spoken thus, O King, Sri Krishna, the great Lord of Yoga, then revealed to Arjuna the supreme Sovereign Form.

aneka vaktra nayanam anekādbhuta darśanam ।
aneka divyābharaṇaṃ divyānekodyatāyudham ॥ 10 ॥

10. With innumerable mouths and eyes, many astonishing aspects, many divine ornaments and brandishing many divine weapons.

divya mālyāmbaradharaṃ divya gandhānulepanam ।
sarvāścaryam ayaṃ devam anantaṃ viśvato-mukham ॥ 11 ॥

11. Wearing celestial garlands and raiment, anointed with divine perfumes, full of all wonders, resplendent, boundless and facing all directions.

Commentary

'*Divyam*' means 'resplendent'. '*Anantam*' (boundless) means that form was not limited by time and space because of its being the foundation of the entire universe in the past, present and future, '*Viśvatomukham*' means extending into all directions.

Sañjaya explains the same resplendence expressed by the term 'Divyam':

divi sūrya sahasrasya bhaved yugapad utthitā ।
yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād bhāsas tasya mahātmanaḥ ॥ 12 ॥

12. If a thousand suns were to rise at once in the sky, the resulting magnificence may be (somewhat) like the effulgence of that mighty One.

Commentary

This statement illustrates the infinitude of His refulgence. The meaning is that this manifestation (theophany) was of the nature of expansive light.

tatraikasthaṃ jagat kṛtsnaṃ pravibhaktam enekadhā ।
apaśyad deva-devasya śarīre pāṇḍavas tadā ॥ 13 ॥

13. There [in that form] Arjuna beheld the entire universe, with its manifold divisions gathered together in one single point within the body of the God of gods.

tataḥ sa vismayāviṣṭo hṛṣṭa-romā dhanañjayaḥ ।
praṇamya śirasā devaṃ kṛtāñjalir abhāṣata ॥ 14 ॥

14. Then Arjuna (Dhananjaya), overcome with amazement, his hair standing on end, bowed his head to the Lord, and with palms pressed together spoke.

arjuna uvāca

paśyāmi devāṃs tava deva dehe sarvāṃs tathā bhūta viśeṣa saṅghān ।
brahmāṇam īśaṃ kamalāsanastham ṛṣiṃśca sarvān uragāṃśca divyān ॥ 15 ॥

Arjuna said:
15. I behold, O Lord, in Your body all the gods and all the diverse hosts of beings, Brahma, Siva who is in Brahma, the sages and the gleaming serpents.

Commentary

"O Lord! I can see in Your Cosmic Body all the gods and every category of living being as also Brahma, the four-faced creator of the universe. So too, Siva (*īśam kamalāsanastham*) who abides in the lotus-seated-Brahma; meaning that Siva follows the instructions of Brahma. So also all the seers of whom the divine seers

are the foremost; and refulgent dragons like Vasuki, Takshaka etc.

aneka bāhūdara vaktra netraṃ paśyāmi tvāṃ sarvato'nanta rūpam ।
nāntaṃ na madhyaṃ na punastavādiṃ paśyāmi viśveśvara viśvarūpa ॥ 16 ॥

16. With manifold arms, torsos, mouths and eyes, I behold Your infinite form on all sides. I see no end, nor middle nor yet the beginning of You, O Lord of the universe, O Universal Form!

kirīṭinaṃ gadinaṃ cakriṇaṃ ca tejorāśiṃ sarvato dīptimantam ।
paśyāmi tvāṃ durnirīkṣyaṃ samantād dīptānalārka-dyutim aprameyam ॥ 17 ॥

17. I behold You with crown, mace and discus, as an expanse of light radiating everywhere, hard to look at, blazing like a burning fire and the sun, and immeasurable.

tvam akṣaraṃ paramaṃ veditavyaṃ tvam-asya viśvasya paraṃ nidhānam ।
tvam-avyayaḥ śāśvata dharma goptā sanātanas tvaṃ puruṣo mato me ॥ 18 ॥

18. You are the Imperishable, Supreme One to be realised. You are the Supreme Substratum of this universe. You are immutable; the Guardian of the Eternal Law (Dharma), I know You are the Eternal Supreme Being.

anādi madhyāntam ananta-vīryam ananta bāhuṃ śaśi-sūrya netram ।
paśyami tvāṃ dīpta hutāśa vaktraṃ sva-tejasā viśvam idaṃ tapantam ॥ 19 ॥

19. I behold You without beginning, middle and end. Your creative potency is infinite and You are endowed with a countless number of arms. The sun and moon are Your eyes and Your mouth is emitting blazing fire and searing the entire universe with your radiance.

dyāvāpṛthivyor idam antaraṃ hi vyāptaṃ tvayaikena diśaśca sarvāḥ ।
dṛṣṭvādbhutaṃ rūpam idaṃ tavograṃ loka trayaṃ pravyathitaṃ mahātman ॥ 20 ॥

20. The inter-space between heaven and earth, and all the directions are filled by You alone. Beholding Your spectacular and awesome form, O Mahatman, the three worlds are greatly overwhelmed with apprehension.

amī hi tvāṃ surasaṅghā viśanti kecid bhītāḥ prāñjalayo gṛṇanti ।
svastītyuktvā maharṣi siddha-saṅghāḥ stuvanti tvāṃ stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ ॥ 21 ॥

21. Verily into You the hosts of Devas enter. Some fearfully extol You with palms joined. The hosts of great sages and Siddhas praise You with perfect eulogies saying "Hail to You."

rudrādityā vasavo ye ca sādhyā viśve'śvinau marutaścoṣmapāśca ।
gandharva yakṣāsura siddha-saṅghā vīkṣante tvāṃ vismitāścaiva sarve ॥ 22 ॥

22. The Rudras, the Adityas, the Vasus, the Sadhyas, the Vishvedevas, the Ashvins, the Maruts and the Manes, and the hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras, and Siddhas — all gaze upon You in amazement.

rūpaṃ mahatte bahu vaktra netraṃ mahābāho bahu-bāhūru-pādam ।
bahūdaraṃ bahu daṃṣṭrā-karālaṃ dṛṣṭvā lokāḥ pravyathitās tathāham ॥ 23 ॥

23. Beholding Your almighty manifestation with many faces and eyes with many arms, thighs, and feet, with many torsos and dreadful with many fangs, all beings including myself are terrified, O Mighty-Armed.

nabhaḥ-spṛśaṃ dīptam aneka varṇaṃ vyāttānanaṃ dīpta viśāla-netram ।
dṛṣṭvā hi tvāṃ pravyathitāntarātmā dhṛtiṃ na vindāmi śamaṃ ca viṣṇo ॥ 24 ॥

24. On seeing You, O Vishnu, touching the highest Heaven, refulgent, multi-coloured with gaping mouths and huge glaring eyes, I am extremely agitated to my inmost being, I have lost all composure and peace.

daṃṣṭrā-karālāni ca te mukhāni dṛṣṭvaiva kālānala sannibhāni ।
diśo na jāne na labheca śarma prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa ॥ 25 ॥

25. Seeing Your mouths with awesome fangs and appearing like the fire of Cosmic Annihilation, I am completely disorientated and confused. Have mercy on me, O Lord of the Devas! O Abode of the universe!

amī ca tvaṃ dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāḥ sarve sahaivāvanipāla saṅghaiḥ ।
bhīṣmo droṇaḥ sūta-putras tathāsau sahāsmadīyairapi yodha-mukhyaiḥ ॥ 26 ॥

26. All these sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra together with the hordes of Kings, Bhishma, Drona and Karṇa along with the leading warriors of our side,

vaktrāṇi te tvaramāṇā viśanti daṃṣṭrā-karālāni bhayānakāni ।
kecid vilagnā daśanāntareṣu saṅdṛśyante cūrṇitair-uttamāṅgaiḥ ॥ 27 ॥

27. hasten to enter into Your fearful mouths with terrible fangs, some caught between the teeth, are seen with their heads crushed to powder

yathā nadīnāṃ bahavo'mbuvegāḥ samudram evābhimukhā dravanti ।
tathā tavāmī naraloka vīrā viśanti vaktrāṇyabhito jvalanti ॥ 28 ॥

28. As the many rivers in torrents flow towards the ocean, so do these heroes of the world of men enter Your blazing mouths.

yathā pradīptaṃ jvalanaṃ pataṅgā viśanti nāśāya samṛddha-vegāḥ ।
tathaiva nāśāya viśanti lokās tavāpi vaktrāṇi samṛddha-vegāḥ ॥ 29 ॥

29. As moths rush irresistibly into a blazing fire to their destruction, so do these men madly rush into Your mouths to meet their destruction.

lelihyase grasamānaḥ samantāllokān samagrān vadanair jvaladbhiḥ ।
tejobhir āpūrya jagat samagraṃ bhāsas tavogrāḥ pratapanti viṣṇoḥ ॥ 30 ॥

30. O Vishnu! Devouring all the worlds on every side with your flaming mouths, You lick them up. Your brilliant rays scorch the whole universe, filling it with their radiance.

ākhyāhi me ko bhavān-ugra-rūpo namo'stu te deva-vara prasīda ।
vijñātum icchāmi bhavantam-ādyaṃ na hi prajānāmi tava pravṛttim ॥ 31 ॥

31. O Fearsome One! Tell me who You are ! Salutations to You, O Supreme God. Be gracious, I desire to know You, the Original One. I do not comprehend Your activity.

śrī bhagavān uvāca
kālo'smi loka-kṣaya-kṛt pravṛddho lokān samāhartum iha pravṛttaḥ ।
ṛte'pi tvāṃ na bhaviṣyanti sarve ye'vasthitāḥ pratyanīkeṣu yodhāḥ ॥ 32 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:
32. I am Time, the mighty force which destroys everything, fully Manifesting Myself, I am here engaged in destroying the worlds. Even without you, none of the warriors arrayed in the enemy ranks shall survive.

Commentary

Kāla (Time) is the 'reckoner' which calculates (*kalayati*). Calculating the end of the lives of all those under the leadership of Dhrtarashtra's sons, I am causing their destruction.

tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyaṃ samṛddham ।
mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva nimitta-pātraṃ bhava savyasācin ॥ 33 ॥

33. Therefore arise, win glory! Conquering your foes, enjoy a prosperous kingdom. They have verily already been slain by Me; act merely as an instrument, O Arjuna, you great Archer (savyasācin)!

Commentary

"Be merely an instrument (nimitta) of Mine in destroying them — just like a weapon in My hand. O Savyasācin!" The root '*Sac'* means 'fastening' — a '*savyasācin'* is one who is capable of fixing or discharging a arrow even with his left hand; in other words Arjuna is so dexterous that he can fight with a bow in either hand.

droṇaṃ ca bhīṣmaṃ ca jayadrathaṃ ca karṇaṃ tathā'nyānapi yodhavīrān ।
mayā hatāṃs-tvaṃ jahi mā vyathiṣṭhā yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān ॥ 34 ॥

34. Slay Drona, Bhīṣma, Jayadratha, Karṇa as well as other mighty warriors, who have been destroyed by Me. Do not vacillate, fight! You shall surely conquer your opponents in the battle.

sañjaya uvāca
etacchrutvā vacanaṃ keśavasya kṛtāñjalir vepamānaḥ kirīṭī ।
namaskṛtvā bhūya evāha kṛṣṇaṃ sagadgadaṃ bhītabhītaḥ praṇamya ॥ 35 ॥

Sanjaya said:
35. Having heard this speech of Sri Krishna, Arjuna [the crowned one] prostrated himself and trembling with awe, he bowed down again, and with cupped-palms, and trembling, he spoke to Krishna in a choked voice.

arjuna uvāca
sthāne hṛṣīkeśa tava prakīrtyā jagat prahṛṣyaty-anurajyate ca ।
rakṣāṃsi bhītāni diśo dravanti sarve namasyanti ca siddha-saṅghāḥ ॥ 36 ॥

Arjuna said:
36. Rightly it is, O Krishna, that the world is delighted and rejoices in singing Your praise. The terrified demons (Rakshasas) flee in all directions, and all the hosts of the perfected ones (Siddhas) bow down to You.

Commentary

Sthāne means 'rightly so' or 'it is but proper' that the whole world of gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas, Yakṣas, Kinnaras, Kiṃpuruṣas etc., who have assembled here with a desire to see the battle, should be delighted with You and love You, after seeing You, by Your grace, as the Lord of the Universe.

Rightly so, after beholding You, the Rakṣasas flee in fear in all directions, and rightly so, all the host of Siddhas, namely, the host of perfected beings who are favourable to You, pay their homage to You. The connection with what was said earlier is that all this is as it ought to be. Arjuna further proceeds to explain how all this is right: —

kasmācca te na nameran mahātman garīyase brahmaṇo'pyādikartre ।
ananta deveśa jagan-nivāsa tvam akṣaraṃ sadasat tatparaṃ yat ॥ 37 ॥

37. And why should they not, O Mahātman, bow down to You who are Great One, being the first Creator, even of Brahma? O Infinite One, Lord of gods, O You who have the universe for Your abode! You are the imperishable individual Self, the existent and the non-existent, and that which is beyond both.

tvam ādidevaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇas-tvam asya viśvasya paraṃ nidhānam ।
vettāsi vedyaṃ ca paraṃ ca dhāma tvayā tataṃ viśvam ananta rūpa ॥ 38 ॥

38 You are the Original Godhead and the Ancient Being. You are the Supreme support of the universe. You are the knower and the knowable, and the Supreme goal. By You, O Lord of

infinite forms, is this universe pervaded.

vāyur-yamo'gnir-varuṇaḥ śaśāṅkaḥ prajāpatis-tvaṃ prapitā-mahaśca |
namo namaste'stu sahasra-kṛtvaḥ punaśca bhūyo'pi namo namaste || 39 ||

39. You are Vayu, Yama, Agni, Varuna the Moon, Prajapati and the great-grandsire; salutations, salutations unto You, a thousand times! Hail unto You again and yet again! salutations, salutations unto You!

Commentary

The Prajāpatis (such as Dakṣa and the other 7 mind-born sons of Brahma) are the progenitors of all creatures. Hiranyagarbha [Brahma], the father of the Prajāpatis, is the grandfather of all creatures. You, being the father of even Hiranyagarbha, are the great grandfather of all creatures. You alone are denoted by the various names by which these beings are known — such is the meaning.

namaḥ purastād atha pṛṣṭhas-te namo'stu te sarvata eva sarva |
ananta-vīryāmita-vikramas-tvaṃ sarvaṃ samāpnoṣi tato'si sarvaḥ || 40 ||

40. Obeisance to You from before and behind! Obeisance to You in all directions, O You who are the All! O You of Infinite prowess and measureless heroism! You pervade all beings and therefore are the All.

sakheti matvā prasabhaṃ yaduktaṃ he kṛṣṇa he yādava he sakheti |
ajānatā mahimānaṃ tavedaṃ mayā pramādāt praṇayena vāpi || 41 ||

41. Unaware of Your majesty, and either from negligence or affection, considering You to be a friend, whatever I have presumptuously said, addressing You as; O Krishna, O Yādava, O friend,

yaccāvahāsārtham asatkṛto 'si vihāra śayyāsana bhojaneṣu |
eko'thavāpy acyuta tat-samakṣaṃ tat kṣāmaye tvām aham aprameyam || 42 ||

42. …. and for whatever disrespect I have shown to You in jest, while playing, resting, while sitting or eating together, while alone or in the presence of others, O Achyuta— I implore Your forgiveness, for You are incomprehensible.

pitāsi lokasya carācarasya tvam-asya pūjyaśca gurur garīyān |
na tvat samo'sty abhyadhikaḥ kuto'nyo lokatraye'py apratima-prabhāva || 43 ||

43. You are the father of this world, of all mobile and stationary entities. You are its teacher and the one most worthy of reverence. There is none equal to You. How then could there be another greater than You in the three realms, O Being of unsurpassed glory?

tasmāt praṇamya praṇidhāya kāyaṃ prasādaye tvām aham īśam īḍyam |
piteva putrasya sakheva sakhyuḥ priyaḥ priyāyārhasi deva soḍhum || 44 ||

44. Therefore, bowing down, prostrating myself, I beg Your pardon, O adorable Lord. As a father forebears with his son or a friend with his friend, it is proper, O Lord, that You, who are dear to me, should bear with me who am dear to You.

adṛṣṭa-pūrvaṃ hṛṣito'smi dṛṣṭvā bhayena ca pravyathitaṃ mano me |
tadeva me darśaya deva rūpaṃ prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa || 45 ||

45. O Lord! I am delighted that I have seen what has never been seen before, but my mind is overwhelmed with anxiety. Show me Your other form, O Lord of the gods! Be gracious, O Abode of the universe!

kirīṭinaṃ gadinaṃ cakra-hastam-icchāmi tvāṃ draṣṭum ahaṃ tathaiva |
tenaiva rūpeṇa catur-bhujena sahasra-bāho bhava viśvamūrte || 46 ||

46. I wish to see You ever as before, wearing a crown and holding a mace and discus in hand. Assume again that four-armed form, O Thousand-armed one, of Universal Form!

śrī bhagavān uvāca

mayā prasannena tavārjunedaṃ rūpaṃ paraṃ darśitam ātma yogāt ।
tejomayaṃ viśvam anantam ādyaṃ yan me tvad anyena na dṛṣṭa-pūrvam ॥ 47 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:
47. By My grace, O Arjuna, this Supreme Manifestation, luminous, cosmic, infinite, primal, which has never seen before by anyone but you, has been revealed to you through My divine potency.

na veda yajñādhyayanair na dānair na ca kriyābhir-na tapobhir-ugraiḥ ।
evaṃ rūpaḥ śakya ahaṃ nṛloke draṣṭuṃ tvadanyena kuru-pravīra ॥ 48 ॥

48. Neither through the study of the Vedas, nor by sacrifices, nor by recital of the Scriptures, nor by charity, nor by rituals, nor by strict austerities can I be realised in a manifestation like this in this mortal world by any one else but you, O Arjuna!

mā te vyathā mā ca vimūḍha bhāvo dṛṣṭvā rūpaṃ ghoram īdṛṅ-mamedam ।
vyapetabhīḥ prīta-manāḥ punas tvaṃ tad eva me rūpam idaṃ prapaśya ॥ 49 ॥

49. You need not fear any more, nor be perplexed by looking on this awesome manifestation of Mine. Free from fear and with a gladdened heart, behold again that other form of Mine.

sañjaya uvāca

ityarjunaṃ vāsudevas tathoktvā svakaṃ rūpaṃ darśayāmāsa bhūyaḥ ।
āśvāsayāmāsa ca bhītam-eva bhūtvā punaḥ saumya vapur mahātmā ॥ 50 ॥

Sanjaya said:

50. Having spoken thus to Arjuna, Sri Krishna revealed to him once more His own form. The Great-minded One, assuming again a benign form, reassured him who was terrified.

arjuna uvāca

dṛṣṭvedaṃ mānuṣaṃ rūpaṃ tava saumyaṃ janārdana ।
idānīm asmi saṃvṛttaḥ sa cetāḥ prakṛtiṃ gataḥ ॥ 51 ॥

Arjuna said:
51. Having beheld the human and benign form of Yours, O Krishna, I have now become composed in mind and I am restored to my normal state.

śrī bhagavān uvāca

sudurdarśam idaṃ rūpaṃ dṛṣṭavān asi yan mama ।
devā apy asya rūpasya nityam darśana-kāṅkṣaṇaḥ ॥ 52 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:
52. It is extremely difficult to behold this manifestation of Mine which you have seen. Even the gods ever long to behold this manifestation.

nāhaṃ vedair na tapasā na dānena na cejyayā ।
śakya evaṃ vidho draṣṭuṃ dṛṣṭavān asi yan mama ॥ 53 ॥

53. Not through the Vedas, nor by austerities, nor by charity, nor by the performance of sacrifices, can I be seen in such a form as You have seen Me.

bhaktyā tv-ananyayā śakya aham evaṃ vidho ‘rjuna ।
jñātuṃ draṣṭuṃ ca tattvena praveṣṭuṃ ca paraṅtapa ॥ 54 ॥

54. But by single-minded devotion, O Arjuna, it is possible to truly know, to see and to enter into Me, who am of this form, O harasser of foes!

Commentary

'*Through the Vedas*' — by mere study, exposition, teaching, hearing and reciting these sacred texts, it is not possible to know Me as I really am. It is also not possible to know Me in truth through Vedic sacrifices, charity, making daily offerings and performing austerities, devoid of devotion towards Me. But with single-minded devotion it is possible to know Me accurately through the Scriptures, to behold Me directly, and enter into Me in reality.

mat karma-kṛn mat-paramo mad-bhaktaḥ saṅga-varjitaḥ |
nivairaḥ sarva bhūteṣu yaḥ sa māmeti pāṇḍava || 55 ||

55. Whosoever serves Me, regards Me as the highest and is devoted to Me, free from attachment and devoid of malice towards any creature, comes to Me, O Arjuna.

Commentary

"Whosoever performs all [obligatory] acts like the study of the Vedas considering them merely as different modes of service (kainkaryam) — he is one who truly serves Me. 'He who regards Me as the highest,' — namely, one to whom I alone am the highest purpose in all his doings, has Me as the highest goal. 'He who is devoted to me,'— that is, so devoted to Me that he is unable to exist without chanting My names, praising Me, meditating upon Me, worshiping Me, bowing down to Me etc., He who does these things, always considering Me as the supreme goal — he is My devotee. He is 'free from attachments,' as he is attached to Me alone, and is therefore unable to develop attachment to any other entity. He who is without ill-will towards any being, is one who fulfils all the following conditions —

(a) his nature is to feel pleasure or pain solely on account of his union or separation from Me;

(b) he considers his own transgressions (karma) to be the sole cause of his suffering (and not the work of others);

(c) he is confirmed in his faith that all beings are co-dependent on the Supreme Being. For all these reasons he can have no hatred for any being."

He who has developed these qualities comes to me, that is, attains Me as I really am. The purport is that free from the least trace of ignorance and delusion, free of all faults, he becomes one who experiences Me alone.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavadgītāsupaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ yoga-śāstre
śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde viśvarūpa darśana yogo nāma
ekādaśo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the eleventh discourse entitled
"Vision of the Cosmic Form"

Chapter 12

Bhakti Yogaḥ

Communion through Devotion

Summary of the Teaching

Arjuna desired to directly experience the unrestricted glory of Lord Nārāyaṇa — the Supreme Brahman, who is the ultimate goal of all who practice Bhakti Yoga. Lord Nārāyaṇa, revealed this to him, because He is one whose intentions are always accomplished, and who is an ocean of positive attributes like compassion, generosity, affability and others which are all limitless in their excellence. It has also been taught that real knowledge of, perception of, and the attainment of the Lord can only be obtained by single-minded and persistent devotion.

After this the following points will be explained:

(1) Meditation on the Lord through the medium of Bhakti
(2) the superiority of such meditation over that [of meditation] on the Ātman, because of its rapid fulfilment,
(3) the great ease of its practice;
(4) the method of meditation on the Lord
(5) the practice of contemplation on the Ātman for one who is incapable of meditating on the Lord,
(6) the requirements thereof.

The reason that meditation on the Lord is superior [to meditation on the Ātman] is because of the superiority of the subject of meditation [the Lord Himself] as declared in:— And among all the Yogis and also with all others, one whose inner self is directed to Me, who worships Me with faith — such a one is deemed by Me to be the most accomplished. (6.47).

arjuna uvāca

evaṃ satata-yuktā ye bhaktās-tvāṃ paryupāsate ।
ye cāpyakṣaram-avyaktaṃ teṣāṃ ke yoga-vittamāḥ ॥ 1 ॥

Arjuna said:
1. Of those devotees, who, ever integrated with You, meditate on You thus, and of those again, who meditate on the imperishable and the unmanifest — which of these have greater knowledge of Yoga?

Commentary

"There are those devotees who considering You and none other as the supreme goal, worship You in complete dedication — as one who is the ocean of attributes of limitless excellence like grace, affability, omniscience, accomplished resolves etc., and endowed with all glory. On the other hand there are those who meditate on the '*Imperishable*' (*Akṣara*) — namely, the Ātman in its immaculate state, which is the same as the '*Unmanifest*' (*Avyakta*) — which means that it cannot be perceived by the sense organs. Which of these two categories of devotees have superior knowledge of Yoga? Who would reach their respective goals sooner?" — Such is the meaning of the question.

śrī bhagavān uvāca

mayyāveśya mano ye māṃ nitya-yuktā upāsate ।
śraddhayā parayopetās-te me yuktatamā matāḥ ॥ 2 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:
2. Those who, [desirous of being] forever united with Me and possessing consummate faith, worship Me, focusing their minds on Me — these are considered by Me the highest among the Yogins.

ye tvakṣaram-anirdeśyam-avyaktaṃ paryupāsate ।
sarvatragam-acintyaṃ ca kūṭastham acalaṃ dhruvam ॥ 3 ॥

3. But those who meditate upon the Imperishable (Ātman) the indefinable, the unmanifest, omnipresent, inconceivable, ubiquitous, stable and constant;

saṃniyam endriya-grāmaṃ sarvatra sama-buddhayaḥ ।
te prāpnuvanti mām-eva sarva-bhūta-hite-ratāḥ ॥ 4 ॥

4. Having subdued all their senses, unprejudiced, intent on the welfare of all beings — they too come to Me alone.

kleśo'dhikataras-teṣāṃ avyaktā-sakta-cetasām ।
avyaktā hi gatir-duḥkhaṃ dehavadbhir-avyāpyate ॥ 5 ॥

5. But greater is the vexation of those whose minds are thus attached to the unmanifest. For the way of the unmanifest is onerous for embodied beings to follow.

ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṃnyasya mat-parāḥ ।
ananyenaiva yogena māṃ dhyāyanta upāsate ॥ 6 ॥

6. For, those who dedicate all their actions to Me, holding Me as their supreme goal, intent on Me and who worship Me and meditate on Me with exclusive devotion;

teṣāṃ ahaṃ samuddhartā mṛtyu-saṃsāra-sāgarāt ।
bhavāmi na cirāt-pārtha mayyāveśita-cetasām ॥ 7 ॥

7. for those whose minds are thus focused on Me, O Partha, I soon become their saviour from the fatal ocean of death and rebirth.

Commentary

"But those whose minds are centred on Me, the Supreme Self, and 'intent upon Me,' — namely, regarding Me as their sole objective, dedicating to Me all their actions — including all worldly actions like eating which are meant for maintaining the body, as also Vedic rites like yāgas, charity, daily fire-offerings, austerities etc., along with their foundational rites and purposes — worship Me and meditate on Me with exclusive devotion, namely, with devotion devoid of any personal motive, adoring Me by all such acts as meditation, worship, prostration, praises and chanting the holy names which are in themselves cherished activities and are equal (in enjoyment) to the end itself — to these I swiftly become their liberator from the ocean of Samsara which, on account of its being obstructive to the attainment of Myself, is fatal."

mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya ।
nivasiṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvaṃ na saṃśayaḥ ॥ 8 ॥

8. Centre your mind on Me alone; and let your intellect (Buddhi) be absorbed in Me. Then, you will abide in Me alone hereafter; there is no doubt.

atha cittaṃ samādhātuṃ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram ।
abhyāsa-yogena tato mām-icchāptuṃ dhanañjaya ॥ 9 ॥

9. If now, you are unable to centre your mind on Me in deep meditation, then seek to reach Me, O Arjuna (Dhananjaya), by the Yoga of constant Practice.

Commentary

"Now, if you are unable to focus your mind immediately on Me in deep meditation, then try to reach Me by the *'Yoga of Constant Mindfulness'* (*Abhyāsa Yoga*) — that is, by practicing constant mindfulness, full of intense love, of the ocean of My manifold personal attributes of unlimited excellence such as beauty, affability, friendliness, affection, compassion, sweetness, majesty, magnanimity, fortitude, valour, omnipotence, omniscience, freedom from wants, accomplished of resolves, supreme sovereignty, the ultimate Cause of all, and of being the antithesis of all that is negative."

abhyāse'pyasamartho'si mat-karma paramo bhava |
mad-artham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi || 10 ||

10. If you are incapable of even this practice of mindfulness, then devote yourself to serving Me. For even by dedicating your actions to Me, you will attain perfection.

athaitad apyaśakto'si kartuṃ mad-yogam āśritaḥ |
sarva karma phala tyāgaṃ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān || 11 ||

11. If you are unable to do even this, then, having resorted to My Yoga with a subdued mind, renounce the fruits of every action.

Commentary

"If you are unable to do even this, then *'having resorted to My Yoga*,' — that is, if you are unable even to do service to Me which is a component of Bhakti Yoga, whereby, I am regarded as the exclusive and sole objective of love through meditation — then you should resort to the Akṣara Yoga described in the first six chapters. This consists of contemplation on the nature of the Jīvatma. This [eventually] engenders devotion to Me and as a start to this practice (of Akṣara Yoga), practice disinterested action." 'With a controlled mind' — means having subdued the thought processes.

śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāt jñānād-dhyānaṃ viśiṣyate |
dhyānāt karma phala tyāgas tyāgāt-chāntir anantaram || 12 ||

12. Wisdom is far better than the practice [of mindfulness of the Lord]. Meditation is esteemed to be better than wisdom; and the renunciation of fruits of action is better than meditation — from such renunciation, peace ensues.

Commentary

In the absence of a spontaneous intense love for the Lord, the practice of mindfulness of the Lord is difficult, so therefore the next best means to well-being is the attainment of wisdom — which is direct Self-realisation by contemplating on the imperishable nature of the Ātman (Akṣara). Better than imperfect Self-realisation, is perfect meditation on the Self, as it is more conducive to one's well-being. More conducive to well-being than imperfect meditation, is the work performed with renunciation of the rewards.

The peace of mind that follows the absolution of sins, is attained only through the performance of works without a desire for their fruits. When the mind is at peace, perfect meditation on the Ātman is possible. From meditation one obtains the direct realisation of the Ātman. From this direct Self-realisation arises consummate devotion. It is in this format alone that Atma-nistha or 'establishment in the Ātman' becomes useful for a person who is incapable of practising Bhakti Yoga. And for one practising the discipline for Self-realisation (Jñana Yoga) without perfect

tranquillity of mind, unmotivated work (Karma Yoga), which includes contemplation on the nature of the Self, is the better path to Self-realisation — this is the purport.

Now Sri Krishna enumerates the attributes required of one intending to perform unmotivated work: —

adveṣṭā sarva bhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca |
nir-mamo nir-ahaṅkāraḥ sama duḥkha sukha kṣamī || 13 ||

13. Not prejudiced towards any living being, friendly and compassionate to all, free from the notions of 'I' and 'mine', and regarding all pain and pleasure with equanimity, and forbearing;

santuṣṭaḥ satataṃ yogī yatātmā dṛḍha-niścayaḥ |
mayyarpita mano buddhiḥ yo mad-bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ || 14 ||

14. contented, constantly contemplating, self-restrained and firm in one's convictions, dedicating the mind and intellect to Me — such a devotee is dear to Me.

Commentary

"That devotee is most dear to Me who never hates any being even though they hate him and do him wrong. For he has the attitude that the Lord impels these beings to hate him and to do him wrong in order to punish him for his transgressions. He demonstrates a friendly disposition towards all beings in spite of being hated and aggrieved. He evinces compassion — shows mercy to suffering beings. He is free from the feeling of 'I-ness', — that is, free from the delusion that the body is the Self. Therefore, pain and pleasure are the same to him. He is free from depression and exultation resulting from pain and pleasure arising from his deeds. He is 'forbearing' — that is, remains unaffected even by pleasure and pain which arise from the inevitable contact with sense-objects. He is '*contented*' — satisfied with whatever chance may bring him for the sustenance of his body. He is '*constantly contemplating*' — constantly practicing mindfulness of the Self as being different from material nature. He is '*self-restrained*' — namely, engaged in controlling the thought processes. He is of '*firm conviction*' — regarding the doctrines taught in this Science of the Self. His 'mind and intellect are dedicated to Me' — in the certitude that Bhagavan Vasudeva alone is propitiated by unmotivated works, and when duly reverenced, He will reveal to me the direct vision of the Ātman. Such a devotee of mine, who acts in this manner as a Karma Yogin, is dear to Me."

yasmān no dvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ |
harṣāmarṣabhayo-dvegaiḥ mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ || 15 ||

15. He by whom the world is not disturbed, and who is not disturbed by the world, who is free from joy and jealousy, fear and repulsion — he is dear to me.

Commentary

The Karma Yogi does nothing to cause affliction to any being in the world. He has no cause to fear the world — no action on the part of others can cause him disturbance because of complete freedom from antagonism towards the world. Therefore he does not show favour towards some and intolerance towards others; he does not fear some or is repulsed by others.

anapekṣaḥ śucir dakṣaḥ udāsīno gatavyathaḥ |
sarvārambha parityāgī yo mad bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ || 16 ||

16. One who is free from expectations, who is uncontaminated, skilled, impartial and free from anxiety, who has renounced every undertaking— is dear to Me.

Commentary

'Free from expectations' — means no longer desires anything except Self-realisation; '*uncontaminated'* — refers to one whose body is nourished only on the food prescribed by the Scriptures; one who is '*skilled'* — is an expert in performing works that are enjoined by the Scriptures; one who is '*impartial'* — is not interested in deeds other than those enjoined by the Scriptures. One who is free from '*anxiety'* — is free from disturbances caused by heat, cold, contact with coarse things and other such experiences which are inevitably associated with the performance of prescribed activities; one who '*renounces all undertakings'* — renounces those of a selfish nature but not those demanded by the Scriptures.

yo na hṛṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati |
śubhāśubha parityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ || 17 ||

17. One who is full of devotion to Me, who rejoices not, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, and who renounces both merit and demerit — such a devotee is dear to me.

Commentary

The Karma Yogi does not '*rejoice'* — on obtaining things which are generally considered to be the causes of joy. He does not '*hate'* — on obtaining anything undesirable; he does not '*grieve'* — that is, is not affected by common deprivations which generally cause grief such as the loss of spouse, child, fortune etc.; who '*does not desire'* these things if he does not already have them. He 'renounces both merit and demerit' — because, like demerit, merit also causes bondage there being no difference between them in this respect.

samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoḥ |
śītoṣṇa sukha duḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅga vivarjitaḥ || 18 ||

18. He who is impartial to both foe and friend, honour and dishonour, who is indifferent to both cold and heat, pleasure and pain and who is free from all attachments;

tulya nindā stutir maunī santuṣṭo yena kenacit |
aniketaḥ sthira-matiḥ bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ || 19 ||

19. to whom both censure and praise are equal, who is silent [when praised or abused] and content with any condition, who has no home, who is steady of mind, and who is devoted to Me — dear to Me is such a person.

Commentary

The general (abstract) absence of hate etc., towards foes and friends has already been taught in the verse beginning with, '*He who never hates any being'* (11.13). What is now stressed is that specific equanimity which is to be practiced when such friends and enemies are actually present before one. One who has no '*home'*, refers to freedom from attachment to home and possessions. He possesses steadiness of mind with regard to the Ātman — because of this he is also balanced even in honour and dishonour.

ye tu dharmyāmṛtam idaṃ yathoktaṃ paryupāsate |
śraddha-dhānāḥ mat-paramā bhaktāste'tīva me priyāḥ || 20 ||

20. But those devotees who adopt this ambrosial virtuous conduct (dharma) as taught above, who are full of faith and who regard Me as the Supreme — they are exceedingly dear to Me.

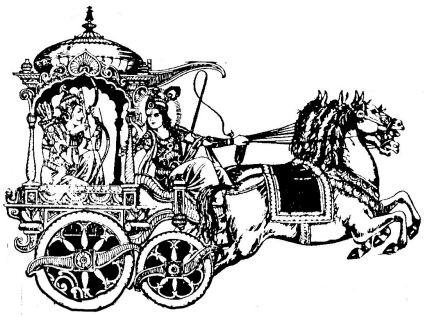
Commentary

"But those who practice Bhakti Yoga— which is an ambrosial path of virtuous conduct, that is, which is both good and delectable at the same time, and which,

even as a means, is equal to its end in being most profitable — and adopt it as instructed in the stanza beginning with 'Those who centre their minds on Me' (12.2) — such devotees are exceedingly dear to Me."

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavad gītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ yoga-śāstre
śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde bhakti yogo nāma
dvādaśo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the twelfth discourse entitled
"Communion through Devotion"



Chapter 13

Prakṛti-Puruṣa-viveka Yogaḥ

Differentiation between Spirit & Matter

Summary of the Teaching

The teaching in the first set of six chapters, dealt with the essential nature of the jivātman, which is a preliminary to the meditation on Krishna, the Supreme Brahman, the ultimate object of attainment. The two disciplines of Knowledge/meditation (Jñāna Yoga) and Non-desiderative Work (Karma Yoga) as means of spiritual advancement have also been taught.

Following that, in the middle set of six chapters, the practice of intense and one-pointed Bhakti Yoga, preceded by the teaching on the supreme goal — the Glorious Supreme Being, were expounded upon. Incidentally it was pointed out, that Bhakti Yoga is also the means of attainment for those who desire power & wealth (*aiśvarya*) and also for those who aspire after the state of self-isolated liberation (*kaivalya*),

In this present set of 6 chapters, the topics mentioned in the first two groups are examined in greater detail. These are; the essential nature of Prakrti (Material Nature) and of the Jivātman, and of the universe comprised of the combination of these two; the essential nature of the Supreme Lord and the basic features of the paths of Karma (Action), Jñana (Knowledge) and Bhakti (Devotion) and the ways of practicing these disciplines.

Now, in this, the thirteenth chapter the following topics are discussed: —

(1) the nature of the body and the Self;
(2) an investigation of the physical body as it really is;
(3) the means of attaining liberation from embodiment;
(4) the investigation of the Jīva in a state of separation from a body;
(5) the investigation of the causes of physical embodiment by the Jīva and
(6) the method of discriminating between Matter and Spirit.

śrī arjuna uvāca

prakṛtiṃ puruṣaṃ caiva kṣetraṃ kṣetrajñam eva ca ।
etad veditum icchāmi jñānaṃ jñeyaṃ ca keśava ॥ 1 ॥

Arjuna Asked
O Kesava, I desire to learn about the spirit and about matter, about the Field and its Knower, about knowledge and the knower.

Śrī Bhagavān uvāca

idaṃ śarīraṃ kaunteya kṣetram ityabhidhīyate ।
etad yo vetti taṃ prāhuḥ kṣetrajñā iti tad vidaḥ ॥ 2 ॥

The Lord said:
2. This body, O Arjuna, is called the Field (Kṣetra). One who knows it is called the 'Knower of the Field' (Kṣetrajña), by the enlightened ones.

Commentary

But in practical terms one's body is inseparable from oneself; for it constitutes a fundamental attribute of the Self like the 'cow-ness' of the cow. The knowing Self is however unique in being an eternal and subtle form of consciousness and can only perceive itself through a mind refined by Yoga and not by mundane awareness. The ignorant regard the Self as being a physical phenomena because of its intimate involvement with material nature. Sri Krishna thus declares later on:— 'When, being associated with the Guṇas, the Self departs or stays or experiences the deluded perceive it not, only those who are enlightened see'. (15.10).

kṣetrajñaṃ cāpi māṃ viddhi sarva kṣetreṣu bhārata ।
kṣetra kṣetrajñayor-jñānaṃ yat tajjñānam mataṃ param ॥ 3 ॥

3. And know Me also as the Kṣetrajña in all Fields, O Arjuna. The knowledge of both the Field and its Knower is, in My view, the highest knowledge.

Commentary

As the Overself, Krishna is the 'Field-Knower' in all the bodies such as those of gods, humans, animals and antigods. By the expression 'also' (api) it can be inferred that the body itself is also a manifestation of Krishna. Just as the body cannot exist separately from the ātman on account of its being an attribute [eg. like the mango and its taste] and consequently when referring to the body one actually refers to the ātman according to the principle of co-ordinate predication, in the same manner, both the body (Field) and the Self (Field-Knower), on account of both of their being inseparable attributes of Krishna's can thus be denoted as 'one with Krishna'.

The Veda teaches that the Supreme Being is the Overself both the Kṣetra (Field) and the Kṣetrajña (Jīva), because of their being like His 'body' [corporeality]. For example see the passages from the Brhad-aranyaka Upanishad beginning with 3.7.3).

tat kṣetraṃ yacca yādṛk ca yad vikāri yataśca yat ।
sa ca yo yat prabhāvaśca tat samāsena me śṛṇu ॥ 4 ॥

4. Learn briefly from Me what the Field is, and what it is like, what its modifications are, what purpose it serves, what it's [nature] is; and what the Self is and what its potencies are.

ṛṣibhir bahudhā gītaṃ chandobhir vividhaiḥ pṛthak ।
brahma-sūtrapadaiścaiva hetumadbhir viniścitaiḥ ॥ 5 ॥

5. It has been lauded by the sages in various ways, in various distinctive hymns of the Vedas, and also in the sound logic and conclusive arguments of the Brahma-sutras.

mahā-bhūtāny-ahaṅkāro buddhir-avyaktam eva ca ।
indriyāṇi daśaikaṃ ca pañca cendriya gocarāḥ ॥ 6 ॥

6. The principle elements, the Ahaṅkāra, the Buddhi, the Avyakta, the ten senses and the one besides, and the five objects of the senses;

icchā dveṣaḥ sukhaṃ duḥkhaṃ saṅghātaścetanā dhṛtiḥ ।
etat kṣetraṃ samāsena savikāram udāhṛtam ॥ 7 ॥

7. … attraction, aversion, pleasure and pain — thus the component elements of the Field, which is the basis of consciousness have been recounted along with its modifications.

Commentary

The principle elements, the *Ahaṅkāra*, the *Buddhi* and the *Avyakta* are factors that produce the body or Field. The 'principle elements' are the earth, water, fire, air and ether. The *'Ahaṅkāra'* (ego-sense) here refers to the *Bhūtadi* (primeval elements).

The *'Buddhi'* is what is called *Mahat* or cosmic intelligence; the *'Avyakta'* is also known as the *Prakrti* or Material Nature. The 'ten senses and the one' and the 'five objects of senses' are principles rooted in the *Kṣetra*. The five sensory organs are ears, skin, eyes, taste buds and nose. The five motor organs are tongue (speech), hands, feet, and the organs of excretion and reproduction — these are known as the ten senses. The *Manas* or organ of internal perception — the mind, is the additional 'one'. The 'objects of the senses' are five — sound, feel, form, taste and smell.

Attraction, aversion, pleasure and pain, being the effects of the Field, are said to be its modifications. Though attraction, aversion, pleasure and pain are said to be the characteristics of the Self, yet they arise from the association of the Self with the body or Field. Krishna will later in verse 20 affirm that they are the characteristics of the Self.

The combination of elements serves as the support (Adhrti) of the Self. As such, the word Adhrti means substratum. The combination of material elements produces the substratum (mind-body) as a device for the Self to experience pleasure and pain, and to acquire worldly experiences as well as final liberation. The combination of elements is formed by the substances commencing with the Prakrti and ending with the earth. These form a Sanghata or an aggregate of elements and this is called the Field.

Now certain virtues, the produce of the Kṣetra, which are worthy of being cultivated as they are the means for securing the knowledge of the Self, are enumerated.

amānitvam adambhitvam ahiṃsā kṣāntir ārjavam ।
ācāryopāsanaṃ śaucaṃ sthairyam ātma-vinigrahaḥ ॥ 8 ॥

8. Humility, absence of ostentation, non-injury, forbearance, integrity, service of the preceptor, purity, resoluteness and self-restraint;

Commentary

'Humility' (amānitvam) — means showing respect towards eminent people. *'Absence of ostentation' (adambhitvam)* — *'dambha'* is the practice of Dharma in order to be acclaimed as a virtuous person; freedom from this is un-ostentatiousness, *non-injury (ahimsa)* — absence of the proclivity to injure others by means of speech, mind and body. *Forbearance' (Kṣānti)* — is the state of remaining free of resentment towards those who cause one harm. *Integrity (ārjava)* — complete harmony of one's thought, speech and action in one's dealing with all other beings. *'Service to the preceptor'* — being intent on prostrating, questioning, performing service etc., to the teacher who imparts the knowledge of the Self. *'Purity'* — is the maintenance of the ideal state of thought, speech and action, as enjoined by the Shastras, for the reception of the knowledge of the Self and its realisation. *'Resoluteness'* — is possessing unshakeable conviction in the teachings of the Shastras concerning the Self. *'Self-restraint'* — mean withdrawing the attention from all objects that are different in nature from the Self.

indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam anahaṅkāra eva ca ।
janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi duḥkha doṣānudarśanam ॥ 9 ॥

9. Dispassion for sense-gratification and also absence of self-affirmative ideation, perception of balefulness in birth, death, old age, disease and sorrow;

Commentary

'Dispassion for sense-gratification' — means development of a distaste for all objects different from the Self by the constant practice of mindfulness of the imperfection in them. *'Absence of self-affirmative ideation' (anahaṅkāra)* — means

freedom from the misconception that the body is the Self. This is only an example for other misconceptions too — it also indicates freedom from the feeling of possession towards one's own things and those of others. *'Perception of balefulness in birth, death, old age, disease and sorrow'* — means constant reflection upon the unfavourableness of the inevitable conditions of birth, death, old age, disease and suffering associated with the body.

asaktir anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putra-dāra-gṛhādiṣu ।
nityaṃ ca sama-cittatvam iṣṭān-iṣṭopapattiṣu ॥ 10 ॥

10. Non-attachment, absence of clinging to progeny, spouse, home and the like, and constant equanimity of mind in all desirable and undesirable events;

Commentary

'Non-attachment' — means freedom from attachment to things other than the Self. 'Absence of clinging to progeny, spouse, home etc.' — means absence of excessive affection for these, beyond their due as being helpful towards the fulfilment of duties mention by the Shastras. 'Constant even-mindedness' — means the state of freedom from joy and grief with regard to occurrences arising from one's efforts to achieve one's goals.

mayi cānanya-yogena bhaktir-avyabhicāriṇī ।
vivikta deśa-sevitvam aratir jana-saṃsadi ॥ 11 ॥

11. Consistent devotion directed to Me alone, unadulterated, resorting to solitary places and dislike for crowds:

Commentary

'Consistent devotion' — means devotion towards one single object, namely, Krishna the Lord of all; *'resorting to solitary places and dislike for crowds'* — means having no attraction for mundane social activities.

adhyātmajñāna nityatvaṃ tattva-jñānārtha darśanam ।
etajjñānam iti proktam ajñānaṃ yadato'nyathā ॥ 12 ॥

12. Constant reflection on the knowledge of the Self, contemplation directed at the attainment of realisation of the Truth — all this is declared to be wisdom-practice (*jñānam*), and what is contrary to it is ignorance (*ajñānam*).

Commentary

'Adhyātma-jñāna' — is the knowledge that pertains to the Self. 'Contemplation directed at the attainment of realisation of the Truth — namely, being always absorbed in the thought process directed at the realisation of the Truth. *'Wisdom-practice'* — is that by which the Self is realised i.e., the means for attaining Self-realisation.

The cultivation of the group of above mentioned virtues, beginning with humility etc., are those that are favourable for developing realisation of the Self in the embodied state. Ignorance comprises of all those attributes of the Field, which are different from the ones mentioned above, because they are an hindrance to Self-realisation.

jñeyaṃ yattat pravakṣyāmi yajjñātvāmṛtam aśnute ।
anādi mat-paraṃ brahma na sattannāsad ucyate ॥ 13 ॥

13. I shall declare that which has to be known, knowing which, one attains immortality — It is beginningless Brahman, to which I am superior; it is said to be neither being nor non-being.

Commentary

The term '*Brahman*' means that which has the capacity for infinite expansion. It is different from the body and not conditioned by it, in other words it is the [subjective] principle which perceives the [objective] Kṣetra. (See Sve. Up., 5.9.) The embodied state is brought about by Karma, and the ātman can again assume its infinite nature only when it is freed from the bonds of Karma. The term Brahman is also used as a synonym to designate the individual Self in Gita 14.26 & 27 Gita 18.54.

Brahman is said to be neither existent nor non-existent. The terms 'existent' and 'non-existent' cannot express the essential nature of the ātman because the ātman [in its essential nature] is free from both the states of effect and cause. However, it is said to be existent when it is embodied in the forms of gods, humans and animals etc. In the latent stage it cannot possess names and forms and is therefore said to be 'non-existent'. (See Tait. Up., 2.7.1 & Br.Up., 1.4.7).

The appearance of the ātman in the states of cause and effect occurs due to the obscuring of consciousness by Avidya or ignorance in the form of Karma. It is not an expression of its real nature. So then, the terms 'being' and 'non-being' do not describe the true nature of the ātman.

sarvataḥ pāṇi-pādaṃ tat sarvato' kṣiśiro-mukham ।
sarvataḥ śṛutimalloke sarvam-āvṛtya tiṣṭhati ॥ 14 ॥

14. Everywhere are Its (Brahman's) hands and feet; Its eyes, heads and faces are everywhere; Its ears are on all sides; and It exists enveloping all things.

Commentary

Everywhere are Its hands and feet — the ātman in its original immaculate state, is able to act and move everywhere, it perceives everything, knows everything and enjoys everything.

It exists enveloping all things: — the purport is that in its essential immaculate state the individual ātman is free from the limitation of space and time and thus reaches everywhere.

sarvendriya guṇābhāsaṃ sarvendriya vivarjitam ।
asaktaṃ sarva bhṛccaiva nirguṇaṃ guṇabhoktṛ ca ॥ 15 ॥

15. Illuminating the functions of the senses while unconnected with the sense organs, detached and yet supporting all, free from the Gunas and yet experiencing the Gunas;

Commentary

'Illuminating the functions of the senses' — means that the ātman is capable of experiencing the material world through the operating of the senses. 'While unconnected with the sense organs' — means the ātman [in its original state] is capable of knowing everything by itself, without the sense organs. It is *'detached'* — namely, it is completely free in its essential nature, from attachment to the bodies of gods etc. [with which it becomes associated]. *'Yet supporting all'* — yet it is capable of supporting all bodies, such as those of gods etc *'It is free from the Gunas'* — that is, in its essential nature it is free from the three modes of material nature — *Sattva* (Harmony), *Rajas* (Activity) and *Tamas* (Inertia) and yet it is the *'experiencer of the Gunas'* — It has the potential capacity to experience the three modes of material nature.

bahir-antaśca bhūtānām acaraṃ caram eva ca ।
sūkṣmatvāt tad avijñeyaṃ dūrasthaṃ cāntike ca tat ॥ 16 ॥

16. It is within and without all beings; It is unmoving and yet moving; It is so subtle that none can comprehend It; It is far away, and yet so very near.

Commentary

'It is unmoving and yet moving' — the ātman is by nature, unmoving, but when it has a body, it is said to be moving. It is so subtle that none can comprehend It: — although embodied, this ātman, possessed of omnipotence and omniscient is yet distinct from the body, and cannot be comprehended by those trapped in Samsara. *'It is far away and yet so very near':* — though present in one's very own body, it is not perceived by those who are devoid of humility and other virtues [mentioned previously] as also from those who possess negative qualities. To those who possess humility etc., the same ātman is very near.

avibhaktaṃ ca bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam ।
bhūtabhartṛ ca tajjñeyaṃ grasiṣṇu prabhaviṣṇu ca ॥ 17 ॥

17. Undivided and yet existing as if divided among beings, this ātman is to be known as the supporter of elements, It consumes and regenerates.

Commentary

Though the ātman is present everywhere in the bodies of gods, humans and animals, It is said to be 'undivided' because, the nature of self-consciousness is the same in all. However, to those who are ignorant, it appears as different in the various bodies.

The ātman can also be differentiated on other grounds such as the 'supporter of elements' etc. Because it supports the physical body which is a combination of earth and other elements. Likewise, it is that which 'consumes' nutrients etc. Because the ātman 'consumes' the food, it can be regarded as different from the elements [of food]. It causes 'regeneration' — the metabolism of the consumed food. Because eating, reproducing and such activities are not seen in a corpse, it is concluded that the inert body, an aggregate of elements, cannot be the cause of consuming food, reproducing and supporting them — the ātman is the cause.

jyotiṣām api tajjyotis tamasaḥ param-ucyate ।
jñānaṃ jñeyaṃ jñāna-gamyaṃ hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam ॥ 18 ॥

18. The Light of all lights is this [Self], said to be beyond Tamas (darkness). It is consciousness, It is the knowable, It is to be attained by wisdom, It is present in the hearts of all.

Commentary

'It is consciousness' alone in the form of the radiance of the ātman which reveals all sources of light such as the sun, lamp etc. But a lamp and other such sources of light, merely dispel the darkness that intervenes between the eye and its object. This ātman is said to be beyond *Tamas* (darkness). — The term *Tamas* here denotes Material Nature (*Prakrti*) in its subtle state. The meaning is that the Self transcends Prakrti, and is the perceiver or knower of Prakrti.

iti kṣetraṃ tathā jñānaṃ jñeyaṃ coktaṃ samāsataḥ ।
mad bhakta etad vijñāya mad bhāvāyopapadyate ॥ 19 ॥

19. Thus the Field, knowledge and the object of knowledge have been briefly stated. On realising this, My devotee becomes fit to attain My state of being.

Commentary

'*My state of being*' — that is, a state that is inherent in Me and is not part of the cycle of reincarnation.

prakṛtiṃ puruṣaṃ caiva viddhyānādī ubhāvapi ।
vikārāṃśca guṇāṃścaiva viddhi prakṛti saṃbhavān ॥ 20 ॥

20. Know that both Matter (*Prakrti*) and Spirit (*Puruṣa*) are without beginning, and know that the modifications and the qualities arise from the Prakrti.

Commentary

Both Material Nature and the individual Self are in constant association with each other and are both beginingless. The modifications (*vikāras*) — attraction, aversion and clinging which are the cause of bondage and the qualities (*guṇas*) — such as humility etc, which lead to liberation, all arise from Material Nature. This Material Nature, active from time immemorial, evolves into physical forms and becomes conjoined with the ātman. Through its own modifications such as attraction, aversion and clinging, it becomes the cause of bondage for the ātman. This same Prakrti through the development of other modifications such humility etc., brings about Liberation — such is the purport.

kārya kāraṇa kartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtir ucyate ।
puruṣaḥ sukha-duḥkhānāṃ bhoktṛtve hetur ucyate ॥ 21 ॥

21. *Prakrti* (Material Nature) is said to be the causal agent of the body (*kārya*) and sense organs (*kāraṇa*). The Puruṣa (Self) is said to be the cause of the experience of pleasure and pain.

Commentary

The *'Kārya'* means the body, the *'Kāraṇas'* are the instruments, that is, the 5 senses of perception and the 5 organs of action plus the mind — in the course of their functioning, Prakrti, which is subservient to the ātman, is alone considered to be the operative factor. In other words, the physical functions, which are the means of experience, have their foundation in Material Nature, which has developed into the form of the physical body controlled by the Self.

puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhuṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān ।
kāraṇaṃ guṇa saṅgo'sya sadasad yoni janmasu ॥ 22 ॥

22. Indeed, the *Puruṣa* (Self) situated in *Prakrti* (Material Nature) experiences the effects (Gunas) that arise from Prakrti. Its attachment to these Gunas is the cause of birth in higher and lower species.

Commentary

The Self (in its pristine state) experiences itself by itself, as nothing but pure joy. But when embodied and in conjunction with Prakrti, It experiences the products which arise from Prakrti, namely; happiness, suffering etc, which are the effects of the Gunas — Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

The Self, transmigrating through a series of bodies which are all modifications of Prakrti, becomes involved in the happiness and pain resulting from the experiences associated with these respective species. It then engages itself in skilful (*puṇya*) and unskilful (*pāpa*) deeds, which produce results in the form of happiness and suffering. Now in order to reap the fruits of these good and evil deeds, the Self is born again in pleasant and unpleasant circumstances. Then it again becomes active, and thus perpetuates the cycle of reincarnation. As long as the virtues like humility etc., which are the means for realising the Self, are not developed, its entanglement in Samsāra is perpetuated. Thus, it has been declared here, that attachment causes births in higher and lower species.

upadṛṣṭānumantā ca bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ ।
paramātmeti cāpyukto deho'smin puruṣaḥ paraḥ ॥ 23 ॥

23. The embodied Self is called the witness, the sanctioner, supporter, experiencer, the great lord and likewise the supreme person.

Commentary

This Self (*Puruṣa*) existing in the body becomes the one who observes and 'sanctions' — permits the physical activities in accordance with volition and other mind states. Likewise, It is the 'supporter' of the body. It becomes the 'experiencer' of the pleasure and pain resulting from its activities. Thus, by virtue of ruling and supporting the body and by making the body completely subservient to its own needs, the Self becomes 'the great lord' (*maheśvara*) of the body, the senses and the mind. (vide Gita 15.8).

The embodied jivātman is said to be the 'supreme person' in relation to the body, the senses and the mind. It is true that the Self [in its emancipated state] has limitless power and knowledge. But it becomes 'the great lord' and the 'supreme person' only in relation to the physical body. The term 'Self' (*ātman*) hereafter will be applied to both the body and the mind.

ya evaṃ vetti puruṣaṃ prakṛtiṃ ca guṇaiḥ saha ।
sarvathā vartamāno'pi na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate ॥ 24 ॥

24. One who understands the Puruṣa (Self)) and the Prakrti (body) thus, along with the Gunas [to be described], is not born again, regardless of one's (material) situation.

dhyānenātmani paśyanti kecid ātmānam ātmanā ।
anye sāṅkhyena yogena karma-yogena cāpare ॥ 25 ॥

25. Some perceive the Self within the self (body) by meditation by the self (mind), others by Saṅkhya Yoga, and still others by Karma Yoga.

Commentary

The three different type of Yogis are mentioned in this verse:—

1. Some with perfect mental concentration perceive the Self (*Ātmānam*) abiding in the body (*ātmani*) by the mind (ātmanā) through meditation (Bhakti Yoga).
2. Others who cannot achieve perfect concentration realise the Self by means of Saṅkhya Yoga (*Jñāna Yoga* — Gnosis) through an intellectual process which is a prelude to meditation.
3. Still others, incapable of intellectualisation (through *Jñāna Yoga*) and those capable, but preferring an easier method, and also some particular people — all these attain Self-realisation after first preparing themselves for meditation by means of selfless action (*Karma Yoga*) which contains within itself wisdom (*Jñana*).

anye tvevam ajānantaḥ śrutvānyebhya upāsate ।
te'pi cātitarantyeva mṛtyuṃ śruti parāyaṇāḥ ॥ 26 ॥

26. But some, who do not know these [methods], having heard [the teachings] from others, meditate accordingly — these too, being devoted to what they hear, pass beyond death.

yāvat sañjāyate kiñcit sattvaṃ sthāvara jaṅgamam ।
kṣetra kṣetrajña saṃyogāt tad viddhi bharatarṣabha ॥ 27 ॥

27. Whatever comes into being, whether it is moving or stationary[6], O Arjuna (Bharatarshabha), know that it is through the combination of the Kṣetra (body) and Kṣetrajña (knower of the Field).

samaṃ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṃ parameśvaram ।
vinaśyatsv-avinaśyantaṃ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ॥ 28 ॥

28. Whoever sees the supreme ruler abiding alike in all bodies and never perishing when they perish, he indeed has insight.

Commentary

One who sees the ātman as it really is, perceives it as:—

- a distinctive entity present in all embodied beings.
- as being 'the knower' and therefore of the same universal nature in all bodies,
- as imperishable

samaṃ paśyan hi sarvatra samavasthitam īśvaram ।
na hinasty-ātmanātmānam tato yāti parāṃ gatim ॥ 29 ॥

29. For, seeing the ruler (Self) as equal and abiding alike in every place, one does not vitiate the Self by the self (mind) and therefore reaches the highest goal.

Commentary

Does not vitiate himself — harm himself by his [erroneous] perception of intrinsic ontological diversity but saves himself from Samsāra as a result of seeing the equality of the ātman everywhere as 'the cognising subject'.

prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ ।
yaḥ paśyati tathātmānam akartāraṃ sa paśyati ॥ 30 ॥

30. One who sees that all acts are done universally by Prakrti alone and likewise that the ātman is not the doer, indeed has insight.

Commentary

The ātman, being comprised of consciousness, is not the doer, and that the ātman's conjunction with the Prakrti, and its controlling the body and its experience of happiness and misery are all the result of ignorance (ajñāna) in the form of Karma — then indeed one perceives the Self as it really is.

yadā bhūta pṛthag bhāvam ekastham anupaśyati ।
tathaiva ca vistāram brahma saṃpadyate tadā ॥ 31 ॥

31. When one understands the independent individuality of all beings as being rooted in one basis, as also their evolution, then one attains to the Brahman.

Commentary

Although the general diversified states of existence of all beings are founded on the dual principles of Prakrti-Puruṣa; their particular individual characteristics and the basis for their personal evolution are rooted in 'one' common foundation which is the Prakrti, and not in the ātman. One then reaches the state of Great Expansion (Brahman). The meaning is that one attains the state of the Self free of limitations, in its pure form of [expanded] consciousness.

anāditvān nirguṇatvāt paramātmāyam avyayaḥ ।
śarīrastho'pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate ॥ 32 ॥

32. This supreme Self, though dwelling in the body, is immutable, O Arjuna, being without beginning. It neither acts nor is tainted, as it is free from the Gunas.

Commentary

Granted that the ātman being free from the Gunas, does not act; but how is it possible that the ātman is not tainted by its constant association with the character of the body? To this, Sri Krishna replies: —

yathā sarvagataṃ saukṣmyād-ākāśaṃ nopalipyate ।
sarvatrāvasthito dehe tathātmā nopalipyate ॥ 33 ॥

33. As the all-pervading ether is not tainted because of its subtlety, even so, the ātman abiding in the body everywhere, is not tainted.

yathā prakāśayatyekaḥ kṛtsnaṃ lokam imaṃ raviḥ ।
kṣetraṃ kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnaṃ prakāśayati bhārata ॥ 34 ॥

34. As the one sun illumines this whole world, so does the Knower of the Field (the Self), O Arjuna, illumine the whole Field (the body).

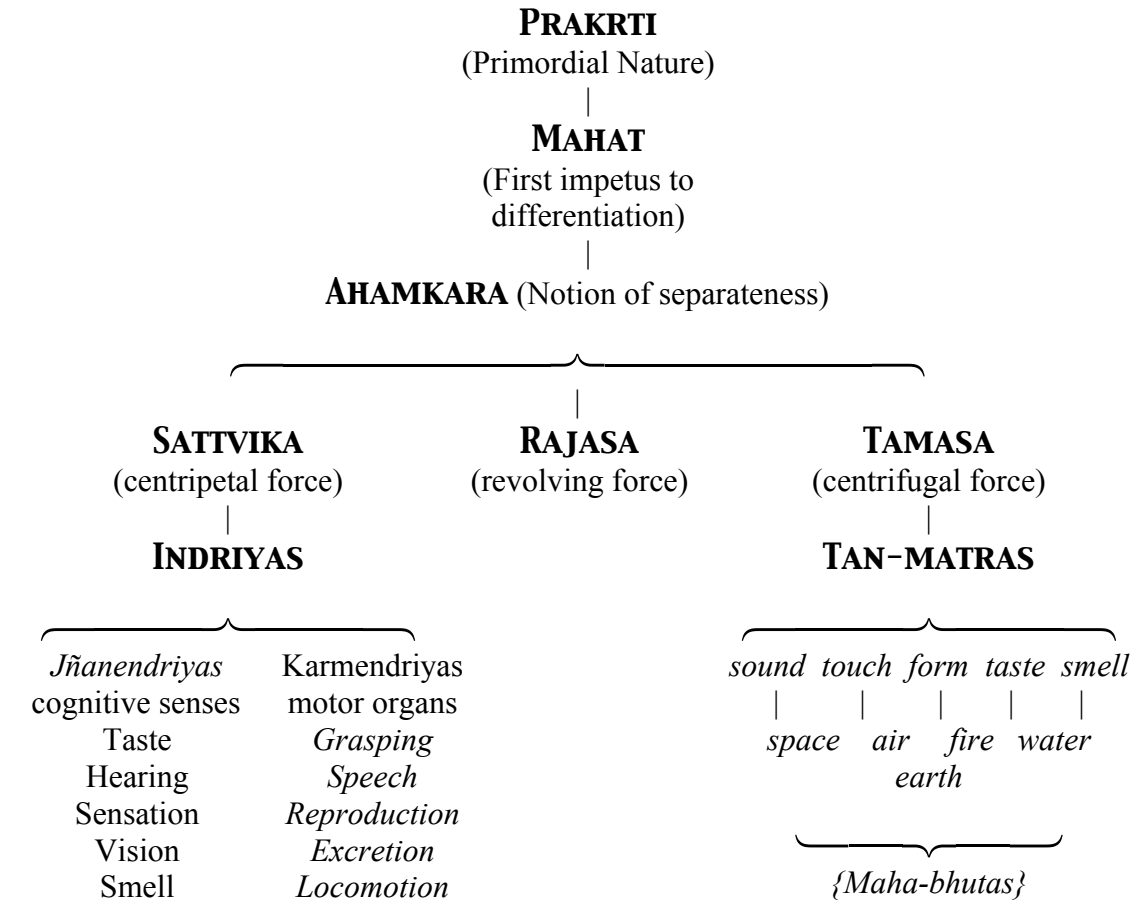
kṣetra kṣetrajñayor-evam antaraṃ jñāna-cakṣuṣā ।
bhūta prakṛti-mokṣaṃ ca ye vidur-yānti te param ॥ 35 ॥

35. Those who thus discern with wise insight, the difference between the body (Field/Kṣetra) and the knower of the body (Field-knower /Kṣetrajña), and the means of deliverance from the manifested Material Nature (Prakrti) — they attain the Supreme.

Those persons, who, through the teaching imparted, understand the difference between the Self and Material Nature, and then learn about the virtues of humility etc., (13.7). and practice these virtues — they will thereby be completely liberated from bondage and will reach their essential ontological state characterised by infinite consciousness abiding in its own state.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavad gītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ yoga-śāstre
śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde kṣetra-kṣetrajñā-vibhaga-yogo nāma
trayodaśo'dhyāyaḥ
Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the thirteenth discourse entitled
"Differentiation between Spirit & Matter"

EVOLUTION OF PRAKRTI ACCORDING TO SANKHYA



Chapter 14

Guṇa-traya-vibhāga Yogaḥ

The Threefold Division of the Modes of Material Nature

Summary of the Teaching

In the thirteenth chapter it was taught that after learning the truth concerning the nature of Prakrti and Purusha and their mutual conjunction, one should cultivate the virtues of humility etc., together with devotion to the Lord as the means for liberation from bondage. And it was also stated in the verse — "Its attachment to these Gunas is the cause of birth in higher and lower wombs" (13.21) — the cause of bondage is attachment to pleasure etc., which arise from affiliation with the Gunas. Now, this chapter deals with the manner in which the Gunas become the cause of bondage and how their hold can be eliminated.

śri bhagavān uvāca

paraṃ bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi jñānānāṃ jñānam uttamam ।
yaj-jñātvā munayaḥ sarve parāṃ siddhim ito gatāḥ ॥ 1 ॥

The Blessed Lord said

1. I shall teach again another kind of knowledge: the best of all forms of knowledge, by knowing which, all the sages have attained the state of perfection beyond this world.

idaṃ jñānam upāśritya mama sadharmyam āgatāḥ ।
sarge'pi nopajāyante pralaye na vyathanti ca ॥ 2 ॥

2. Resorting to learning this and participating in My Being, they are not born at the time of universal projection, nor do they suffer at the time of its dissolution.

Commentary

"They who study [and assimilate] this teaching about to be expounded, attain qualities that are akin to Mine, and they attain a [metaphysical] similarity to Me".

mama yonir mahad-brahma tasmin garbham dadhāmyaham ।
saṃbhavaḥ sarva bhūtānāṃ tato bhavati bhārata ॥ 3 ॥

3. My womb is the great Brahman (i.e. Mūla-Prakrti), in that I lay the germ. From that, O Arjuna, are all beings born.

Commentary

Prakrti is designated here by the name '*the great Brahman*' because it is the cause of transformations of described in the text — 'Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and ego-sense; thus My Prakrti is divided eightfold' (7.45). In the Vedas also, Prakrti is designated as Brahman in some places, for example in Mundaka Upanishad 1:1:9

The higher Prakrti which is the aggregate of sentient Jivas, mentioned in the passage — 'Know My higher Prakrti to be distinct from this; it is the life-principle' (Gita 7.5) — is here expressed by the term 'Garbha' — germ, which means the source from which all living beings originate. In other words: "I lay the seed, consisting of the aggregate of sentient Jivas, in that great Mūla Prakrti, which is insentient and forms the matrix. From that conjunction between these two 'Prakrtis' brought about by My will, the emanation of all entities from Brahma down to a tuft of grass occurs".

sarva yoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ ।
tāsāṃ brahma mahad-yonir ahaṃ bīja-pradaḥ pitā ॥ 4 ॥

4. Whatever beings are produced in any species, O Arjuna, the Mūla-Prakrti is their great womb and I am the seed giving father.

Commentary

It means that Material Nature or the Mūla-Prakrti, [the evolution of which] begins with the Cosmic Mind (Mahat) and culminates with the appearance of the five elements, together with the aggregate of sentient Jīvas instilled in it by Me, is the cause of existence. I am the seed giving father means that I instil the aggregate of sentient jīvas [into Prakrti] according to each one's individual Karma.

sattvaṃ-rajas-tama iti guṇāḥ prakṛti saṃbhavāḥ ।
nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinam avyayam ॥ 5 ॥

5. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the Gunas that arise from Prakrti. They cause the bondage of the immutable Self to the body, O Arjuna.

Commentary

The three Modes of Material Nature — *Sattva* (harmony), *Rajas* (activity) and *Tamas* (inertia) — are inherent in the essential nature of Prakrti and are it's particular expressions. Their existence can be ascertained only through their effects such as enlightenment etc. They are not apparent in the unevolved state of Prakrti, but become apparent in the cosmic evolution. The Self is immutable, ie., it is not, in its natural state affected by the Gunas, but becomes 'bound by them' when residing in the body by virtue of the limiting conditions of being embodied.

tatra sattvaṃ nirmalatvāt prakāśakam anāmayam ।
sukha-saṅgena badhnāti jñāna-saṅgena cānagha ॥ 6 ॥

6. Of these, Sattva, being pure is illuminating and free from morbidity. It causes bondage, O Arjuna, through attachment to pleasure and to learning.

Commentary

Sattva causes illumination on account of its being immaculate or free from all impurity. Purity being defined as a state free from conditions which hinder enlightenment and happiness. *'Illumination'* or enlightenment is the perception of things as they really are. It is 'free from morbidity' ie., it is not the cause of ill health, in other words, Sattva is that which is conducive to health.

rajo rāgātmakaṃ viddhi tṛṣṇā-saṅga samudbhavam ।
tan nibadhnāti kaunteya karma-saṅgena dehinam ॥ 7 ॥

7. Know, O Arjuna (Son of Kunti) that Rajas is of the nature of passion arising from craving and attachment, it causes the bondage of the embodied Self through attachment to action.

Commentary

'*Rāga'* (passion) is sexual attraction (libido). '*Tṛṣṇa'*, (craving) is the hankering for all the sense-objects. '*Saṅga'* (attachment) is the ardour for constant association with one's partner, progeny, friends and such other relations.

By creating a strong desire to act, *Rajas* binds one. All activities undertaken through craving for sense-gratification produce merit and demerit; these in turn perpetuate the cycle of rebirth. In other words — *Rajas* is the cause of the sex-drive, craving and attachment, and of constant engagement in activity.

tamas tvajñānajaṃ viddhi mohanaṃ sarva dehinām ।
pramād-ālasya nidrābhis-tan nibadhnāti bhārata ॥ 8 ॥

8. Know that Tamas is born of nescience and causes the delusion of all embodied Selves. It causes bondage, O Arjuna, through negligence, indolence and sleep.

Commentary

Knowledge is defined as the perception of things as they really are — by '*nescience*' (ajñāna) is meant that which is opposed to it or false knowledge. *Tamas*, arising from false knowledge, deludes all beings. Delusion is mistaken comprehension; in other words, Tamas is the cause of error. Being the cause of negligence, indolence and sleep, it binds the embodied Atman. '*Negligence*' — is lack of attention, which causes one to do the wrong thing. '*Indolence*' — is the tendency to avoid work; it may even develop into complete inaction. '*Sleep*' — is the state of cessation of all externally directed activities due to exhaustion and the need to recover from the same. In *sleep (nidrā*) when only the externally directed action of the senses stops, [but the mind continues to function] it is called the *dream state (svapna).* When even the mental activity ceases it is called *dreamless sleep (suṣupti).*

sattvaṃ sukhe sañjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata ।
jñānam āvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayaty-uta ॥ 9 ॥

9. The Mode of Sattva generates attachment to pleasure, Rajas to action, O Arjuna. But the Mode of Tamas, obscuring wisdom, generates attachment to negligence.

Commentary

The question arises:— 'the three Modes of Material Nature evolve from the essential nature of Prakrti, and develop into the psycho-physical being and therefore they always co-exist in all beings at all times. How, then, can they cause effects which are mutually contradictory? Sri Krishna replies: —

rajas tamaścābhibhūya sattvaṃ bhavati bhārata ।
rajas sattvaṃ tamaścaiva tamas sattvaṃ rajas-tathā ॥ 10 ॥

10. Prevailing over Rajas and Tamas, Sattva [sometimes] prevails, O Arjuna. Overwhelming Tamas and Sattva, Rajas preponderates, overwhelming Rajas and Sattva, Tamas [sometimes] predominates.

sarva dvāreṣu dehe'smin prakāśa upajāyate ।
jñānaṃ yadā tadā vidyād vivṛddhaṃ sattvam ityuta ॥ 11 ॥

11. When the light of wisdom radiates from all the gateways (senses) of the body, then, one should know that Sattva prevails.

lobhaḥ pravṛttir āraṃbhaḥ karmaṇām aśamaḥ spṛhā ।
rajasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha ॥ 12 ॥

12. Greed, activity, undertaking of projects, restlessness and craving — these arise, O Arjuna (Bull of the Bharatas), when Rajas is ascendant.

Commentary

'Greed' is the unwillingness to share one's own resources. *'Activity'* is [in this case] the tendency to be active without any definite useful purpose. *'Undertaking of projects'* refers to endeavours undertaken for the achievement of specific goals. *'Restlessness'* is incessant desire for sensual stimulation, *'craving'* is the desire for possessing objects.

aprakāśo'pravṛttiśca pramādo moha eva ca ।
tamasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe kuru-nandana ॥ 13 ॥

13. Non-illumination, inactivity, negligence and even delusion — these arise, O Arjuna (Joy-of-the-Kurus), when Tamas prevails.

Commentary

'Non-illumination' is the absence of wisdom. *'Inactivity'* is stupor. *'Negligence'* is carelessness resulting in wrong doing. *'Delusion'* is erroneous thinking.

yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu pralayaṃ yāti deha-bhṛt ।
tadottama vidāṃ lokān amalān pratipadyate ॥ 14 ॥

14. If the embodied entity meets with disintegration when Sattva predominates, then it proceeds to the pure realms of those who know the highest Truth.

Commentary

If one happens to die when the Sattva Guna is dominant then one attains the assemblage of those [enlightened beings] who know the science of the ātman and who are free from ignorance. In other words one will be born in the families of those who have the knowledge of the Self, and will thus be qualified to perform those virtuous acts which are the means of attaining Self-realisation.

rajasi pralayaṃ gatvā karma saṅgiṣu jāyate ।
tathā pralīnas tamasi mūḍha-yoniṣu jāyate ॥ 15 ॥

15. Meeting with disintegration when Rajas predominates one is born among those attached to action. Similarly, one who has met with disintegration when Tamas prevails, is born among species lacking in intelligence.

Commentary

Dying when Rajas is preponderant, one is reborn in the families of those who are motivated by the desire for achievement; one thus becomes qualified to perform those virtuous acts which lead to heaven and other such [material] benefits.

Similarly, one who dies when Tamas is preponderant is born among species lacking in intelligence, meaning one is reborn as one incapable of realising any [of the four] goals of human existence.

karmaṇaḥ sukṛtasyāhuḥ sāttvikaṃ nirmalaṃ phalam ।
rajas-astu phalaṃ duḥkham ajñānaṃ tamasaḥ phalam ॥ 16 ॥

16. The result of a good deed, they say, is pure and is of the nature of Sattva, but the result of Rajas is suffering; and that of Tamas is ignorance.

Commentary

'Good deeds' are actions (*punya*) which are done without a desire for their rewards, they generate more Sattva than before and one becomes more pure, namely, devoid of the slightest vestige of suffering — so say those who know about the development of Sattva.

'*Suffering'* is continuation in Samsāra consisting of successive births in families attached to goal orientated actions. Rebirth of this type increases Rajas further, resulting in more self-gratifying achievements. 'Ignorance' is the result of Tamas predominating at the time of death, and means the continuation of successive states of ignorance.

sattvāt sañjāyate jñānaṃ rajaso lobha eva ca ।
pramāda-mohau tamaso bhavato'jñānam eva ca ॥ 17 ॥

17. From Sattva, wisdom arises, and from Rajas greed, from Tamas arise negligence and delusion, and indeed, ignorance.

ūrdhvaṃ gacchanti sattvasthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ ।
jaghanya guṇa vṛttisthā adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ ॥ 18 ॥

18. Those who persist in Sattva rise upwards; those who abide in Rajas remain in the middle; and those, remaining in the lowest tendencies of Tamas go downwards.

Commentary

'*Those who persist in Sattva rise upwards'*, means they attain liberation from Samsāra in successive stages. Those who, *'abide in Rajas remain in the middle'* means they are born again in this world and pursue the same goal-orientated activities — this [vicious cycle] is mostly suffering, as it is characterised by continued rebirth.

'go downwards' means that they become increasingly more degenerate through the expansion of Tamas. And thus descend to the lowest state among human beings, then to the condition of animals; then to that of worms, insects etc., then of immovable things, and even to the condition of shrubs and creepers, and ultimately to the condition of stones, logs, clods, straw etc.

nānyaṃ guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṃ yadā draṣṭānupaśyati ।
guṇebhyaśca paraṃ vetti madbhāvaṃ so'dhigacchati ॥ 19 ॥

19. When the enlightened one perceives no agent of action other than the Gunas, and knows that which transcends the Gunas, then one attains to My state.

Commentary

The enlightened one first has to completely repress the states of Rajas and Tamas and remain in a state of pure Sattva through consuming Sattvic food and performing selfless actions as service alone. The Self, essentially immaculate, acquires agency in respect of various actions, by its involvement with the Gunas — a condition arising from past Karmas. When one perceives that the Self in its essential state is not actually an agent but consists of infinite consciousness, one then attains similitude to Krishna.

guṇān etān atītya trīn dehī deha samudbhavān ।
janma mṛtyu jarā duḥkhair vimukto'mṛtam aśnute ॥ 20 ॥

20. Transcending these three Gunas from which the body arises, the embodied Self, freed from birth, death, old age and suffering, attains immortality.

arjuna uvāca

kair-liṅgais trīn guṇān etān atīto bhavati prabho ।
kim ācāraḥ kathaṃ caitāṃs trīn guṇān ativartate ॥ 21 ॥

Arjuna said:

21. What are the indications of one who has transcended the three Gunas? How does one behaviour? And how does one overcome the three Gunas?

Commentary

With what kind of behaviour is one associated and how does it serve as an indication for knowing one's inner state? — such is the meaning.

śrī bhagavan uvāca

prakāśaṃ ca pravṛttiṃ ca moham-eva ca pāṇḍava ।
na dveṣṭi saṃpravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati ॥ 22 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:

22. Illumination, activity and even delusion, O Arjuna, [he] resents not, while these prevail, nor longs for them when they are absent,

udāsīnavad āsīno guṇair yo na vicālyate ।
guṇā vartanta ityeva yo'vatiṣṭhati neṅgate ॥ 23 ॥

23. He is said to transcended the Gunas, who remains like one indifferent, undisturbed by the Gunas; and who, knowing that it is the Gunas that are active, remains stable and does not act;

Commentary

He who remains like one indifferent — namely, who is joyful in the realisation of the ātman as being different from the Gunas and is unconcerned about material things and is not therefore disturbed through aversion and attraction and who remains quiescent, reflecting that the Gunas produce their own effects like illumination etc., and so remains inactive and does fall under the control of the Gunas.

sama duḥkha sukhaḥ svasthaḥ sama loṣṭāśma kāñcanaḥ ।
tulya priyāpriyo dhīras-tulya nindātma saṃstutiḥ ॥ 24 ॥

24. One who is poised in pleasure and pain, who focuses within, to whom a clod, a stone and piece of gold are of equal value, who remains the same towards the pleasant and the unpleasant and who is intelligent, and regards both censure and praise of himself as equal;

mānāpamānayos tulyas tulyo mitrāri pakṣayoḥ ।
sarvārambha parityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate ॥ 25 ॥

25. one who is the same in honour and dishonour, and the same to friend and foe, and who has abandoned all enterprises — such a person is said to have transcended the Gunas.

Commentary

'who focuses within,' means abiding in the ātman because of love for the ātman, and maintaining emotional equanimity in pleasure and pain arising from birth, transformation, sickness old age and death of one's children and other relatives and friends.

'*who regards any praise and blame as equal'* — realising that the good and bad characteristics one may possess are due merely to the fact of being human and identifying with the body rather than the Jīva, and as such are unconnected with the real Self.

'the same in honour and dishonour' — because these are feelings based on the misconception that the body is the Self; and 'the same to friend and foe' — because one understands that there is no [substantial] physical connection between oneself and others and who has thus abandoned all enterprises in which embodied beings are involved — these are the indications of one who is said to have transcended the Gunas.

māṃ ca yo'vyabhicāreṇa bhakti yogena sevate ।
sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate ॥ 26 ॥

26. And by serving Me with unswerving devotion, one transcends the Gunas, and becomes fit to attain the state of Brahman.

Commentary

The state of transcendence of Gunas is not attained merely by reflecting on the difference between the Prakrti and the ātman as declared in the text such as "When the enlightened one perceives no agent of action other than the Gunas" (14:19) — for this perception is liable then, to be controverted by contrary subtle impressions (*saṃskāras*) which have accrued from beginingless time. One who, with unswerving one-pointed Loving Devotion, serves Krishna and takes refuge in Him transcends

the Gunas which are otherwise insurmountable, and becomes worthy for the 'state of Brahman' (*brahma-bhūya*) — the meaning is that one attains cognisance of the Self as it really is; immortal and immutable.

brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhā'ham amṛtasyāvyayasya ca ।
śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyaikāntikasya ca ॥ 27 ॥

27. Verily, I am the ground of Matter as well as the immortal and immutable [Self], of everlasting Dharma and of perfect bliss.

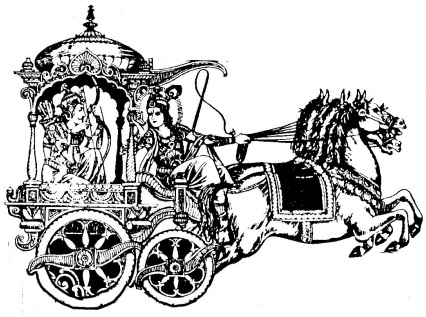
Commentary

Although the expression *'everlasting Dharma'* is usually indicative of the practice [of Dharma or right-living] that leads to the goal; yet in the present context it denotes the actual goal to be obtained and not the practice.

The purport is this:— earlier it has been stated in the passage — 'For this divine Māya of Mine consisting of the three Gunas is hard to transcend, except for those who take refuge in Me alone...' (7.14) — that taking refuge in the Lord is the only means for transcending the Modes of Material Nature and the attainment of Self-realisation, supernal glory and unification with the Supreme Being. Thus, taking refuge (prapatti) with one-pointed mind is the only means for transcending the Gunas and for the attainment of the state of Brahman.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavad gītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ
yoga-śāstre śrī kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde guṇa-traya-vibhaga-yogo nāma
caturdaśo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the fourteenth discourse entitled
"The threefold division of the modes of Material Nature"



Chapter 15

Puruṣottama Yogaḥ

The Mystery of the Omnipresent Supreme Being

Summary of the Teaching

In the 13th chapter the nature of Prakrti and Purusha was analysed; it was taught that from time out of mind the immaculate Jīva comprised entirely of infinite consciousness, conjoins with Material Nature (Prakrti), and is embodied in the forms of gods etc., This produces the cycle of attachment to the Modes of Material Nature (Gunas). Then followed in the 14th chapter the teaching concerning the Gunas was elaborated upon and then it was taught that Devotion to Krishna leads to detachment from the Gunas which in turn results in the realisation of the true nature of the Self.

Now in this 15th chapter, Sri Krishna, the adorable Lord reveals Himself as being in absolute control of the universe; both perishable (Kṣara) or bound Jīvas and the imperishable (Akṣara) or liberated Jīvas. He also states that He is the Supreme Being because of His supernal greatness in being antithetic to all that is negative and being the font of auspicious attributes. He is different in kind from both the perishable and imperishable Jīvas which constitute His Modes.

śrī bhagavan uvāca

ūrdhva mūlam adhaḥ śākham aśvatthaṃ prāhur-avyayam ।
chandāṃsi yasya parṇāni yastaṃ veda sa vedavit ॥ 1 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:
1. They [the Vedas] speak of an indestructible Aśvattha tree with its roots above and branches below, the leaves of which are the injunctions; one who knows this knows the Vedas.

Commentary

The Vedas often depict Samsāra as the imperishable Aśvattha (banyan) tree having its roots above and branches below, in such passages as Ka. Up., 6:1 and Tait. Ar., 1.11.5

It has its 'roots above' since it arises from Brahma [the Creator or Hiranyagarbha] who is located beyond the seven realms. It has 'branches below' developing into beings like humans, animals, beasts, worms, insects, birds and plants and minerals. It is 'indestructible' because it cannot be felled except with the dawn of perfect knowledge which causes detachment — it is like a flowing current.

The leaves of this Aśvattha tree are said to be the prescriptions of the Vedas because this tree of Samsāra grows by actions prompted by worldly desires as taught in specific passages.

The tree indeed flourishes with the help of these ‘leaves’. One who knows the Aśvattha tree in this way 'knows the Vedas'. The Veda also describes the means of felling this tree of Samsāra. One who understands this is called the ‘knower of the Vedas’, since knowledge of the nature of the tree to be cut down is helpful in deciding the means of felling the tree.

adhaścordhvaṃ prasṛtās tasya śākhāḥ guṇa-pravṛddhā viṣaya pravālāḥ ।
adhaśca mūlāny-anusantatāni karmānubandhīni manuṣya-loke ॥ 2 ॥

2. Both above and below its branches spread out, nourished by the Gunas, the shoots are the sense-objects, and their dependant roots extend downward in the mortal world resulting in acts which bind (karma).

Commentary

This Aśvattha tree spreads downwards with humans and other beings, produced by their own respective Karmas, as branches. Other branches spread upwards in the forms of [celestial beings] such as Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Devas, etc. They are nourished by the three Modes of Material Nature. They have tender shoots in the form of sense-objects which are sound, sight, taste, feel and smell.

Sri Krishna explains how this happens;— the 'dependant roots' of this banyan tree with the main roots in the world of Brahma and its top in this mortal world extends downwards. These roots are the effects of karma which causes bondage. In other words, the effects of actions done in the human state bring about the further rebirth as humans, beasts etc., down below, and as celestial beings up above.

na rūpam asyeha tathopalabhyate nānto na cādir naca saṃpratiṣṭhā ।
aśvattham enaṃ suvirūḍha-mūlam asaṅga śastreṇa dṛḍheṇa chitvā ॥ 3 ॥

3. Its form as such, is not perceived here, nor its end, nor its origin, nor its support. Having cut down this firmly rooted Aśvattha Tree with the strong axe of non-attachment,

Commentary

Humankind is at the pinnacle, our actions form the branches extending above and below as also its secondary roots — this form of the tree is not understood by those immersed in Samsāra. Similarly, it is not understood that the end [of Samsāra] can be brought about by non-attachment to pleasures which are founded upon the Gunas. It is also not perceived that attachment to the Gunas alone is the foundation of this tree. Nor is it realised that this tree is nourished by ignorance (ajñanam) which is the misconception that the body is the Self. Ignorance alone is the basis of this tree, since in it alone the tree is established.

This Aśvattha Tree is firmly-rooted — its roots are firm and manifold, and it is to be cut down with the strong axe of non-attachment, — namely the axe, forged by right knowledge of non-attachment to the enjoyable sense objects composed of the three Gunas.

tataḥ padaṃ tat parimārgitavyaṃ yasmin gatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ ।
tameva cādyaṃ puruṣaṃ prapadye yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī ॥ 4 ॥

4. One should then seek that goal, attaining which one never returns. One should take refuge in that Primal Being from whom this ancient process emanated.

Commentary

As one becomes free from attachment to sense-objects, one should seek and discover

the ultimate goal from which one never returns. How can one bring an end to this beginingless attachment to sense objects? Sri Krishna now answers: — one should take 'refuge (*Prapadyet*) in the Primal Being' alone in order to overcome this ignorance. One should seek refuge in Him who is the Original One, namely, the source of all entities.

A variant reading of this stanza is *'prapadya iyatah pravrttih'* (in place of *prapadyet yatah pravrittih'*). This gives the sense that this process of taking refuge in the Supreme Being [prapatti] for the dispelling of ignorance has continued from a distant past. Even in the distant past there were those seeking liberation by this ancient means.

nirmāna mohā jita saṅga doṣā adhyātma nityā vinivṛtta kāmāḥ ।
dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukha-duḥkha saṃjñāir gacchanty-amūḍhāḥ padam-avyayam tat ॥ 5 ॥

5. Free from delusions, having conquered the affliction of attachment, constant in the [contemplation of the] Self, having rejected desires and been liberated from the pairs of contrasts known as pleasure and pain, the undeluded attain that immutable goal.

na tad bhāsayate sūryo na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ ।
yad gatvā na nivartante taddhāma paramaṃ mama ॥ 6 ॥

6. That supreme realm of Mine, after reaching which they do not return again [to Samsāra], is not illumined by the sun nor the moon, nor the fire.

mamaivāṃśo jīva-loke jīva-bhūtas sanātanaḥ ।
manaṣ ṣaṣṭhān-īndriyāṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati ॥ 7 ॥

7. An everlasting part of Myself, having become the Jīvātman in the mortal world, acquires the [five] senses, and the mind which is the sixth, and abides in Prakrti.

Commentary

The ātman, even though an everlasting part of Myself, becomes bound in the cycle of transmigration. Enveloped by ignorance (*avidya*) in the form of beginingless karma, it enters into the bodies of various beings acquiring the five senses and the mind, which are specific modifications of Prakrti. Some parts of Myself (ie. Jīvas) become liberated from ignorance (*avidya*) in the aforesaid manner, and remain in their original pristine state. But the bound Jīvātman has its ability and knowledge inhibited. The Jīvātman participates in an organic synthesis with the body/body complex which is a specific modification of Material Nature resulting from Karma. Thus, in accordance with its Karma the Self manipulates the sense-faculties and the body.

śarīraṃ yad avāpnoti yaccāpy-utkrāmat-īśvaraḥ ।
gṛhītvaitāni saṃyāti vāyur-gandhān ivāśayāt ॥ 8 ॥

8. Whatever body the ruler (Jīvātman) acquires and from whatever body it departs, it proceeds, taking with it these sense-faculties as the wind carrying fragrance from their places [in flowers].

Commentary

The Jīvātman is the lord of the body whenever it departs and goes on its way, it takes with it the [mental] sense-faculties and the elements, in a subtle form; just like the wind carrying the subtle fragrances from flower-garlands, sandal-paste, musk etc. from their sources and spreads them elsewhere.

śrotraṃ cakṣuḥ sparśanaṃ ca rasanaṃ ghrāṇam eva ca ।
adhiṣṭhāya manaścāyaṃ viṣayān upasevate ॥ 9 ॥

9. Presiding over the ear, the eye, the sense of touch, the tongue, the nose, and the mind, it experiences these objects of the senses.

utkrāmantaṃ sthitaṃ vāpi bhuñjānaṃ vā guṇān-vitam ।
vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñāna-cakṣuṣaḥ ॥ 10 ॥

10. The deluded do not perceive it [the Jīvātman] conjoined with the Gunas when departing or staying or experiencing — only the enlightened ones see.

yatanto yoginaścainaṃ paśyanty-ātmany-avasthitam ।
yatanto'pyakṛtātmāno nainaṃ paśyantyacetasaḥ ॥ 11 ॥

11. The striving practitioners of Yoga behold It (the ātman) abiding within themselves, but, strive as they may, those of unrefined mind, devoid of intelligence, perceive it not,

yadādityagataṃ tejo jagad bhāsayate'khilam ।
yaccandramasi yaccāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakam ॥ 12 ॥

12. That light that is in the sun which illumines the whole universe, and that which is in the moon and in fire, know that light to be Mine.

gām āviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmy-aham ojasā ।
puṣṇāmi cauṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ ॥ 13 ॥

13. And pervading the earth I support all beings by My power. I nourish all herbs by becoming the Moon full of nectar.

ahaṃ vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇināṃ deham āśritaḥ ।
prāṇāpāna samāyuktaḥ pacāmyannaṃ caturvidham ॥ 14 ॥

14. Becoming the Vaishvanara Agni, I function within the bodies of all living beings. In association with the Prana and the Apana, I digest the four kinds of food.

Commentary

The *'Vaiśvānara Agni'* is the fire of digestion, in union with various activities of the breath; *Prāṇa* — inspiration, and *Apāṇa* — expiration, Krishna digests the *'four kinds of food'* eaten by beings — these are foods which need to be chewed, sucked, licked and drunk.

sarvasya cāhaṃ hṛdi sanniviṣṭo mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanaṃ ca ।
vedaiśca sarvair aham eva vedyo vedānta-kṛd vedavid eva cāham ॥ 15 ॥

15. And I am located in the hearts of all. From Me come memory, knowledge and their absence also. Indeed, I alone am that which is to be known from all the Vedas. I bring about the fruition of the rituals of Vedas; I alone am the knower of the Vedas.

Commentary

Because Krishna is the Over-self, the faculty of memory in all beings can be said to arise from Him alone. *'Memory'* is cognition arising from the content of past experiences and their subtle impressions. 'Knowledge' is appraisement of a thing with the help of the senses, inference, verbal testimony and insight gained from meditation. *'Apohana'* means the cessation of knowledge. *'Apohana'* can also mean *'Uhana'* (conjectural knowledge) which is that secondary information which is an aid to the factual data (*Pramāṇa*). This is a process of determining whether the knowledge of the facts presented can be operative with reference to the particular subject-matter on hand, through the examination of the way in which the factual data was obtained — this is *'Uha'*.

I am the One to be known from all the Vedas because terms like Devas, humans etc., signify the Jīvas in them. I bring about the fruition of the Veda — *'Vedānta'*, in

this context means [literally] the end, namely, the end result of Vedic injunctions to offer sacrifices. *'Veda-Anta-krt'* means 'the bestower of rewards of the actions prescribed in the Vedas'.

dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣarāścākṣara eva ca ।
kṣaras sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho'kṣara ucyate ॥ 16 ॥

16. There are two kinds of Selves (*puruṣas*) mentioned [in the Veda] — the perishable (*kṣara*) and the imperishable (*akṣara*). All beings are the perishable and the imperishable is [also] called the immutable (*kuṭastha*).

Commentary

The category of Purushas designated by the term *'perishable'* (*Kṣara*) refers to the Jīvas conjoined with mutable insentient Matter (Prakrti). Here the term 'Purusha' (Being or spirit) is used in the singular to indicate the single adventitious condition of being conjoined with insentient Matter.

The *'imperishable' (akṣara)* also called *'immutable' (kuṭastha),* is the category of liberated Jīvas, devoid of association with insentient matter, abiding in their own essential nature. The liberated Jīva is called 'immutable' because when it is free from insentient matter, it has no specific relationship with any of the particular transformations of insentient Matter. Here also the term is in the singular (as expressing a generic class) and denotes the single adventitious condition of dissociation from insentient matter. It does not mean that before this, in the course of time without beginning, there existed but a single liberated ātman for it is stated:— *'Many purified by the austerity of wisdom, have attained My state'* (4.10); and 'They are not born at the time of creation, nor do they suffer at the time of dissolution' (14.2).

uttamaḥ puruṣas-tvanyaḥ paramātmety-udāhṛtaḥ ।
yo loka-trayam-āviśya bibharty-avyaya īśvaraḥ ॥ 17 ॥

17. Distinct from these is the Supreme Being, described as the Supreme Self [in the Vedas], He who pervading the threefold universe, supports it as the Immutable One and the Lord.

Commentary

The Supreme Being (*Paramātma*) is different from the bound and the liberated Jīvas who are expressed by the terms, the 'perishable' and the 'imperishable' respectively. How is He different? *'Pervading the threefold universe'* He supports it. *'Loka'* (realm) is that which is perceived and there are three such perceptible realms which are understood from the authority of the Scriptures. These are the realm of insentient matter, the realm of sentient Jīvas conjoined with matter, and the realm of liberated Jīvas. He enters into these three categories [of entities] as their Over-self and supports them. Thus, being the Pervader and Supporter He is [proven to be] an entity different from the triad [of entities].

yasmāt-kṣaram-atīto'ham akṣarād-api cottamaḥ ।
ato'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ ॥ 18 ॥

18. Because I transcend the perishable and am also higher than the imperishable, I am declared to be the Supreme Being (Purushottama) in the Smrti and the Veda.

yo mām-evam asammūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam ।
sa sarva-vid bhajati māṃ sarva bhāvena bhārata ॥ 19 ॥

19. Whoever, being free from all delusion, understands Me thus to be the highest Purusha — knowing all, he worships me in every way.

iti guhyatamaṃ śāstram idam uktaṃ mayā'nagha ।
etad buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛtakṛtyaśca bhārata ॥ 20 ॥

20. Thus, O sinless one, has this most mysterious doctrine been imparted by Me. By understanding this, O Arjuna one will become truly wise and will have fulfilled all duties.

Commentary

In this stanza it is intimated that the knowledge of the Supreme Being acquired through the Scriptures achieves all this, but it does not give direct experience of God.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavad gītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ
yoga-śāstre śrī kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde puruṣottama yogo nāma
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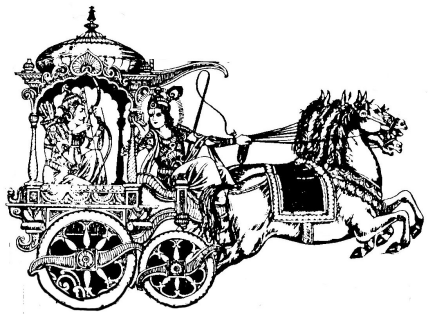
Ends the fourteenth discourse entitled
"The Mystery of the Omnipresent Supreme Being"



Chapter 16

Daivāsura Sampad Vibhāga Yogaḥ

The Division between the Divine and the Non-Divine.

Summary of the Teaching

In the preceding three chapters the following teachings were given: —

The true nature of the Material World (Prakrti), and the Jivatman (Purusha), both in isolation as well as in conjunction with each other;

Attachment is the cause for their [continued] conjunction and non-attachment leads to their separation;

Both Prakrti and the Purusha in whatever modes of existence they may be, constitute the plenary expansion (Vibhuti) of the Lord; and

The Lord is truly the Supreme Being who is distinct from insentient matter and sentient Jiva in both the states of bondage and liberation, because He is immutable, all-pervading — the Supporter and the Ruler of all.

In this chapter, the Lord describes the characteristics of those who belong to the Divine Establishment — those who submit to the teachings of Śāstra and those of the Non-Divine Establishment — those who do not — in order to reinforce the point that reliance on the authority of Śāstra is the essential basis for all the teachings given earlier.

śrī bhagavān uvāca

abhayaṃ sattva saṃśuddhiḥ jñāna yoga vyavasthitaḥ ।
dānaṃ damaśca yajñāśca svādhyāyas tapa ārjavam ॥ 1 ॥

The Blessed Lord said:
1. Fearlessness, purity of mind, consistent contemplation on wisdom, philanthropy, self-control, worship, study of Vedas, self-discipline, forthrightness,

Commentary

'Fear' — is defined as anxiety that arises from the perception of [future] suffering in the form of separation from cherished things or association with adverse objects — the absence of this emotion is 'fearlessness'.

'Purity of mind' — the Sattvic condition of the mind being freed from Rajas and Tamas.

'Consistent contemplation on wisdom' — steady persistence in discriminating between the true nature of the Self and of Prakrti.

'Philanthropy' — giving away one's wealth earned through right means to the deserving poor.

'Self-control' — the practice of withdrawing the mind from sense-objects.

'Worship' — the performance of the fivefold sacrifices (pañca-mahā-yajña) and other rituals simply as service to the Lord without attachment to the merit obtained.

'Study of the Vedas' — regular study of the Vedas with the conviction that all the

teachings of the Vedas deal with the Lord, with His glories and with the mode of worshipping Him.

'Self-discipline' — the practice of penances like Krcchra & Candrayana; fasting on the twelfth day of the lunar fortnight, etc., which foster an inclination for performing acts pleasing to the Lord.

'forthrightness' — consistency in thought, word and deed in one's dealings with others.

ahiṃsā satyam akrodhas tyāgaḥ śāntir apaiśunam ।
dayā bhūteṣv-aloluptaṃ mārdavaṃ hrīr acāpalam ॥ 2 ॥

2. Non-injury, truthfulness, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquillity, freedom from slandering, compassion to all beings, freedom from hankering, gentleness, modesty, freedom from whimsicality;

Commentary

'Non-injury' — abstaining from causing pain to other beings.

'Truthfulness' — communicating what one knows for certain and what is conducive to the good of others.

'Freedom from anger' — the absence of mental agitation which could lead to the injury of others.

'Renunciation' — the giving up of everything that is contrary to the good of the Self.

'Tranquillity' — practice of restraining the senses from their predilection for sense-objects.

'freedom from slandering' — refraining from talk that may cause hurt to others.

'Compassion to all beings' — the inability to abide the suffering of others.

'Freedom from hankering' (*Aloluptvam*) — freedom from craving for sense-gratification.

'Gentleness' — absence of harshness, and being worthy of associating with the good people.

'Modesty' — the feeling shame in doing what should not be done.

'Freedom from whimsicality' (*Acapalam*) — being unmoved by enjoyable objects even when they are at hand.

tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śaucam adroho nātimānitā ।
bhavanti sampadaṃ daivīṃ abhijātasya bhārata ॥ 3 ॥

3. Refulgence, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, freedom from spite and humility these treasures, O Arjuna, belong to one who is born to a Divine Estate.

Commentary

'refulgence' (*tejah*) — the virtue of not being influenced by the wicked.

'Forgiveness' — freedom from the feelings of animosity towards others even when they are the cause of suffering.

'Fortitude' — the determination to do the right thing even under conditions of great danger.

'Purity' — fitness of the body and the mind, as prescribed in the Scriptures, for the performance of right conduct.

'Freedom from spite' (*adroha*) — the avoidance of interfering in the freely chosen activities of others.

'Humility' — freedom from misplaced pride (Atimānita); that is, excessive unjustified self-esteem.

These are the virtues that are found in one destined for a 'divine estate'. The 'Divine' are those who live in harmony with the Divine Nature. The meaning is that these virtues are endowments in those who are born with a natural affinity for them and that seek to actualize them.

dambho darpo'bhimānaśca krodhaḥ pāruṣyam eva ca ।
ajñānaṃ cābhijātasya pārtha sampadam āsurīm ॥ 4 ॥

4. Religious hypocrisy, hubris, self-conceit, anger, rudeness and ignorance these, O Arjuna, belong to one who is born to a non-Divine estate.

Commentary

'Religious hypocrisy' — (*dambha*) is making a show of the practice of Dharma for earning a reputation for righteousness.

'hubris' — (*darpa*) the elation caused by sense-gratification and the consequent inability to discriminate between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done.

'Self-conceit' — (*abhimāna*) the estimation of oneself to a degree not warranted by one's education and birth.

'Anger' — (*krodha*) the agitation of the mind which leads to causing injury to others.

'Rudeness' — (*paruṣyam*) is the disposition of causing anxiety to good people.

'Ignorance' — (*ajñānam*) is inability to discriminate between high and low principles, and between what ought to be done and what ought not to be.

These are the qualities that are found in one born for a Non-Divine Estate. The 'Non-Divine' are those who are not in harmony with the Divine Nature.

daivī sampad vimokṣāya nibandhāyāsurīm matā ।
mā śucaḥ sampadaṃ daivīm abhijāto'si pāṇḍava ॥ 5 ॥

5. The Divine Estate is deemed to lead to Liberation, the Non-divine to bondage. Grieve not, O Arjuna, you are born to a Divine Estate.

Commentary

'The Divine Estate — which is characterized by conformity to the teachings of the Lord aids the achievement of Liberation. The meaning is, that it leads step by step to the attainment of Krishna. *'The Non-Divine Estate* — which is characterised by rejection of the teachings leads to continued bondage — it results in spiritual degradation.

dvau bhūta sargau loko'smin daiva āsura eva ca ।
daivo vistaraśaḥ proktaḥ āsuraṃ pārtha me śṛṇu ॥ 6 ॥

6. There are the two types of beings that have been produced in this world — the Divine and the Non-divine. The Divine has been described at length. Hear from Me, O Arjuna, about the Non-divine.

Commentary

In this realm of [volitional] action (*karma-loka*), these are the two categories of beings who act. '*Emanation'* (*sarga*) means '*production'* ie. by the influence of previous karma resulting from positive and negative deeds. Sentient beings are born into either one of these two categories — for either working in harmony with the

Divine Will or acting contrary to it. Of these, the Divine-estate that is to say; the paths of Karma, Jñana and Bhakti Yogas have been described at length so that the good may fulfil the purpose of their birth by following these teachings. Now hear about the conduct which is the destiny of those born in the later category; —

pravṛttiṃ ca nivṛttiṃ ca janā na vidurāsurāḥ ।
na śaucaṃ nāpi cācāro na satyaṃ teṣu vidyate ॥ 7 ॥

7. The Non-divine know neither the right action nor what to refrain from. Neither purity, nor right conduct nor truthfulness is found in them.

Commentary

'right action nor what to refrain from,' — that is, the Vedic Dharma that leads to prosperity and Liberation.

'Purity' is the prerequisite for performing Vedic rites as established in the Scriptures, that 'purity', be it external or internal, is alien to the non-divine.

'Right conduct,' — observances by means of which mental and physical purity arises, even this right conduct is alien to them.

asatyam apratiṣṭhaṃ te jagad-āhur anīśvaram ।
aparaspara sambhūtaṃ kim anyat kāma haitukam ॥ 8 ॥

8. They say; "This universe is unreal, without any foundation and without a Controller (Iśvara), brought about by mutual union, with lust for its cause; what else?"

Commentary

They (certain schools of philosophy) maintain that the universe is *'unreal'* — they do not accept that this universe, which is the manifestation of Brahman and is denoted by the term Reality (*Satya*), has Brahman for its Self. They contend that it has no *'foundation*,' — they do not accept that Brahman is the substrata of the universe.

etāṃ dṛṣṭim avaṣṭabhya naṣṭātmāno'lpa buddhayaḥ ।
prabhavanty-ugra karmāṇaḥ kṣayāya jagato'hitāḥ ॥ 9 ॥

9. Holding this view, these embittered ruined people of deficient intellects commit many atrocities that lead to the destruction of the world.

kāmam āśritya duṣpūraṃ dambha māna madānvitāḥ ।
mohād gṛhītvāsadgrahān pravartante 'śuci-vratāḥ ॥ 10 ॥

l0. Filled with insatiable desires, grabbing through delusion unjustly acquired resources, and committed to vicious resolutions, they act, full of ostentation, pride and arrogance.

cintām aparimeyāṃ ca pralayāntām upāśritāḥ ।
kāmopabhoga paramā etāvad iti niścitāḥ ॥ 11 ॥

11. Subject to immeasurable anxieties, which extend to the very dissolution of the universe, regarding sense-gratification as their highest ideal, and convinced that this is all;

Commentary

Those who are about to die today or tomorrow [still] obsess themselves with anxiety in regard to objects, the attainment of which is not possible even if they lived until the dissolution of the universe. Likewise, they are convinced that the satisfaction of sensual enjoyments is the highest goal of human life. They that there is no aim in human life greater than this.

āśā-pāśa śatair baddhāḥ kāma krodha parāyaṇāḥ ।
īhante kāma bhogārtham anyāyenārtha sañcayān ॥ 12 ॥

12. Bound by hundreds of fetters of hopes, preoccupied with desire and anger, they strive by unjust means to amass resources for the gratification of their desires.

idam-adya mayā labdham imaṃ prāpsyase manoratham ।
idam astīdam api me bhaviṣyati punar dhanam ॥ 13 ॥

13. "This I have gained today, and this aspiration I shall fulfil. This wealth is mine, and that also shall be mine in the future".

asau mayā hataḥ śatrur haniṣye cāparān api ।
īśvaro'ham ahaṃ bhogī siddho'haṃ balavān sukhī ॥ 14 ॥

14. 'This enemy is slain by me; and others also I shall slay. I am a Lord, I am an enjoyer, I am successful, I am powerful and happy.

Commentary

Here the concept of spiritual recompense (*adṛṣṭa*), is regarded only as an invention of weak people of feeble minds. Furthermore: *'I am a lord'* — I am independent, and I control others. *'I am an enjoyer'* — I enjoy through my own achievements and not through karma or Divine Grace. *'I am successful,'* — I am the creator of my own success and not through karma etc. Likewise, *I am also powerful and happy* — through my own self-effort.

āḍhyo'bhijanavān asmi ko'nyosti sadṛśo mayā ।
yakṣye dāsyāmi modiṣye ityajñāna vimohitāḥ ॥ 15 ॥

15. 'I am wealthy and nobly-born; who else is equal to me? I shall sacrifice, I shall give charity, I shall rejoice' — thus they think, deluded by ignorance.

anekacitta vibhrāntāḥ moha-jāla-samāvṛtāḥ ।
prasaktāḥ kāma bhogeṣu patanti narake'śucau ॥ 16 ॥

16. Bewildered by many fantasies, ensnared by the net of delusion, addicted to sensual enjoyments, they fall into a foul purgatory.

Commentary

Rejecting the doctrine of Karma, Divine Grace and other factors in their achievements and believing them to be due entirely to personal efforts, they are confounded by many goal oriented projects — and in this way they are ensnared by the net of delusion.

ātma-saṃbhāvitāḥ stabdhā dhana-māna-madānvitāḥ ।
yajante nāma yajñāis-te daṃbhenāvidhi pūrvakam ॥ 17 ॥

17. Self-conceited, complacent, intoxicated with pride and wealth, they perform sacrifices in name only with ostentation and contrary to the injunctions of the Śāstras.

Commentary

They are *'self-conceited'* — they are held in high esteem by themselves only. They are *'complacent'* — regarding themselves as perfect, they do nothing [to improve themselves spiritually]. How? They are *'intoxicated with pride and wealth'* — they are obsessed by wealth and pride of learning and descent. *'They perform sacrifices in name only'* — they perform sacrifices in order to obtain renown as the performers of sacrifice. These are performed with pretension and for self-aggrandisement and not in accordance with the proper directions of the Scriptures.

ahaṅkāraṃ balaṃ darpaṃ kāmaṃ krodhaṃ ca saṃśritāḥ ।
mām-ātma para-deheṣu pradviṣanto'bhyasūyakāḥ ॥ 18 ॥

18. Overcome with egoism, power, conceit, desire and anger, these malicious people hate Me in their own bodies and in those of others.

Commentary

They depend entirely upon their own egos thinking— 'I can do everything without the help of anyone'; likewise, in all their doings they depend on their own power — this leads to conceit ('there is nobody like me'), and then to desire ('Because I am who I am, my mere desire will become actualised.') Anger manifests in the thought of — 'l shall destroy all those who cross me.' Thus, being overcome by these ideas, they display malice towards Krishna, the Supreme Being and the Controller abiding in their own bodies as well as in the bodies of others; and they abuse and hate Krishna. They invent fallacious arguments to discredit Him, and being unable to tolerate Him, they perform all acts like sacrifices etc., with complete egocentricity.

tān ahaṃ dviṣataḥ krūrān saṃsāreṣu narādhamān ।
kṣipāmy-ajasram aśubhān āsurīṣveva yoniṣu ॥ 19 ॥

19. These wicked people who are hostile, cruel, and the most contemptible of humankind, I hurl continually into the cycles of births and deaths, into the non-Divine species.

Commentary

The meaning is that Krishna will confirm their malevolent disposition so that they would be impelled to do things which lead to prolonging the cycle of reincarnation.

āsurīṃ yonim āpannā mūḍhā janmani janmani ।
mām aprāpyeva kaunteya tato yānty-adhamāṃ gatim ॥ 20 ॥

20. Fallen into demoniac species and deluded birth after birth, and without attaining Me O Arjuna, they sink down to the lowest state.

Commentary

They are born in conditions that are not conducive to obtaining Krishna and remain deluded — that is, remaining ignorant or misinformed about Him. They never 'attain Me,' — that is, realise that Krishna, the Lord and the ruler of all, truly exists. They sink farther and farther down, from that birth, to the lowest level.

Sri Krishna proceeds to explain the root-cause of the perdition of the one of demoniac nature: —

trividhaṃ narakasyedaṃ dvāraṃ nāśanam ātmanaḥ ।
kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād etat trayaṃ tyajet ॥ 21 ॥

21. Self-referent desire, anger and greed — this is the threefold gateway to Naraka, ruinous to the Self. Therefore one should abandon these three.

Commentary

Those three negative emotions:— *self-referent-desire* (*kāma*), *anger* (*krodha*) and *greed* (*lobha*) constitute the triple gateway to purgatory for those of demoniac disposition, and are destructive of the Self (*ātman*). The nature of these three has already been explained. 'Gateway' (*dvāra*) means the path or the cause. Therefore, since they constitute the cause of the extremely dreadful condition of Purgatory (*naraka*), one should wholly renounce this triad — selfish-desire, wrath and greed.

etair vimuktaḥ kaunteya tamo dvārais tribhir naraḥ ।
ācaraty-ātmanaḥ śreyas tato yāti parāṃ gatim ॥ 22 ॥

22. One who has been liberated from these three gates to darkness, O Arjuna, practices what is beneficial to the Self and hence reaches the Supreme State.

yaḥ śāstra vidhim utsṛjya vartate kāma kārataḥ ।
na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṃ na parāṃ gatim ॥ 23 ॥

23. Whoever disregarding the ordinances of the Scriptures, acts under the influence of personal desire, attains neither perfection nor happiness, nor the Supreme State.

tasmāt śāstra pramāṇaṃ te kāryākārya vyavasthitau ।
jñātvā śāstra vidhān-oktaṃ karma kartum ihārhasi ॥ 24 ॥

24. Therefore, let the Śāstra be your authority for determining what should be done and what should not be done. Having learnt what is enjoined in the Śāstra, you should act .

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavad gītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ yoga-śāstre
śrī kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde daivāsura -sampad-vibhāga-yogo nāma
ṣoḍaśo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the sixteenth discourse entitled
"The Division between the Divine and the Non-Divine"

Chapter 17

Śraddhā-traya-vibhāga Yogaḥ

The Three Classifications of Conviction.

Summary of the Teaching

In the [previous] chapter, after expounding the division [of beings] into two classes — Divine and Non-divine, it was revealed that the knowledge of Reality and the means for acquiring it have their source in the Vedas alone. Now [in this chapter] it will be taught that whatever is not enjoined by the Scriptures is ineffectual, because it is 'non-divine', furthermore actions enjoined by the Scriptures are categorised into three kinds according to the Gunas. The definition of what [exactly] is established in the Scriptures will also be given.

Arjuna, unable to understand why works not enjoined by the Scriptures are futile, sincerely asks about the different kinds of results, in terms of the three Gunas, arising from works such as sacrifices that are not enjoined in the Scriptures, but are done with conviction: —

arjuna uvāca

ye śāstra vidhim utsṛjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ |
teṣāṃ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa satvam āho rajas tamaḥ || 1 ||

Arjuna said
1. What is the position O Krishna of those who disregard the injunctions of the Shastra, yet worship with conviction (śraddhā)? Is it Sattva, Rajas or Tamas'?

śrī bhagavān uvāca

trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehināṃ sā svabhāvajā |
sātvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tāṃ śṛṇu || 2 ||

The Blessed Lord said:
2. Threefold is the conviction of embodied beings, inherent in their own nature, classified as Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic — listen to the teaching about it.

Commentary

The conviction (*śraddhā*) of all embodied beings arises from their natural disposition (*svabhāva*) — one's own character. Śraddhā is the peculiar state or predilection (*ruci* = taste) caused by past habitual tendencies (*vāsanas*). One develops a conviction in accordance with one's natural taste. For 'conviction' (*śraddhā*) is defined as enthusiasm for a certain method by which one believes one will achieve one's desired goals.

Vāsana (habitual pattern formation), *Ruci* (taste) and *Śraddhā* (conviction) are the characteristics of the Self which arise from it's identification with the three modes of Material Nature. These states arise in one through the subtle impressions caused by association with Gunas in sense experiences.

sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata |
śraddhāmayo'yaṃ puruṣo yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ || 3 ||

3. The conviction of each person, O Arjuna, is in accordance with one's character. A person consists of conviction, and whatever one's conviction is, that verily one is.

Commentary

The meaning is that one's efforts are directed towards projects that reflect the predominant state of one's mind. The term 'character' (*sattvānurūpa*) used here includes the body, senses and other things already mentioned. A person consists of conviction, — in other words one is the product of one's conviction; that verily one is; — one becomes an embodiment of that particular kind of conviction. The purport is this:— the attainment of results is mainly dependant on one's convictions, if one has conviction in doing an act of virtue, one will obtain the fruit of such actions.

yajante sātvikā devān yakṣa rakṣāṃsi rājasāḥ ।
pretān bhūtagaṇāṃścānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ ॥ 4 ॥

4. The Sattvic types worship the gods. The Rajasic types worship Yakshas and Rakshasas, and the others, classified as Tamasic, worship Pretas and the host of Bhūtas.

Commentary

Thus there are varying types of results regarding the worship and other acts which are enjoined in the Scriptures and are done with conviction . However, no happiness whatsoever will result from the performance of charity, tapas (self-discipline) and sacrifices etc., not enjoined in the Scriptures and therefore in violation of Krishna's teachings. In fact only calamity results from them. Sri Krishna proceeds to explain this more fully.

aśāstra vihitaṃ ghoraṃ tapyante ye tapo janāḥ ।
dambhāhaṅkāra saṃyuktāḥ kāma rāga balānvitāḥ ॥ 5 ॥

5. Those who practice severe self-discipline (tapas) not enjoined by the Śāstras, through ostentation and egoism, and impelled by the force of passion and attachment;

karṣayantaḥ śarīrasthaṃ bhūta-grāmam acetasaḥ ।
māṃ caivāntaḥ śarīrasthaṃ tān viddhyāsura niścayān ॥ 6 ॥

6. These foolish people, torture the material components of their bodies and Me also who dwell within the body — know them to be non-divine in their faith.

Commentary

'Those who engage in self-disciplinary programs not enjoined by the Scriptures even though they may be intense' — is a statement representative of all sacrifices and other religious works not enjoined by the Scriptures and which demand much exertion. They are undertaken by arrogant and self-centred practitioners and are motivated by sensual desire, attachment and passion.

The Threefold Classification of Food.

Now, Sri Krishna, resuming the topic under discussion, elaborates on the categorisation of sacrifices and other works enjoined by the Scriptures according to the Gunas. To begin with, He categorises food into three kinds because food is the basis for the development of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas as declared by the Scriptures:—

'For the mind my dear, consists of food' (Cha. Up., 6.5.4) and

'when the food is pure, the mind becomes pure' (Cha. Up., 7.26.2).

āhāras-tvapi sarvasya trividho bhavati priyaḥ ।
yajñās tapas tathā dānaṃ teṣāṃ bhedam imaṃ śṛṇu ॥ 7 ॥

7. The food which is preferred by each, is threefold, as are the sacrifices, self-discipline and philanthropy. Now listen to their differentiation.

āyuḥ sattva bal-ārogya sukha prīti vivardhanāḥ ।
rasyāḥ snigdhāḥ sthirā hṛdyā āhārāḥ sātvika priyāḥ ॥ 8 ॥

8. A diet which promotes longevity, intellectual alertness, energy, health, pleasure and cheerfulness and those that are succulent, nutritional, substantial and agreeable, are preferred by Sattvic people.

Commentary

Intellectual alertness (*Sattva*) — in this context the term *'Sattva'* means mind, and refers indirectly to the power of thinking. For the Sattva Guna promotes the development of learning, as previously declared:— *'From Sattva knowledge arises'* (14.17).

kaṭvamla lavaṇāty-uṣṇa tīkṣṇa rūkṣa vidāhinaḥ ।
āhārāḥ rājasasyeṣṭā duḥkha śokāmaya pradāḥ ॥ 9 ॥

9. Foods that are bitter, sour, very salty, very hot, very sharp, astringent and heating, are all dear to Rajasic people, they produce pain, discomfort and disease.

yāta-yāmaṃ gata-rasaṃ pūti paryuṣitaṃ ca yat ।
ucchiṣṭam api cāmedhyaṃ bhojanaṃ tāmasa priyam ॥ 10 ॥

10. Foods which are stale, tasteless, foul, putrid, left-over and impure, are loved by Tamasic people.

Commentary

Stale (*yāta-yāmam*) — that food which has been left standing for more than three hours. *Tasteless* (*gata-rasam*) — that which has lost its natural flavour. *Foul* (*pūti*) — emitting a bad smell. *Putrid* (*paryuṣitam*) — fermented over a long period. *Left-over* (*ucchiṣṭam*) — the food that remains after have being eaten by persons other than Gurus, parents or elder siblings. *Impure* (*amedhyam*) — that which is unfit for offering in sacrifice or worship. The meaning is that, being unfit for offering in worship, they cannot become prasādam.

The Three Grades of Spiritual Practice.

aphalā-kāṅkṣibhir yajño vidhi dṛṣṭo ya ijyate ।
yaṣṭavyam eveti manaḥ samādhāma sa sātvikaḥ ॥ 11 ॥

11. The Sattvic yajña (sacrifice) is one that is offered by one without a desire for reward and with the conviction that it should be performed as enjoined in the Śāstras.

abhisandhāya tu phalaṃ dambhārtham api caiva yat ।
ijyate bharata-śreṣṭha taṃ yajñāṃ viddhi rājasam ॥ 12 ॥

12. That yajña which is offered, O Arjuna, with an expectation of reward and for the sake of ostentation, know that to be Rajasic.

vidhi hīnam asṛṣṭānnaṃ mantra-hīnam adakṣiṇam ।
śraddhā virahitaṃ yajñāṃ tāmasaṃ paricakṣate ॥ 13 ॥

13. That yajña which is not based upon Scriptural authority, with unsanctioned offerings, devoid of the recitation of mantras, lacking in gifts of appreciation and faith—that is considered to be Tamasic.

The Threefold Division of Tapas (self-discipline)

deva dvija guru prājñā pūjanaṃ śaucam ārjavam ।
brahmacaryam ahiṃsā ca śārīraṃ tapa ucyate ॥ 14 ॥

14. Adoration of the gods, the twice-born, the preceptors, the enlightened ones, purity, rectitude, chastity and non-injury, these are said to be the physical disciplines.

Commentary

purity — through ablutions in sacred water; *rectitude* —harmony of thought and action; *chastity* — avoidance of considering others as mere objects of pleasure; *non-injury* — avoidance of causing pain to any being — these constitute the Tapas (self-discipline) of the body.

anudvega-karaṃ vākyaṃ satyaṃ priya-hitaṃ ca yat |
svādhyāyābhyasanaṃ caiva vāṅmayaṃ tapa ucyate || 15 ||

15. Speech that does not cause distress and which is true, agreeable and beneficial, and also the recitation of the Vedas are called the verbal disciplines.

manaḥ prasādaḥ saumyatvaṃ maunam ātma vinigrahaḥ |
bhāva saṃśuddhir ityetat tapo mānasam ucyate || 16 ||

16. Peace of mind, benevolence, silence, self-restraint, perfect mindfulness — these are called mental disciplines.

Commentary

'Peace of mind' — the absence of anger, desire, delusion, pride, greed: 'benevolence' — being devoted to the good of others; silence — control of expression; 'self-restraint' — focusing one thought flow on the object of contemplation; 'perfect mindfulness' — the avoidance of reflecting upon subjects other than the Self — these constitute the self-discipline (Tapas) of the mind.

śraddhayā parayā taptaṃ tapas tat trividhaṃ naraiḥ |
aphalākāṅkṣibhir yuktaiḥ sātvikaṃ paricakṣate || 17 ||

17. This threefold self-discipline, practiced with firm conviction by those who desire no reward and are devoted — is called Sattvic self-discipline.

satkāra māna pūjārthaṃ tapo dambhena caiva yat |
kriyate tad iha proktaṃ rājasaṃ calam adhruvam || 18 ||

18. Discipline, practiced with ostentation for the sake of gaining respect, praise and reverence, is considered to be Rajasic. It is unstable and transient.

mūḍha-grāheṇa ātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ |
parasyotsādanārthaṃ vā tat tāmasam udāhṛtam || 19 ||

19. That self-discipline which is practiced with foolish obstinacy by means of self-torture or in order to injure another is declared to be Tamasic.

The Three Kinds of Charity

dātavyam iti yad-dānaṃ dīyate'anupakāriṇe |
deśe kāle ca pātre ca tad-dānaṃ sātvikaṃ smṛtam || 20 ||

20. The charity that is dispensed from a sense of duty, to one who does not reciprocate, at the proper place and time to a deserving person — that is said to be Sattvic.

yattu pratyupakārārthaṃ phalam uddiśya vā punaḥ |
dīyate ca parikliṣṭaṃ tad-dānaṃ rājasaṃ smṛtam || 21 ||

21. But that which is given as a consideration for something received or in expectation of future reward, or grudgingly, is considered to be Rajasic

adeśakāle yad-dānam apātrebhyaśca dīyate |
asat-kṛtam avajñātaṃ tat-tāmasam udāhṛtam || 22 ||

22. That gift which is given at the wrong place and wrong time to unworthy recipients, without due respect and with derision, is considered to be Tamasic.

Commentary

So far, the classification based on Guna differences of yajñas, austerities and gifts as enjoined by the Vedas have been described. Now the definition of the same Vedic yajñas etc., is given according to their association with the Praṇava (the syllable AUM), and as signified by the terms Tat and Sat.

oṃ tat sad iti nirdeśo brahmaṇas trividhaḥ smṛtaḥ |
brāhmaṇas tena vedāśca yajñaśca vihitāḥ purā || 23 ||

23. "Aum Tat Sat" — this threefold expression designates Brahman. By this were the Knowers of brahman (Brāhmaṇas), the Vedas and yajñas ordained in the past.

Commentary

"Om That Truth" — denotes the Brahman. Here the term Brahman refers to the Veda. It is the secondary meaning of the term, and here alludes to the ritualistic portion of the Veda in which yajñas and similar rituals are prescribed. The mantra *"Om Tat Sat"* is used in these Vedic rites. The relevance of Om is that it should always be used at the commencement of the recitation of Vedic hymns. The syllables *Tat Sat* indicate that these rituals are worthy of esteem. The term Brāhmaṇas (knowers of the Vedas) covers the Vedas and the sacrificial rites ordained in them as well as the three social groups (Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas) who are entitled to Vedic study. All these were instituted by Krishna in the past.

tasmād om-ity-udāhṛtya yajña dāna tapaḥ kriyāḥ |
pravartante vidhān-oktāḥ satataṃ brahmavādinam || 24 ||

24. Therefore, all acts of worship, charity and self-discipline enjoined in the Vedas begun after the utterance of "Om" by the religious scholars.

Commentary

Thus the connection between the syllable Om and the Vedas and rituals enjoined in them has been established. The Vedas are associated with the syllable Om and the Brāhmanas — a term which here refers to all those belonging to the three social groups who [study] and memorise the Vedas and perform the rituals enjoined in them.

Now, Sri Krishna describes how these three (Vedas, rituals and performers) are linked with the word *Tat*: —

tad-ity-anabhisandhāya phalaṃ yajña-tapaḥ kriyāḥ |
dāna kriyāśca vividhāḥ kriyante mokṣa-kāṅkṣibhiḥ || 25 ||

25. Uttering "Tat" — without expectation of reward, those who seek Liberation perform acts of sacrifice, of self-discipline and of various kinds of charity.

Commentary

Whatever acts such as Scriptural study, yajña, self-discipline and charity are done without motivation for rewards by those seeking only final Liberation — these are designated by the term Tat referring to the Brahman (Ultimate Reality), since these [acts] constitute the means for attaining Brahman. For it is well known that the term

Tat signifies Brahman (Ultimate Reality.

sad-bhāve sādhu-bhāve ca sad-ity-etat prayujyate ।
praśaste karmaṇi tathā sacchabdaḥ pārtha yujyate ॥ 26 ॥

26. The term "*Sat*" is used in the sense of existence and goodness, and so also, O Arjuna, the word "*Sat*" is to describe any action deserving of praise.

Commentary

The word *Sat* is used both in a metaphysical and mundane sense to express existence (*sad-bhava*) and harmony with the world (*sādhu-bhāva*). Similarly, in relation to any praiseworthy mundane work undertaken by someone, that is, a work which is done for the benefit of others, the word Sat is used to express this act.

yajñe tapasi dāne ca sthitiḥ sad-iti cocyate ।
karma caiva tadarthīyaṃ sad-ityevābhidhīyate ॥ 27 ॥

27. Perseverance in sacrifice, self-discipline and charity is also called "*Sat*"; and so also any action for the sake of these is termed "*Sat*".

aśraddhayā hutaṃ dattaṃ tapas taptaṃ kṛtaṃ ca yat ॥
asad ity-ucyate pārtha na ca tat pretya no iha ॥ 28 ॥

28. Whatever is offered or donated, whatever self-discipline is practiced and whatever action is performed without conviction — is called "*Asat*", O Arjuna. It is worthless here and in the hereafter.

Commentary

Offerings made in the fire, all self-discipline and philanthropy when performed without conviction, are Asat (ie. unreal, unbeneficial), even though they may have been enjoined by the Scriptures. Why so? Because they are worthless here and in the hereafter; — [without being purified by conviction] they are not conducive to Liberation nor to any significant mundane results.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavad gītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ
yoga-śāstre śrī kṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde
śraddhā-traya-vibhāga-yogo nāma
saptaḍaśo'dhyāya

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the seventeenth discourse entitled
"The Three Division of Conviction"

Chapter 18

Mokṣa Sannyāsa Yogaḥ

Liberation Through Renunciation

Summary of the Teaching

In the preceding two chapters, the following points were made:— (a) Only actions such as sacrifices, austerities, philanthropy and other works prescribed by the Vedas lead to worldly prosperity and Liberation; nothing else (b) The general characteristic of all Vedic works is their connection with the Pranava (Om); (c) there is a distinction between the works that lead to Liberation and those that lead to mundane prosperity — designated respectively by the terms Tat and Sat.. (d) Liberation is achieved through spiritual practice and the other works done without the desire for personal gain; (e) — an enterprise made possible by the prevalence of Sattva. (f) The increase of Sattva is brought about by the adoption of a Sattvic diet.

Now, in this the 18th Chapter these concepts are further elucidated:—

(1) The similarity between *Tyāga* (relinquishment) and *Sannyāsa* (renunciation) which are described as the means to Liberation.

(2) The nature of *Tyāga*.

(3) Ascribing the agency of all actions to the Lord who is the Supreme Ruler.

(4) Sattva Guna is magnified by an elaborate description of the effects of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

(5) How the Supreme Being is attained through work done according to one's own station in life — done as worship of the Divine and

(6) Bhakti Yoga, the essential teaching of the whole of this Sacred Scripture.

arjuna uvāca

saṃnyāsasya mahābāho tattvam icchāmi veditum |
tyāgasya ca hṛṣīkeśa pṛthak keśiniṣūdanam || 1 ||

Arjuna said:
1. I desire to know the decisive truth about the difference between renunciation (*Sannyāsa*) and relinquishment (*Tyāga*) O Krishna.

Commentary

Both renunciation and relinquishment as means for Liberation are enjoined in the Scriptures. Arjuna wants to know whether *Tyāga* and *Sannyāsa* are synonymous or not. "Do these two terms *Sannyāsa* and *Tyāga* have different meanings or do they signify the same thing? If they signify different things, I want to know their characteristics. If they are synonymous, their identical nature should be explained".

śrī bhagavān uvāca

kāmyānāṃ karmaṇāṃ nyāsaṃ saṃnyāsaṃ kavayo viduḥ |
sarva karma phala tyāgaṃ prāhus tyāgaṃ vicakṣaṇāḥ || 2 ||

The Blessed Lord said:

2. The enlightened ones understand that renunciation (*Sannyāsa*) means the giving up of all works which are motivated by desire. The wise declare relinquishment (*Tyāga*) to be the relinquishment of the fruits of all works.

Commentary

Some scholars understand that Sannyāsa is complete abandonment of acts done with a motive for rewards (*Kāmya Karma*), others opine that the meaning of the term Tyāga, used in reference to Liberation, means the relinquishment of the results not only of all desiderative acts (*Kāmya*), but also of obligatory (*Nitya*) and periodic (*Naimittika*) duties. Here the problem is, whether the relinquishment Tyāga taught in the Scriptures concerns only the desiderative acts themselves, or is inclusive of all works. Sri Krishna uses the terms Sannyāsa and Tyāga interchangeably — from this it is concluded that He considers the terms Tyāga and Sannyāsa as synonyms.

tyājyaṃ doṣavad ityeke karma prāhur manīṣiṇaḥ ।
yajñā dāna tapaḥ karma na tyājyam iti cāpare ॥ 3 ॥

3. Some learned ones say that all actions should be given up as defective; others declare that works such as yajña, philanthropy and self-discipline should not be given up.

niścayaṃ śṛṇu me tatra tyāge bharata sattama ।
tyāgo hi puruṣa-vyāghra tri-vidhaḥ saṃprakīrtitaḥ ॥ 4 ॥

4. Listen to My verdict, O Arjuna (Tiger-among-men), regarding relinquishment (Tyāga) for relinquishment is declared to be of three kinds.

Commentary

The term 'Tyāga' has been used by Krishna in respect of actions prescribed by the Scriptures from three points of view:– (1) as referring to results, (2) as referring to the acts themselves and, (3) as referring to agency.

- The relinquishment of results consists in the conviction that 'Heaven and such other [beneficial] results arising from acts do not belong to Me.'
- Renunciation of acts is the complete rejection of the sense of possessiveness in regard to one's acts. This sense of possessiveness appears as a conviction that — 'I am undertaking these works because they are the means for achieving my own personal goals.'
- Renunciation of agency is correctly ascribing all instrumentality to the Supreme Lord of all.

yajñā dāna tapaḥ karma na tyājyaṃ kāryam eva tat ।
yajño dānaṃ tapaścaiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām ॥ 5 ॥

5. The acts of yajña, philanthropy and self-discipline should not be relinquished; but should be performed. For yajña, philanthropy and self-discipline are the purifiers of the wise.

Commentary

Why? Because these three practices performed consistently and perpetually until death are an aid to the erasure of previous Karmas which stand in the way of the fulfilment of one's spiritual development.

etānyapi tu karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tvyaktvā phalāni ca ।
kartavyānīti me pārthas niścitaṃ matam uttamam ॥ 6 ॥

6. It is My considered and final opinion that even these [three] practices should be done, O Arjuna, relinquishing all attachment and the desire for reward.

niyatasya tu saṃnyāsaḥ karmaṇo nopapadyate ।
mohāt tasya parityāgas tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ ॥ 7 ॥

7. But the renunciation (sannyāsa) of obligatory acts (nitya karma) is not proper. Relinquishment (Tyāga) of these through delusion is declared to be in the Mode of Tamas.

Commentary

The synonymity of these two terms Tyāga and sannyāsa is conclusively established by this verse. Obligatory acts (should not be rejected for without works even the sustenance of the body would be impossible, as already stated:—

'From inaction, not even the body can be sustained' (3.8).

Nitya karmas are those acts concerned with acts of daily living such as the Five Great Sacrifices (*Pañca Mahā Yajnas* — see footnote to Chap 3:8) in which offerings are made and the remnants consumed as a sacramental meal. Nurturing the body by eating the remnants of food offered to the Lord produces a positive mind-set according to the Vedas. Therefore enlightenment in the form of direct perception of Brahman, is dependent on the purity of diet. The relinquishment of these obligatory duties, which contribute to the development of wisdom, through the misconception that they perpetuate material bondage is a characteristic of the Mode of Ignorance.

duḥkham ityeva yat karma kāya kleśa-bhayāt tyajet ।
sa kṛtvā rājasaṃ tyāgaṃ naiva tyāga phalaṃ labhet ॥ 8 ॥

8. One who renounces works as being bothersome from apprehension of physical hardship, acts in the Mode of Rajas and will not gain the merit of renunciation (Tyāga).

kāryam ityeva yat karma niyataṃ kriyate'rjuna ।
saṅgaṃ tyaktvā phalaṃ caiva sa tyāgaḥ sātviko mataḥ ॥ 9 ॥

9. When obligatory works are performed merely as duty, O Arjuna, renouncing attachment and also fruits, such relinquishment is regarded as Sattvic.

na dveṣṭy-akuśalaṃ karma kuśale nānuṣajjate ।
tyāgī sattva samāviṣṭo medhāvī-cchinna saṃśayaḥ ॥ 10 ॥

10. The one who has renounced, being wise and imbued with Sattva, free from doubts neither hates disagreeable work nor clings to an agreeable one.

Commentary

Disagreeable work (*akuśalam karma*) are those which produce undesirable results; and agreeable acts *(kuśalam karma*) are those which bring about desirable results.

In respect of both these types of works there is neither resentment nor enthusiasm because of (a) the absence of the feeling of possession and (b) the forsaking of all goals other than the Ultimate Truth (Brahman) as well as (c) the rejection of the notion of agency.

na hi deha-bhṛtā śakyaṃ tyaktuṃ karmāṇy-aśeṣataḥ ।
yastu karma-phala-tyāgī sa tyāgīty-abhidhīyate ॥ 11 ॥

11. For, it is impossible for an embodied being to abandon work entirely. But one who foregoes the rewards of works, is called a renunciate.

Commentary

It is impossible for one who has a body and has to maintain it, to abandon all actions; for eating, drinking etc., required for nourishing the body and other acts connected therewith are unavoidable. For the same reason the Five Great Sacrifices etc., are also indispensable.

Since the topic was commenced with the declaration:— 'For renunciation (Tyāga) is declared to be of three kinds' (18.4). The reference in this verse to renunciation of rewards is illustrative; — it implies also the renunciation of the idea of agency as well as attachment to the works themselves.

aniṣṭam iṣṭaṃ miśraṃ ca trividhaṃ karmaṇaḥ phalam ।
bhavaty-atyāgināṃ pretya na tu saṃnyāsināṃ kvacit ॥ 12 ॥

12. Undesirable, desirable and mixed — thus threefold is the result of work that accrues after death to those who have not renounced; but to those who have renounced, there is none whatsoever.

Commentary

The '*undesirable result'* is Purgatory [and other negative Karmic states], *'the desirable'* is heaven [and various positive Karmic states], *'the mixed'* is progeny, and other material benefits [such as cows, food etc.], which are also mixed with some undesirable results. Those who have not abandoned the idea of agency, possessiveness and desire for rewards — obtain these three types of consequences after death. The meaning of *'after death'* (*Pretya*) may also be understood as '*following the performance of actions'*. But to those who have relinquished the sense of agency etc., no such results, which are a hindrance to final Liberation are accrued.

pañcaitāni mahābāho kāraṇāni nibodha me ।
sāṅkhye kṛtānte proktāni siddhaye sarva karmaṇām ॥ 13 ॥

13. Learn from Me, O Arjuna, these five causes which that are considered in reasoned deliberation (Saṅkhya-krtānta) to be responsible for the accomplishment of all works.

Commentary

'*Saṅkhya'* here means the reasoning faculty. *'Saṅkhya-krtānta'* means those conclusions which are arrived at, after rational and intelligent deliberation in accordance with the Vedic teachings on the nature of the things as they really are. There are considered to be five factors which contribute to the actualisation all works.

adhiṣṭhānaṃ tathā kartā karaṇaṃ ca pṛthag vidham ।
vividhāśca pṛthak-ceṣṭā daivaṃ caivātra pañcamam ॥ 14 ॥

14. The seat of action (the body) and likewise the agent, the various organs, the different and distinctive functions of Prāṇa (vital force) and also the presiding deity is the fifth among these.

śarīra vāṅg-manobhir yat karma prārabhate naraḥ ।
nyāyyaṃ vā viparītaṃ vā pañcaite tasya hetavaḥ ॥ 15 ॥

15. For whatever work one undertakes by body, speech and mind, whether right or wrong, these five are its basis.

Commentary

These five factors are the basis of all actions performed by means of the body, mind or speech, whether they are authorised by the Shastras or not.

(1) The body, which is a combination of the 'five great elements' is known as the seat of action (*adhiṣṭhānam*), since it is governed by the individual Self.

(2) The 'doer' is the individual Jivātman. In the Vedanta-Sutras it is declared that the individual Self is the knower and the doer

(3) The various organs are the five motor organs; speech, hands, feet, reproductive system and alimentary system along with the mind. They are varied in accordance with their distinct functions in accomplishing actions.

(4) The unique and distinctive functions of Prāṇa (vital force) — here the expression 'functions' (*Ceṣṭa*) refers to all its several dynamics which sustain the body and senses through its divisions of Prāṇa, Apāṇa, Vyāna, Udāna and Samāna.

(5) the Presiding Deity (*daivam*) is the Supreme Self, the Inner Ruler, who is the main 'cause' in carrying out the action.

The general paradigm is this:— By means of the senses, body etc., provided by the Supreme Being, supported by Him and empowered by Him — the individual begins, of its own free will, the effort of directing the body, senses etc., in the performance of actions. The Jīva itself, of its own free will, is responsible for activity, since the Supreme Being, abiding within, impels it to act only in the sense of granting His permission. Just as projects such as moving heavy stones and trees are collectively the labour of many persons who are all equally responsible for the effect as a group, yet each one of them individually is also responsible for it by being subject to positive and negative commands (by the managing director).

tatraivaṃ sati kartāram ātmānaṃ kevalaṃ tu yaḥ ।
paśyat yat kṛta buddhitvān na sa paśyati durmatiḥ ॥ 16 ॥

16. Now such being the case, the fool who sees only the Self as the agent on account of undeveloped intellect — does not see at all.

Commentary

In order to do anything the Jīvātman requires the consent of the Paramātman. Such being the case, if one regards the Jīvātman as the sole agent, due to an undeveloped intellect, one does not see reality as it actually is.

yasya nāhaṅkṛto bhāvo buddhir yasya na lipyate ।
hatvāpi sa imāṃ-llokān na hanti na nibadhyate ॥ 17 ॥

17. He who is free from the egoistic notion and whose understanding is not tainted — though he slays all these men, he slays not, nor is he bound.

Commentary

He who is free from the egoistic notion of being the sole agent is therefore not tainted by self-conceit. He has arrived at the logical conclusion that — 'As I am not the agent of this work, its results are extraneous to me; so this work does not belong to me'— such a person, is not bound by this enterprise known as 'battle'. In other words he does not experience the karma of such actions.

jñānaṃ jñeyaṃ pari-jñātā trividhā karma codanā ।
karaṇaṃ karma karteti trividhaḥ karma saṅgrahaḥ ॥ 18 ॥

18. Knowing, the knowable and the knower are the threefold stimulus to action. The instrument, the act and the agent are the threefold basis of action.

Commentary

'Knowing' means the knowledge about the work which ought to be performed. The *'knowable'* is the work which ought to be performed. *'The knower'* is the person who understands this work. The meaning is that in the [Vedic paradigm] the injunctions to do [ritual] acts, are a combination of these three. Among these three factors, action itself, which is the object of knowledge, is briefly described as being threefold — the instrument, action and the agent. The '*instrument*' consists of the materials and implements which are the means [of the ritual act]. The '*action*' consists of the [actual] sacrifice etc. The '*agent*' is the performer [of the sacrifice].

(This Vedic Paradigm is intended to be used as model for all acts — spiritual as well as mundane. Ed.)

jñānaṃ karma ca kartā ca tridhaiva guṇa-bhedataḥ ।
procyate guṇa saṅkhyāne yathāvac-chṛṇu tāny-api ॥ 19 ॥

19. Knowledge, act and actor are declared, according to the Doctrine of the Gunas (Sankhya philosophy) to be of three kinds, according to the Modal Differences. Listen to a description of them as they really are.

The Threefold Division of Knowledge

sarva-bhūteṣu yenaikaṃ bhāvam avyayam īkṣate ।
avibhaktaṃ vibhakteṣu taj-jñānaṃ viddhi sātvikam ॥ 20 ॥

20. That knowledge which reveals one immutable reality in all beings, and not as separate in the different bodies — know that knowledge to be Sattvic.

Commentary

The Self, which is of the form of consciousness, is alike and uniform, though distinct, in all beings, even though they may externally, and from the point of view of qualification and function, be distinguished into social classes, students, householders, fair, tall etc.

pṛthaktvena tu yaj-jñānaṃ nānā bhāvān pṛthag-vidhān ।
vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu taj-jñānaṃ viddhi rājasam ॥ 21 ॥

21. But that knowledge which sees various and distinctive (spiritual) entities in all the separate (physical) beings — know that knowledge to be Rajasic.

yat tu kṛtsnavad ekasmin kārye saktam ahaitukam ।
atattvārthavad alpaṃ ca tat tāmasam udāhṛtam ॥ 22 ॥

22. But that which adheres to one single act as if it were the whole, which is not founded on reason, and which is untrue and trivial — that knowledge is declared to be Tamasic.

Commentary

But that understanding which clings to a single type of act as a bounden duty — such as the worship of disembodied spirits or elementals yielding very small rewards — as if it granted all desires; that work which is not based on any sound reason — in other words, because of attachment, since it is not fully productive and is 'untrue' because it is based on a false view of things — such as seeing differentiation in the nature of the Atman; 'trivial' because the practice yields poor results.

The Threefold Division of Acts

niyataṃ saṅga rahitam arāga-dveṣataḥ kṛtam ।
aphala prepsunā karma tat tat sātvikam ucyate ॥ 23 ॥

23. That obligatory work which is done without attachment, without desire or aversion, by one who desires no reward is said to be Sattvic

Commentary

'Obligatory work' are those activities which are appropriate to one's own profession and stage of life (varṇa-āśrama). Doing it *'without attachment'* means being free from the idea of agency or personal involvement, and *'without desire or aversion'* means that it is not done through either a desire to win approval or to avoid calumny — that is, performed without ostentation.

yat tu kāmepsunā karma sāhaṅkāreṇa vā punaḥ ।
kriyate bahulāyāsaṃ tad rājasam-udāhṛtam ॥ 24 ॥

24. But that act which is performed with great effort by one who longs to gratify desires and prompted by self-interest; is said to be Rajasic.

Commentary

Here *vā* (or) is used in the sense of *ca* (and) — in other words, whatever work is performed by one who possesses the misconception that whatever enormous effort this act demands, it is performed entirely by oneself.

anubandhaṃ kṣayaṃ hiṃsām anavekṣya ca pauruṣam ।
mohād ārabhyate karma yat tat tāmasam ucyate ॥ 25 ॥

25. That task which is undertaken through delusion, disregarding the consequences, loss, injury and one's own capacity is said to be Tamasic

Commentary

'Consequence' refers to the [personal] suffering which follows from an action performed. *'Loss'* means financial loss involved in doing that action. *'Injury'* is suffering caused to other living beings during the execution of the action. *'Personal capacity'* is the ability to complete the task. Whenever an enterprise is undertaken without considering these aspects and from delusion ie., unmindful of the actual agency of the Divine — that act is said to be in the Mode of Ignorance.

The Threefold Division of Agents

mukta saṅgo'nahaṃvādī dhṛty-utsāha-samanvitaḥ ।
siddhy-asiddhyor nirvikāraḥ kartā sātvika ucyate ॥ 26 ॥

26. An agent who is free from attachment, and self-acclaim, who is endowed with perseverance and enthusiasm and is unaffected by success and failure, is said to be Sattvic.

Commentary

Free from self-acclaim (*an-ahamvādi*) means one does not have the feeling of being the agent. Perseverance is the attribute of enduring until the completion, any suffering that is collateral in the work undertaken.

rāgī karma phala prepsur-lubdho hiṃsātmako'śuciḥ ।
harṣa śokānvitaḥ kartā rājasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ ॥ 27 ॥

27. That agent is known as Rajasic who is swayed by desire and motivated by gain, stingy, cruel, impure and overwhelmed by delight and grief.

Commentary

Cruel — one who hurts others who have been engaged to do the work; *impure* — lacks the [mental & physical] purity required for the act; overwhelmed by delight and *grief* — is elated or depressed by success or failure in victory or defeat, in a battle.

ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭho naiṣkṛtiko'lasaḥ ।
viṣādī dīrgha-sūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyate ॥ 28 ॥

28. That agent who is unqualified, vulgar, obstinate, unscrupulous, dishonest, lazy, morose and a procrastinator is said to be Tamasic

Commentary

Unqualified (*Ayukta*) — is unfit for works enjoined by the Shastras, and is engaged in forbidden activities; *vulgar* (*prākṛtaḥ*) — uneducated; *stubborn* (*stabdhaḥ*) — not disposed to work; *unscrupulous* (*ṣaṭaḥ*) — inclined to do nefarious deeds; *dishonest* (*naiṣkṛtikaḥ*) — treacherous; *lazy* (*ālasaḥ*) — not inclined to carry out even work that is undertaken; *morose* (*viṣādī*) — given to excessive moodiness; and a *procrastinator* (*dīrgha-sūtrī*) — a person who, while engaged in nefarious activities, spends a lot of time thinking about harming others.

The Threefold Division of Rationalism (Buddhi) and Fortitude (Dhṛti)

These [intellectual] faculties contribute to understanding the definitive conclusions about the facts of reality (tattvas) and the purpose of human life (puruṣārthas).

buddher bhedaṃ dhṛteścaiva guṇatas trividhaṃ śṛṇu ।
procyamānam aśeṣeṇa pṛthaktvena dhanañjaya ॥ 29 ॥

29. Hear now, the threefold division of *Buddhi* (rationalism) and *Dhṛti* (fortitude), according to the Gunas, O Arjuna, as I declare them completely and distinctly.

Commentary

'Buddhi' is the reasoned conclusion reached through [intellectual] analysis. *'Dhrti'* is the resolution to persevere in whatever task has been undertaken even against all odds.

pravṛtiṃ ca nivṛttiṃ ca kāryākārye bhayābhaye ।
bandhaṃ mokṣaṃ ca yā vetti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sātvakī ॥ 30 ॥

30. That Rationalism is considered to be Sattvic O Arjuna, which discerns extroversion and introversion, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, fear and freedom from fear, bondage and liberation.

Commentary

Extroversion (*pravṛtti*) — the Dharma which is practiced as the means for worldly prosperity. *Introversion* (*nivṛtti*) — the Dharma which is practiced as the means for *Liberation* (*Mokṣa*). A pure intellect understands that transgression of the teachings of Dharma is the cause of fear and the following of the teachings is the cause of fearlessness. It reveals the causes of bondage and Liberation — the true nature of Samsāra and deliverance from it.

yayā dharmam adharmaṃ ca kāryaṃ cākāryam eva ca ।
ayathāvat prajānāti buddhiḥ sā pārtha rājasī ॥ 31 ॥

31. The Rationalism which produces a mistaken conception of Dharma and Adharma and also of what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, O Arjuna, is Rajasic.

Commentary

'What ought to be done, and what ought not to be done' — in accordance with place, time and circumstances.

adharmaṃ dharmam iti yā manyate tamasāvṛtā ।
sarvārthān viparītāṃśca buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī ॥ 32 ॥

32. That Rationalism, O Arjuna, which, enveloped in darkness, regards Adharma as Dharma and which reverses every value, is Tamasic.

dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate manaḥ prāṇendriya kriyāḥ ।
yogenāvyabhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sātvikī ॥ 33 ॥

33. That perseverance by which one, through steady application, maintains the consistent functioning of the mind and metabolism and the work of these sense-organs — that perseverance is of the nature of Sattva.

Commentary

The meaning is that the perseverance in the Mode of Goodness entails persistence in contemplation and other acts of spiritual practice (which includes physical well-being) until the attainment of the goal.

yayā tu dharma kāmārthān dhṛtyā dhārayate'rjuna ।
prasaṅgena phalākāṅkṣī dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī ॥ 34 ॥

34. That perseverance, O Arjuna, by which, on account of attachment and desire for rewards, one adheres to [the pursuit of] Dharma, Kāma and Artha is Rajasic.

Commentary

These are the three Puruṣārthas or Goals of Human Endeavour which are Dharma — duty/right action, Kāma — recreational activities, and Artha — economical advancement. One who is dedicated to their pursuit is in the Mode of Passion.

yayā svapnaṃ bhayaṃ śokaṃ viṣādaṃ madam eva ca ।
na vimuñcati durmedhā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī ॥ 35 ॥

35. That perseverance by which a foolish person does not give up sleep, fear, grief, depression and passion, O Arjuna, is of the nature of Tamas.

The Threefold Division of Happiness

sukhaṃ tvidānīṃ trividhaṃ śṛṇu me bharatarṣabha ।
abhyāsād ramate yatra duḥkhāntaṃ ca nigacchati ॥ 36 ॥

36. Now hear from Me, O Arjuna, the threefold division of happiness, in which one enjoys by continued practice and by which one is surely freed from suffering;

Commentary

True happiness is that incomparable joy which a person, through continued [spiritual] practice over a long period of time, gradually attains, and [after attaining which,] is never again engulfed by the suffering of Samsāra.

yat tad agre viṣam iva pariṇāme'mṛtopamam ।
tat sukhaṃ sātvikaṃ proktam ātma buddhi prasādajam ॥ 37 ॥

37. That joy which is like poison at first but eventually becomes like ambrosia, arising from the serene state of the mind focusing on the Atman — such joy is said to be Sattvic.

viṣayendriya saṃyogād yat tad agre'mṛtopamam ।
pariṇāme viṣam iva tat sukhaṃ rājasaṃ smṛtam ॥ 38 ॥

38. That pleasure which arises from contact of the sense organs with their objects, which at first is like ambrosia but in the end like poison — that is declared to be Rajasic.

yad agre cānubandhe ca sukhaṃ mohanam ātmanaḥ ।
nidrālasya pramādotthaṃ tat tāmasam udāhṛtam ॥ 39 ॥

39. That pleasure which is characterised by self-delusion both in the beginning and the sequel, arising from sleep, indolence and negligence is declared to be Tamasic.

Commentary

Here 'delusion' means the absence of knowledge about things as they really are. 'Sloth' is lethargy in the activities of the senses. When sensory perceptions are slow, retardation results. 'Negligence' is neglect of one's duty. From this too, one's learning becomes obstructed. In this manner these two (sloth & negligence) cause delusion.

na tad asti pṛthivyāṃ vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ ।
sattvaṃ prakṛtair muktaṃ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ ॥ 40 ॥

40. There is no being on earth or even among the gods in heaven, that is free from [the influence] these three Gunas arising from Prakrti.

The Fourfold Division of Vocations

Now Sri Krishna, proceeds to teach about the vocations of the various social classes — the Brāhmaṇas (Intellectuals), Kṣatriyas (administrators), Vaiśyas (entreupreneurs) and Śūdras (workers) based upon their previous Karmas; all of which He classifies according to the Gunas. He declares that all such activities when performed in the spirit of renunciation and as acts of worship are a means to final Liberation which is the attainment of the Supreme Being.

brāhmaṇa kṣatriya viśāṃ śūdrāṇāṃ ca paraṅtapa ।
karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāva prabhavair guṇaiḥ ॥ 41 ॥

41. The duties of the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas; Vaishyas and the Śūdras O Arjuna, are distinctly divided according to their inherent dispositions.

Commentary

The character of Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaishyas, and Śūdras arise from their various inherent dispositions. In other words their past Karma is the cause of their being born in a specific social group. The dominant Guna [in one's character] is the result of such Karma. The Sattva-guna becomes dominant in the character of the Brāhmaṇa through the suppression of the qualities of Rajas and Tamas. In the Kṣatriya the dominant quality is Rajas through the suppression of Sattva and Tamas. The Tamo-guna becomes the inherent nature of the Vaishya, becoming slightly dominant by suppressing Sattva and Rajas. While in the Śūdra the Tamo Guna is much more dominant.

Obligations and duties are assigned to them by the Scriptures according to their inherent dispositions. For the Shastras assume that the Brāhmaṇas and the others possess particular attributes and accordingly suggest their duties and occupations.

śamo damas tapaḥ śaucaṃ kṣāntir ārjavam eva ca ।
jñānaṃ vijñānam āstikyaṃ brahmam-karma svabhāvajam ॥ 42 ॥

42. Serenity and restraint, self-discipline, purity, forbearance, integrity, wisdom, insight and faith in the Vedas — all these constitute the functions of the Brāhmaṇas based on their inherent disposition

Commentary

Serenity is the control of the external sense-organs, *restraint* is the control of the mind, *self-discipline* is the regulating of enjoyments as enjoined by the Shastras.

Purity is maintaining fitness for the performance of rituals as enjoined by the Shastras. *Forbearance* is the retaining of mental composure even while being injured by others. *Integrity* is straight-forwardness, that is, dealing with others according to what one actually feels. *Wisdom* is the correct understanding of the nature of the higher and lower truths. *Insight* is the understanding of the notable and unique attributes of the Supreme Reality. *Faith in the Vedas* (*āstikyam*) is the firm conviction in the truth of everything enjoined in the Vedas; in other words, a conviction that cannot be unsettled for any reason whatever.

śauryaṃ tejo dhṛtir dākṣyaṃ yuddhe cāpyapalāyanam |
dānam īśvara-bhāvaśca kṣātraṃ karma svabhāvajam || 43 ||

43. Valor, power, determination, proficiency and courage in battle, generosity and leadership are the inherent characteristics of the Kṣatriyas.

Commentary

Valor is the ability to engage in combat without fear. *Power* is the capacity to remain undefeated by others. *Determination* is the capacity to carry to completion any undertaking that has been started, despite obstacles. *Proficiency* is skill in the executing of all tasks. *Courage* is not retreating in a battle even when faced with certain death. *Generosity* is the ability to give away one's own possessions even in their entirety. *Leadership* is the capacity to govern well.

kṛṣi go-rakṣya vāṇijyaṃ vaiśya-karma svabhāvajam |
paricaryātmakaṃ karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajam || 44 ||

44. Agriculture, cattle-breeding and trade are the innate vocations of Vaiśyas, and the duty of the Śūdras is service, arising from their innate dispositions.

Commentary

Because the Brāhmaṇas [presumably] posses a preponderance of Sattva, the control of the senses, mind etc., [should] come easily and naturally to them and have thus been prescribed as their Dharma (duty). Control of the mind, senses etc., have not been recommended as the duties of Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas since this can only be achieved with great difficulty owing to the respective preponderance of Rajas and Tamas in them. The vocation of a Brāhmaṇa is officiating as a priest in sacrifices, teaching the Vedas and receiving gratuity. The vocation of a Kṣatriya is public administration and protection, and that of the Vaiśyas is farming etc., as mentioned before. The duty and vocation of the Śūdra is service under the direction of the other three orders.

sve sve karmaṇy-abhirataḥ saṃsiddhiṃ labhate naraḥ |
svakarma nirataḥ siddhiṃ yathā vindati tacchṛṇu || 45 ||

45. Through dedication to one's own duties, one attains perfection. How dedication to one's own duty achieves perfection listen now:—

Commentary

Perfection is the supreme state of ultimate beatitude.

yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānāṃ yena sarvam idaṃ tatam |
svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ || 46 ||

46. By worshipping the One from whom all beings have evolved and by whom all this is pervaded — through the performance of one's own vocational Dharma — perfection is attained.

śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt |
svabhāva niyataṃ karma kurvan-nāpnoti kilbiṣam || 47 ||

47. Better is one's own Dharma, even when imperfectly done, than the Dharma of another well-performed. When one practices the Dharma ordained by one's own nature, one incurs no fault.

Commentary

One's own Dharma is that practice which is suitable for one to undertake according to one's natural disposition (*svabhāva*), and takes the form of Divine Service, relinquishing the idea of agency etc., as has been taught previously. The *Dharma* [referred to here] known as *Karma Yoga*, consists in physical and mental activity and is thus easy to perform by one engrossed in Material Nature (Prakrti). Thus, Karma Yoga, even if it is defective in some respects, is better than the *Dharma of another*, that is — *Jñāna-yoga*, a practice that is suitable for one capable of controlling the senses. This practice is difficult and prone to failure, and may only occasionally be well performed.

Thus Sri Krishna reminds us here about the teaching of the third chapter — [that Karma Yoga is superior to Jñāna Yoga.]

sahajaṃ karma kaunteya sadoṣam api na tyajet ।
sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛtāḥ ॥ 48 ॥

48. One should not relinquish one's natural vocational skills [Karma] O Arjuna, though they may be imperfect; for, all undertakings are enveloped by imperfection like fire by smoke.

Commentary

The meaning is that even though one may be capable of practicing Jñāna Yoga, one should rather perform Karma Yoga only. All undertakings, whether of Karma or Jñāna, are indeed accompanied by a certain degree of imperfection, that is, involve painful effort, as fire is attended by smoke. But still there is this difference:— Karma Yoga is easy and free from the liability to misadventure, but Jñāna Yoga is the exact opposite to this.

asakta buddhiḥ sarvatra jitātmā vigata spṛhaḥ ।
naiṣkarmya siddhiṃ paramāṃ sanyāsenādhigacchati ॥ 49 ॥

49. One who is completely unattached, who is self-controlled and is free from desires — attains by renunciation the supreme perfection of liberation from all activity.

Commentary

The gist is that one attains steadfastness in mindfulness (Dhyāna Yoga) which is the consummation of even Jñāna Yoga. Dhyāna Yoga which is going to be described hereafter consists in the complete cessation of sensory activity.

siddhiṃ prāpto yathā brahma tathāpnoti nibodha me ।
samāsenaiva kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā ॥ 50 ॥

50. Learn from me in brief, O Arjuna, how one who has achieved perfection, attains Brahman (Self-realisation), which is the supreme consummation of wisdom.

buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhṛtyātmānaṃ niyamya ca ।
śabdādīn viṣayāṃs-tyaktvā rāga-dveṣau vyudasya ca ॥ 51 ॥

51. Endowed with a purified intellect, subduing the mind by steadfastness, relinquishing sound and other objects of the senses and abandoning attraction and aversion;

Commentary

'Endowed with a purified intellect' — means endowed with the intellect (*Buddhi*) focusing on the Self as it really is. *'Subduing the mind by steadfastness'* — means preparing the mind for meditation by practicing the gradually withdrawal from

external objects. *'Relinquishing sound and other objects of senses'* — means not paying attention to them, and *'abandoning attraction and aversion'* associated with engagement with objects of the senses.

vivikta-sevī laghvāśī yata-vāk-kāya-mānasaḥ ।
dhyāna yoga paro nityaṃ vairāgyaṃ samupāśritaḥ ॥ 52 ॥

52. Resorting to solitude, eating moderately, restraining speech, body and mind, perpetually engaged in the Yoga of meditation and practicing dispassion;

Commentary

'Resorting to solitude' means living in a secluded place free from hindrances to meditation; *'eating moderately'* means eating neither too much nor too little; *'restraining speech, body and mind'* means directing the functions of the body, speech and mind to meditation; *'perpetually engaged in the Yoga of meditation'* means daily practicing meditation until death; *'exercising dispassion'* means developing non-attachment to everything except the one object of contemplation [the Self] through reflection on the imperfections of all objects [of enjoyment].

ahaṅkāraṃ balaṃ darpaṃ kāmaṃ krodhaṃ parigraham ।
vimucya nirmamaḥ śānto brahma-bhūyāya kalpate ॥ 53 ॥

53. Forsaking self-affirmative ideation, power play, arrogance, desire, anger and property, free from the notion of possessiveness and tranquil — one becomes worthy of the state of Brahman.

Commentary

'Forsaking self-affirmative ideation (*ahaṅkāra*)' means abandoning the concept that the body is the Self; diminishing the force of previous Vāsanas (mental impression and habitual patterns) which nourish self-affirmative ideation.

brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati ।
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu mad-bhaktiṃ labhate parām ॥ 54 ॥

54. Having realised the state of Brahman, full of joy, neither grieving nor craving, being the same to all beings, one attains supreme devotion to Me.

Commentary

'Having realised the state of Brahman', means having realised the essential nature of the Self as consisting of unlimited knowledge and naturally completely dependent and subservient to Krishna. *'Full of joy'* means not affected by various forms of suffering (kleṣas) that arise from Karma and other causes, and does not grieve for any being other than [separation from] Krishna, nor desires anything other than Him. *'The same to all beings'* means that one becomes equally indifferent to all beings other than Krishna and regards them as worthless as straw and thus attains supreme devotion to Him. *'Supreme devotion'* is a realisation which makes one love Krishna ardently — an experience of Krishna as the Lord of all, who creates, sustains and dissolves the universe in cosmic play, who is the Lotus-eyed Lord of Sri; and the personal Lord of the individual Self.

bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaścāsmi tattvataḥ ।
tato māṃ tattvato jñātvā viśate tad anantaram ॥ 55 ॥

55. By [such] devotion, one realises Me and knows who I am in reality — Knowing Me thus in truth, through devotion one thereafter enters into Me.

Commentary

"Through such devotion, one comes to understand My essential nature and My attributes and sovereign glory. After obtaining this realisation of the Ultimate Truth through loving devotion, one then enters into Me — attains unification with Me".

sarva karmāṇyapi sadā kurvāṇo mad vyapāśrayaḥ ।
mat prasādād avāpnoti śāśvataṃ padam avyayam ॥ 56 ॥

56. Constantly engaged in all works, taking refuge in Me, through My grace, one attains the eternal and immutable state.

Commentary

Not only obligatory and periodic duties but all works, even those meant for material gain (desiderative acts or Kāmya Karmas) when done by *'taking refuge in Me'* — that is, transferring to Krishna the ideas of agency and proprietorship, one attains, by His Grace, the eternal realm which is unchanging or perfect. *'Pada'* (realm) indicates the goal which is attained; ie. Krishna Himself.

cetasā sarva karmāṇi mayi saṃnyasya mat paraḥ ।
buddhi-yogam upāśritya mac-cittaḥ satataṃ bhava ॥ 57 ॥

57. Mentally dedicating all works to Me, thinking of Me as the Supreme Goal, and resorting to the Yoga of Discrimination (Buddhi-Yoga), focus your mind on Me.

mac-cittaḥ sarva durgāṇi mat-prasādāt tariṣyasi ।
atha cettvam ahaṅkārān na śrosyasi vinaṅkṣyasi ॥ 58 ॥

58. Focusing your mind on Me, you shall, by My grace, surmount all obstacles. If, however, out of self-conceit, you do not heed Me, you shall be ruined.

yad ahaṅkāram āśritya na yotsya iti manyase ।
mithyaiṣa vyavasāyaste prakṛtis-tvāṃ niyokṣyati ॥ 59 ॥

59. If out of self-conceit, you think; 'I will not fight,' your resolve is futile — Nature will compel you.

Commentary

'self-conceit' means under a false sense of independence, and thinking that you know what is good for you and what is not.

svabhāvajane kaunteya nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā ।
kartuṃ necchasi yan mohāt kariṣyasy-avaśo'pi tat ॥ 60 ॥

60. O Arjuna (Kaunteya), bound by your own Karma inborn in your own nature, having no self-control, you will be compelled to do that very thing which, through delusion, you now desire not to do.

īśvaraḥ sarva bhūtānāṃ hṛddeśe'rjuna tiṣṭhati ।
bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā ॥ 61 ॥

61. The Lord abides in the heart of every being, O Arjuna, spinning them round and round, by His power, as if they were mounted on a machine.

tam-eva śaraṇaṃ gaccha sarva-bhāvena bhārata ।
tat prasādāt parāṃ śāntiṃ sthānaṃ prāpsyasi śāśvatam ॥ 62 ॥

62. Take refuge in Him alone, O Arjuna (Bharata), with your whole being. By His grace, you shall obtain supreme-peace and the eternal abode.

iti te jñānam ākhyātaṃ guhyād guhyataraṃ mayā ।
vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru ॥ 63 ॥

63. Thus I have taught you that knowledge which is the greatest of all mysteries. Reflecting on it thoroughly, do what you will.

sarva guhyatamaṃ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṃ vacaḥ ।
iṣṭo'si me dṛṣam iti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam ॥ 64 ॥

64. Hear again My supreme teaching, the most secret of all; as you are exceedingly dear to Me, I will declare what is good for you.

manmanā bhava mad-bhakto mad yājī māṃ namas kuru ।
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṃ te pratijāne priyo'si me ॥ 65 ॥

65. Focus your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me, prostrate before Me and you shall come to Me alone. I promise you this verily, for you are dear to Me.

sarva dharmān parityajya mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja ।
ahaṃ tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ॥ 66 ॥

66. Completely relinquishing all Dharmas, take refuge in Me alone. I will release you from all sins, grieve not.

Commentary

'Relinquishing all Dharmas' — means the complete abandonment of the notion of agency, proprietorship, results etc., in the practice of Karma, Jñāna and Bhakti Yogas which are the means (dharmas) for attaining the highest good when done as Divine Service.

'I will release you from all sins' — means that I will free you from all obstacles that prevent you from attaining Me; consisting of [the karmic reaction of] innumerable acts of doing what is forbidden and neglecting what is bidden. Accumulating from beginingless times [the reactions of] these deeds cause obstacles in spiritual development.

An alternative interpretation is this:— Bhakti Yoga is possible only for those individuals who love the Lord intensely and who are free from all negative karma. One's karmic reactions (sins) are obstacles in the path of developing loving devotion and are so numerous that the expiatory rites which would exculpate them could not possibly be performed in the limited time of one life span. Arjuna therefore thought that he was incapable of practicing Bhakti Yoga. To remedy Arjuna's despondency the Lord said: 'Completely relinquishing all Dharmas, take refuge in Me alone.' The term 'Dharma' used in this context would apply to the expiatory rites. So in order to successfully commence Bhakti Yoga, surrender to Me alone. I am supremely compassionate, the refuge of all without distinction, an ocean of maternal solicitude for those dependent on Me. I will release you from all sins, which have been explained as obstacles to the practice of Bhakti Yoga — grieve not.

idaṃ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana ।
na cāśuśrūṣave vācyaṃ na ca māṃ yo'bhyasūyasi ॥ 67 ॥

67. This teaching you should never reveal to one who is devoid of self-discipline and devotion, nor to one who has no desire to listen, nor certainly to one who traduces Me.

ya imaṃ paraṃ guhyaṃ mad bhakteṣv-abhidhāsyati ।
bhaktiṃ mayi parāṃ kṛtvā mām evaiṣyaty-asaṃśayaḥ ॥ 68 ॥

68. One, who possessed of supreme devotion to Me, expounds this highest mystery to my devotees, shall come to Me, there is no doubt about this.

na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścin me priya-kṛttamaḥ ।
bhavitā na ca me tasmād anyaḥ priyataro bhuvi ॥ 69 ॥

69. Nor is there among human beings anyone who does more precious service to Me. Nor shall there be another on earth dearer to Me than he.

adhyeṣyete ca ya imaṃ dharmyaṃ saṃvādam āvayoḥ ।
jñāna-yajñena tenāham iṣṭaḥ syām iti me matiḥ ॥ 70 ॥

70. And whoever studies this dialogue of ours about Dharma, worships Me through the sacrifice of knowledge (Jñāna-yajña); such is My conviction.

śraddhāvān anasūyaśca śṛṇuyād api yo naraḥ ।
so'pi muktaḥ śubhāṃllokān prāpnuyāt puṇya karmaṇām ॥ 71 ॥

71. And the one who listens to it with faith and free from envy, shall also be liberated and will attain the auspicious realms of those who have performed meritorious deeds

kaccid etacchātaṃ pārtha tvyaikāgreṇa cetasā ।
kaccid ajñāna saṃmohaḥ pranaṣṭaste dhanañjaya ॥ 72 ॥

72. Have you paid attention to this, O Arjuna (Partha), with a concentrated mind? Has your delusion, caused by ignorance been dispelled O Dhananjaya?

arjuna uvāca

naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvat prasādān mayācyuta ।
sthito'smi gata sandehaḥ kariṣye vacanaṃ tava ॥ 73 ॥

Arjuna said:
73. Destroyed is my delusion and I have, by Your grace, O Krishna, gained insight (Smrti). Freed from doubts, I stand steadfast, I will act according to Your word.

Commentary

Delusion or misapprehension here means (a) the misconception that the Atman is the Prakrti (body-mind complex) which is actually the non-self; (b) the lack of understanding that all sentient and insentient entities, constitute the 'vesture' of the Divine who is their antarātman (inner-self). (c) The notion that works, both obligatory (nitya-karma) and periodic (naimittika-karma), cause bondage when in fact they are a means for attaining the Supreme Being — when done as service to Him. All such misapprehension is now destroyed.

sañjaya uvāca

ity-ahaṃ vāsudevasya pārthasya ca mahātmanaḥ ।
saṃvādam imam aśrauṣam adbhutaṃ roma-harṣaṇam ॥ 74 ॥

Sanjaya said:
74. Thus have I heard this astounding dialogue between Vasudeva and the great-minded Arjuna, which makes my hair stand on end.

vyāsa prasādāc-chātvān etad guhyam aham param ।
yogaṃ yogeśvarāt kṛṣṇāt sākṣāt kathayataḥ svayam ॥ 75 ॥

75. By the grace of Vyasa have I heard this supreme mystery of Yoga as declared personally by Krishna, the Lord of Yoga.

rājan saṃsmṛtya saṃsmṛtya saṃvādam imam adbhutam ।
keśavārjunayoḥ puṇyaṃ hṛṣyāmi ca muhurmuhuḥ ॥ 76 ॥

76. O King, constantly remembering this astounding and auspicious dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, I rejoice again and again.

tacca saṃsmṛtya saṃsmṛtya rūpam aty-adbhutaṃ hareḥ ।
vismayo me mahān rājan hṛṣyāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ ॥ 77 ॥

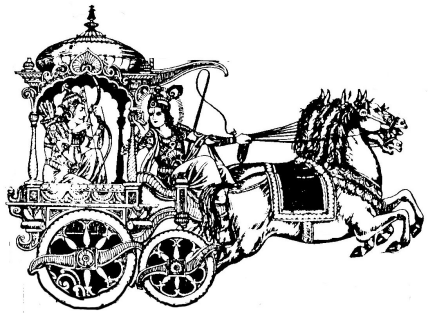
77. And constantly recalling that most spectacular form of Hari, great is my amazement, O King, and I rejoice again and again.

yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ ।
tatra śrīrvijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama ॥ 78 ॥

78. Wherever Sri Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, and Arjuna the archer are, there abide forever prosperity, victory, wealth and righteous statesmanship — this is my firm conviction.

hariḥ oṃ tatsat
iti śrīmad bhagavad gītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahma-vidyāyāṃ
yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjuna saṃvāde mokṣa-sanyāsa-yogo nāma
aṣṭāḍaśo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus in the Upanishads of the Glorious Bhagavad Gita
The science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga
The dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna
Ends the eighteenth discourse entitled
"Liberation Through Renunciation"



APPENDIX # 1

Esoteric Interpretation of the Names mentioned in the First Chapter (*Paramahamsa Yogananda*)

Pāṇḍavas

Yuyudhāna — śraddha — devotion
Yudham caitany prakāśayitum eṣaṇaḥ abhilaṣamān iti ।
The one who has an ardent desire to fight to express spiritual consciousness.

Uttamaujas — vīrya — Vital celibacy
Uttama oja yasya sa iti । One whose power is supreme.

Cekitāna — smriti — spiritual awareness
Ciketi jānāti iti । He who remembers, realises; one whose perception is clear.

Viraṭa — samādhi — enstacy
Viśeṣeṇa ātmani rājate iti । One who is wholly immersed in the inner Self.

Kāśirāja— prajna — insight
Pādarthān kāśuyān prakāśayan rājate vibhāti iti ।
One whose illumination causes other things to be illuminated or revealed accurately.

Drupada — tivra samvega — extreme dispassion or ardent desire for liberation
Drutam padam yasya iti । One whose steps are quick or swift

Dhriṣṭaketu — yama — self—restraint (*Dhriṣ* = courageous, ketu = chief)
Jana-ketavaḥ āḍādaḥ dhṛṣyate anena iti ।
One by whose discriminative intellect difficulties are overcome.

Śaibya — niyama — observances (*śī* — in whom all things lie)
śivam maṅgalam tat-sambandhiyam iti maṅgala-dāyakam ।
One who adheres to that which is auspicious — to what is conducive to one's welfare.

Kuntibhoja — āsana — right posture (*Bhuj* — to take possession of, or to rule.)
Yama kuntim kunā ātmantraṇā daiva vibhūtī ākarṣikā śaktim bhunakti pālayate yaḥ saḥ
He who takes possession of and supports the spiritual force — Kunti — by which divine powers are invoked and drawn into oneself.

Yudha-manyu — prāṇāyama — Control of life force
Yudham caitanya prakāśaytum eva manu kriyā yasya saḥ ।
One whose chief action is to fight to manifest divine consciousness

Purujit — pratyahāra — mental interiorization
Paurān indriya adhiṣṭhātṛi devān jayati iti ।
One who has conquered the fortress of the astral powers ruling the senses.

Abhimanyu — samyama — pratyahāra and dhyāna — self mastery
Abhi sarvatra manute prakāśate iti ।
One who shines intensely everywhere

Yudhiṣṭhira – viveka — discriminative awareness

Bhīma – prāṇāyāma — control of prāṇā

Arjuna — dhṛti, samyama — power of patience and self control

Sahadeva – yama — the power to observe the negative rules of morality

Nakula – niyama — the power to observe the positive rules

Kauravas

Duryodhana — material desires — (*dur* — difficult, *yodhana* — to overcome)

Droṇa — vipāka — *samskāra* or mental impressions. (*dru* — to melt)
Karmaṇām dravībhāvanām vipākaḥ iti ।
The fruition of actions that are dormant

Kripa — avidya — delusion (derived from *klṛp* — to imagine)
Vastuni anyatvāni kalpayati iti । He who sees things not as they are.

Bhīṣma — asmita – sense of self — (root *bhiṣ* — to frighten)
Yasmāt pañca-tattvāni vibhāti saḥ ।
That by which the five elements come into being or shine.

Karṇa — rāga — attachment (root *kri* — to do)
Karaṇa śīla iti । One who acts according to habitual tendencies to derive pleasure.

Vikarṇa — dveśa — repulsion
Akaraṇa śīla iti । One who behaves according to his habitual tendencies in avoiding pain.

Jayadratha — abhiniveśa — body bound identification
Rāmitvā anurakto bhūtvā jayati utkṛṣṭa rūpeṇa tiṣṭhati iti ।
One who conquers by deep attachment to life — deep attachment to one's continued embodied existence

Bhuriśravas (Son of Somadatta) — Karma — Material action (*bhūri* — repeated *śravas* — flow or stream)
Bhūri bahulam śravaḥ kṣaraṇam yaḥ saḥ iti ।
That flow which frequently and repeatedly disappears.

Aśvathāman — āśaya — latent desires. (root *ās—va* — to store up, *stha* — to remain)
āsnuvan sañcayan tiṣṭhati iti । That which remains stored up or preserved.