

Hari Sri Ganapataye Namah
Om Saraswathyai Namah
Om Sri Gurubhyo Namah

SERVE, LOVE, GIVE,
PURIFY, MEDITATE, REALISE

Srimad Bhagavad Gita – Sadhakasahayi
(A Guide to spiritual aspirants)
(Explanations by: M. Narendran)

Om Namassivaya
Om Sri Mahadevyai Namah
Jagata Pitarou Vande Parvatiparamesvarou

Om Parthasarataye Namah

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Om Parthasarataye Namah

Introduction

Do Hindus have any single holy book, as Jews the Old Testament of Holy Bible, Christians the New Testament and Muslims the Holy Quran? Hinduism is based on Vedas which is so vast that a lifetime is too short for a common man to study and understand it. Most Hindus have absolutely no knowledge about it and even for those in the know, their knowledge is fragmental. Bhagavatha, Ramayana, Mahabharata (of which Srimad Bhagavad Gita is a part) or other Puranas and Ithihasas (Hindu epics) do not fulfil the conditions to be called the Basic Book, as these works (unlike Quran or Old and New Testaments of Bible) did not originate at the inception of Hinduism.

It should be recognized that while other religions in the world are based on teachings of a single prophet or a small group of prophets belonging to one school of thought, Hinduism is based on Vedas which are divine revelations to generations of Rishis (Seers) who belonged to various regions and different backgrounds. The Rishis were all seekers of Absolute Truth. Vedas (meaning Knowledge) revealed to them were all ways and means of realizing this Truth. According to Vedas, the Absolute Truth is one without a second (non-dual) called by several names such as Om, Iswara, Paramatma, Parabrahma (the Supreme Consciousness), Parasakthi (Supreme Power), Sambha Siva (for Saivas), Mahavishnu (for Vaishnavites), Adiparasakthi (for Saktheyas) etc. It is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, immutable, eternal, blissful and totally free from all bondages. The universe originated from it, is sustained by it and will be dissolved into it, all at Its free will. For a true Hindu, realisation of Absolute Truth and union of the individual self with It, is the mission of human life.

Hinduism is a combination of a number of religious views such as Saiva, Vaishnava, Saktheya, Ganapathya, Skanda, Soura etc. Six darsanas {philosophical views viz. Samkhya, Vaiseshika, Nyaya, Yoga, Purvamimsa and Uttaramamsa (Vedanta)} have emerged from it. Although some of these are not in tune with the Vedas, a Hindu scholar is expected to learn all the six darsanas. Other religions that originated in India (Buddhism, Jainism etc.) owe a lot to some of these Darsanas. Hinduism is more than a religion and combines religion, philosophy, theology, spiritual sciences etc.

Srimad Bhagavad Gita, (known by its short name Gita) is considered the Hindu Book, as Gita crystallises the essence of Vedas into 700 verses in 18 chapters. Literal meaning of the title Srimad Bhagavad Gita is "that which is sung by the Lord". Excluding the first chapter, which sets out the context in which the knowledge of Gita was imparted by Lord Krishna to Arjuna, one can say, the knowledge portion of Vedas is condensed into just about 600 and odd verses in 17 chapters. By any measure, this task by its author, Sage Veda Vyasa is unparalleled in history. Each chapter of Gita in Sanskrit concludes with a statement that Gita is an Upanishad on Yogasastra and a dialogue between Arjuna and Lord Krishna. Upanishads are the concluding part of the Vedas forming the Jnana Kanda (the Knowledge Section) on which the Vedanta philosophy is based. Gita is a crystallization of the knowledge contained in the Vedas. Yogasastra means the science of Yoga. The word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word "yuj" which means to join. Yogasastra is the science of uniting the jivatma (the individual self) with Paramatma (the Supreme Self).

Gita, along with Brahmasutra and ten Upanishads form the Prasthanas Thraya, the three books which are the backbone of Vedanta philosophy. Gita summarizes this philosophy in the guise of a conversation between Arjuna and Lord Krishna. It accepts portions of philosophical schools, other than Vedanta, to the extent they are not in contradiction with the Vedas.

Devotion to Lord is a precondition for Study of Gita. Lord Krishna himself has stated that Gita should not be taught to those lacking devotion. To understand any spiritual topic, one needs to have faith in the Lord, the spiritual sciences and the teacher. The student should, at least, be open minded and should be a genuine seeker of Truth, without atheistic prejudices. Let us now briefly look into the contents of Gita.

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Gitadhyanam (Meditation on Gita)

It is common practice to meditate on the book, the author and the divinity that is praised by the book, before commencing study or recital of any Indian scripture. These verses are intended for that purpose.

Verse 1: Om! I meditate on You O' Bhagavad Gita, Loving Mother, O' Blessed Mother, the Destroyer of Rebirth showering the nectar of Advaita, with which Partha (Arjuna) was enlightened by Lord Narayana (Krishna) Himself and which consists of eighteen chapters and forms part of the Mahabharata authored by the ancient sage Vyasa.

Verse 2: Salutation to You, O' Sage Vyasa, of mighty intellect and with eyes long like full blown lotus petals, by whom was lit the lamp of wisdom filled with the oil of Mahabharata.

Verse 3: Salutation to Lord Krishna, the holder of Jhnanamudra, He who grants the desires of those who take refuge in Him, He who milked Gita-nectar and He who holds the cow-herd's cane.

Verse 4: All the Upanishads are cows, Lord Krishna milks the cows, Arjuna is the calf, men of purified intellect are the drinkers and the supreme nectar Gita is the milk.

Verse 5: I salute Lord Krishna, the Universal Guru, son of Vasudeva, supreme bliss of Devaki (mother of Lord Krishna) and the Destroyer of Kamsa and Chanura.

Verse 6: With Bhishma and Drona as river-banks, Jayadrata as the water, King of Gandhara as the dark rock, Salya as the shark, Krpa as the current and Karna as tides, Asvattama and Vikarna as terrible Makaras (type of a large fish) and Duryodhana as the whirlpool in the river of Mahabharata battle, the river was crossed over by Pandavas with Lord Krishna as the ferryman, indeed.

Verse 7: May the taintless lotus of the Mahabharata – growing on the waters of the words of Sage Vyasa, having the Gita as its strong sweet fragrance, with many a narratives as its stamens, fully blossomed by the discourses on Lord Krishna and drunk joyously day after day by the honey-beetles of the good and pure in the world – be productive of the supreme good to him who is eager to destroy the taint of Kali (evil-times).

Verse 8: I salute that All-bliss Lord Krishna whose compassion makes the mute eloquent and the cripple cross mountains.

Verse 9: Salutation to God whom the creator Brahmadeva, Varuna, Indra, Rudra and the Maruts praise with divine hymns; whom the singers of Sama praise through Vedas with full complement of parts, consecutive sections and Upanishads; whom the Yogis see with their minds absorbed in Him through perfection in meditation and whose limit the hosts of Devas (Divine Beings) and Asuras (Demonic Beings) know not.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Chapter 1 – Arjunavishadayoga

The first chapter is named Arjunavishada Yoga (Yoga of Arjuna's grief). The book starts with the blind King Dhritharashtra asking his aide Sanjaya to explain what is happening in the battlefield of Kurukshetra between his sons and the sons of his brother Pandu, opposing each other. What follows, till the very end of the book, is a commentary by Sanjaya on what happened in the battlefield, before the battle began. Sanjaya has been attributed with extrasensory power, by Veda Vyasa, to know all the happenings in the battlefield.

In the subsequent verses, Duryodhana, the eldest son of the blind King approaches Dhrona, his teacher of martial arts and gives a short list of commanders on both sides and assesses the battle capabilities of both armies. Duryodhana considers his army inadequate, though it outnumbers its opponents. He stresses on the need to fully protect Bhishma, the commander of the regiment. Bhishma then blows his conch signalling the preparedness for battle. Lord Krishna and leading warriors on both sides also blow their respective conches.

At this stage, Arjuna asks Lord Krishna who had gracefully agreed to be the charioteer for Arjuna during the battle, to lead his chariot to a position from where he can view all those who are marshalled for battle on both sides. Lord Krishna complies with Arjuna's demand and places the chariot between the two forces. Arjuna looks around and finds his grand-fathers, uncles, teachers, brothers, his own sons as well as those of his kin, grandsons, fathers-in-law, comrades and friends, ready to fight. He realises that it is his own people on both sides standing ready to kill each other. Seeing the kinsmen gathered, eager to fight, Arjuna reflects on the bloodshed that will be caused by the war and the loss of close relations and respected elders. He is overcome by grief at the thought of death and injuries to his people. With mouth parched up, skin burning, limbs failing and shivering, Gandiva (the great bow) slips down from Arjuna's grip.

He addresses the Lord on the futility of the battle. Of what avail is victory in war and the empire and pleasures that it will bring forth, if such victory is at the cost of those for whose sake all these gains are intended? He would rather be killed by his enemies than fighting them. Even the dominion of all the three worlds (heaven, earth and the netherworld) would not justify killing one's own people. He speaks on the consequences of the war, the effect it will have on womenfolk and the social upheaval the war would thrust upon the future generations. The first chapter ends with Arjuna sitting on his chariot, immersed in sorrow, casting away his bow and arrows.

Many may argue of what relevance the above story is to the present-day world. A very valid question - no doubt. It should be borne in mind that Gita is an extract from the great Ithihasa (epic) Mahabharata. Hindu Puranas and Ithihasas are intended to convey to the common man the hidden Truth in the Vedas. Bhakti and Dharma (Devotion to the Eternal Truth & Righteous Living) form the mainstay of Puranas and Ithihasas. Puranas stress on devotion and Ithihasas on Dharma. Through Dharma and Bhakti a believer is led to the knowledge of the Truth, which alone will lead one to Moksha (Liberation from worldly bondages) and union of Jivatma with Paramatma. A serious student should therefore look deep into the story to find out the message behind the stories.

The next 17 chapters of Gita deal with Lord Krishna preparing a reluctant Arjuna to give up his misgivings and take up arms to fight the battle against evil. Lord does it successfully, but in a most unusual and unworldly manner. The entire advice is a philosophical treatise. Not a word of spite against the enemy, no temptations of possible gains on winning the war, no understatement of possible losses. What the Lord does is to make Arjuna look into himself and realize himself. As such Gita is a book meant for all sadhakas (those who strive for self-realization) who genuinely desire to know the truth about them. The battle of Mahabharata is being fought within the sadhaka, between evil and virtuous mental trends. The war between the two is unavoidable and the sadhaka must be ready to side with virtuous trends and go on with the battle. Gita prepares the sadhaka to fight the battle and win over evil. The battle, of course, will have to be fought by none other than the sadhaka himself/herself.

The blindness of the King symbolizes ignorance and the extrasensory power of Sanjaya stands for ability to imbibe spiritual knowledge. The battlefield of Kurukshetra is described as Dharmakshetra (place where righteousness prevails). The 100 sons of Dhritrashtra (collectively called Kauravas) and their regiment represent products of ignorance and the five sons of his brother Pandu (Pandavas) and their regiment represent the quest for spiritual knowledge. Without fighting and annihilating ignorance, spiritual knowledge is not possible.

Given below is a short description of how our esteemed Guru, His Holiness Swami Gnanananda Saraswathi explains the relevance of the first chapter of Gita in his book Bhagavadgitaahridayam.

“The story of Gita is not something that took place long time ago. It is not separated from anyone by place or time. All of us have an unbreakable bond with Gita. Gitopadesa (advice of Gita) is taking place inside each and every one of us at all times. The battlefield of Kurukshetra is the human mind. The mental activities beneficial and detrimental are represented by Pandavas and Kauravas. The Mahabharata battle is going on within each of us. Each Jiva is Arjuna. Each body is Arjuna’s chariot. Human mind is the source of two opposing forces, virtuous thoughts and vicious ones. Undue attachment, despise, lust, anger, greed, pride, competition etc. on one side and truth, non-injury, celibacy, non-covetousness etc. on the other. These two forces are represented by Kauravas and Pandavas respectively. These forces belong to the same mind, one is born out of ignorance and the other from desire for enlightenment – so they are cousins. The battle will go on until one force is totally annihilated. Arjuna is the unenlightened Jiva unable to choose between the two – undecided, unwise and cowardly. Arjuna has love for his virtuous elder brother Dharmaputra, the eldest of the Pandavas. But at the same time he is now reluctant to fight vicious Duryodhana. Similarly, the Jiva has love for virtuous conduct, but at the same time it does not have the courage to fight and disown the vices. Jiva has the desire to be liberated from worldly bondages. At the same time it holds on to the body and sensual pleasures.

These contradictions are not due to lack of knowledge. But all that knowledge is used to justify one’s wrong conduct. Arjuna is a very knowledgeable person. He knows well about what will happen to Pandavas, if the war is not fought. Still he uses his knowledge to justify his reluctance to fight, due to his misplaced attachments. Similarly, sadhakas after gaining spiritual knowledge often cling to their old worldly attachments.

Each chariot is occupied by Lord Krishna who is the Paramatma and should be led by Him. In each breath, the Lord advises each of us that Jiva and Lord are not separate. We should heed the advice and go by it. That is the essence of Gita”.

Lord’s advice to Arjuna starts from verse 11 of the second chapter. The first chapter sets the scene for the Lord’s advice to commence.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 2 – Samkhyayoga.

Note: *Portions in italics are translation of verses in Gita based on renditions by others.* Portions in normal letters are explanations/ comments by the author.

This chapter is named Samkhyayoga (Yoga of Samkhya, a school of philosophy founded by Sage Kapila).

The second chapter opens up with Sanjaya continuing his description of what happened in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The entire description until the end of the book is the conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, interspersed with Sanjaya's brief comments. In other words, Gita from verse 11 of second chapter till the end forms the dialogue between Jiva (individual self) and Paramatma (Supreme Self) on why and how Jiva should be ready to fight the evil tendencies (within & without) and attain union with the Paramatma. Arjuna, overpowered by compassion on the thought of bloodshed and loss of kin, friends & respectable elders and refusing to take up arms, is like a sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) reluctant to engage in his mission. for fear of giving up his erstwhile way of life and worldly pleasures and relations, which he holds dearer.

In the second and third verses Lord Krishna snubs Arjuna for his timidity that is a disgrace to a warrior of his status and is un-heavenly. The Lord invokes Arjuna not to yield to unmanliness, spurs him to cast off his weakness and stand up to fight the righteous battle. Lord addresses Arjuna as Parantapa (terror of foes) to make it clear to Arjuna that he has the capacity to overcome his enemies. And so does every righteous sadhaka.

In verses 4 to 8 Arjuna repeats his plight and confesses that he is totally confused. He submits himself to Lord Krishna as a disciple and asks him to advise, for certain, what shall prove beneficial to him. It is now that one realises the significance of Chapter 1 – Arjunavishada Yoga. Some have questioned the need to include Chapter 1 in the Gita, as the advice by the Lord to Arjuna commences only from verse 11 of Chapter 2. Only a sadhaka truly despondent about his ignorance of Absolute Truth and willing to submit himself to a worthy Guru (preceptor) or to the Paramatma (Supreme Soul) attains true knowledge. Lord Krishna is the Guru here, Arjuna is sadhaka and the battle-field of Kurukshetra is the external world rid with contradictions. Despondency which is a disadvantage in spiritual endeavours is now turned into an advantage by submission to the Lord seeking his advice and willingness to abide by it.

In verses 9 & 10 Sanjaya describes Arjuna's despondency and the advice to Arjuna by Lord Krishna, with a smiling face, unperturbed by the happenings in the battlefield, commences. Here ends the introduction to Gita (the song of the Lord). From here on, it is one serious spiritual discourse on Yogasastra (the science of uniting Jiva with Paramatma) for the benefit of one and all regardless of caste, creed, age, sex or religion. In a spiritual session there are no bars, except one's devotion to the subject and all participants are Jivas seeking knowledge of Absolute Truth. Lord Krishna represents Paramatma. He is Jehovah of Jews, Christ of Christians, Allah of Muslims, Buddha of Buddhists, Mahavir of Jains, Guru Nanak of Sikhs, Siva of Saivites, Vishnu of Vaishnavites, and Parasakthi of Saktheyas and so on, depending upon each one's religious beliefs. All are disciples and the physical Guru expounding the subject is a channel to Paramatma.

This chapter of Gita includes the basics of Samkhya Yoga (Yoga of Knowledge) and Karma Yoga (Yoga of Action) as well as a brief description of how a Stitaprajhna (one who is steady in consciousness of absolute truth) will conduct himself. Stitaprajhna is a word used by Veda Vyasa only in Gita and not found elsewhere in the scriptures.

Arjuna's plight is similar to that of all Jivas. All of us want to liberate ourselves from samsarachakra (the cycle of transmigration) and be one with Paramatma (eternal, omniscient, blissful Supreme Self) but are unwilling to work towards this end for fear of losing what we consider dear to ourselves. Lord commences his advice based on Samkhya philosophy, a philosophical school founded by Sage Kapila.

There are three subjects of knowledge viz.

- Jagat or Prakriti (Universe or Nature) – The known
- Jivatma {Jiva for short}, Atma or Purusha – (Individual self) – The knower
- Iswara, Paramatma, Brahma or Purushottama (God, Cosmic Self or Supreme Self) – That which is to be known. All knower and source of all knowledge - Jiva and Jagat originate from It, are sustained by it and finally dissolve into It.

For the sake of brevity, Universe or Nature, Jiva or Self and Paramatma or Supreme Self respectively will be used henceforth to refer to these three subjects. Incidentally the words for these three rhyme well in Urdu – Khudrat, Khud and Khuda.

Universe is the known (or knowable through senses) external world, Jiva is the less known knower of the Universe and Paramatma is the least known to Jiva. Present research is all concentrated on the Universe and little or no effort is made to understand Jiva or Paramatma. Knowledge of Universe cannot give one an understanding of Jiva or Paramatma. Neither can it take the Jiva nearer to Paramatma. Paramatma is beyond senses, words and thought. It can only be experienced by a Jiva with a pure heart, free from ahanta (ego or I-ness) and mamata (possessiveness or my-ness). Vedas say that “Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavathi - The knower of Paramatma becomes Paramatma”. In other words, knowing Paramatma is experiencing and becoming one with It. Since Paramatma is the true form of Jiva concealed only by Jiva’s ignorance, what is required to reach Paramatma is casting off one’s ignorance in the form of ahanta and mamata - not acquiring any external knowledge.

Arjuna means Fortright (uncomplicated) and Krishna means Black or Dark. It would be interesting to ponder over the relevance of these names in the context of Gita. The name Arjuna (Fortright) suggests the quality required of sadhaka (righteousness) and Krishna (Black or Dark) suggests the veil of Maya (illusion) which conceals the Paramatma to sadhaka. Paramatma is described in the Vedas as Sachitananda (Truth, Light or Consciousness and Bliss). But to the uninitiated sadhaka, he is Dark and Black – invisible - due to the ignorance within the sadhaka. Once the veil of ignorance is removed a righteous sadhaka would be able to view the cosmic as well as the divine forms of the Lord, which will be described in Chapter 11 of the Gita.

All creation is unreal. Unreal here means all that is created is subject to constant change and eventual dissolution. The external world is created. The study of created world may give one an idea of the greatness of the Creator, but would not take the knower any nearer to the Creator. It is the knowledge of Self (or the knowledge of who am I) that will bring the knower nearer to the Creator. It is through disengagement from the created world that the Self reaches the Creator. It is for this reason, that the Lord starts his advice to Arjuna by first explaining the nature of the Self.

Disengagement of Self from the world is, however, not possible by withdrawing from all activities and remaining idle. It should be understood that it is the selfish desire for fruits of action that engages one to the external world and not action per se. Therefore, disengagement from the world is possible only by giving up selfish desires for fruits of action. Work done without selfish desires for fruits of action and as service to Paramatma and fellow beings is Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga is to be performed knowing that all Jivas are essentially manifestations of one and only Paramatma. The differences between Jivas are only due to ignorance and sense of separation from Paramatma. Purpose of Karma Yoga is to cast off this ignorance and sense of separation. This type of service gives one the purity of heart, by which one gains knowledge of the Absolute Truth. The Truth is “Brahma Satyam, Jaganmithya Jeevo Brahmaiva, na apara” as so succinctly put forward by Adi Sankaracharya. Brahma (Paramatma) is the Truth, The external world is unreal and Jiva is none other than Paramatma. Direct knowledge of this Truth is Moksha (Liberation from transmigration cycle). Here, it is worth noting that in Indian philosophy the word Satyam (Truth) stands for Absolute Truth which may be defined as “that which remains immutable during all times (past, present and future)” and not transactional truth. Similarly what is meant by the unreality of the external world is that it is constantly subject to change and is ephemeral – not that we have to discount our experience of the external world as invalid. A person who has attained firm knowledge of this Truth is Sthithaprajna and it is the conduct of such a person that is described in the final part of the second chapter.

Samkhya philosophy has different interpretations including some atheistic ones. Gita being a book by Veda Vyasa, it is advisable not to be misled by interpretations other than those that match with the author's thought stream. Those who want to know more of the Vaishnava interpretation of Samkhya philosophy, on which Gita is based, is referred to Kapilopakhyaana (Skandha III – Chapters 25 to 33), in Srimad Bhagavatham, book by the same author.

Lord commences his advice by stressing on the futility of grief for those living and dead. The Lord's advice ends in Chapter 18, with the words "Ma sucha (Don't grieve). Hence, one can conclude that the objective of Gita is to overcome grief. Meaninglessness of grief is made clearer by explaining the true nature of Atma (Soul or Self) from verses 12 to 30. These verses are based on Samkhya philosophy. Samkhya philosophy uses the words Purusha to mean Atma and Pradhana or Prakrti to refer to Nature.

Atma means Self and it is used both for Jiva as well as Paramatma (Paramatma) depending on the context. Jiva is essentially Paramatma. They are separated only by Maya. Maya is the Paramatma's power of illusion which creates, sustains and dissolves the Universe. Jiva gets enchanted with the products of Maya and forgets its true form, just as a child gets involved with his/her toys and forgets himself/herself.

Samkhya philosophy stresses that Purusha is free and its bondage to the world is due to association with Prakrti. Prakrti consists of following 24 constituents:

- intellect, mind, ego, chittha (memory including vasanas or urges generated during past lives)
- five organs of senses (ear, eyes, nose, skin and tongue)
- five organs of action (hand, feet, organs of speech, reproduction and excretion)
- five tanmatras (types of sense) viz. hearing, seeing, smelling, touching and tasting
- five cosmic elements viz. space, air, fire, water and earth.

Liberation from the worldly bondages is possible for the Purusha only by seeking refuge in Paramatma. In the second chapter of Gita only Purusha or Jiva is touched upon. Prakrti (nature) and Purushottama (Paramatma) are discussed in Chapters 13 and 15 respectively.

Summary of verses 11 to 15 is as follows:

Lord tells Arjuna: You have been mourning for them who should not be mourned for. You speak like a wise person, but the truly wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead. The Atma in me, you and those others in the battlefield have existed in the past and will not cease to exist in future. As childhood, youth and old age come and go by, so also is leaving this body and taking another. Notions of heat and cold, pain and pleasure are born from contact of senses with their objects. They come and go. They are impermanent. Bear them patiently. The calm and brave who is not disturbed by pain and pleasure alone is able to attain immortality.

Lord explains to Arjuna that though he is speaking like a wise person, he has not attained true wisdom. The wise know the world to be temporal and do not grieve for happenings here. Nor do they run away from responsibility fearing consequences.

Verses 16 to 25: None has the power to destroy this immutable Atma. Bodies have an end, but not the indwelling Atma which is changeless, indestructible and illimitable. Therefore fight. He who takes the Atma to be the slayer or slain does not know that Atma neither slays nor is it slain. Atma is never born nor does it die. It is unborn, eternal, changeless and ever Itself. It is not killed when the body is killed. He who knows this Truth, how can he slay or cause another to slay? Even as a person casts off worn out clothes and puts on new ones, so does the embodied casts off worn-out bodies and enters into new ones. Weapons cut not, fire burns not, water wets not and wind dries not the Atma. Changeless, all pervading, unmoving, immovable, the Atma is eternal. Atma is said to be unmanifested, unthinkable and unchangeable. Knowing this one should not grieve.

The Lord clarifies the nature of Indwelling Atma in all bodies and also what is Truth. Truth is that which does not change with time. That which is true has no birth and will not cease to exist. In absolute terms, that which ceases to exist with time (external world for example) is only a temporal illusion. All creations are dreamlike temporal illusions. Men possessed of true Knowledge can discriminate between truth and illusions. Atma which is the Truth is omnipresent and indestructible.

Verses 26 to 28: *Even if one is to consider Atma as having constant births and deaths one ought not to mourn for the dead. Why grieve over that which is unavoidable as death is certain for those born and birth is certain for the dead. All beings are un-manifested in the beginning, manifested in the middle and un-manifested again in their end. What is there to grieve about?*

In the above verses, the Lord comes down to the level of Arjuna's state of mind and talks to him from the point of view of a worldly person. Why should one grieve for a dead person as death is certain for everyone and the dead shall be reborn again?

Verses 29 and 30: *Some look upon the Atma as an object of wonder, some speaks of it as wonderful, others hear it as a marvel. Still others though hearing do not understand It at all. The in-dweller in the bodies is ever indestructible. Therefore you shall not mourn for any creature.*

The Lord returns to the explanation of Atma and how hard it is to understand the nature of Atma. It is to be understood that Self in all beings is indestructible and there is no need to mourn for anyone.

Verses 31 to 38: *Looking at your own Dharma (righteous duty) you should not waver, for there is nothing higher for a Kshatriya than a righteous war. Fortunate are those who are called to fight in such a battle that comes as an open gate to heaven. If you refuse to engage in this righteous war, forfeiting your Dharma and honour, you shall incur sin. The world will also hold you in dishonour. To the honoured, disrepute is worse than death. Great warriors would consider that you have withdrawn from the battle out of fear. You will be lightly esteemed by those who had great expectations of you. Your enemies will utter unspeakable words about you and will be bent on downgrading your competence. What could be more painful? Dying, you shall gain heaven; winning the battle, you shall enjoy the earth. Therefore arise, resolved to fight. Viewing pain and pleasure, gain and loss, victory and defeat with equanimity, engage in the battle and you shall incur no sin.*

In these verses, the Lord once again speaks to Arjuna in a worldly manner enlightening him on what is righteous for a Kshatriya (one belonging to the warrior class) and the consequences of his withdrawing from the battle.

What the Lord says here is that even judging by worldly standards, inaction is not desirable. Please note that the discourse on Karma Yoga is yet to start. At this point, it is the Lord's intention to advise Arjuna that there is no justification either philosophically or otherwise to refrain from doing his duty. "Dying, you shall gain heaven; winning the battle, you shall enjoy the earth" should not be considered as an inducement by the Lord to engage Arjuna in the battle.

Verse 39: *The wisdom of Self-realization has been declared to you, now listen to the wisdom of Karma Yoga, endowed with which one can break through the bonds of Karma (past actions).*

Lord concludes his discourse on Samkhya Yoga with the above words. Verses 40 to 53 deal with Karma Yoga.

Verses 40 to 44: *In Karma Yoga, there is no waste of the unfinished attempt nor is there production of contrary results. Even very little of this Yoga protects one from great fear. This Yoga calls for single-pointed determination. Convictions of the irresolute are many branched and endless. Those with minds deeply attached to pleasure and power and whose discrimination is stolen away by flowery words of the unwise, full of desires and who look upon heaven as their highest goal, taking pleasure in the panegyric words of the Vedas declare that there is nothing else beyond the heavenly enjoyments.*

In these verses, the Lord stresses on the need for the Yogi (person practising Karma Yoga) to have a firm determination and not to be misled by the flowery words in the Karma Kanda (Parts dealing with action) of Vedas extolling various Vedic rites intended to bring in worldly enjoyments and heaven after death. Performance of such rites will not liberate the Jiva from transmigration cycle nor take anywhere nearer the Paramatma but would entail further births and deaths. They praise various specific rites as the means to pleasure and power causing new births as the result of such Karma. Vedas lead one from Tamas (inaction) to Rajas (action) and from Rajas to knowledge (Satva) and as such contain details of rites to be performed which can bring forth worldly benefits in this life and heaven after death. Arjuna is exhorted not to fall for it as desires for pleasure and power are an impediment to acquiring true knowledge.

Verse 45: Vedas (Karma Kanda) deal with the three Gunas. Arjuna free yourselves from the triad of the Gunas and pairs of opposites. Remain ever-balanced, established in the Self, free of desires to get and retain.

The three gunas of Prakrti are referred to in this verse. Guna in Sanskrit means rope as well as quality. Both the meanings are valid here when referring to Prakrti. Prakrti binds the Jiva with Gunas, therefore they are ropes. The three gunas are the qualities of Prakrti as well. The three gunas will be dealt in detail in Chapter 14 of Gita. Briefly the three gunas are Satva, Rajas and Tamas. Satva stands for knowledge, Rajas for action and Tamas for ignorance. With these words the Lord once again expounds the Samkhya philosophy that Self enjoys the free will, not to be bound by the qualities of Nature. For this, the Self should resolutely bind itself to the Supreme Self and not desire to get and retain worldly pleasures and power, including heaven.

Verse 46: To the Brahmana who has known the Self, all the Vedas are of so much use as a reservoir is, when there is flood everywhere.

Lord says in verse 46 that to a Brahmana (one who is possessed of Self-knowledge) Vedas are only of as much use, as reservoir during flood. The who man knows the Self knows the creation to be an illusion and the knowledge to gain worldly powers, pleasure and progeny fail to attract him.

Verse 47: You have the right to work only, but not to the fruits thereof. Action shall not be governed by the fruits it will bring forth nor should one cling towards inaction.

This verse has been much misunderstood as a result of failure to distinguish between Karma and Karma Yoga. In the case of the unenlightened, Karma (action) is due to desires emerging from vasanas (urges generated during the past lives and the present) and contact of sense organs with sense objects. These actions are controlled by desires for fruits of action. As such, ego will be boosted leading to further desires in case of success and dissatisfaction will be caused in case of failure. Both will lead to mental agitation. Contrary to this, action by Karma Yogi is spurred by devotion to Paramatma, sense of service and sense of duty. In this case, success will be considered as Prasada of Paramatma (Grace of God) and failure will prompt self-introspection and corrective action. There will be no mental frenzy. A balanced mind viewing both success and failure with equanimity will be the result. A placid mind is a pre-requisite for attaining true knowledge.

Verses 48 to 53: Be steadfast in Yoga (Union with Paramatma), perform actions abandoning attachments with evenness of mind towards success and failure. Work performed with desire is inferior to work performed with mind, undisturbed by desires. Seek refuge in the evenness of mind. Wretched are the seekers after results. With the intelligence of evenness, one discards in this life both good and evil works (merits as well as demerits of works). Strive to secure this Yoga. Yoga is dexterity in action. Wise, possessed of this evenness, abandoning fruits of their actions, freed from the chains of birth attain the status free from misery. When the intellect crosses beyond the taint of illusion one shall attain detachment from both what has been heard and what is to be heard (both knowledge already gained and knowledge to be gained will strike as unprofitable).

The Lord explains here the salient features of Karma Yoga. The illusory nature of Universe will become clearer. The knowledge of Truth will dawn on the Self. When knowledge of Truth is gained, knowledge already gained will strike as unprofitable and there will be nothing more to be known. The Supreme Yoga will be won when the intellect earlier bewildered by the Karma Kanda of Vedic texts becomes firm and unwavering in concentration of Absolute Truth.

Here ends the description of Karma Yoga in the second chapter. The discourse on Karma Yoga will now be continued in the next chapter. The remaining portion of second chapter is a reply by Lord Krishna on Arjuna's request to describe Stitaprajhna (person with an intellect firm and unwavering in concentration of Absolute Truth).

Verse 54: Arjuna asks the Lord: *What is the description of Stitaprajhna merged in Samaadhi (state of mind united with Paramatma)? How does he conduct himself?*

Please note that he stands for both he and she as Atma is beyond gender.

Verses 55 to 72: *When a person completely casts away all desires, satisfied in Self by Self alone he is said to be Stitaprajhna. He is not shaken by adversity, does not hanker after happiness and is free from affection, fear and wrath. He is a Muni (sage) of steady wisdom. He is detached, not pleased nor vexed by good or evil. Like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs inward, he can completely withdraw senses from their objects and make his wisdom steady.*

Objects move away from the abstinent leaving the longing behind. Longings cease when the Supreme Self is realised. The turbulent senses violently snatch away the mind of even a wise person striving after perfection. The steadfast having controlled them sits focussed on Me as Supreme. Whenever Lord says Me, it is to be understood that the word stands for the Paramatma. His wisdom is steady whose senses are under control.

Thinking of objects, attachment to them is formed. From attachment longing grows and from longing grows anger. From anger comes delusion and from delusion loss of memory. Ruin of discrimination follows and with ruin of discrimination one perishes. But the self-controlled, moving among objects with senses under restraint, free from attraction and aversion, attains tranquillity. In tranquillity all sorrow is destroyed. Tranquil-minded, his intellect is soon firmly established.

Unsteady has no self-knowledge. Nor has he meditation. To him who has no meditation, there is no peace. How can the peace-less have happiness? The mind which follows wandering senses carries away discrimination as wind carries away a boat on the waters, away from its course. Whose senses are completely restrained from their objects, his knowledge is steady.

That which is night to all beings, in that, the self-controlled remains awake. That in which all beings are awake is night to the Self-seeing Muni. In other words, the Self-realized person is awake to what is not known to others (Supreme Self). At the same time, the world which appears real to common folk is an illusion to him.

As into the ocean, brim-full and still flow the waters even so the Muni into who enter all desires, he attains peace – but not the desirer of desires. He who lives devoid of longing, abandoning all desires, without the sense of "I" and "Mine" attains peace.

This is Brahmi Sthithi (one's being with Paramatma). None, attaining this becomes deluded. Being established therein, even at the end of life, a person attains union with Paramatma.

These verses are the reply of Lord Krishna to Arjuna's question in verse 54. It is made clear that a person with desires cannot attain peace, but one who is devoid of desires can attain the Supreme State from which there is no fall ever and meditation on Supreme Self and detachment from the world help one gain knowledge of Absolute Truth and Liberation from the bondages of Karma, which is the aim of Karma Yoga .

Here ends the second chapter of Gita.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 3 – Karmayoga

This chapter is titled Karmayoga – Yoga of Action.

For a better understanding of this chapter let us re-visit verses 62 & 63 of the earlier chapter in which Lord Krishna describes how one perishes starting from attachments arising out of thought of objects, through Kaama (longing or craving), Krodha (anger, rage), sammoha (delusion), smrtibhramsa (loss of memory of Self) and buddhinaasa (ruin of discrimination between Self and Nature). It would be noted there-from that the root cause of ignorance of Self is attachment (to worldly objects). This chapter explains how one can get rid of these attachments through Karma Yoga. It is the bondage generated from Karmas in the past that have caused the loss of knowledge of Truth about Self and it is the aim of Karma Yoga to release one from this bondage, by getting rid of the vasanas.

Lord Krishna elaborates further on Karma Yoga in answer to Arjuna's question contained in verses 1 & 2 of the chapter.

Verses 1 & 2: Arjuna asks: *According to you, knowledge is superior to action. Still you engage me in this terrible action (war). With these seemingly conflicting words you bewilder my understanding. Tell me one thing for certain by which I can attain to the highest.*

In chapter 2, Lord had spoken about both Samkhya Yoga and Karma Yoga and it was natural for Arjuna, just as for any sadhaka, to get confused about which of these two is to be followed. Samkhya Yoga says Atma is separate from Nature and detachment from Nature (suggesting relinquishment of all action) is what is required for union with Paramatma. Karma Yoga states that one should continue to perform righteous duties without desire for the fruits of action. Since Lord spoke first about Samkhya Yoga, it is natural to assume that this Yoga is superior to Karma Yoga. Besides, the way the Stitaprajna was described befits a Samkhya Yogi better than a person performing action.

Lord's answer to the question is:

Verses 3 to 5: *In the beginning of creation, twofold path of devotion was given by me to the world – the path of knowledge for the meditative and the path of action for the active. None attains perfection by merely giving up action. Non-performance of action is not Naishkarmya (absence of action, normally described as a quality of Paramatma). None can ever rest for even a moment without action – all are made to act by the Gunas born of Prakrti (Nature).*

Paramatma is omnipotent. He has the power to create, sustain and dissolve the creation unto Himself, all at will. All three acts of creation, sustenance and dissolution may be termed as Karma. He is not affected by Karma, as he has, at all times, the knowledge of Self and is not attached to the fruits of Karma. He is the master of all Karmas and everything happens at his will. Therefore, naishkarmya (absence of action) is described as one of his qualities. On the contrary, Jiva has lost the knowledge of Self, through involvement with fruits of Karmas in past lives as well as the present and need to perform Karmas to get rid of attachments to the world, which alone will help him regain the paradise lost. Merely giving up action will not help one develop detachment and bring upon enlightenment.

Verses 6 to 9: *A deluded person who restrains the organs of action with thoughts regarding objects of senses still active in mind is called a hypocrite. One, who controls the senses with an unattached mind, directing his organs of action to the path of action, excels. Therefore perform obligatory action. Action is superior to inaction. Even maintenance of the body would not be possible for the inactive. One gets bound to the world by actions other than those performed as Yajhnas. Therefore perform action as Yajhna, without attachment.*

Once again the Lord stresses that merely refraining from action will not help one gain knowledge of Self. One will not be able to maintain even one's body without action. Therefore being totally inactive is not possible for anyone. Hence, actions need to be performed controlling one's senses, clearing desires for fruits of action from the mind and directing the organs of action towards Yoga (union with Supreme Self).

A person who refrains from action nourishing desires in his mind is a hypocrite. Here, Lord introduces the concept of Yajhna (actions for the sake of knowledge of Truth and service to fellow-beings, with devotion to Paramatma) to be performed as obligatory to Karma Yogi. These Yajhnas are to be performed without any selfish desire for fruits of action.

Verses 10 to 13: *Prajapati (creator), created mankind together with Yajhnas and said to the mankind: "By this you shall multiply, this shall be the milking cow of your desires. Cherish the Devas (Divine beings) with this and may Devas cherish you. Thus cherishing one another you shall gain the highest good. Devas cherished by Yajhnas will give you desired objects". He who enjoys Devas' gifts without offerings in return to them is verily a thief. The good, eating the remnants of Yajhna are freed from all sins. Those who cook food only for themselves incur sin.*

The scriptural sanctity of Yajhnas is clarified here. Yajhnas were created by the Lord as a method for pleasing Devas (Divine beings). What is meant by the word Deva (divine being) will be clearer after we complete the study of Chapter 16 in which Divine and Demonic attributes are described. Devas help generate the good qualities of a person within. These good qualities bring about peace all around and make enjoyment of desired objects possible. A Karma Yogi is therefore advised to eat only the remnants of Yajhna – i.e. enjoy one's legitimate fruits of actions only after performing his obligatory duties prescribed in the Vedas. Living for oneself is a sin. **All actions produce results. So do yajhnas. But these results should be realized as prasaada (grace) from the Lord and a sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) should enjoy them only to the extent essential to meet his life's minimum needs and share the remaining with fellow-beings.**

Verses 14 to 18: *From food come forth beings. From rain is produced the food. From Yajhna arises rain. Yajhna is born of karma. Know karma to have risen from Veda and Veda from the Imperishable. Therefore all pervading Veda is ever centred in Yajhna. He who follows not the wheels thus set revolving lives in sin, satisfied in the senses. He lives in vain. But the man who is devoted to the Self, satisfied with the Self and content in the Self alone has no obligatory duty. He has no object in this world to gain by performing action nor does he incur any loss by non-performance. He does not depend on any being for any object.*

A scriptural description of the cycle of Karma is given here. Obviously, all living beings are born out of food, as all bodily elements like bone, bone-marrow, blood, muscle, skin, semen and fats are products of food. The food is produced by rain (prosperity showered from above). Overall prosperity is a product of Yajhna (selfless service). Yajhna is born of activities according to Vedas and Vedas are knowledge revealed to Rishis (seers) of pure self-less heart. As such Vedas are the very breath of Paramatma. Therefore, one who disregards service to Paramatma and fellow-beings without attempt to realize the Truth and lives only for fulfilment of selfish desires lives in sin. Sin should be understood here as an act that produces misery to oneself and/or other fellow beings. Only the one who has attained true knowledge of Self and who lives devoted to Self, content in Self, is exempted from performance of Yajhnas.

Verses 19 to 24: *Therefore always perform actions those are obligatory without attachment. By performing actions without attachment one attains the highest. By such action alone Janaka (name of a king who ruled like a sage) and others attained perfection. You should similarly perform action simply with the view for the guidance of men (to set an example to others). Whatsoever a superior person does that is followed by others. What he demonstrates by action, people follow that. I have no duty. There is nothing that I have not gained, and nothing that I have to gain, in the three worlds. Yet, I continue in action. If ever I did not continue in action without relaxation, the world would, in every way follow in My wake. If I did not perform action, these worlds would perish. I would, then, be the cause of confusion and would ruin these beings.*

In these verses the Lord is explaining how one should conduct after attaining knowledge of Self. He cites King Janaka, who was a Rajarshi (a king and a sage at the same time) as an example. No harm occurs to a Jhnanis (enlightened person) by performing action. Such Jhnanis may continue performing Dharmic and obligatory actions for the sake of their fellow-beings, lest the latter misunderstand that inaction is superior to action. Lord Krishna cites himself as an example and states that if he sets a bad example to others, the world would perish.

Verses 25 & 26: *One must perform actions desirous of guidance to the world, but without attachment, just as the unwise with attachment do. One should not unsettle the understanding of the ignorant, attached to action. The wise one steadily acting should engage ignorant in all actions.*

What is required of actions by an enlightened person is guidance to the world, by setting a right example of a Karma Yogi. He should not unsettle an unenlightened person with spiritual discourses that is beyond the listener's understanding and which would only generate confusion in the listener. We can, perhaps, find here a reason for the Vedas being forbidden to the unenlightened.

Verses 27 to 29: *All actions are performed by the gunas of Prakrti. With understanding, deluded by egoism, one thinks: "I am the doer". On the contrary, he who is able to differentiate between the Gunas and their operations does not attach himself to action knowing that gunas operate amidst gunas. Men of perfect knowledge should not unsettle the understanding of the people of dull wit and imperfect knowledge, who are deluded by the Gunas of Prakrti and are attached to the functions of the Gunas.*

One of the main aims of Karma Yoga is subsidence of Ego. Ego grows from a sense of doer-ship that comes out of performance of a successful action. A failure in action, similarly, generates a negative Ego. Detachment from the fruits of action is, therefore, of utmost importance. Ego may be defined as one's own deluded assessment of oneself. It is ego that blinds Self-knowledge most. Ego is ignorance personified.

The true nature of Karma should therefore be properly understood to avoid growth of Ego. A Karma Yogi should therefore understand that actions are the products of Gunas (the three constituents of Nature – viz. Satva (knowledge), Rajas (urge for action) and Tamas (ignorance and inaction) and not of the Self. He should direct himself towards developing from Tamas to Rajas and Rajas to Satva, without himself taking credit/discredit for results of actions. It is Satvaguna that will finally lead him to enlightenment (Self-realization).

Verses 30 to 34: *Renouncing all actions in Me, with mind centred on the Self, getting rid of cravings and selfishness, fight, free from all mental frenzy. Those who constantly conform to this doctrine of Mine, faithful and un-envious are liberated from Karma. But those who decry this teaching of Mine and do not practise it, deluded in respect of all knowledge and devoid of discrimination, know them to be ruined. Even a man of knowledge behaves according to his nature. All living beings conform to nature. What can repression avail. Senses have attachments and aversions to their respective objects. None should be swayed by them. They are indeed obstacles in one's path.*

These verses remind a sadhaka that overcoming the attachments and aversions of senses to sense objects is not easy. Even men of knowledge fall for the temptations of the senses. Only recourse to relieve oneself from delusion is to take refuge in Paramatma with continued devotion, all actions submitted to Him and carry out activities directed towards self-purification through Karma Yoga. Those who fail to abide by these teachings are warned of falling into delusion and ruin (total loss of knowledge of Self).

Verse 35: *Better is one's own Dharma, though imperfect than the Dharma of another well-performed. Better is death in one's own Dharma. Dharma of another is fraught with fear.*

Lord states in verse 35 that one need not consider any task as inferior or superior. It is better to undertake that task which is one's Dharma (righteous) – i.e. task that befits one's nature and ability – rather than undertaking one that is outside one's Dharma under the misconception that such a task is superior.

Arjuna now asks a question.

Verse 36: Impelled by what does one commit sin, though against his wishes, constrained as it were by force?

Arjuna wants to know here the root cause for persons committing sinful actions, even when they know that such actions would lead them to misery. Why are they not able to control themselves?

Lord's response to the query follows:

Verses 37 to 41: Desire and anger, born of Rajoguna (one of the three gunas - constituents of Prakrti) of great craving and great sin – know them as the foes here (in this world). As fire is enveloped by smoke, mirror by dust, embryo by placenta so is knowledge by desire. Knowledge is covered by unappeasable fire of desire, the constant foe of the wise. The senses, mind and the intellect are said to be its abode. Through these it deludes the embodied by veiling his wisdom. Therefore, controlling the senses at the outset, kill it – the sinful, the destroyer of knowledge and realisation.

Kaama and Krodha (Uncontrolled desire and anger or rage) are identified as the enemies that lead one to sinful actions. True knowledge is not possible to be achieved as long as these are present. Three examples are cited to show how desire and anger covers up knowledge – viz. fire by smoke, mirror by dust and embryo by placenta. The first task is to identify the foes and their abode and take action to eliminate them. Kaama (desire) is the main enemy as Krodha (anger) is a by-product of Kaama that arises when an obstacle occurs to Kaama. The abodes of these enemies are senses, mind and intellect.

Verses 42 & 43: The senses are said to be noble, mind is nobler than the senses, the intellect is superior to the mind and that which is superior to the intellect is He (the Atma or Self). Thus knowing the Atma to be superior to the intellect and restraining oneself by the Self destroy the desire, the enemy that is so hard to reach.

After identifying the abodes of Kaama and Krodha, the method of eliminating these enemies is prescribed. Senses are to be controlled by mind, mind by intellect and intellect by the all supreme Self. Mind can control senses when it gets rid of desires, which in turn is possible only through true knowledge, true knowledge can be obtained only from the Self which is omniscient and the source of all knowledge. The Self is omnipotent and the will to control the intellect, mind and senses should also come from the Self.

Chapter 3 ends here proclaiming the supremacy of Self.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Chapter 4 – Jhnanakarmasanyasayoga

This chapter is named Jhnanakarmasanyasayoga meaning the Yoga of Renunciation of Action in Jhnana (Knowledge). It should be borne in mind that Jhnana (knowledge) here refers to knowledge of Self and not to worldly knowledge. To a realized person, worldly knowledge is just knowledge of toy-making and playing with toys. The pleasures and satisfaction one derives from worldly knowledge is as short-lived as to what a child gets from toys. It is only knowledge of Self that will give one freedom from desires. Vedas describe Jhnana as “gaining which nothing more is to be gained”.

In the earlier chapter kaama (desire) and krodha (anger) were identified as the enemies that lead one to sinful action. Arjuna was exhorted to rise and fight these two enemies and eliminate them. The abode of these enemies was also marked out as senses, mind and intellect. Control of senses by mind, mind by intellect and intellect by Self was established as the process to be followed for elimination of the two enemies.

Knowledge of Self is the only way to conquer kaama and krodha the enemies that lead one to sinful actions. Attachment to the world is the main reason for having lost Jhnana. Therefore, to regain Jhnana, it is essential to turn inward and make the intellect clear by focussing it on the Self, make the mind follow the decisions of the enlightened intellect and control the senses according to the instructions of the invigorated mind.

Here one needs to understand the three components of Prakrti or Maya (the Supreme Self's power of Assumption for sustenance, creation, and dissolution). They are Satva, (knowledge), Rajas (action) and Tamas (ignorance). Creation is not possible without these three components. Supreme Self is suddha satva (pure consciousness) free of impurities in Satva as well as the influence of Rajas and Tamas. Vedas describe It as satchithaananda (eternal reality, pure consciousness and bliss without blemish). It is all pervading. It is not subject to birth, growth, decadence, modification or death). It cannot be comprehended by intellect nor can it be described in words. It is essentially the true form of all beings. Being the true form of each one, it can only be experienced.

Though Jivas are essentially the same as Supreme Self, engaged in the act of creation, they tend to forget their true nature and gradually an avarana (veil) of Tamas builds over the Satva, making the Self forget sense of belonging to the Supreme Self. With the loss of memory of its true nature, Jivas gets involved in vikshepas (superimposition of their own limited knowledge on Self) imagining themselves to have births and deaths and taking up various forms based on their likes and dislikes. Rajas can act in two ways – vidya (good learning & action) and avidya (bad learning and action). Vidya helps Jivas to regain the memory of their true nature and bring it closer to the Supreme Self. Avidya makes the Jivas forget their true nature and takes them further away from the Supreme Self. Vidya works to remove the veil of Tamas. Avidya strengthens the veil and tend to blind Satva completely. Removal of misconceptions about Self and the veil of ignorance can be achieved only through vidya. Vidya is action to recover lost memory of the bond with the Supreme Self. The first step in vidya is to recognize that it is not action but the desire for fruits of actions that strengthens the veil of ignorance and not action per se. Desires for fruits of actions are formed due to actions of avidya during the past lives and the present. The veil of ignorance can be removed only through righteous action in the present. Know that ignorance is only a veil over knowledge and satva (which is the basic form of Self) remains untouched by Tamas. Remove the veil and knowledge will shine by itself. It is only by removing the veil of ignorance that satva can be realised and purified to suddha satva. Therefore Karma Yoga is the method of eliminating the veil of ignorance generated by karmas in the past and unveiling the knowledge concealed within oneself through vidya. Purifying this knowledge through meditation and devotion to the Supreme Self, one realizes that Self is non-dual (one without a second) and present in all beings in the world. **Advaita (non-dual) means "One without a second", because other than the Supreme Self there is no second thing separate from It. When the Jiva unites with the Supreme Self, Jiva can realize that there is no second thing other than the Self and all its experiences so far was an illusion. In reality, nothing separate from Self ever exists.**

Once this is realized there is nothing more to be known and all activities cease resulting in absolute peace. One realizes that the entire creation is a sport of Mayasakthi (Power of Assumption) of the Supreme Self and is dreamlike and has had no impact on the Self which is essentially the same as Supreme Self. **A person who has realized this Truth may or may not perform actions, because it has been realized that actions have no impact on Self. Since all attachments and aversions have been overcome, there is no compulsion for action. But that need not prevent one from acting for the overall good of creation as such actions will no more affect his inner peace.**

Karma (action) is unavoidable as long as one is involved in creation and even a wee bit of ignorance remains. What is required is to make Karma follow the diktats of Dharma (righteous action). Dharma being the very breath of Paramatma, knowledge of Self (indirect to begin with) is essential to determine what Dharma is. Indirect knowledge of Self is to be gained from a realized preceptor. Direct knowledge of Self is gained not by action, but by Sanyasa (renunciation in an appropriate manner). What is sanyasa will be discussed in detail, in the forthcoming chapter. To a practising Karma Yogi sanyasa begins with giving up kaamyas (actions born out of desires). A Yogi should continue with actions which are directed towards knowledge of Self, devotion to Paramatma and service to fellow-beings. Kaama can be overcome only by Jhnanas. Jhnanas is not possible by remaining inactive. It is tyaga (sacrifice or renunciation) that leads to Jhnanas and not sensual pleasures or acquisition of wealth, power or progeny. This process of sacrifice is renunciation of action in knowledge. **Karma Yoga is a process of sacrifice through action of service with the aim of acquiring control of senses, purity of heart and clear intellect that can imbibe Jhnanas (enlightenment).**

Knowing this, one should direct one's action towards service of fellow beings (without expecting anything in return), devotion to Supreme Self and Jhnanas. Such action through renunciation of desires and activities directed towards Jhnanas is elaborated in this chapter.

Lord Krishna continues his explanation on Karma Yoga to Arjuna.

Verses 1 to 3: *I told of this imperishable Yoga to Vivasvat (Sun). Vivasvat passed it on to Manu (the first man created by Brahmadeva, the creator) and Manu to Ikshvaku (famous ancestor of Solar Dynasty). Thus handed over in succession, the royal sages knew it. This Yoga by lapse of time was lost in this world. I have now told you of the same ancient Yoga. You are my devotee and friend and this secret is profound indeed.*

Lord advises Arjuna on the lineage by which the knowledge was imparted to the world by Paramatma. This Yoga was first made known to Sun (the cosmic Karma Yogi – scripturally symbolic of cosmic intellect), from whom it was passed on to Manu and by Manu to Ikshvaku a Rajarshi (Sage King) of Solar Dynasty (Karma Yogi at the individual level). The Karma Yoga that is described in latter part of Chapter 2 and entire Chapter 3 is same as what was imparted to the Sun in the beginning of creation. With passing generations getting more and more involved with intricacies of creation, this knowledge was lost. To re-establish this knowledge in the world, which is a mission of Lord's incarnation, Arjuna is being enlightened.

Understanding these verses require a deep knowledge of Puranas and what each character in Puranas stands for. Sun (the cosmic intellect) obtained the knowledge of Yoga from Supreme Self. Manu (the first man created by Brahmadeva, the Creator of all living beings) got it from Sun and passed it on to Ikshvaku, the first king of the Solar Dynasty. Solar Dynasty perhaps refers to a Dynasty of Kings intellectually advanced or a lineage of kings who worshipped Sun for spiritual knowledge. The kings of that Dynasty who were sage-like also possessed this knowledge. With the passage of time this knowledge was forgotten. What the Lord tells Arjuna is that the knowledge of Yoga is as ancient as mankind or older. These verses also serve to highlight the Lord's omniscience as can be seen from the verses that follow. Devotion to Supreme Self is cited as a pre-requisite to knowledge of Yoga.

Arjuna raises a question here.

Later was your birth and that of Vivasvat prior. How then should I understand that you told this in the beginning?

Arjuna not knowing the secrets of Lord's incarnation is bewildered by Lord's statement. Viewing Lord as a worldly person Arjuna wonders how the Lord could have imparted this knowledge to the Sun long back.

Lord replied thus to Arjuna:

Verses 5 to 10: *Many are the births that have been taken by Me and you. I know them all while you know not. Though I am unborn of changeless nature, yet subjugating My Prakrti, I come into being by My own Maya. Whenever there is decline of Dharma (righteousness) and rise of Adharma (unrighteousness), I take body Myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for establishment of Dharma, in every Yuga (age), I come into being. He who knows, in principle, My divine birth and actions, leaving the body is not born again. He attains Me. Free from attachment, fear and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, purified by the fire of knowledge, many have attained My state.*

Here, the Lord reveals to Arjuna the secret of divine incarnation. Paramatma being omniscient and omnipotent has no difficulty in taking a body and remaining still omniscient and omnipotent. The memory of the past is not lost in the case of a divine incarnation. The knowledge in the incarnated Supreme Self is free from Tamas and Rajas except to the extent demanded by the needs of incarnation. Purpose of an incarnation is to re-establish Dharma in the world by routing Adharma and to impart Jnana to devotees.

But in the case of a Jiva, which has passed through many births and deaths, the memory is totally clouded with attachments and aversions generated from many lives, to the extent that it is limited to a narrow stretch of what the Jiva considers essential to conduct the activities of its present life.

The knowledge of Paramatma and its incarnations leads one to Mukthi (liberation) from samsarachakra (transmigration cycle). Lord makes it clear here that many in the past have attained the state of Paramatma purified by the knowledge of Absolute Truth. Three conditions are laid out here for union with Paramatma:

- free of worldly emotions such as attachments, fear and anger
- absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me and
- purified by the fire of knowledge

The above three conditions describe the qualities a sadhaka should possess to attain to the state of Paramatma which are detachment (vairaagya), devotion (Bhakti) and Jnana (knowledge of Truth).

Verses 11 & 12: *In whatever way men worship Me, in the same way do I fulfil their desires. It is my path that men tread in all ways. Longing for success in action, in this world, men worship various divine beings. Because success resulting from action, is quickly attained in this world.*

Possessing the supreme knowledge that nothing exists other than the Self, Paramatma is full of love for all living beings. As such Paramatma fulfils desires of each Jiva according to their desires and according to their actions of worships. Since there is nothing else than Paramatma, all deities that are worshipped are all different forms of one Paramatma. Most of the Jivas seek only fruits of action and to realise these, they worship the Supreme Self in various forms. Seeking only fruits of action – not knowledge – they attain these through worship of Paramatma in the form of various devatas (deities).

According to Gita, worship of Paramatma in the form of various deities fulfils desires of Jivas. Gita does not object to such worships either. The aim of Gita is to enlighten the sadhaka on the triviality of such worships for worldly gains as compared to the knowledge of Absolute Truth through Yoga that will benefit the Self as well as other Jivas. Tolerance towards all religion is the result of this knowledge.

Verse 13: *The fourfold Varnas (classes) were created by Me, by the differentiation of Guna and Karma. Though I am the author thereof, know me to be the non-doer, and changeless.*

Paramatma should be understood to be free from all sense of differentiation. Still it is said here that the four-fold class system (chaturvarnyam) is created by Him by the differentiation of Guna (the rope or quality that binds the Jiva to Prakrti (Nature)) and Karma (action) performed by each Jiva.

It should be borne in mind that the Jiva is separate from Nature and is not tainted in any manner by taking birth in any varna. Jiva's level of Ajhnana (ignorance) is the determining factor for the lower or higher Varna as the case may be and the stress should be to ascertain the level of Ajhnana, understand one's proper Dharma and work accordingly to get rid of the Ajhnana. The ladder to Jhnana is dhama (self control), paroksha Jhnana (indirect knowledge from preceptor), Bhakti (pure and deep love for Lord), seva (service), daana (charity), daya (mercy towards all living beings) and upasana (devotion to Supreme Self). The first three are applicable to all. Indirect Jhnana is to be obtained from a realized preceptor through loyal service and humble queries. Seva is particularly relevant to Sudras, daana to Vaisyas, daya to Kshatriyas and upasana to Brahmanas.

Verses 14 & 15. *Actions do not taint Me, nor have I any thirst for the result of action. He who knows Me thus does not get bound by action. Knowing thus, the ancient seekers of liberation also performed actions. Therefore perform actions, as did the ancients in the past.*

It is not performance of action that binds one to the world, but the sense of doer-ship and the desires for fruits of action. A person who knows that Self is not bound by self-less action performed as worship of Paramatma is not tainted by such actions. During the past, many sadhakas performed such actions and attained liberation from the transmigration cycle. Arjuna is also asked to perform actions in a similar manner.

Verses 16 to 23: *Even sages are bewildered, as to what action is and what inaction is. I shall, therefore, tell you what action is. By knowing this you will be freed from evil. Verily the true nature of action (enjoined by Vedas & Sastras – Vedic sciences) should be known as well as of forbidden action and of inaction. The nature of Karma is impenetrable. He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is wise among men. He is a Yogi and doer of all action (performer of his duties). Whose undertakings are all devoid of plan and desire for results and whose actions are burnt by the fire of knowledge, him the sages call wise. Forsaking attachments to the fruits of action, ever satisfied, depending on nothing, though engaged in action, he does not do anything. Without hope, the body and mind controlled, all possessions relinquished, he does not suffer any evil consequences, by performing mere bodily action. Content with what comes to him without effort, unaffected by the pairs of opposites, free from envy, even-minded in success and failure, though acting he is not bound. Devoid of attachment, liberated, with mind centred in knowledge, performing actions as Yajhna alone, his whole Karma dissolves away.*

The Lord explains here the difficulty of knowing the exact nature of Karma as even sages find it difficult to differentiate between action and inaction. Lord states that he shall tell what action is, knowing which one will get freed from evil. To understand what Karma is, both Vikarma (forbidden action) and Akarma (inaction) should be known. Actions enjoined by Vedas and related sciences are Karma, those forbidden are Vikarma.

It is the doer-ship in a performer of action that binds him to the action and when an action is performed without the feeling of doer-ship, such actions do not bind the performer to Karma. On the other hand, howsoever a person may remain in-active, if he entertains doer-ship in him he gets bound to the cycle of Karma.

Lord Krishna, though apparently involved in many actions is inactive and not bound by Karma as He performs all actions for establishment of Dharma and imparting Jhnana, entertaining no personal attachment towards the fruits of labour. Whereas people who work hard for accumulating wealth and those sitting idle and surviving on the labour of others get bound by Karma as they live a life desirous of fruits of their labour or of others.

Self is action-less and Prakrti is where all action takes place. One should be able to see the power of Self in Prakrti and at the same time see control by Self in Prakrti. Control is possible only by separation from activity, whereas proper activity is possible only with control.

The prescription for not getting bound by Karma and doing Karma as Yajhna is given in the next few verses. They are as follows:

- Act devoid of assumptions, expectations and desire for results
- With mind centred in knowledge and all effects of past karmas burnt by the fire of knowledge of Self
- With body and mind controlled, relinquishing all possessions
- Content with what comes out.
- Unaffected by pairs of opposites, even-minded in success and failure
- Free from envy

Verses 24 to 33: *The process is Brahma, the clarified butter is Brahma and offerings are made by Brahma in the fire of Brahma – by seeing Brahma in action Brahma, verily, should be reached. Some Yogis perform sacrifices to Devas (Divine beings) alone, while others offer the Self as sacrifice by the Self verily in the fire of Brahma. Some again offer hearing and other senses as sacrifice in the fire of control, while others offer sound and other sense-objects as sacrifice in the fire of the senses. Yet others offer all actions of senses and the functions of Prana (Breath considered as Vital Energy) as sacrifice in the fire of control in Self, kindled by knowledge. Others again offer wealth, penance and Yoga, as sacrifice, while still others, of self-restraint and rigid vows, offer study of the scriptures and knowledge, as sacrifice. Yet some others offer as sacrifice, the outgoing into the incoming breath and the incoming into the outgoing, stopping the courses of incoming and outgoing breaths, constantly practising the regulation of the Vital Energy while others of regulated food, offer in the Prana the functions thereof. All of these are knowers of Yajhna having their sins consumed by Yajhna and eating of the nectar – the remnant of Yajhna – they go to the eternal Brahma. Even this world is not for the non-performer of Yajhna – how then another – O Arjuna? Various Yajhnas like the above are strewn in the store-house of the Vedas. Know them all to be born of action. Thus knowing you shall be free. Sacrifices, performed with knowledge, are superior to those performed with wealth (material objects). All action attains its consummation in knowledge.*

Verse 24 describes as to the notion with which a Yajhna should be conducted. All components of Yajhna – the clarified butter, offerer, the fire, the action and the goal should be seen as Brahma. All effects of Karma vanish when a Yajhna is performed with a mind concentrated in Brahma in this manner. The sadhaka submits all materials, instruments, actions, himself and his goal for performing action to Brahma through such a Yajhna. All his senses, mind and intellect gets set on a single goal, i.e. Brahma or Paramatma. It is this type of Yajhna that will lead one to the ultimate Truth of unity in all diversities – the knowledge that there is nothing real other than the Paramatma.

Verses 25 to 33 describe the different processes of Yajhnas adopted by various sadhakas. These include:

- Sacrifices to Devas (Divine Beings)
- Divesting the Jiva of its upadhis (limiting adjuncts) in order to unite with Brahma
- Control of senses
- Withdrawal of senses from sense objects
- Control of senses and functions of Prana (Vital Energy)
- Sacrifice of wealth
- Penance, Yoga
- Study of Scriptures and Jhna Yajhna

All these Yajhnas are described in the Vedas. All these are born of Karma. Perform these with knowledge and one shall be liberated.

Purpose of all action is to attain knowledge and realization of ultimate Truth. Therefore knowledge Yajhna are superior to Yajhnas performed with materials. All actions consummate in knowledge. Purpose of all action must be for knowledge and realization.

Verses 34 to 38: *The wise, those who have realised the Truth will instruct you in knowledge, when you prostrate, seek knowledge through humble questions and by service. Knowing which you shall not again be deluded like this and by which you shall see the whole of creation in Self and Self in Me. Even if you be the most sinful among all the sinful yet with the raft of knowledge alone you shall transgress all sin. As blazing fire reduces wood into ashes, the fire of knowledge reduces all Karma to ashes. Verily there exists nothing in this world purifying like knowledge. In good time, having reached perfection in Yoga, one realizes that knowledge oneself.*

The importance of humility in gaining knowledge is stressed here. Knowledge is to be gained from the realized souls. Only the humble can imbibe knowledge as ego is a great obstacle to gaining spiritual knowledge. Just as water, knowledge flows from a higher level to lower level. Therefore sadhakas should hold their heads in humble submission to the preceptor. By prostration, seeking humbly for advice and by service to the mahatmas (great souls) one can get instructions from them on the ultimate knowledge. The final aim of all knowledge is to see the whole of creation in Self and Self in Paramatma. This knowledge will get rid of all sins, as one can realize the illusory nature of all creation. All karmas will then be seen as working on the illusions and the fire of knowledge shall burn all the Karmas. This knowledge alone is Supreme and can be realised having reached perfection in Yoga.

Verses 39 to 41: *The man with Sraddha (faith), the devoted, the master of one's senses attains this knowledge. Having attained knowledge he attains, at once, the Supreme Peace. The ignorant, the man without Sraddha, the doubting self, perishes. The doubting self has neither this world nor the next – and no happiness. With work renounced by Yoga and doubts rent asunder by knowledge, actions do not bind him who is poised in the Self.*

The need for Sraddha (faith) is stressed here. The three qualities required for attaining true knowledge are faith, devotion and mastery of senses. Supreme Peace shall be the result of knowledge of Self. Without faith this cannot be attained.

Verse 42 – *Therefore cutting with the sword of knowledge, this doubt about the Self, born of ignorance residing in your heart, take refuge in Yoga. Arise O' Bharata (O' Arjuna).*

The chapter ends with call to Arjuna as well as to all sadhakas to dispel all doubts and ignorance with the sword of knowledge about Self, and take the path of Yoga (union with Paramatma).

Part of the 2nd chapter and 3rd and 4th chapters of Gita on Karma Yoga outlines the process of union of Jiva with Paramatma first by overpowering Tamas (ignorance & inaction) by Rajas (activity), directing activity towards Satva (knowledge) through Yajhnas (sacrificial activities) and gradually withdrawing from worldly activities (Sanyasa) and striving towards knowledge & realization of Absolute Truth. It is the realization of Absolute Truth that culminates in the union of Jiva with Paramatma. Once the temporality of creation, non-influence of creation on Self and unity of Jiva with Paramatma are realized, all negative mental feelings like fear, envy, desire, anger etc. drops off automatically and Jiva enjoys the bliss that is natural to the Self. It is this state of bliss that all beings strive to achieve through various activities as well as inactivity. Alas they fail to achieve it in the absence of knowledge of Absolute Truth. Once that knowledge is attained all actions of Jiva will be for the benefit of creation as a whole and no action or inaction will have any bearing on his freedom of action.

Note on Chaturvarnyam:

In this chapter, the Lord has stated that “Chaturvarnyam (four-fold system of classes) is created by me” which had generated much controversy. It is of utmost importance for a sadhaka to steer clear of controversies and to understand chaturvarnyam in a spiritual light. Apparent contradictions, if any, will be resolved, once we understand the verse as a whole without focussing only on the first line of the verse. The Lord says here: “the fourfold class system is created by me based on differentiation of Gunas and karma. Though I am the author thereof, know me to be the non-doer, changeless”.

All activities by Paramatma are attributed to Maya and Paramatma remains actionless and nirguna (without Guna). Maya is the power inherent in Paramatma and should not be viewed as a separate entity. As all activities by Maya is illusive and Paramatma is aware of this fact at all times He can engage in any activity and still remain inactive as the results of actions have no effect on His omniscience or omnipotence. Chaturvarnyam has been created by Lord to help sadhaka identify his appropriate Dharma for Karma Yoga. While recognizing Chaturvarnyam, sadhakas should also understand that the aim of saadhana is to reach the state described in verse 18 of the next chapter, which states that a jhnaani views a Brahmana, Pariah or an animal, all with an equal eye. The Self in all beings is one changeless Brahma.

In the case of Jiva which considers all Nature's products as real and forgets the Creator and His Power, the Gunas act as binding ropes preventing it from knowing the Truth. At the human level (the only level of creation where Jhnaana is possible through Yoga), Jivas operate at different levels of knowledge, depending upon the Gunas which bind them to creation and the actions performed by them in the past. Life is not possible without possessing all the three Gunas in some measure. Predominance of Tamas tends towards sleep and sensual pleasures, Rajas towards possession of wealth and power and Satva towards knowledge – worldly when combined with Rajas and spiritual when pure.

The four classes formed on the basis of Gunas and Karma are:

- Brahmana in whom Satva Guna predominates, more capable to realize Truth and Dharma – the Spiritually Advanced Class.
- Kshatriya in whom Satva & Rajas predominate, more capable to know Dharma and implement it – the Ruling Class with administrative skills and leadership quality.
- Vaisya in whom Rajas predominates and more capable to know the material needs of the society and to produce and distribute such products and services.
- Sudras – Working Class in whom Tamas is predominant and who are more suited to provide the physical manpower requirements to serve all the other three classes.

Sadhakas are referred to Verses 41 to 44 of Chapter 18 to understand the Dharma of each Varna.

In an ideal society, Tamasic persons who are totally ignorant of Self, bound to their body treating only sensual pleasures as the aim of life, attainment of true knowledge of Self has to commence from service to others and worship of Paramatma under instruction from a Satvic Guru. Dharma of those with some Rajasic qualities and who possess productive and commercial skills is to involve themselves in activities beneficial to all living beings and perform charities, viewing the world as the manifestation of Paramatma. Those with Rajasic and Satvic qualities should learn Dharma from Satvic persons and guide others as well as enforce Dharma at every level of social life. They should perform their actions as agents of Paramatma without any selfish interest. Those with a Satvic bend of mind should involve themselves in worldly life only to the minimum extent and devote all their resources to worship of the Paramatma, to be one with it and spread the message of the Lord to all. Everyone should bear in mind that the Self in all is essentially pure Satva and is not affected in any manner by the class system. Classification is only in order to determine each one's Dharma, so that the society as a whole is benefited.

A merit-based society which maintains purity of heart and knowledge of Truth as the aim of human life needs persons of all the four classes to ensure Self-realization for maximum number of its members. Just as an intellect turned to Self should control the wandering mind and a steady mind should control the senses in the case of an individual, so should the knowers of Dharma control the implementers of Dharma and the implementers of Dharma the producers of goods and services. The working class should serve all the other three classes. It is to underline the need for cooperation by all varnas that Vedas visualize the four varnas as originated from the head, arms, thighs and feet of Brahmadeva (the Creator).

It is very significant to note that the four classes are determined only on the basis of Gunas and Karma - not based on birth as it came to be practised later. Though all the four classes have originated from the Paramatma through Mother Nature, the Paramatma should be known as the non-doer as He does not perceive himself as the performer of any action. All actions are performed through Mother Nature according to His Will. All actions by Paramatma are for the overall benefit of all Jivas and He does not entertain any doer-ship for his actions thus keeping His consciousness ever pure.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 5 – Sanyasayoga

This chapter is titled Sanyasayoga (Yoga of Renunciation).

Vedaanta philosophy on which Gita is based does not envisage eternal heaven for the holy and eternal hell for the sinners. Jhnana (knowledge of Absolute Truth) plays a very important role in Vedanta. All beings essentially possess Jhnana. Heavenly experiences are result of good deeds, whereas hellish experiences are products of evil deeds. Both heaven and hell are transitory phenomena. Therefore desire for heaven or aversion for hell will not lead to Jhnana, the ultimate knowledge. Jhnana is the realization of the glory of the Supreme Self and Jiva's bondage to It. Ignorance is loss of memory of Jiva's true form which has led it feel separate from Supreme Self. There is no devil other than ignorance within oneself. Yoga is the science of conquering this devil.

Ignorance is not absence of Jhnana but non-perception of Jhnana or forgetting one's own true form. Jhnana is present in all beings, albeit in an unknown form. Non-perception happens on two accounts, viz. Avarana (veil) and vikshepa (superimpositions) over Jhnana. Birth as a human being affords Jiva an opportunity to get rid of the veil and superimpositions. The veil is Tamas. Rajas is action that has resulted in the mass of misconceptions. Sanyasa is the process of renunciation of the veil and the misconceptions. Once the veil is destroyed there is no need for any activity either. Satva (knowledge) then lights up by itself and this knowledge is then purified/stabilized through devotion to the Supreme Self. The Supreme Self is pure Satva (pure consciousness). Some prefer to call It Nirguna (without Gunas). The entire process of Yoga is sacrificing Tamas and Rajas into Satva. Satva is then to be purified through devotion of the Supreme Self to realize It (to become one with It). The art of realization of Self will be dealt with, in the forthcoming chapters.

Both Samkhya Yoga and Karma Yoga have same objective – Self realization. Samkhya Yoga aims to achieve it through contemplation (apparent inaction), whereas Karma Yoga leads to it through right method of action. For those who have not overcome their desires and have not achieved a sense of equanimity, Karma Yoga is more suited. Both involve **detachment**, i.e. control of senses and breath, concentration of mind, intellectual contemplation of ultimate truth and devotion and surrender to Supreme Self. In the case of Karma Yoga action without desires for fruits of action is an additional requirement.

In verse 1 Arjuna asks Lord Krishna:

O' Krishna, you command renunciation of action and yet its performance. Which is the better one of these? Please tell me decisively.

Arjuna is still not clear about why Lord is speaking about action and renunciation at the same time, as performance of action and renunciation is not possible at one time. He wants the Lord to clearly choose one of the two that suits him best.

Lord replied:

Verse 2: Both renunciation and performance of action lead to freedom. Of these, performance of action is superior to the renunciation of action.

Lord makes it clear to Arjuna that Karma Yoga, rather than Samkhya Yoga is best suited to him.

*Verses 3 to 7: He should be known as a constant Sanyasi who neither likes nor dislikes. Free from the pairs of opposites, he is easily set free from bondage. Children, not the wise speak of knowledge and performance of action as distinct. He who truly lives in one gains the fruits of both. The **plane** that is reached by the jhnanis is also reached by the yogis. He who sees knowledge and performance of actions as one alone sees. Renunciation of action is hard to attain, without performance of action. The man of meditation purified by devotion to action quickly goes to Brahma. With the mind purified by devotion to performance of action, and the body conquered and senses subdued. one who realizes one's Self and the Self in all beings, though acting, is not tainted.*

Sanyasa (renunciation) is not to be judged by whether a person is performing action or not, but by freedom from the bondages of likes and dislikes. The Karma Yogi who works towards freedom from bondage and the ascetic who contemplates on knowledge of Self, both reach the same goal of Self-realization. Actions without likes and dislikes for the welfare of all leads one to Jhnanā just as contemplation on knowledge about Self. The mental purity required to gain true knowledge is easier for a Karma Yogi rather than an ascetic as the former is active in the service with the knowledge that one's Self is same as Self in others. The humility that one develops as part of one's service-orientation is a helpful factor, whereas the ascetic runs the danger of a sense of know-all which will act as a block to true knowledge.

Verses 8 to 11: The knower of Truth, being centred in the Self should think "I do nothing at all" – though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, speaking, letting go, holding, opening and closing the eyes – convinced that it is the senses that move among sense objects. He who does actions forsaking attachment, resigning them to Brahma is not soiled by evil, like unto a lotus-leaf by water. Yogis perform action only with body, mind, senses and intellect, forsaking attachment for the purification of the heart.

The greatest danger for a Yogi is the development of ego. Ego is ignorance about Self that envelops true knowledge. When one claims doer-ship of action, it builds up ego. Therefore a Yogi should always remember that actions are performed only by components of Nature and not by the Self. Nature acts according to laws set by the Supreme Self.

Verses 12 & 13: Yogi, forsaking the fruits of action, attains peace. The unbalanced one, led by desire, is bound by attachment to the fruits (of action). One who has subdued his senses, having renounced all actions by discrimination rests happily in the city of nine gates, neither acting nor causing (others) to act.

Actions performed without attachments and with senses under control and with the knowledge that discriminates between Self and Nature attains peace even while embodied. The city of nine gates is a term meaning human body, as the body has nine openings. Those who seek fruits of action get bound to the body and associated mental frenzy and intellectual confusions.

Verses 14 & 15: Neither agency, nor actions does the Lord create for the world, nor (does he bring about) the union with the fruit of action. It is universal ignorance that does (it all). The omnipresent takes note of the merit or demerit of none. Knowledge is enveloped in ignorance, hence do beings get deluded.

The root cause for all actions is the veil of ignorance over true knowledge, which is part of Nature and not Supreme Self. It is the delusion produced by this ignorance which is the reason for desire for fruits of actions. Attachments and aversions arise from ignorance. The aim of Yoga is to dissolve this ignorance, in knowledge. Rajas works in two ways - Vidya (righteous Karma) and avidya (unrighteous Karma). Vidya leads to knowledge and avidya leads to ignorance. Ignorance is mental impurity that arose gradually out of actions spurred by desires for its fruits in past lives and present.

Vedānta differs significantly from other religious philosophies. There is no devil opposed to God. There is only knowledge of Truth and ignorance. Truth is nothing but Self. Truth is Eternity, Consciousness and Bliss. Ignorance is transitory. Ignorance is misconception of a transitory phenomenon as Truth. Ignorance is the result of Avidya (unrighteous Karma). Vidya (righteous Karma) is the redeemer from ignorance. Every human being is endowed with Free Will and can choose between Vidya and Avidya as his/her path. Supreme Self reveals its powers to those who follow the path of Vidya, but remains concealed from those who follow Avidya, because they hold on so tightly to their veil of ignorance. The path of liberation is to sacrifice the hold on ignorance and yearn with deep love for the Supreme Self, for the knowledge of Truth. Ultimate knowledge is that the Self in every being is same as Supreme Self. Since there is no second thing other than the Supreme Self, there is no question of an emotion other than Love (Mercy), in the Supreme Self.

Verses 16 & 17: But whose ignorance is destroyed by the knowledge of Self – that knowledge of theirs like the sun, reveals the Supreme (Brahma). Those who have their intellect absorbed in That, whose Self is That, whose steadfastness is That, whose consummation is That, their impurities cleansed by knowledge, they attain non-return (Moksha or Liberation).

He who knows the true nature of Self as pure Satva (pure consciousness) and strives for that with his intellect absorbed in that knowledge, who steadily holds on to that knowledge and who holds on to the faith that the goal of human life is jhaana, their mental impurities dissolve and they merge with the Supreme Self and attain total freedom.

Verses 18 to 21: The knowers of the Self look with an equal eye on a Brahmana endowed with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a pariah. Relative existence has been conquered by them, even in this world, whose mind rests in evenness, since Brahma is even and is without imperfection. Therefore, they indeed rest in Brahma. Resting in Brahma, with intellect steady and without delusion, the knower of Brahma neither rejoices on receiving what is pleasant nor grieves on receiving what is unpleasant. With the heart unattached to external objects, he realises the joy that is in the Self. With the heart devoted to the meditation of Brahma, he attains happiness without decay.

Endowed with true knowledge, a realized person sees Self in all beings. The world is full of relative experience. But to a realized person who sees world as a Leela (sport) of Supreme Self and who knows that Self is same as Supreme Self which is perfect, the relative experience ceases and he enjoys the bliss of Supreme Self in all its manifestation. Such happiness is eternal.

Verses 22 & 23: Since enjoyments that are contact-born are parents of misery alone, with beginning and end, a wise man does not seek pleasure in them. He who can withstand in this world before the liberation from the body, the impulse arising from lust and anger, he is steadfast (in Yoga). He is a happy man.

All worldly experiences are transient and a wise person will not seek worldly pleasures that come out of contact of senses with sense objects. He who is steadfast in Yoga realizes this fact and is able to free himself from the sense of embodiment and impulses arising from kaama (lust) and krodha (anger).

Verses 24 to 26: Whose happiness is within, whose relaxation and light is within – that Yogi alone, becoming Brahma gains absolute freedom. With imperfections exhausted, doubts dispelled, senses controlled, engaged in the good of all beings the Rshis (Sages) obtain absolute freedom. Released from lust and anger, the heart controlled, the Self realized, absolute freedom is for such Sanyaasins, both here and hereafter.

A jhni realizes that the external world is only a delusion created from within. Real happiness, relaxation and knowledge are all within. With this realization, he gains absolute freedom, freedom to act, not to act and to act in a different manner. He becomes free from imperfections and all his doubts get cleared. With his senses under control, he is not pushed to action for selfish ends and welfare of all beings becomes his reason for action, if any. While alive and after giving up his body, he remains devoid of lust and anger (avoiding further births) and enjoys absolute freedom.

Verses 27 & 28: Shutting out external objects, steadying the eyes between the eyebrows, restricting the even currents of Prana and Apana inside the nostrils, the senses, mind and intellect controlled, with Moksha as the supreme goal, freed from desire, fear and anger, such a man of meditation is verily free for ever.

These verses briefly explain the method of meditation on Self, which will be detailed in the forthcoming chapter. A person who is able to meditate on Self as explained above reaches the supreme goal of Moksha (total liberation).

Verse 29: Knowing me as the dispenser of Yajnas and asceticism, as the Great Lord of all worlds, as the friend of all beings, he attains Peace.

The results of Yajhnas (Karma Yoga) and asceticism (Samkhya Yoga) are dispensations by the Supreme Self and His Grace. Know the Lord as friend of all worlds and all beings. His mercy is boundless. He is the Self in all beings. This knowledge results in Supreme Peace.

He is Paramatma, Parabrahma and Lord of all beings. He is Eternal Truth, Pure Consciousness and Total Bliss. He is the Self in all beings. He is Pure Love for all beings. Creation is His Leela (Divine Sport) with His Consort, Paraa Prakrti (Cosmic Nature) inherent in Him, inseparable from Him, ever chaste and loyal to Him. This knowledge removes all impurities in the heart of the devotee and brings him Eternal Peace.

With this praise of Lord, ends the fifth chapter.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 6 - Dhyanayoga

This chapter is titled Dhyanayoga (Yoga of Meditation).

To get a better understanding and to match with the three parts of Vedas, viz. Karma Kanda (Part related to actions), Upasana Kanda (Part related to Devotion) and Jhnana Kanda (Part related to Knowledge), Gita may also be considered to have three parts. Chapters 2 to 6 relate to Karma, 7 to 12 to Upasana and Chapters 13 to 18 to Jhnana. Chapter 6 is the last chapter of the Part related to Karma. Karma Yoga has two aspects, one of Karma and the other of Yoga. Karma is performance of action and Yoga is the art of uniting Jivatma with Paramatma. While performance of action is important, the ultimate aim of union with the Supreme Self should ever be kept in mind. All Jivas have three instruments of action – body, mind (including senses) and intellect. Body, the external instrument for performance of action is insentient and without freedom. Body obeys the commands of mind. It is mind that keeps on prodding body to act. Hence, mind should be brought under control of the Intellect which has absorbed Jhnana (Knowledge of Self) attained through renunciation of Karma in Jhnana (as described in the earlier two chapters). Meditation is the art of gaining control over Mind.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verse 1: He who performs his bounden duty, without leaning to the fruit of action, is a renouncer of action as well as a Yogi – not niragni (he who is without fire), nor he who is without action.

Lord clarifies that there is no difference between a Sanyasi (one who has renounced all actions in order to unite Jivatma with Paramatma) and a Yogi (one who continues performing Dharmic actions, without any desire for fruits of action with the same goal). Niragni (He who is without fire) here stands for one who has given up performance of Vedic rites. Simply giving up performance of actions or Vedic rites would not qualify a person to piety which is the quality of a Sanyasi (recluse).

Verses 2:to 4: Know that which is called concentration to be devotion to action. None becomes a devotee to action without forsaking Sankalpa (wandering of mind after desires). For the man of meditation wishing to attain purification of heart leading to concentration, work is said to be the way. For him, when he has attained it (concentration), inaction is said to be the way. Verily, when there is no attachment, either to sense objects or to actions, having renounced all Sankalpas, then is one said to have attained concentration.

Performance of action without desire for fruits does not mean actions are to be performed without aim or in a casual manner. Karma Yoga should be performed with devotion to action. Such devotion requires concentration of mind. Concentration of mind requires giving up sankalpas (wandering of mind after desires). Only when the heart is pure, i.e. when mind stops wandering, sense organs are not attracted by sense objects and organs of actions are still, then only is a Yogi said to have attained concentration. Only at this stage, a Yogi may renounce action.

Verses 5 & 6: Self should be uplifted by Self. Self should not be dragged down. Self is verily the friend of Self and Self alone is the enemy of Self. Self is the friend of Self for one who has conquered himself by Self. But to the unconquered, Self acts as if inimical and behaves like a foe.

It was understood from the earlier chapters that the Supreme Self is present in all beings and it is only the veil of ignorance created from attachments and aversion that is concealing the Supreme Self from being known. Supreme Self is omniscient, omnipotent & omnipresent. It is this knowledge that uplifts the Jiva from the cycle of transmigration. Jivas should have faith in Self and at no stage should consider themselves to be weak to attain knowledge of Truth. For one who has faith in Self and is able to control the mind and senses, the Self is a friend. To others, Self is said to be acting like a foe. It is important to note that Self is friend of all and at no stage is inimical to anyone, but due to the ignorance of Jiva, Self just appears to be an enemy to the unrealized one.

Verses 7 to 9: To the self-controlled and serene, the Supreme Self is the object of constant realization, in cold and heat, pleasure and pain as well as in honour and dishonour. Whose heart is content by wisdom and realization and is changeless, whose senses are conquered and to whom a lump of earth, stone and gold are the same – that Yogi is called steadfast. He attains excellence who looks with equal regard upon well-wishers, friends, foes, neutrals, arbiters, the hateful, relatives and upon the righteous and the unrighteous alike.

Meditation is the art of keeping the Supreme Self in focus under all conditions. The mind should not be affected by the dualities present in creation. For this, the knowledge that creation is only an illusion should always be present in the sadhaka. The Self is the only reality and dualities of creation have no effect on the Self. It is only the realization of this knowledge that would bring about the equanimity of vision envisaged in these verses. These verses do not mean that gold is to be considered as valueless as a lump of earth or stone in the practical world, but one should not be swayed from sadhana (spiritual endeavours) by the attraction of gold. Similarly, it is not that a criminal and saint should be treated alike during worldly transactions, but it should be understood that it is the same Supreme Self that is present both in the criminal and in the saint and it is only ignorance of the criminal that is hiding the Supreme Self from him. The behaviours of a friend, foe, indifferent, righteous or unrighteous should not create negative emotions in one and should not have any impact on the sadhana.

Verses 10 to 15: The Yogi should constantly practise concentration of mind, retiring into solitude, alone, with the mind and body subdued and free from desire and possession, established in a clean spot, seated firmly, neither too high nor too low (on a seat) made of grass covered by animal skin and cloth over it. Seated there, making the mind one-pointed and subduing actions of mind and senses Yoga should be practised for the purification of the heart, with body firmly held, head and neck erect and still, (with eye-balls fixed, as if) gazing at the tip of the nose, with the heart serene and fearless, firm in the vow of a Brahmachari (celibate) and ever thinking of Me as his supreme goal. Thus always keeping the mind steadfast, the Yogi of subdued mind attains the supreme peace of Nirvana residing in Me.

These verses deal with the techniques of meditation and are self-explanatory. The most important thing here is to keep the body in the correct posture, seated comfortably in a neither soft nor hard seat with a pure mind steadfastly bound to the Supreme Self. Supreme Self may be meditated upon with or without form according to each one's religious views. Constant practice of this leads one to attain mental serenity and experience of supreme peace of the pure consciousness of Supreme Self. It is advisable to practise meditation under the guidance of an experienced Guru to avoid ill-effects due to improper practice.

Verses 16 to 19: Yoga is not for him who eats too much or too little nor for him who sleeps too much or too little. To him who is moderate in eating, recreation, effort for work and sleep and wakefulness Yoga becomes destroyer of misery. When the completely controlled mind rests serenely in the Self alone, free from longing after all desires - then is one called steadfast (in the Self). As a lamp in a spot sheltered from the wind does not flicker so is the simile thought of (to describe) a Yogi of subdued mind practising concentration in the Self.

In these verses Lord gives practical hints to the sadhaka on the importance of moderation that will help to keep the mind focussed on Supreme Self without flickering.

Verses 20 to 23: In which state, by the practice of concentration, the mind absolutely restrained:

- *attains quietude,*
- *sees the Self by Self, content in Self,*
- *feels that infinite bliss which transcends the senses and perceived by the (pure) intellect,*
- *established wherein never departs from one's real state,*
- *obtaining which, regards no other acquisition superior to that and*
- *established wherein is not moved even by severe sorrow,*

let that be known as the state called by the name of Yoga, a state of severance from the contact of pain. This Yoga should be practised with perseverance, undisturbed by depression of heart.

The results of successful meditations are listed in these verses. Briefly, they are mental peace, contentment, bliss that transcends all worldly experience, realization of self, cessation of further desires, ability to withstand any and all worldly situations.

Verses 24 to 26: Abandoning without reserve all desires born of Sankalpas (Assumptions) and completely restraining the whole group of senses, from their objects in all directions, by the mind, with intellect set in patience, with mind fastened on the Self, quietude should be attained gradually without the thought of anything. Through whatever reason the restless, unsteady mind wanders away, it should be curbed from that and brought under the subjugation of the Self alone.

Complete control of mind is not possible to be achieved right away. Constant practice will be required. Sadhakas should consistently keep watch of their mind. Whenever it wanders away to worldly matters, efforts should be made to bring it back to the spiritual path. It is a gradual process and one should not get disheartened with failures in the beginning. Efforts to restrain the mind should continue.

Verses 27 & 28: Verily the supreme bliss comes to that Yogi of perfectly tranquil mind, with passions quieted, becoming Brahma and freed from taint. The Yogi freed from flaws constantly engaging the mind thus with ease, attains the infinite bliss of contact with Brahma.

The Yogi having attained a tranquil mind that is pure without blemish realizes that Self in him is none other than the Supreme Self that is present in all beings. He loses all sense of alienation and attains the Brahmic State and experiences the bliss that is Supreme Self.

Verses 29 & 30: With the heart concentrated by Yoga, with the eye of evenness for all things, one who is steadfast in Yoga beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self. He, who sees me everywhere and everything in Me, never vanishes from Me nor do I vanish from him.

The secrets of Moksha (liberation) are revealed here. Moksha is the ability to see the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self. He who is liberated knows that Self is present everywhere and everything is a superimposition on the Self by Self through His Mayasakthi (Power of Assumption). The workings of Maya have no impact on the Self and it is only a sport played by the Self.

Verses 31 & 32: He, who being established in unity worships Me who am dwelling in all beings, whatever his mode of life, that Yogi abides in Me. He who judges of pleasure or pain everywhere by the same standard as he applies to himself, that Yogi is regarded as the highest.

A Yogi who has realized his unity with the Supreme Self performs actions only at the Will of the Supreme Self. Whatever be his status or class in the world that Yogi ever abides in the Supreme Self. He considers all beings as part of himself and is mercy personified. All actions by such a Yogi would naturally be only Dharmic.

Verses 33 & 34: Arjuna here raises a doubt: This Yoga which has been taught by You, Madhusudhana (slayer of Madhu) as characterised by evenness, I do not see (the possibility of) its lasting endurance owing to restlessness (of the mind). Verily, the mind, O Krishna, is restless, turbulent, strong and unyielding. I regard it quite as hard to achieve its control as that of the wind.

A doubt that is natural to all sadhakas is raised here by Arjuna. The practicality of the control of mind as described in the above verses is questioned as it appears impossible to be achieved by Jiva.

Verses 35 & 36: The Blessed Lord replies: Without doubt, the mind is restless and difficult to control. But through practice and renunciation, it is restrained.

Lord agrees with Arjuna and gives a very short prescription - Practice and renunciation.

Verses 37 to 39: Arjuna raises another question: Though possessed of Sraddha (faith) but unable to control himself, with the mind wandering away from Yoga, what end does one failing to gain perfection in Yoga meet, O' Krishna? This doubt of mine, O' Krishna, you should completely dispel, for it is not possible for any but you to dispel this doubt.

The next doubt that Arjuna has is what would happen to a sadhaka if he starts practising meditation as described and dies before he can attain concentration. Arjuna states that answer to this question is possible only by Lord Krishna who is omniscient, being an incarnation of the Supreme Self.

Verses 40 to 45: The Blessed Lord says: Verily, there is no destruction for him either here or hereafter for the doer of good. O' My son, he never comes to grief. Having attained the worlds of the righteous and dwelling there for everlasting years, one fallen from Yoga reincarnates in the home of the pure and the prosperous. Or else, he is born into a family of wise Yogis only; verily, a birth such as that is very rare to obtain in this world. There he is united with the intelligence acquired in his former body and strives more than before for perfection. Though not a master of himself, he is attracted by his prior discipline. Even the enquirer after Yoga is superior to the performer of Vedic rites. The Yogi, striving assiduously, purified of taint, gradually gaining perfection through many births reaches the highest goal.

Lord clarifies that the gains accrued by practice of meditation in this life will not be lost and a befitting next life will follow, wherein the sadhaka, with the Grace of Supreme Self, will be able to continue the practice to perfection and through subsequent births, if required, as well.

Verses 46 & 47: The Yogi is regarded as superior to those who practise tapas (penances) also to the knowers of Sastras (Vedic sciences). He is also superior to the performers of action (Vedic rites). Therefore, be a Yogi, O' Arjuna. And of all Yogis, he who with the inner Self merged in Me, with Sraddha (faith) devotes himself to Me, is considered by Me the most steadfast.

Lord stresses here the superiority of Yoga over tapas (penances) and mere acquisition of knowledge through study of Vedas and Sastras as well as performance of Vedic rites. The superiority of Yoga over penances, knowledge of Vedic Sastras and performance of Vedic rites is because; it is Yoga alone that strives towards union of Jivatma with Paramatma, the Absolute Truth. Arjuna is called upon to perform his duties like a Yogi, without abandoning his worldly responsibilities. The important thing is to perform all Dharmic (righteous) actions with the mind and intellect concentrated on the Supreme Self with full faith and devotion.

Here ends Chapter 6. Chapter 6 may also be considered as an introduction to Upasana Kanda that follows from Chapters 7 to 12. Lord slowly takes the sadhaka from Karma (action) to Upasana (devotion) and then to Jhnana (Knowledge) which will make the sadhaka possess all the three qualities of Vairagya (detachment), Bhakti (loving devotion) and Jhnana (knowledge) which will qualify him to attain union with Supreme Self. Bhakti, love for the Supreme Self makes meditation simpler, as it is easier to keep the mind concentrated on an object of love. Such love for the Supreme Self springs from the knowledge of the magnificence of the Supreme Self. Jhnana and Bhakti are therefore complementary to each other. It is not possible to attain both without the sense of service to fellow-beings who are all creations of one and only Supreme Self. While engaged in Karma, it is important to keep in mind that Karma has the potential to take one towards Supreme Self as well as away from It. The path of Karma has therefore to be treaded carefully, without falling for desires and without generating desires in others, except the desire for realization of Self.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Chapter 7 – Jhnanavijhnanayoga

This chapter is named JhnanaviJhnanayoga (Yoga of Knowledge with Realization). While discussing Samkhya Yoga in Chapter 2, we noted that there are three subjects for study. Jiva, Nature and Paramatma. So far, the discourse has been on Jiva and Paramatma only. The third issue, Jagat or Nature is now taken up for study. Jhnana is knowledge of Self and Vijhna is knowledge of Jagat. Knowledge becomes realization only when it is fully absorbed within and one is able to live a life befitting the knowledge. A sadhaka may have experienced the bliss of Supreme Self during meditation, but if he is to retain the memory of Self during his worldly activities he must ever keep in touch with the Glory of Paramatma in his day to day activities. He should be able to see the Supreme Self right through the Nature. Devotion should go hand in hand with Jhnana.

Bhaktha (devotee) is not just satisfied with the experience of Paramatma's non-dual nature during meditation. He retains his Jivahood, loving and serving the Supreme Self experiencing the Glory of Supreme Self in this world. He is not concerned about Liberation. His sole aim is to ever remain faithful to Supreme Self and to live a life of service to Supreme Self and Its creations, experiencing Its Glory and imparting it to the world around. Puranas & Itihaasaas (Indian mythology and epics) are full of stories of such experiences by devotees. Written in poetry in archaic style, these great works may appear as exaggerated fantasies to the modern mind. But for those with devotion and patience to study them, they are a treasure of knowledge with stories of real experiences of Supreme Self by ardent devotees.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 1 to 3: With the mind intent on Me, taking refuge in Me, and practising Yoga, how you shall know Me (the Supreme Truth) fully without doubt, do hear that. I shall explain to you in full the knowledge combined with realization, knowing which nothing more here remains to be known. One, perchance, in thousands of men, strives for perfection and one perchance, among the blessed ones, striving thus knows Me in reality.

Lord promises Arjuna that He will now reveal to the latter, how Jhaana combined with Vijhaana dawns upon a Yogi by the Grace of Supreme Self, when the Yogi sets his mind fully on the Absolute Truth, surrendering completely to His Will. Once Realization is attained there is nothing more to be known, i.e. all other knowledge will become irrelevant to the seeker of Truth. Of course, such Realization is not easy to come by. Most seekers drop out half way and only the persistent blessed devotees attain Realization.

Verses 4 & 5: Bhumi (Earth), Ap (water), Anala (fire), Vayu (air), Kha (space or ether), mind, intellect and ego; thus is my Prakrti (Nature) divided eightfold. This is the lower (Prakrti or Nature). But different from it, know My higher Prakrti by which this universe is sustained.

The Nature that is known to Jiva is the lower Nature. This lower nature, (the external world and the world within combined) is said to have eight components. They are earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and ego. It should be noted that space, air, fire, water and earth as commonly known are not the meanings intended here. These five elements, in Indian philosophy, are associated with the five senses of sound, touch, sight, taste and smell respectively. The elements are understood as those experienced by the five senses. Space is the sound producing agency. Air rises from space and has the properties of sound and touch. Fire rising from Air has the properties of sound, touch and sight. Water rises from fire and has the properties of sound, touch, sight and taste. Earth is the final element that rises from water, bringing with it the additional property of smell. The five senses with their sense objects, mind, intellect and ego complete the lower nature as experienced by the Jiva. The higher Nature, Power of Supreme Self, which sustains the lower Nature, is not known to Jiva, except with the Grace of the Supreme Self. The purpose of all Yogas (Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jhnana Yoga) is to attain the Grace of Supreme Self by which higher Nature becomes known.

Verses 6 & 7: Know that these (two Prakrtis) are the womb of all beings; I am the origin and dissolution of the whole universe. Beyond Me, there is naught. All this is strung in Me, as a row of jewels on a thread.

Everything in the Universe is born of these two Natures. The Supreme Self creates, sustains and dissolves the Universe through these two natures. The Higher Nature is known as Mayasakthi (the Power of Illusion) of Supreme Self and should not be seen as separate from It. Maya, however, has no power to delude the Supreme Self. Other than the Supreme Self with its Maya which dissolves into It at Will, there is nothing else. Entire Universe is a creation of Maya, a transient superimposition on the Supreme Self. Supreme Self is the bond running through all the beings, just as the thread in a chain of beads. Universal brotherhood cannot be realized without this knowledge being imbibed.

Verses 8 to 11: I am the flavour in water, radiance in the moon and the sun; I am the Om in all Vedas, sound in Akasa (space) and masculinity in men. I am the sweet fragrance in earth; brilliance in fire am I; I am the life in all beings and the penance in ascetics. Know Me as the eternal seed of all beings, intellect of the intelligent and the heroism of the heroic. Of the strong, I am the strength devoid of desire and attachment. I am desire in beings, unopposed to Dharma.

It is only the presence of the Supreme Self in all beings that enables them to sense the flavour in water, radiance in celestial objects, fragrance in earth, brilliance of fire and sound in space. It is Om, the most sacred of the Mantras in the Vedas. It is also manliness in men without which reproduction of species will not be possible. Without It, life will not exist. The power to conduct penances, intellectual prowess and heroic capabilities all come from It. It is also the strength of the strong as well as Dharmic (righteous) desires of all beings. It is the seed from which all beings have sprung. The entire Universe originated from It, is present in It and will finally dissolve into It. It is the only refuge for all beings.

Verses 12 to 15: And whatever states pertaining to Satva and those pertaining to Rajas and to Tamas, know them to proceed from Me alone; still I am not in them, but they are in Me. Deluded by these states, the modifications of the three Gunas of Prakrti, all this world does not know Me who is beyond them and immutable. Verily, this divine illusion of Mine, constituted of the Gunas is difficult to cross over; those who devote themselves to Me alone cross over this illusion. The evil-doers, the deluded, the lowest of men, deprived of discrimination by Maya and following the way of Asuras (those with demoniac qualities) do not devote themselves to Me.

Nature (both lower and higher) works through three Gunas viz. Satva, Rajas & Tamas. In the higher Prakrti these represent three activities, viz. sustenance, creation and dissolution respectively. Supreme Self should be known as controller of all activities and not at all affected by the actions of His Nature. Supreme Self is not in Prakrti, but the Power of Prakrti is in Supreme Self. The reason for the Jiva not realizing the Supreme Self is on account of Jiva's attachment to products of Prakrti, the (lower nature). Jiva should recognize the higher Nature as Jagadambika (mother of the universe). It is not easy to cross over the illusions created by the Maya of Supreme Self. The only way to transcend Maya is devotion to the Supreme Self with the firm knowledge that the higher Nature and Supreme Self are one. Those who are not willing to recognise this Truth fall for the temptations of the world and undergo many miserable births and deaths.

Verses 16 to 19: Four kinds of virtuous men worship Me - the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth and Jhnaani (the wise). Of them the Jhnaani, ever-steadfast, with devotion to the (Supreme) One excels; for supremely dear am I to Jhnaani and he is dear to Me. Noble indeed are they all, but the Jhnaani I regard as My very Self; for with the mind steadfast, he is established in Me alone as the Supreme Goal. At the end of many births, the Jhnaani takes refuge in Me, realising "all this is Vasudeva (The Supreme Self)". Very rare is such a great soul.

Devotees are divided into four types here: Those who seek relief from distress, those who seek enjoyment, those who are curious to know the Reality and the Jhnanis who have realized the Truth. The devotion of the first three is conditional, whereas it is the Jhnanis who devote themselves to Paramatma unconditionally. To the Jhnanis, Paramatma is not separate from them and as such, the Supreme Self showers Its full grace on them. They realize that there is nothing else than Supreme Self and finally merge with It. Of course, such great men are rare indeed.

Verses 20 to 23: Others again, deprived of discrimination by this or that desire, following this or that rite, devote themselves to other deities led by their own natures. Whatsoever form any devotee seeks to worship with Sraddha (faith) – that Sraddha of his do I make unwavering. Endued with that Sraddha, he engages in the worship of that and from it gains his desires – these being dispensed verily by Me alone. But the fruit (accruing) to these men of little understanding is limited. The worshippers of the Devas go to the Devas; My devotees come to me.

The Supreme Self is one, but the understanding and the reason for worship of the Supreme Self may differ from person to person. Though all worship is intended to please the Supreme Self, It is worshipped in many forms and formlessly too. Forms attributed to Supreme Self for the purpose of worship are called deities. Many mistake Hinduism to be a polytheistic religion, failing to differentiate between the concepts of God and deity. God is one and only Eternal Truth, whereas deities are perceptions of the Eternal Truth by different persons, communities, sects and/or religions. “Eka Satyam, Vipraa bahunaa vadanthi” – Truth is one, but those in the know interpret it differently” is the Vedic statement that clarifies this point. Depending upon the desire of the worshipper, the form of the deity and the rites of worship differ. Regardless of the form or rite of worship, it is the Supreme Self that showers Its Grace on the worshipper and grants the worshipper’s desire, according to the degree of faith demonstrated by the worshipper. The worshipper however thinks the boon as coming from his deity of worship, without knowing the Glory of the Supreme Self. This helps to strengthen the faith of the worshipper in the deity worshipped. As these worships are conducted with desires, the fruits of such worship are limited to the worshipper’s desire. He does not come to know of the magnificence of Paramatma fully. Realisation of such worshippers will be limited to those of their deities. Those who worship the Supreme Self without any worldly desires and feeling of separation, attain the highest goal.

Verses 24 & 25: The foolish regard Me, the un-manifested as come into manifestation not knowing my Supreme State – Immutable and Transcendental. Veiled by the illusion born of the congress of the Gunas, I am not manifest to all. This deluded world knows Me not – the Unborn, the Immutable.

The ignorant regards the Supreme Self as subjected to modifications by Nature from un-manifested to manifested state. They do not understand that Paramatma is not affected at any stage by the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the Nature’s manifestations, and that the Supreme Self is beyond Nature. The supernatural power of Supreme Self is manifested only to very few ardent devotees, such as Arjuna, as we will find in Chapter 11 hereof. With clouded intellect affected by the Gunas of Nature, the ignorant cannot even imagine the state of Supreme Self. The world in general is deluded and knowledge of Truth is difficult to come by.

Verses 26 to 28: I know the beings of the whole past, the present and the future. But none knows Me. By the delusion of the pairs of opposites, arising from desire and aversion, all beings fall into delusion at birth. Those men of virtuous deeds, whose sins have come to an end – they freed from the delusion of the pairs of opposites worship Me with firm resolve.

Supreme Self is omniscient, whereas Jivas are veiled by ignorance. While Paramatma can see the ins and outs of all Jivas the only knowledge that Jivas have is that which strains through the veil of their ignorance. Likes and dislikes formed from births after births make them born deluded. Only those who have earned merit through good deeds washing away their past sins, can overcome the likes and dislikes formed earlier and worship the Supreme Self with full devotion.

Verses 29 & 30: Those who strive for freedom from old age and death taking refuge in Me, they know Brahma, the whole of Adhyatma (Reality underlying within Jiva) and Karma in its entirety. Those who know me with the Adhibhuta, the Adhidaiva and the Adhiyajhna know me even at the time of death, steadfast in mind.

The meanings of Adhyatma, Karma, Adhibhuta, Adhidaiva and Adhiyajhna will be dealt with, in the next chapter. Only a realized Jiva, with this knowledge ingrained within, can keep his mind turned towards the Supreme Self at the time of death. By this, he can free himself from the transmigration cycle. Chapter 7 concludes here.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 8 – Aksharabrahmayoga

This chapter is titled Aksharabrahmayoga (Yoga of Imperishable Brahma). The imperishable nature of Brahma is being dealt with, in this chapter. Only Brahma is eternal and beyond time. Everything else, including Brahmadeva, the creator is time-bound and has life and death. Brahmadeva is however not deluded as He is ever devoted to Supreme Self and carries out creation fully knowing the illusory nature of His creations. The Supreme Self present in all beings do not perish with the dissolution of body, but takes new body according to the vasaanas (urges) associated with it, which are remembered at the time of death. It is only the constant remembrance of Brahma during life, which will bring forth the memory of Brahma at the time of death. This alone can result in escape from the transmigration cycle as only Brahma transcends time and exists at all times. Time is Paramatma's power of dissolution. At His Will, time would dissolve into Him. Supreme Self, therefore, has the power to control creation as well as dissolution. He is the one who sustains all creation within time.

Last chapter ended with the statement by the Lord that those who take refuge in Supreme Self know Brahma, the whole of Adhyaatma and Karma in its entirety. They also know Supreme Self with the Adhibhuta, the Adhidaiva and the Adhiyajna at the time of death. This chapter begins with explaining the meaning of the six terms Brahma, Adhyatma, Karma, Adhibhuta, Adhidaiva & Adhiyajna.

Arjuna said:

Verses 1 & 2: O' Purushottama (Krishna): What are Brahma, Adhyatma, Karma, Adhibhuta and Adhidaiva? Who and in what way is the Adhiyajna here in this body? O' Slayer of Madhu, how are you (Supreme Self) known at the time of death, by the self-controlled?

In these verses, Arjuna asks Lord Krishna to clarify the meanings of the six terms viz. Brahma, Adhyatma, Karma, Adhibhuta and Adhiyajna referred to in the closing verses of last chapter. Arjuna's second question is how a Yogi can keep the memory of Supreme Self bright at the time of death.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 3 & 4: The Imperishable is the Supreme Brahma. Its dwelling in each individual body is called Adhyaatma. The offering in sacrifice which causes the genesis and support of beings is called Karma. The perishable adjunct is the Adhibhuta and the indweller is the Adhidaiva. I alone am the Adhiyajna here, O' best of the embodied

Lord Krishna replies:

Supreme Brahma is the imperishable. The term used here for imperishable is akshara. Akshara is a synonym for the Mantra "Om", which is also known as Pranava. In this verse, Brahma means that which is represented by "Om". Brahma is qualified in this verse by the adjective Supreme to signify that there is nothing equal to or beyond Brahma.

The self-luminous Brahma while said to be present in each individual body is Adhyaatma.

Karma is manifest creation bringing beings into existence. Creation and sustenance is only possible through Karma.

The perishable adjunct which is different from and yet depends for its existence on the Self – i.e. everything material, everything that has birth is Adhibhuta. They are all created and have a beginning and end.

Adhidaiva is Purusha. Purusha means that which fills all or that which reclines in the City - the divinity that protects organs of cognition and action. Vedas describe him as first cosmic being and present in the body of each being as the spirit controlling Praana (breath or vital life force), sense organs and organs of action. His body is the subtle world – i.e. the cosmic intellect, mind, memory and ego.

Adhiyajhna is the presiding deity of all sacrifices. Attainment of everything virtuous is possible only through sacrifices. Results of all sacrifices come from Adhiyajhna, the omnipresent sustaining power of the Supreme Self. Adhiyajhna is none but Supreme Self. He is separate from intellect, mind, memory and ego. He is present in each being to enable the individual to conduct sacrifices through which the Eternal Truth can be realised. Performance of sacrifices and realisation is possible only while embodied.

By Brahma, qualified as imperishable and Supreme, that which is to be known is identified. By the term Adhyaatma, the individual self, the one who seeks Self-knowledge, being present in a body is also Brahma is made known. Karma, the process of sacrifice, by which Self-knowledge will be revealed to the seeker, is also Brahma. It is therefore important for a Karma Yogi to do all service to fellow-beings as a dedication to Supreme Self. Adhibhuta, the entire material world is also creation of the Brahma. The power to control praana and the subtle body (intellect, mind, memory and ego) as well as sense organs and organs of action, present in each body, is also to be recognized as Brahma. Finally, it should be realized that all yajhnaas (sacrifices -virtuous deeds) are conducted for the pleasure of Brahma and the results of such yajhnaas are to come from none other than Brahma. In the case of a Yogi, the end result is union of individual self with Brahma, by purification of the subtle body, dedicating the material world through Karma in the form of Yajhna. The same idea expressed in verse 24 of Chapter IV is presented in a different form here. For a person living a life of sacrifice for the sake of Self-knowledge, there is nothing other than the Supreme Self anywhere.

A person, who realizes that his individual self, sacrifices, entire material world, praana, intellectual prowess, mental abilities including memory and ego are all the Grace of the presiding deity of sacrifice, the sustaining power of Supreme Self present in all beings, is able to retain the memory of Supreme Self at the time of death too.

Verses 5 to 8: And he who at the time of death meditating on Me alone, goes forth leaving the body, attains My Being: There is no doubt about this. Remembering whatever object, at the end, he leaves the body, that alone is reached by him, because of his constant thought of that object. Therefore, at all times, constantly remember Me, and fight. With mind and intellect absorbed in Me, you shall come to me, no doubt. With the mind not moving towards anything else, made steadfast by the method of habitual meditation and dwelling on the Supreme Resplendent Purusha (Self), one goes to Him.

Lord explains further: It is important to keep the memory of Supreme Self alive at the time of death because that alone can ensure union with Supreme Self. What would remain in memory at the time of death is determined by what is constantly being thought of during life by the dying person. Therefore while engaged in fight (fight means righteous duty, as being a Kshatriya, Arjuna's righteous duty is to fight for Dharma) always keep the Paramatma in mind. Such a person shall doubtlessly attain the Supreme Goal is the Lord's assurance. Constant meditation on the Supreme Self, at all available time is the sure way to reach Supreme Self.

Verses 9 & 10: The Omniscient, the Ancient, the Over-ruler, more minute than an atom, one who sustains all, of form inconceivable, self-luminous like the sun, beyond the darkness of Maya – he who meditates on Him thus, at the time of death, full of devotion, with the mind unmoving, and also by the Power of Yoga, fixing the whole Prana betwixt the eyebrows, he goes to that Supreme Resplendent Purusha (Self).

The method of meditation is clarified here. Supreme Self should be thought of as all-knowing, the one that existed before creation, controller of all beings, subtlest of all, merciful towards creation, beyond ken of mortals, brighter than the brightest, totally pure and free from all blemishes. He who meditates thus devotionally at the time of death with his power of Yoga with control over breath and with an unwavering mind would attain the Eternal Bliss of Supreme Self.

Verse 11 to 14: What the knowers of the Veda speak of as Imperishable, what the Sanyaasis (recluse), freed from attachment enter, and to gain which goal they live the life of a Brahmachari (celibate), that I shall declare unto you in brief. Controlling all the senses, confining the mind in the heart, drawing the Praana into the head, occupied in the practice of concentration, uttering the one-syllabled Om – the Brahma - meditating on Me – he who so departs, leaving the body, attains the Supreme Goal. I am easily attainable by that ever-steadfast Yogi who remembers Me constantly and daily, with a single mind.

Once again, Lord Krishna is making clear the method of meditation for Yogis for constant practice as well as at the time of death. Why a Sanyaasi gives up all attachments and adhere to the vow of celibacy is to attain the realisation of the Eternal Truth, the imperishable Brahma. Senses are to be brought under control, breath should be controlled drawing them upward, the Mantra “OM” is to be chanted, mind should be kept steadfast on the form, if any assigned to Brahma or formlessness of Brahma and thus meditating should one leave the body. As it is difficult to meditate on formlessness, it is always recommended to commence meditation on Ishtadevatha (a form of liking attributed to Brahma). Such meditation at the time of death is not difficult for a Yogi of constant practice.

Verses 15 & 16: Reaching the highest perfection and having attained Me, the great-souls are no more subject to rebirth, in the ephemeral world, home of suffering. All the worlds including the Realm of Brahmadeva are subject to return. But after attaining Me, there is no rebirth.

Taking birth inevitably involves death as well as sufferings during life-time. Heaven is not eternal. Even life of Brahmadeva, the creator, has an end. The only way to avoid re-birth is union of Jiva with Supreme Self. Knowing this, the great souls strive for attainment of union with Paramatma and reach the realm of no-return through Self Realization.

Verses 17 to 19: They who know (the true measure of) day and night know the day of Brahmadeva which ends in a thousand Yugas and the night which (also) ends in a thousand Yugas. At the approach of the (Brahmadeva's) day all manifestations proceed from the un-manifested state; at the approach of night, they merge verily into that alone, which is called the un-manifested. The very same multitude of beings (that existed in the preceding day of Brahmadeva) being born again and again, merge, in spite of themselves (into the un-manifested) at the approach of night, and re-manifest at the approach of day.

Brahmadeva, the Creator is also time-bound. The time during which the creative intelligence is manifested is Brahmadeva's day and the time at which His creative intelligence is at rest is Brahmadeva's night. The Creator's days and nights are thousand Yugas each, a very long time beyond human comprehension. All the beings emerge during the Day and dissolve into the Creator's sleep during Night, in order to re-manifest at the approach of the next Day.

Verses 20 to 22: But beyond this un-manifested, there is that other Un-manifested, Eternal Existence – that which is not destroyed at the destruction of all beings. What has been called Un-manifested and Imperishable has been described as the Goal Supreme. That is my highest state; having attained which, there is no return. And that Supreme Purusha (Self) is attainable by whole-souled devotion to Him alone, in Whom all beings dwell, and by Whom all this is pervaded.

Beyond the Creator's world is the Abode of Supreme Self, the Eternal. Attaining this, there shall be no re-birth. Selfless Devotion to the Supreme Self is the only way by which this Goal can be reached. This is the true form of all beings and this should be the Supreme Goal of human life. Supreme Self is present in all beings and all beings dwell in It.

Verses 23 to 26: Now I shall tell you of the time (path) travelling in which the Yogis return (and again of that taking which) they do not return. Fire, flame, day-time, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern passage of the sun – taking this path the knowers of Brahma go to Brahma. Smoke, night-time, the dark fortnight, the six months of the southern passage of the sun – taking this path, the Yogi attaining the lunar light, returns. Truly are these bright and dark paths of the world considered eternal: one leads to non-return: but the other one returns.

Yogis are classified into two types here – Nivrtti Marga (the path of relinquishment) and Pravrtti Marga (the path of action). The paths taken are described here - one as the path of light (knowledge) and the other as the path of darkness. First path is the solar path, the path of Jhnanas, which takes one, after death to Supreme Self, through fire, flame, day-time, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern passage of the sun (all deities of light). The other is the lunar path, the path of karma, which takes one through Smoke, night-time, the dark fortnight, the six months of the southern passage of the sun (all deities of darkness), to the worlds with re-birth. Based on the choice of the Yogi, he can choose any of the two paths. A Mahatma (great soul) may prefer to return to the world for spiritual uplift of his fellow-beings rather than liberating himself totally from the transmigration cycle. Return to the mortal world, however involves the risk of getting deluded by the Power of Maya and the only way to avert this risk is to keep the memory of Supreme Self alive through Yoga, at all times. These paths are considered eternal. The word eternal here means as long as universe exists.

Verses 27 & 28: No Yogi is deluded after knowing these paths. Therefore, be you steadfast in Yoga at all times. Whatever meritorious effect is declared (in the scriptures) to accrue from (the study of) the Vedas, (the performance of) Yajhnas, penances and gifts – above all this rises the Yogi, having known this, attains the Prime, Supreme Abode.

Yogis who have realized the two paths are freed from delusion of Maya. Yoga should therefore be practised with full devotion to Paramatma. Such Yogis accrue more merit than those who study Vedas, perform Yajhnas or penances and those who give away in charities. Only such Yogis attain the Supreme Goal.

Here ends Chapter 8 of Gita.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Chapter 9 – Rajavidyajarajaguhyayoga

This chapter is titled Rajavidyajarajaguhyayoga (Yoga of Kingly Knowledge and Kingly Secret). Rajavidya means the process of understanding that truth beyond which there is nothing more to be comprehended and Rajaguhyya means the most hidden secret. This chapter deals with the knowledge of the secrets of secret. What is secretive about this knowledge? Because this knowledge calls for total sacrifice of all sankalpas (Assumptions) and ignorance, which is difficult for a worldly person spurred by desires to attain. As such this knowledge is revealed only to chosen few.

As already learnt, the Supreme Self is Suddha Jhnanaswaroopa (pure knowledge or consciousness), bhakthavatsala (merciful to devotees), naishkarmya (inactive) and advaita (non-dual). Inherent in him is the infinite power of creation, sustenance and dissolution called Maya (Power of illusion). These activities are called Karma. The three activities of Maya – viz. creation, sustenance and dissolution are carried out by the three Gunas (qualities), Rajas, Satva and Tamas respectively. The three activities are not possible without the presence of Self. However these activities do not bind the Self as long as the Self has the awareness of the illusory nature of creation. All activities of Maya are of an illusory nature and nothing other than the Supreme Self is ever exists in reality. Supreme Self is in total control of His Power of Maya. Exercising Its Free Will, the Supreme Self, through its Creative Intelligence assumes various forms of life. These Jivas in course of time through their Karma lose the memory of their true form (identity with Supreme Self), loses touch with reality and through various sankalpas (assumptions) develops ego. The only way to regain the knowledge of true Self is by constant devotion to Supreme Self and performance of Karma as service to fellow-beings knowing them to be different forms of one Supreme Truth.

The devotee should realize that the entire Universe is born of Supreme Self, through Mother Nature and all glory of creation found in this Universe is of the Paramatma.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 1 to 3: To you, who do not carp, verily shall I now declare this, the most profound knowledge, united with realisation, having known which, you shall be free from evil (Samsara). Of sciences, the highest; of profundities the deepest; of purifiers the supreme; this is realisable by direct perception, endowed with Dharma, very easy to perform and of an imperishable nature. Persons without Sraddha (faith) for this Dharma return without attaining Me, to the path of rebirth fraught with death.

As Arjuna has totally submitted himself to Lord Krishna, the Lord now promises to divulge to him the most profound knowledge, beyond which there is nothing to be known. Two qualities asked of the devotee to merit this knowledge is Dharma (righteousness) and Sraddha (faith in the Supreme Self, the Guru and the Spiritual Sciences).

Verses 4 to 6: All this world is pervaded by Me in My un-manifest form: all beings exist in Me, but I do not dwell in them. Nor do beings exist in Me (in reality), behold my divine Yoga! Bringing forth and supporting the beings, My Self does not dwell in them. As the mighty wind, moving everywhere, rests ever in the Akaasa (space), know that even so do all beings rest in Me.

Nothing other than the Supreme Self is real. Entire Universe created by Maya is a superimposition on the Supreme Self. Universe exists in Self. Self does not exist in Universe. Self pervades the Universe in an un-manifest form. But in reality the Universe does not exist, but is only an illusion created by the Maya. All beings are created and supported by Maya. Though Self is present in all beings, the delusion that Self dwells in beings like corporeal things should be avoided. Self does not dwell in beings in contact with them or is not held in them like a concrete body. As the moving wind rests in space causing no effect on space so does Self pervade all beings without any contact with them.

Verses 7 to 10: At the end of a Kalpa, all beings go back to My Prakrti: at the beginning of (another) Kalpa, I send them forth again. Animating my Prakrti, I project again and again this whole multitude of beings, helpless under the sway of Prakrti. These acts do not bind Me, sitting as neutral, unattached to them. By reason of my proximity, Prakrti produces all this, the moving and the unmoving; the world wheels round and round, because of this.

At the end of a Kalpa (period of cosmic manifestation) the creations dissolve into Nature. Again when another period of cosmic manifestation begins, they re-emerge from Nature. Nature which had gone to sleep at the time of universal dissolution at the end of the Kalpa wakes up at the dawn of another Kalpa invigorated and fertilized by Paramatma. Though Nature is the active element, Nature cannot do anything without the presence of Self. The seed for activity is drawn by Nature from the Self. The actions by Nature have no impact on Self.

Verses 11 & 12: Unaware of My higher state, as the great Lord of beings, fools disregard Me, dwelling in the human form. Of vain hopes, of vain works, of vain knowledge and senseless, they verily are possessed of the delusive nature of Rakshasas and Asuraas (those with Tamasic and Rajasic natures).

Without knowing this higher state of Paramatma, ignorant considers Self as dwelling in the physical human form. This avidya (wrong knowledge) results in their leading a life full of worldly desires, worthless activities and misconceived notions. Instead of a life guided by true knowledge, they lead a life full of sinful, selfish and devilish actions, creating hell for themselves and for those around them.

Verses 13 to 15: But the great souls, possessed of the Divine Prakrti, knowing Me to be the origin of beings and immutable, worship Me with unwavering mind. Glorifying Me always and striving with firm resolve, bowing down to Me in devotion, always steadfast, they worship Me. Others, too, sacrificing by the Yajhna of knowledge (i.e. seeing the Self in all), worship Me, the All formed, as one, as distinct, as manifold.

But those endowed with Vidya (the right knowledge of Supreme Self), imbibe divine qualities and worship the Paramatma with an unwavering mind. Devotees sing the Glories of the Lord and bow down to their deity with full faith. Glory they sing is of the Self of all beings and not of someone separate from oneself. Many modern thinkers fail to understand the need for singing the Glory of the Lord. They ask why the Lord should be flattered by glorifying Him. There are two things to be remembered here. 1. Flattery means attributing someone qualities & virtues not present in him. Supreme Self cannot be flattered, as it is not even possible to grasp Its magnificence by human imagination. 2. Singing Its Glory is in reality an effort to understand the inherent qualities within oneself as well as one's fellow-beings. Certain others prefer to follow the path of sacrifice. Sacrifice is not just a ritual but an effort to give up ignorance and sankalpas (misconceived Assumptions).

Verses 16 to 19: I am the Kratu, Yajhna, Svadha, Aushadha, Mantra, Ajya, Fire and the Oblation. I am the Father of this world, the Mother, One who sustains the worlds, the Grandfather, the Purifier, That which is to be known, Om and also Rk, Saama and Yajus (the three Vedas). (I am) the Goal, the Supporter, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, the Refuge, the Friend, the Origin, the Dissolution, the Substratum, the Storehouse, the Seed immutable. (As Sun) I give heat; I withhold and send forth rain; I am immortality and also death; being and non-being am I.

Omnipotence of the Self is the subject of these verses. Supreme Self is described here in various ways to make clear Its absolute supremacy. The Supreme Self is:

Kratu – A complex Vedic rite, Yajhna – Sacrifices performed according to Vedas, Svadha – offerings to manes, Aushadha – all vegetables and medicinal herbs, Mantra – the chant with which oblation is offered, Ajya – articles of oblation, Fire: into which the offering is poured during Yajhna, the act of oblation.

Supreme Self is the father of the world as the seed for creation comes from It. It is the mother as the Maya (the mother of the Universe) is Its Power of Assumption. The world is supported by It. It is the Grandfather as the first being the Cosmic Creator originated from It. It is the Purifier as all purifying Self-knowledge is revealed by It. Self is what is to be known, as all actions consummate on knowing It. Om and all the three Vedas are It, as they lead Jiva to the Supreme Self. It is the final goal of all Jivas. Without Its support existence is not possible. It is the Lord as it is the master of Maya. It is the witness as all actions take place in its presence, but It is not affected by such actions. It is the refuge because submission to It is the only way to liberation. It is the friend as It can be counted upon for help in all situations. Entire universe originated from It and will finally be dissolved into it. It is the substratum as all thoughts emerge from it and is behind all that is sensed. It is the store-house because all fruits of actions ensue from it – so does knowledge of the Self for those who act without desire for fruits of action. It is the seed immutable, because it has the capability to produce infinite number of universes and still remain potential as ever. Being the controller of nature, heat and rain are obtained from It. For those who have realized the Self It is immortality and for those unrealized It is death. All non-beings and beings are Its creation and are superimpositions on It.

Verses 20 & 21: The knowers of the three Vedas, worshipping Me by Yajhna, drinking the Soma, and thus being purified from sin, pray for passage to heaven; reaching the holy world of the Lord of the Devas, they enjoy in heaven the divine pleasures of the Devas. Having enjoyed the vast Svarga (heaven), on exhaustion of their merit, they enter the mortal world. Thus abiding by the injunctions of the three (Vedas), tempted by desires they keep going and coming.

Temporality of heaven is clarified here. With the knowledge of Vedas and with proper performance of certain Vedic rites, passage to heaven is possible where a life of sensual pleasures is possible. But heavenly pleasures are possible only until such time till one's merit exhaust. Then the Jiva has to come back to the mortal world and take a body to continue its Karma.

Verses 22: Persons who, meditating on Me without other thoughts (as non-separate), worship Me in all beings, to them thus ever zealously engaged, I give them Yoga as well as I grant them worldly welfare.

For the blessed ones who meditate on the Paramatma without other thoughts and see the Self in all beings, their union with Supreme Self as well as all their worldly welfare will be taken care of by Paramatma.

Verses 23 to 25: Even those devotees, who endued with Sraddha worship other deities, they too worship Me alone, but by the wrong method (not according to the rules of Sastra). For I alone am the Enjoyer and Lord of all Yajhnas; but because they do not know Me in reality, they return (to the mortal world). Those who worship Devas go to the Devas, to Pitrs (manes) go their votaries; to the Bhutas go the Bhuta worshippers. My votaries come to Me.

Many, unaware of the true knowledge and because of their personal deficiencies could be worshipping the Paramatma without complying with rules of the Spiritual Sciences. Whichever deity one may worship, the worship is of none other than the Supreme Self. It is this knowledge which is the root of religious tolerance. Those who do not have true knowledge, they go to the worlds of their deities (they realize the worlds according to their concept of Self). It may be the world of Devas (divine beings), Manes (deified souls of dead ancestors) or Bhutas (Tamasic beings). Those with true knowledge of Self reach the Supreme Abode.

Verses 26 to 28: Whoever with devotion offers Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water that I accept – the devout gift of the pure-minded. Whatever you do, eat, offer in sacrifice, give away as charity, practise as penance do that as an offering unto Me. You shall thus be freed from the bondage of Karma, bearing good and evil results: with the heart steadfast in Yoga of renunciation and liberated you shall come unto Me.

Result of devotion is not measured by the scale of largesse of the offering, but by the devotion behind it. Even a leaf, flower, fruit or water offered with pure minded devotion pleases the Paramatma. To ensure constant remembrance of the Supreme Self, a devotee should perform all actions as an offering to It. Release from bondage of Karma would be the result of such a devoted life and realization of Supreme Self will be attained.

Verse 29 to 31: I am the same to all beings: to Me there is none hateful or dear. But those who worship Me with devotion, are in Me, and I too am in them. If even a very wicked person worships Me with devotion to none else, he should be regarded as good, for he has rightly resolved. Soon he becomes righteous and attains eternal Peace. Boldly, you can proclaim that My devotee never perishes.

Since all beings are essentially Supreme Self, It is impartial to all. It is the faith and devotion to It which makes one the vessel of Its Grace. Faith and devotion for It in a wicked person marks the beginning of reform of such a person. He will soon turn righteous and attain eternal Peace. One's past actions or present condition will not prevent a person from salvation, if only such a person can command faith and devotion to Paramatma.

Verses 32 & 33: For, taking refuge in Me, they also, who might be of inferior birth - women, Vaisyas as well as Sudras attain the Supreme Goal. What need to mention of holy Brahmanas and devoted Rajarshis (Kings with qualities of a sage). Having obtained this transient, joyless world, worship Me.

Similarly, the class or social status is also no bar for a devotee to attain the Supreme Goal. The word "women" here represents persons dominated by worldly desires. Vaisyas are those who go after wealth and Sudras are those with Tamasic qualities. What to talk of a person who is born with social circumstances conducive to devotion and Jhnanas. The ephemeral nature of this world should always be borne in mind and that which is Eternal should be worshipped.

Verse 34: Fill your mind with Me, be My devotee, sacrifice unto Me, bow down to Me, thus having made your heart steadfast in Me taking Me as the Supreme Goal, you shall come to Me.

Ever remember the Supreme Self, be its constant devotee, sacrifice the worldly desires for Its knowledge, bow down to It, thus with firm faith surrender to It and one shall surely reach It.

Here ends Chapter 9 of Gita.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 10 – Vibhuthiyoga

This chapter is titled Vibhuthiyoga (Yoga of Divine Glory) and lists glimpses of manifested powers of the Supreme Self. In this chapter, Lord Krishna advises Arjuna that whatever excellence one sees in the universe whether it be of a sentient being or insentient, it should be understood as manifestation of the Power of Supreme Self. Whatever glory that we see in the universe is drawn from the Supreme Self present within all beings. Infinite is the powers of the Supreme Self and what is experienced by us in the universe is only a tiny fragment of such powers.

In answer to a question by Arjuna on how to meditate upon the powers of Supreme Self, Lord answers that it should be realized that whatever excellence we see around is of Supreme Self. There is no source of power, whether virtuous or vicious, other than the Supreme Self. A brief list of those who have excelled in various fields is furnished and Arjuna is advised that he may meditate on any or all of these with the knowledge that their glory is only manifestation of a tiny fraction of the powers of Paramatma. This list is drawn based on the Puranas and Ithihaasas (Indian mythology and epics) and knowledge of these great works will be an advantage in understanding fully verses 6 & 7, 12 to 18 and 21 to 39 of this chapter.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 1 to 3: Again, O' Arjuna, listen to My supreme word, which I, wishing your welfare, shall tell you who are delighted (to hear from me). Neither the hosts of Devas, nor the great Rshis know My origin, for in every way I am the source of all the Devas and the great Rshis. He who knows Me, birth-less and beginning-less, the great Lord of worlds, he among mortals, is un-deluded, he is freed from all sins.

No sage or divine being is in a position to know Supreme Self, as It is beyond intellectual comprehension. Supreme Self can only be realized as Self. The knowledge of Paramatma is limited to being one with It and realizing It as one without beginning and end. All the worlds emerge from It, rests in It and dissolves in It all at Its Free Will. Those who so know It and unite with It are freed from the delusion of Maya.

Verses 4 & 5: Intelligence, knowledge, non-delusion, forbearance, truth, restraint of the external senses, calmness of heart, happiness, misery, birth, death, fear as well as fearlessness, non-injury, evenness, contentment, penance, benevolence, fame as well as infamy – these different kinds of qualities of beings arise from Me alone.

All the qualities observed in beings arise from the Supreme Self. All these qualities are creations of Maya, the power of illusion of the Paramatma. It is not only the positive emotions that are born of Paramatma but also the negative ones. While Paramatma is free of all emotions and full of mercy for all beings, the creation is dualistic in nature and both positive and negative is present in creation. All powers of creation belong to the Supreme Self.

Verses 6 & 7: The seven great Rshis as well as the first four and Manus were mind-born, endowed with my powers (due to their thoughts being fixed on Me); from them are these creatures in the world. He who, in reality knows these manifold manifestations of My being and (this) Yoga power of Mine, becomes established in the unshakable Yoga – there is no doubt about it.

The seven great Rshis, the first four sages, and Manus, the first among men had possessed great powers because they were mind-born from the Creator and their thoughts were fixed on Paramatma. The beings subsequently emerged are all their progeny. Those, who know the diverse creations proceed from a single source and the power of that source is infinite, become established in Yoga.

Verses 8 to 11: I am the origin of all. From Me everything evolves – thus thinking, the wise worship Me with loving consciousness. With their minds fixed wholly on Me, with their senses absorbed in Me, enlightening one another and always speaking of Me, they are satisfied and delighted. To them, ever steadfast and serving Me with affection, I give that Buddhi Yoga (Devotion to right knowledge) by which they come unto Me. Out of mere compassion for them, I, abiding in their hearts, destroy the darkness (in them) born of ignorance, by the luminous lamp of knowledge.

The knowledge that everything originates from the Self and meditation on this knowledge makes the consciousness pure as the only emotion that Self has for Self is love. For persons who have attained this knowledge the only subject of interest would be Self and the Glory of Self. Buddhi-yoga (Devotion to right knowledge) comes to them naturally from within. Their veil of ignorance gets shattered and the lamp of knowledge within shines dispelling all darkness.

Arjuna said:

Verses 12 to 18: You are the Supreme Brahma, the Supreme Abode, the Supreme Purifier. All the Rshis, the Devarshi Narada as well as Asita, Devala and Vyaasa have declared You as Eternal, the Self Luminous Purusha, the first Deva, Birth-less and All-pervading. So also You say to me. I regard all this You say to me as true. O' Lord, verily neither the Devas nor the Daanavas know Your manifestations. Verily only You know Yourself by Yourself, O' Supreme Purusha, O' Source of Beings, O' Lord of beings, O' Deva of Devas, O' Lord of beings, O' Protector of the World. You should indeed speak, without reserve, of Your divine attributes by which filling all these worlds, You exist. How shall I, O' Yogi, meditate ever to know You? In what things, O' Bhagavan (God) are You to be thought of by me? Speak to me again in detail, O' Lord Krishna of your Yoga-powers and attributes; for I am never satisfied in hearing the ambrosia (of Your speech).

Arjuna is now beginning to see the Supreme Self through Lord Krishna and expresses his faith in his Mentor by the statement that "all that You say is true". He requests the Lord to speak in detail of His manifestations and divine attributes. He asks how the Supreme Self seen through the Guru is to be meditated upon. To express his full interest in the subject he states that "I am never satisfied with the nectar of your speech".

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 19 & 20: I shall speak to you now of My divine attributes, according to their prominence: there is no end to the particulars of My manifestations. I am the Self, existent in the heart of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings.

Infinite are the manifestations of Paramatma. Only a few prominent examples can be furnished. Paramatma is the Self in all beings and Self has no beginning, middle or end.

Verses 21 to 39: I am Vishnu among Adityas, of the luminaries, I am the radiant sun. Of the winds, I am Marichi, among the stars, I am Moon; I am the Sama-Veda of the Vedas, Indra of the Devas, of the senses I am the mind and intelligence in living beings am I. And of the Rudras I am Sankara; of the Yakshas and Raakshasas the Lord of wealth (Kubera); of the Vasus I am Paavaka; and of mountains Meru am I. And of priests know me the chief Brhaspati; of generals, I am Skanda; of bodies of water, I am the ocean. Of the great Rshis I am Bhrgu; of words, I am the one-syllable Om; of Yajhnas, I am the Yajhna of Japa; of immovable things, the Himalaya.

Of all trees, (I am) the Asvattha and Narada of Devarshis, Chitraratha of Gandharvas am I; and the Muni Kapila of the perfected ones. Know me among horses, as Uchhaisravas, Amrta-born; of Lordly elephants Airavata and of men, the king. Of weapons, I am the thunderbolt, of cows, I am Kaamadhenu, I am the Kandarpa, the cause of offspring; of serpents, I am Vasuki; Ananta of snakes, I am. I am Varuna of water-beings; Aryama of manes I am; I am Yama of controllers. And Prahlada am I of Diti's progeny, of measures, I am time; of beasts, I am the lion and Garuda among birds. Of purifiers, I am the wind, Rama of warriors am I; of fishes, I am the shark; of streams, I am Ganges.

Of manifestations, I am the beginning, the middle and also the end; of all knowledge, I am the knowledge of the Self and Vada (logic) of disputants. Of letters the letter A am I, Dvandas of all compounds; I alone am the inexhaustible Time, I the All-formed Sustainer (by dispensing fruits of action). And I am the all-seizing Death and of things yet to be, I am the origin; of feminine qualities, (I am) fame, prosperity (with grace), speech, memory, intelligence, constancy and forbearance. Of samas, I am the brhad-sama; of meters, I am Gayatri; of months, I am margasirsha; of seasons, I am spring, the flowery season.

I am the gambling of the fraudulent; I am the power of the powerful; I am victory; I am resolution; I am the virtue of the virtuous. Of the Vrshnis, I am Vasudeva; of the Pandavas I am Arjuna; of the munis I am Vyasa; of the sages, I am Usanah. Of punishers, I am sceptre; of those who seek to conquer, I am statesmanship; of things secret, I am silence and the knowledge of knowers am I. And whatsoever is the seed of all beings, that also am I. There is no being, whether moving or unmoving that can exist without Me.

All the excellence that one sees in this universe is attained from the Supreme Self. All these grand accomplishments are products of faith in the Self, constant devotion to Self, willingness to sacrifice, control of senses and concentration of mind and realization of the power of Yoga. All manifestations and excellence in manifestation are of Paramatma.

Verses 40 to 42: There is no end of My divine attributes – but this is a brief statement by Me of the particulars of My divine attributes. Whatever being there is great, prosperous or powerful – know that to be a product of a part of My splendour. Or what avails you to know all this diversity, O' Arjuna? Know that I exist for ever, supporting this whole world by a fragment of My Power.

What is given above in verses 21 to 39 are only a brief statement of the Divine Glory. There is no end to the Glory of His manifestations. Wherever greatness, prosperity or power is observed, know that to be the manifestation of the power of Paramatma. This will eliminate envy from the heart. What is to be realized is that this entire universe is created and supported by a fraction of the Power of manifestation of Supreme Self.

Here ends chapter 10.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Chapter 11 – Visvarupadarsanam

This chapter is named Visvarupadarsanam (Vision of the Cosmic Form). In this chapter Lord Krishna reveals His cosmic form to Arjuna to make it clear to the latter, that the entire Universe is contained in the Supreme Self.

“Sarvabhuthastham atmaanam sarvabhutaani chaatmani sampasyan paramam brahmam yaathi naanyena hethuna” is a verse from Kaivalyopanishad. It means that “Seeing (cognizing) all the beings in the Self and the Self in all beings one attains Supreme Brahma and by no other means”. Earlier chapters gave us an insight into how the Self is present in all the beings. In this chapter Lord reveals how all the beings are present in the Supreme Self. Vision of the cosmic form signifies cognition by the sadhaka of the ultimate truth that the entire universe exists within the Supreme Self as an illusion. The Supreme Self is in total control of the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the illusion. The place where the Gitopadesa (advice of Gita to Arjuna) takes place being a battle-field of Kurukshetra, the cosmic form revealed to Arjuna by the Lord is one of Time dissolving the warriors on both sides of the battle. This form is terrifying to Arjuna. So, it would be for the sadhakas to view the nigraha (destroying) form of the Supreme Self. Truth is that all that is created will certainly be dissolved by Time. It is only natural that Arjuna asks the Lord to conceal the Cosmic Form and reveal the Anugraha (blessing) Divine Form with four arms which Arjuna worships and is pleasing to all. The Supreme Self has the capacity for both nigraha and anugraha at the same time. Time described as jagatbhakshaka (consumer of universe) by Adi Sankaraacharya Swamikal is fearsome to all. But true devotees are able to see through Time the Blissful Form of the Supreme Self.

Arjuna said:

Verses 1 to 4: By the supremely profound words on the discrimination of Self, that have been spoken by You out of compassion towards me, my delusion is gone. Of You, lotus eyed, I have heard at length, of the origin and dissolution of beings as also Your inexhaustible greatness. So it is, O’ Supreme Lord, as you have declared Yourself. (Still) I desire to see Your form of Isvara (God), O’Supreme Purusha. If O’ Lord, You think me capable of seeing it, then O’Lord of Yogis, show me your Immutable Self.

Hearing the Lord’s advice in the earlier chapters, Arjuna is convinced of the omnipotence of the Supreme Self and expresses his desire to have a direct experience of the omnipresence of the Supreme Self, if the Lord considers him worthy of that experience.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 5 to 8: Behold, O’ Partha (Arjuna), by hundreds and thousands, My different forms celestial of various colours and shapes. Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the two Asvins and the Maruts; behold many wonders never seen before. See now, in this My body, the whole universe centred in one – including the moving and the unmoving and all else that you desire to see. But you cannot see Me with these eyes of yours; I give you supersensuous sight; behold My Supreme Yoga Power.

Lord accedes kindly to Arjuna’s request and gives an introduction of what the Cosmic Form that He would be revealing is like. He also explains to Arjuna that such a Form is not visible to mortal eyes and mercifully grants His devotee extra-sensory power to view the Cosmic Form *Sanjaya said:*

Verses 9 to 14: Having thus spoken, O’ King, Hari (Lord Krishna) the Great Lord of Yoga showed Arjuna His Supreme Isvara-Form - with numerous mouths and eyes, with numerous wondrous sights, with numerous celestial ornaments, up in arms with numerous celestial weapons, wearing celestial garlands and apparel, anointed with celestial scented unguents, the All wonderful Resplendent, Boundless and All-formed. If the splendour of a thousand suns were to rise up simultaneously in the sky, that would be like the splendour of that Mighty Being.

There in the body of the God of Gods, Arjuna then saw the whole universe resting in One, with its manifold divisions. Then, Arjuna, filled with wonder with his hairs standing on end, bending down his head to the Deva in adoration spoke thus with joined palms.

Arjuna now has the vision of the Cosmic Form which is as intensely bright as if thousand suns have risen at a time, all pervading and containing the entire universe. He is wonder-struck and bows down in devotion to the Lord with folded hands and speaks as follows.

Arjuna said:

Verses 15 to 31: I see (cognize), O' Lord, in Your body all the Devas, as also groups of beings, the mighty Brahmadeva seated on the lotus, all the Rishis and celestial serpents. I see You of boundless form on every side with manifold arms, stomachs, mouths and eyes. Neither the end nor the middle, nor also the beginning of You do I see, O' Lord of the universe, O' Cosmic Form. I see You (adorned) with diadem, club and discus; a mass of radiance blazing in all directions, dazzling all around with the light of blazing fire and sun and immeasurable. You are Imperishable, the Supreme Being, that which is to be known. You are the great Refuge of this universe; You are the undying Guardian of the Eternal Dharma; I deem You to be the everlasting Spirit. I see You, who have no beginning, middle and end, endowed with inexhaustible energy and manifold arms, with the sun and moon for Your eyes, the blazing fire for face, burning the universe with Your radiance. This space betwixt heaven and earth and all the quarters are filled by You alone. Beholding this marvellous, menacing form of Yours O' Magnanimous Being, the three worlds are overwhelmed. Verily, into You enter these hosts of Devas; some extol You in fear with folded hands; Groups of eminent Rishis and perfected souls exclaiming "May it be well" praise You with splendid hymns. The Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Sadhyas, Visva Devas, the two Asvins, Maruts, Ushmapas and hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras and Siddhas gaze at You with amazement. Having seen Your immeasurable Form – with many mouths and eyes, O' Mighty Armed, with many arms, thighs, feet and bellies and with many fearsome tusks the worlds are terrified and so am I. Touching the sky, blazing with many terrifying hues, mouths wide open, eyes flaming and distended – seeing You thus, my inner self is deeply troubled. I can find no courage nor have I inner calm, O' Vishnu. On seeing Your mouths, glowing like the all-consuming fire of Time, I can't find my bearings, nor do I find peace. Have mercy, O' Lord of the Devas, O' Abode of the universe. All those sons of Dhrtarashtra, with hosts of monarchs, Bhishma, Drona and Karna, as also the leading warriors on our side rush into Your mouth, terrible with tusks and fearful to behold. Some are found sticking between the teeth with their heads crushed to powder. Verily as the many streams of rivers rush towards the ocean, so do these heroes among men enter Your fiercely flaming mouths. As moths precipitately rush into a blazing fire only to perish, even so do these creatures also rush into Your mouths, with accelerated speed, only to perish. Repeatedly licking, swallowing all the worlds on every side with Your flaming mouths, Your fierce rays, filling the whole world with luminous energy, Your dreadful radiance scorch, O' Vishnu. Tell me who You are with Your awesome form. Salutation to You O' Supreme Deva, be gracious. I desire to know You, O' Primordial Being, for I do not understand (the nature of) Your activity.

Arjuna describes here, for the benefit of all, what all he finds in the Cosmic Form of the Lord. He sees in the Cosmic Form, the Cosmic Creator Brahmadeva as well as all the creations – Divine and Celestial beings and sages with their eyes fixed on the Lord with devotion. He also sees in the Cosmic Form all the beings of this world, both moving and stationary as well as those of the nether world. Arjuna finds all the worlds enveloped by the radiance of the Lord. He is overwhelmed by the sight of the Lord with innumerable arms, thighs, feet and bellies and fearsome tusks (as all the organs of the living beings belong to the Supreme Self). He finds his enemies in the battlefield as well as warriors on his side being consumed by the Lord. He admits that he is deeply disturbed at the sight and requests the Lord to advise him of the significance of the Form that is revealed.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 32 to 34: Dominant Time am I, wreaking the dissolution of the world. Here I am active gathering the worlds unto Me. Even without you, these warriors marshalled in these opposing forces will cease to be. Stand up therefore; win renown, conquering the enemies. Enjoy this opulent kingdom. Verily by Myself have they been already slain; be merely an occasion (apparent cause), O' Arjuna. Kill Drona, Bhishma, Jayadrata, Karna as well as other brave warriors who are already slain by Me. Be not distressed with fear; fight and you shall conquer your enemies in the battle.

Lord answers that the Cosmic Form that is revealed is that of Time, which is all-consuming. The enemies in the battle-field are sure to be killed by Time and all that Arjuna needs to perform is his righteous duty of fighting a Dharmic battle.

Sanjaya said:

Verse 35: Listening to these words of the Lord, Arjuna with joined palms, trembling, prostrated himself and again addressed Krishna in a choked voice, bowing down, overwhelmed with fear.

Sanjaya now tells Dhrtarashtra of Arjuna's condition after seeing the Cosmic Form of the Lord. Trembling with fear, full of devotion, Arjuna speaks to Lord Krishna as follows.

Arjuna said:

Verses 36 to 46: Indeed it is proper, Krishna that the world is delighted and rejoices in Your praise. Demons flee frightened away into space and all the hosts of perfected souls bow down to You in adoration. And why should they not, O' Great-souled, bow to You, greater than and the Primal Cause of even Brahmadeva, O' Infinite Being, O' Lord of the Devas, O' Abode of the universe? You are the imperishable, the Being and the non-Being, as well as that which is beyond them. You are the Primal Deva, the Ancient Purusha; You are the Supreme Refuge of this universe, You are the Knower and that which is to be known; You are the Supreme Goal. By You is the universe pervaded, O' Boundless Form. You are Vayu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, Moon, Prajapati, and great grandfather. Salutation, salutation to You, a thousand times and again and again salutation, salutation to You. Salutation in front of You before and behind You, salutation to You on every side, O' All, You are infinite in power and infinite in prowess, You pervade all – Therefore You are All. Whatever I have presumptuously said in the past out of carelessness or love, addressing You as O' Krishna, Yadava, O' friend - regarding You merely as a friend, unconscious of Your greatness – in whatever way I may have been disrespectful to You in fun, while walking, reposing, sitting, or at meals, when alone with You, O' Lord, or in company – I implore you, Immeasurable One to forgive all this. You are the Father of the world, moving and unmoving; the object of its worship; greater than the great. None there exists who is equal to You in the three worlds; who then can excel You, O' Power Incomparable. So, prostrating my body in adoration, I crave Your forgiveness, Lord adorable! As a father forgives his son, friend a dear friend, a beloved one his love, even so should You forgive me, O' Deva. Overjoyed am I to have seen what I saw never before; yet mind is distracted with terror. Show me, only that Divine Form of Yours. Have mercy, O' Lord of Devas, O' Abode of Universe. Diademed, bearing a mace and a discus, I desire to see you as before. Assume that same four-armed Form, O' Thousand armed, O' Universal Form.

Arjuna now understands why the Lord is praised by the realized ones and why demons flee from the presence of the Lord. In his own words, Arjuna praises the Lord and prostrates before the Cosmic Truth. He feels guilty of treating the Lord as a friend without knowing his greatness and apologizes for all his past actions. He seeks the Lord's forgiveness and requests him to appear before him in the Divine Form and attributes of his Ishtadevata (favoured idol of worship).

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 47 to 49: Graciously have I shown to you, O' Arjuna this Supreme Form, by My own Yoga power, this resplendent, primeval, infinite, universal Form of Mine, which has not been seen before by anyone else. Neither the study of the Veda and Yajhna, nor by charity, nor by rituals nor by severe penances am I in such Form seen, in the world of men, by any other than you, O' Arjuna. Be not afraid, nor bewildered, having beheld this Form of Mine, so terrific. With your fears dispelled and with gladdened heart now see again this former Form of Mine.

Lord tells Arjuna that the Cosmic Form revealed to him has not been revealed to anyone else before. It is not possible to see the Cosmic Form of the Lord by study of Vedas or performance of Yajhnas rituals, penance or charity. It is only total devotion to the Lord that will merit the Lord's Grace by which alone the Form revealed to Arjuna can be viewed. Lord concedes to conceal the terrifying Cosmic Form and reveal the Divine Form to Arjuna.

Sanjaya said:

Verse 50: Having thus spoken to Arjuna, Lord Krishna showed again His own Form; and the Great-souled assuming His gentle Form pacified Arjuna who was terrified.

Sanjaya intervenes to tell Dhrtaraashtra that Lord Krishna was merciful enough to reveal the Lord's Divine Form to Arjuna.

Arjuna said:

Verse 51: Having seen Your gentle human Form, O' Lord, my thoughts are now composed and I am restored to my nature.

Arjuna is now brought back to his normal Self after seeing the Lord's Divine Form.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 52 to 55: Very hard indeed it is to see this Form of Mine which you have seen. Even the Devas ever long to behold this Form. Neither by the Vedas, nor by penance, nor by charity, nor by sacrifice can I be seen as you have seen Me. But by single-minded devotion I may in this Form be known, and seen in reality and also entered into. He who does work for Me alone and has Me for his goal, is devoted to Me, is freed from attachment, and bears enmity towards no creature – he enters into Me.

Lord advises Arjuna that devotion and complete surrender to the Lord is the only qualifying factor to see the Divine Form of the Supreme Self. Lord assures Arjuna that any person who is truly devoted to Paramatma and performs all actions dedicated to Supreme Self without attachment or aversion would attain the Supreme State.

Here ends Chapter 11.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 12 – Bhaktiyoga

This chapter is titled Bhaktiyoga (Yoga of devotion). Bhakti is defined by Adi Sankaraacharya Swamikal as svaswarupanusandhanam or constant remembrance of the true form of Self. The vision of Cosmic Form, the Lord revealed to Arjuna clearly establishes the omnipotence and omnipresence of the Supreme Self. As it would be difficult for a devotee to meditate on the Cosmic Form, the Lord also revealed to Arjuna, His Divine Form, beautiful, peaceful and sweet to meditate upon. In this chapter, the Lord clarifies what true Bhakti is. Many consider that Bhakti Yoga (Yoga of Devotion) and Jhnanana Yoga (Yoga of Knowledge) as two separate methods. A study of this chapter will convince that Bhakti is inherent in Jhaana and vice versa. Both Bhakti and Jhana are complementary and one without the other could be misleading.

Arjuna said:

Verse 1: Those devotees who, ever steadfast, thus worship Thee and those also worship the Imperishable, the Un-manifested – which of them are better-versed in Yoga?

The query by Arjuna is which method of worship of the Paramatma, whether sakara (with form) or nirakara (without form) is better.

Blessed Lord said:

Verses 2 to 4: Those who fixing their mind on Me worship, ever steadfast and endowed with supreme Sraddha, they in my opinion are the best versed in Yoga. But those also, who worship the Imperishable, the indefinable, the Un-manifested, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Unchangeable, the Immovable and the Eternal, having subdued all the senses, even-minded everywhere, engaged in the welfare of all beings – verily they reach only Myself.

While most non-Indian religions hold saakara worship (worship attributing a form to the Supreme Self) as inferior, Lord Krishna holds sakara worship as equal to nirakara worship (worship without form), as both finally reach the Supreme State. It is the faith and steadfastness with which worship is conducted that matters and not the form or formlessness of the object of worship.

Verses 5 to 7: Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the Un-manifested; for the goal of the Un-manifested is very hard for the embodied to reach. But those who worship Me, resigning all actions in Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, meditating on Me with single-minded Yoga – to these whose mind is set on Me, verily, I become before long the Saviour out of the ocean of the mortal Samsara.

Sakara worship is recommended for most sadhakas as it is difficult to hold the mind on to formlessness. Once again, it is made clear that total devotion and complete surrender to the Supreme Self without entertainment of other thoughts are the main factors for salvation and not whether meditation is with or without form.

Verses 8 to 11: Fix thy mind on Me alone, place your intellect in Me; then you shall no doubt live in Me hereafter. If you are unable to fix your mind steadily on Me, then by Abhyasa-Yoga (Yoga of constant practice) you seek to reach Me. If you are unable to practice Abhyasa, be intent on doing actions for My sake. Even by doing actions for My sake, you shall attain perfection. If you are unable to do even this, then taking refuge in Me, abandon the fruits of all action, being self-controlled.

In these verses, Lord explains the various steps to reach Him. The best method is to place both the mind and intellect on the Supreme Self, without disturbance by other thoughts. Since this will be difficult for most sadhakas, Lord recommends that sadhakas do constant practice of this Yoga. If this is also difficult, the next best thing is devote all one's actions to the Lord. If this is also not practicable, the course then recommended is to take refuge in the Lord and give up all fruits of actions, taking control of one-self – i.e. not to anticipate, dwell or build on or care for the results, knowing them to be dependent on the Lord.

Verse 12: Better indeed is knowledge than Abhyasa; meditation (with knowledge) is more esteemed than (mere) knowledge; renunciation of the fruit of action than meditation; peace immediately follows renunciation.

Renunciation of the fruit of all actions as a means to attainment of Bliss is extolled here, by the superiority of one over the other. Because it constitutes a common factor which immediately precedes Peace, both in the case of a man of wisdom who is steadily engaged in devout contemplation and also in the case of a common sadhaka who is unable to give up all activities.

Verses 13 to 19: He who hates no creature, is friendly and compassionate towards all, free from the feelings of "I" and "Mine", even minded in pain and pleasure, forbearing, ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled and possessed of firm conviction with mind and intellect fixed on Me – he who is thus devoted to Me, is dear to Me. He by whom this world is not agitated and who cannot be agitated by the world and is freed from joy, envy, fear and anxiety – he is dear to Me. He who is free from dependence, is pure, prompt, unconcerned, untroubled, renouncing every undertaking – he who is thus devoted to Me is dear to Me. He who neither rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing good and evil, full of devotion, he is dear to Me. He who is the same to friend and foe and in honour and dishonour; who is the same in heat and cold and in pleasure and pain; who is free from attachment; to whom censure and praise are equal; who is silent, content with anything, homeless, steady-minded, full of devotion – that man is dear to Me.

The qualities required of a true devotee to earn the blessings of the Supreme Self are made clear in these verses in very simple language.

Verse 20: And they who follow this Immortal Dharma, as described above, endued with Sraddha regarding Me as the Supreme Goal and devoted – they are exceedingly dear to Me.

The chapter is concluded highlighting the importance of faith and adherence to the Dharma enshrined in the earlier verses for attainment of the Supreme Goal. With this chapter the six chapters forming the Bhakti Kanda (Part related to Devotion) comes to an end.

Here ends Chapter 12.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 13 – Kshetrakshetranjhavibhagayoga

This chapter is titled Kshetrakshetranjhavibhagayoga (Yoga of Discrimination of Kshetra (Field) and Kshetrajhna (Field-knower)). This chapter elaborates on atma anaatma vivekam (differentiation between Self and non-Self forming part of Samkhyayoga). The analysis is conducted at two levels viz. knowledge and action - first as Kshetra (what is known) and Kshetrajhna (the knower) and the second as Prakrti (nature – where action takes place) and Purusha (witness of action in the nature). The enquiry into "Who am I?" starts here.

Arjuna said:

Prakrti and Purusha, also the Kshetra and Kshetrajhna, knowledge and that which is to be known – these O' Kesava (Krishna), I desire to learn.

Arjuna requests Lord Krishna to explain what Kshetra is. Word Kshetra has several meanings such as field, temple, place, abode, earth, body, mind, congregation of senses etc. What is meant by Kshetra here is explained in Verses 5 & 6 below. Kshetrajhna is one who knows the Kshetra. The question also covers what is Knowledge and what is to be Known.

This verse appears only in certain editions of Gita and is therefore added as an unnumbered verse.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 1 to 4: This body is called Kshetra and he who knows it is called Kshetrajhna by those who know the Truth. Also know Me as the Kshetrajhna in all Kshetras. I deem real knowledge to be the knowledge of Kshetra and Kshetranjhna. Listen to Me as I briefly set forth what the Kshetra is, what its properties are and how it is transformed and the cause of transformation; also what the Kshetranjhna is and what His powers are. This Truth has been sung by Rshis variously in varied hymns; it is also stated in reasoned and definitive words of the Brahmasutras.

Lord Krishna commences his answer to Arjuna's query. Though Lord says that body is called Kshetra, to get a fuller understanding of the word, one has to wait till the next two verses. The Self residing in the body is Kshetrajhna (the knower of the Kshetra). Real knowledge is to know the Self as distinct from the body.

Verses 5 & 6: The great elements, the ego, the intellect and the un-manifested, the ten senses and one (mind) and the five objects of the senses, desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, the aggregate, intelligence, fortitude – the Kshetra has thus been described briefly with its modifications.

It is a well-known fact that what is known cannot be the knower. Therefore the knower has to be distinct from known. The great elements comprise space, air, fire, water and earth, the material constituents that form the universe. The ego, the intellect, the mind, intelligence, the potential for manifestation that remains un-manifested, the ten organs of sense and action (viz. ear, eye, nose, skin, tongue, speech, hands, feet, reproductive and excretory organs) and their aggregate are all instruments of the Self, the knower and as such cannot be the Self. The five objects of the senses, viz. sound, sight, taste, touch and smell also comprise what are known and cannot be the knower. Also the feelings such as desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, fortitude etc. are also known and cannot be the knower. The knower therefore cannot be known, but can only be realized as Self in its true form.

Verses 7 to 11: Humility, unpretentiousness, non-injury, forbearance, uprightness, service to the Guru, purity, steadiness, self-control, renunciation of sense-objects, absence of egoism, reflection on the evils of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain, non-attachment and non-identification of the self with son, wife, home and the rest, constant even-mindedness in the occurrence of the desirable and the undesirable, unswerving devotion to Me by the Yoga of non-separation, resort to solitary spots, aversion to crowds unfailing cultivation of spiritual knowledge, perception of the content of philosophical knowledge – all this is said to be knowledge. What is other than this is ignorance.

True knowledge should not be confused with scholarship or expertise in any field of activity including spiritual field. Knowledge of Truth, purity of heart, devotion to Paramatma and detachment to the world are the true signs of real knowledge. The process of attaining true knowledge is elucidated in these verses. Deviation from this process generates ignorance and miscomprehension of what Self is.

Verses 12 to 18: I shall describe that which has to be known, knowing which one attains immortality, the beginning-less Supreme Brahma. It is neither being nor non-being. With hands and feet on all sides, with eyes, heads and mouths everywhere, with ears everywhere in the universe – It exists pervading all. Without and within all beings, the unmoving and also the moving, because of Its incomprehensible subtlety, It is far and near. Impartible, It exists as if divided in beings; It is to be known as sustaining beings and devouring, as well as generating (them). The Light even of lights, It is said to be beyond darkness; Knowledge and the One Thing to be known, the Goal of knowledge, dwelling in the hearts of all. Thus Kshetra, knowledge and that which has to be known have been briefly stated. Knowing this, My devotee becomes fit for assimilation to Me.

What is to be known (realized as Self) is described in these verses. It is Supreme Brahma, the true form of Self, that is to be realized. It is beyond word and thought. Only a vague idea can be given in words here. The differentiation between beings and non-beings begins only with creation. Since the Supreme Self existed even earlier, It cannot be called either being or non-being. Self exists in all beings It has infinite hands, feet, eyes, heads and mouths on all sides and everywhere. It exists within all beings, so It is near. All beings exist in It. Therefore It is far and beyond imagination. It is one integral whole, but It appears as divided in parts as several beings. Creation, sustenance and dissolution all takes place in It at Its free will. It is the Knowledge that lights up all lights. Therefore it is beyond darkness. It is the One thing to be known (realized). All knowledge ends with this realization. As already stated earlier, the knower of Brahma becomes Brahma.

Verses 19 to 23: Know that Prakrti and Purusha are both beginning-less; and know also that all modifications and Gunas are born of Prakrti. In the production of the body and the senses, Prakrti is said to be the cause; in the experience of pleasure and pain, Purusha is said to be the cause. Purusha seated in Prakrti, experiences the Gunas born of Prakrti; the reason for his birth in good and evil wombs is his attachment to the Gunas. And the Supreme Purusha in this body is called the Close Observer, the Giver of sanction, One who Sustains, Experiencer, the Pre-eminent Lord, Supreme Self. He who thus knows the Purusha and Prakrti together with the Gunas, whatever his life, is not born again.

Now starts the analysis at the level of action. Prakrti (Power of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the Self) and Purusha (Self) have no beginning. But the actions of creation, sustenance and dissolution takes place only in Prakrti and the Purusha is not affected by them, except to the extent Purusha identifies with Prakrti. The identification is in the form of pleasure and pain. The reason for consecutive births and deaths is this identification. Once Purusha (Self) devotes itself to the Supreme Self and realizes Its identity with Supreme Self as witness of all actions, one with free will, one who sustains the creation, one who experiences and controls all actions, is not born again.

Verses 24 & 25: Some by meditation behold the Self in their own intelligence by the purified heart, others by the path of knowledge, yet others by Karma Yoga. Others not knowing these, worship as they have heard from others. Even these go beyond death, regarding what they have heard as the Supreme Refuge.

The greatness of faith and devotion to Supreme Self is praised here. Whatever be the method of devotion, he who earnestly devotes himself to the Supreme Self transcends the transmigration cycle in due course.

Verses 26 to 30: Whatever being is born, moving or unmoving, know it to be from the union of Kshetra and Kshetrajhna. He sees, who sees the Supreme Lord, existing equally in all beings, deathless in the dying. Since seeing the Lord equally existent everywhere, he injures not Self by Self and so attains the Supreme Goal. He sees, who sees that all actions are done by Prakrti alone and the Self is actionless. When one sees the multiplicity of beings as abiding in the One and plurality as proceeding from That One alone, he becomes Brahma.

The knowledge that leads one to liberation is described in these verses. Every being proceeds from the combination of Kshetra (body) and Kshetrajhna (consciousness). Ahimsa (non-injury to beings) is a result of cognition of the same deathless consciousness pervading all living beings. Such a realized person cannot injure another as he sees Himself pervading all the beings. He also realizes that all actions take place only in Prakrti and the Self is not affected by actions. He thus gets released from the bondage of Karma and becomes one with the action-less Brahma.

Verses 31 to 34: Being without beginning and devoid of Gunas, this Supreme Self, immutable, though existing in the body neither acts nor is affected. As the all-pervading Akasa because of its subtlety is not tainted, so the Self existent everywhere in the body is not tainted. As the one sun illumines all the world, so does He who abides in the Kshetra illumine the whole Kshetra. Those who thus with the eye of knowledge perceive the distinction between the Kshetra and Kshetrajhna and also the emancipation of being from Prakrti, they go to the Supreme.

The Supreme Self is eternal. . Since the Gunas are the cause for action, the Supreme Self, free from all Gunas (Satva, Rajas and Tamas) is action-less and is not affected by actions that take place in Prakrti, just as space is not tainted by the actions that take place within it. As the sun illumines the whole world, the Self illumines the entire known world. Those who understands the differentiation between the Self and non-Self and who are able to de-link from Nature attains Supreme Brahma.

Here ends Chapter 13.

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Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 14 – Gunatrayavibhagayoga

This chapter is titled Gunatrayavibhagayoga (Yoga of Discrimination of the three Gunas). In this chapter the Lord describes the different Gunas (constituents of Prakrti). With these three constituents creation, sustenance and dissolution are carried out in Prakrti. Rajoguna represents creation, Satvaguna sustenance and Tamoguna dissolution. These also represent dream, wakefulness and sleep states, respectively. Rajas produces desire for wealth and power, Satva desire for Dharma and knowledge and Tamas sensual desires, indolence and sleep. These three Gunas are always present in Nature and as long as the Self is associated with Prakrti, one will be bound to the Gunas with anyone of the Gunas dominating and the others latent. The ways and means to transcend these Gunas are devotion to Supreme Self, knowledge of the true form of Self and detachment from worldly desires – Bhakti, Jhna and Vairagya.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 1 & 2: Again I shall tell you that supreme knowledge which is above all knowledge, having known which all the Munis (silent sages) have attained high perfection beyond this (empirical sphere). They, who having devoted themselves to this knowledge have attained My Being, are neither born at the time of creation nor are they troubled at the time of dissolution.

Lord Krishna promises Arjuna to reveal the supreme knowledge which is the end of all knowledge by which a pure-hearted person can attain freedom from the effects of three Gunas of Prakrti. It is this knowledge that releases one from the hold of transmigration cycle. When one comes to know that all creation is merely an illusion, one is not affected either by the creation or dissolution of the universe.

Verses 3 & 4: My womb is Brahma, the Mahat; in that I cast the seed; thence are born all beings. Whatever forms spring from all kinds of wombs, the great Brahma is their womb and I the seed-giving Father.

The cosmic intelligence is referred to in these verses as Brahma, the Mahat. The seed of creation is cast by the Supreme Self in the cosmic intelligence from which the universe flourishes.

Verses 5 to 9: Satva, Rajas and Tamas – these Gunas born of Prakrti bind the embodied and immutable (Spirit). Of these Satva, because it is stainless, luminous and free from evil, binds by attachment to happiness and knowledge. Know Rajas to be of the nature of passion, giving rise to thirst and attachment; it binds fast the embodied one by attachment to action. And know Tamas to be born of ignorance, stupefying all embodied beings; it binds fast by miscomprehension, indolence and sleep. Satva attaches to happiness, Rajas to action, while Tamas verily shrouding discrimination, attaches to miscomprehension.

Prakrti through its three constituents bind the seed of Self, though pure and immutable. Satva binds it to happiness and knowledge, Rajas to passion and attachment to action and Tamas to ignorance, indolence and sleep.

Verses 10 to 13: Satva arises predominating over Rajas and Tamas; likewise Rajas over Satva over Satva and Tamas; so Tamas over Satva and Rajas. When through every sense in this body, the light of knowledge shines then it should be known that Satva is predominant. Greed, activity, the undertaking of actions, unrest, longing – these arise when Rajas is predominant. Darkness, inertness, miscomprehension and delusion – these arise when Tamas is predominant.

These verses explain how one is affected by the three Gunas at various times. When knowledge and awareness is predominant one is Satvic, when driven by desires into unrest and activity one is Rajasic and when overcome by sloppiness and sloth one is Tamasic.

Verses 14 & 15: If the embodied one meets death when Satva is predominant, then he attains the spotless regions of the worshippers of the Highest. Meeting death in Rajas he is born among those attached to action; dying in Tamas he is born in the wombs of the irrational.

Gita attaches high importance to the Guna predominant and the thought that is active at the time of one's death in determining the birth that follows. Anthe Narayanasmrthi (the thought of Narayana – the Supreme Self at the final breath) is the prescription for liberation from transmigration cycle. If death occurs when one Satva predominates, one takes birth in surroundings conducive to knowledge and happiness. If Rajas predominates at death one takes birth among Rajasic creatures and if Tamas predominates at the end one takes birth among Tamasic beings.

Verses 16 to 18: The fruit of good action, they say, is Satvik and pure; verily the fruit of Rajas is pain and ignorance is the fruit of Tamas. From Satva arises wisdom and from Rajas greed; miscomprehension, delusion and ignorance arise from Tamas. The Satva-abiding go upwards; the Rajasic dwell in the middle and the Tamasic, abiding in the function of the lowest Guna, go downwards.

The three Gunas are classified as good, medium and bad. Satva is good, Rajas medium and Tamas is bad. The evolution that Gita recommends is not from man to superman, but from an ignorant being to an active one and thence to knowledge with purity of heart and enlightenment. De-evolution is also as much a reality as evolution.

Verses 19 & 20: When the seer beholds no agent other than the Gunas and knows That which is higher than the Gunas he attains My Being. The embodied one, having gone beyond these three Gunas out of which the body is evolved, is freed from birth, death, decay and pain; He attains immortality.

The Lord concludes his discourse on the three Gunas by stating that a sadhaka should not merely remain satisfied being Satvic, but should know that all the three Gunas bind one to transmigration cycle. He should meditate on the Supreme Self, that is the true form of Self in all beings which is free from all the three Gunas. Only through this knowledge of truth and devotion to Supreme Self is one freed from birth, death, decay and pain. In other words he realizes that the birth, death, decay and pain are all flights of fancy. He realizes his own immortality and sense of bliss.

Arjuna said:

Verse 21: By what marks, O' Lord is he (known) who has gone beyond these three Gunas? What is his conduct, and how does he pass beyond these three Gunas?

Arjuna's query is how one can transcend the three Gunas and how one can recognize a person who has transcended the Gunas.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 22 to 27: He who hates not the appearance of light (the effect of Satva), activity (the effect of Rajas) and delusion (the effect of Tamas) nor longs for them when absent; Seated as if indifferent he is not disturbed by the Gunas; he stirs not but remains steadfast, holding that Gunas alone prevail. Alike in pleasure and pain, self-abiding, regarding a clod of earth, a stone and gold alike, the same to agreeable and disagreeable, firm, the same in censure and praise, the same in honour and disgrace, the same to friend and foe, relinquishing all undertakings – he is said to have gone beyond the Gunas. And he who serves Me with unswerving devotion, he going beyond the Gunas is fit to become Brahma, for I am the abode of Brahma, the Immortal and Immutable, of everlasting Dharma and of Absolute Bliss.

The Lord answers Arjuna in very simple language on the marks of a Gunatita (one who has transcended the Gunas). The important thing here is not to be affected by any of the Gunas including Satva. One while remaining Satvic (awake to the realities) should take care not to be emotionally involved with Satva. Similar Rajas and Tamas should also be realized as part of nature and should not be allowed to cause emotional disturbances when encountered.

The way to reach this final goal is constant devoted meditation of one's own true form – that of the Supreme Self. The Supreme Self is the sole refuge of all beings. That abode of Brahma, eternal, immutable, transcending time, ever blissful and the source of Dharma is the only world that is worth seeking. Heaven or paradise which is sought normally by most sadhakas is only a world of sensual pleasures and prosperity that is temporal and nothing comparable to the world of knowledge of Truth.

Earnest sadhakas would not fail to notice how similar the marks of identification are of Stitaprajna in Chapter 2, Bhakta in Chapter 12 and Gunatita in this chapter. Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jhnana Yoga all lead to the same goal.

Here ends Chapter 14. Next chapter is on Purushothama (the Supreme Self).

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Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 15 – Purushothamayoga

This chapter is titled Purushothamayoga (Yoga of Purushothama – Supreme Self).

This chapter deals with the magnificence of the Supreme Self. In chapter 13, Prakrti and Purusha were spoken of. In that chapter Purusha was dealt with Prakrti as partner. This chapter describes Purushothama (the Supreme Purusha) with Prakrti dissolved in Purusha.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 1 to 4: They speak of an eternal fig tree rooted above and branching below whose leaves are the Vedic hymns; he who knows it knows the Vedas. Below and above spread its branches, nourished by the Gunas; sense-objects are its buds; and below in the world of men stretch forth the roots, that link up actions. Its form is not perceived here as such, neither its end, nor its origin, nor its foundation. Having cut asunder this firm rooted fig tree with the strong axe of non-attachment – then that Goal is to be sought, going where the wise do not return again. I take refuge in that Primeval Purusha whence streamed forth the Eternal Activity.

The discourse commences with describing the entire creation as a fig tree with its roots above in Brahma and branching downwards. This tree is nourished by its leaves. Vedas are described here as the leaves of the universal tree as the Vedas describe eloquently on the Karmas to be performed for pleasures and power here and hereafter. He who knows the tree and its true nature knows the Vedas. Its branches are nourished by the three constituents of Prakrti. Its buds are sense-objects – sound, sight, smell, touch and taste. Its roots are attachment and aversion. None knows the origin nor from where it has originated. It is this tree that sadhaka is urged to cut asunder with the axe of detachment in order to reach the world from which the wise do not return. Refuge is to be sought in the Eternal Purusha that predates creation who will be revealed only when the tree of creation that hides Him from sadhaka is completely removed.

Verses 5 & 6: Free from pride and delusion, with the evil of attachment conquered, ever dwelling in the Self, with desires completely receded, liberated from the pairs of opposites known as pleasure and pain, the un-deluded reach that Eternal Goal. That the sun illumines not, nor the moon, nor fire; that is My Supreme Abode, going where they return not.

The world of the Supreme Self, which is the source of all light, is described here as one which the sun, moon or fire cannot illumine. This Supreme Goal is attainable only by those who are pure-hearted, realized and who have totally renounced this world.

Verses 7 to 10: An eternal portion of Myself having become a jiva (living soul) in the world of life, draws (to itself) the (five) senses with mind for the sixth, that are set in Prakrti. When the Lord (potent jiva) obtains a body and when He leaves it, He takes these and goes, as the wind takes the scents from their abodes (the flowers). Presiding over the ear, the eye, the skin, the tongue and the nose, as also the mind, jiva experiences objects. While transmigrating from one body to another, or residing in the same, or experiencing or when united with the Gunas – the deluded do not see Him; but those who have the eye of wisdom behold Him.

In these verses, the Lord describes the process of transmigration of a Jiva from one body to another on death. While leaving a body, Jiva takes along the mind and the five senses, which are capable only of experiencing the outside world but not capable of understanding the Self within. It is only those realized that can see the Truth.

Verses 11 to 13: The Yogis striving (for perfection) behold Him (jiva) dwelling in the inner self; but the unrefined and unintelligent, even though striving, see Him not. The luminous energy of the sun that illumines the whole world, that which is in the moon and in the fire – know that radiance to be Mine. Entering the earth with My energy, I support all beings, and I nourish all the plants and herbs, becoming the moon with its essence of sap.

Yogis are able to experience the Supreme Self, whereas ordinary mortals even with effort do not see Him because of their attachments to the known world. The sun, moon and fire shines only in His presence. The world is sustained only on His energy.

Verses 14 & 15: Abiding in the body of living beings as the fire of hunger (Vaisvanara); Associated with Prana (in-breath) and Apana (out-breath) I digest the fourfold food. I am centred in the hearts of all; From me spring memory, knowledge and loss of memory. I am verily that which has to be known by all the Vedas; I indeed am the Author of Vedanta and the Knower of Veda am I.

The energy within each being is also Him. Digestive power, breath, functions of heart, memory, knowledge and memory loss spring from Him. Note that He has the power for anugraha (blessing) as well as nigraha (denial). The goal that is reached through Vedas is Him. Since He is the author of Vedanta (the end of Vedas) and the knower of Vedas, it is only with His blessings that one can attain the Supreme Knowledge.

Verses 16 to 18: There are two Purushas in the world – the Perishable and the Imperishable. All beings are the Perishable, and the Kutastha is called the Imperishable. But there is another, the Supreme Purusha, called the Highest Self, the Immutable Lord, who pervading the three worlds, sustains them. As I transcend the Perishable and am exalted above even the Imperishable, I am celebrated as Purushothama (The Highest Purusha) in the world and in the Vedas.

These verses define the term Purushothama. The perishable Purusha is the Self that identifies with the body which is mortal. The Purusha that is present as Jiva, but knows himself as separate from the body is the Imperishable. But the Supreme Self is beyond both the perishable and imperishable and is present in all bodies pervading all the three worlds - the heaven, earth, the netherworld and beyond. As He is One that transcends all Purushas, he is exalted as Purushothama (the Highest Purusha) by Vedas as well as by worldly persons.

Verses 19 & 20: He, who, free from delusion, thus knows Me, the Highest Spirit, he knowing all, worships Me, the Highest Spirit with all his heart. Thus O' sinless one, has this most profound teaching been imparted by Me. Knowing this one attains the highest wisdom and will have accomplished all one's duties.

There is no worship greater than that of Supreme Self with mind devotedly attached to Him, knowing that the entire creation is an illusion and He transcends time and all creations. This is the highest of wisdom and this knowledge constitutes accomplishment of all one's duties in life.

Here ends Chapter 15.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Chapter 16 – Devasurasampadvibhagayoga

This chapter is titled Devasurasampadvibhagayoga (Yoga of the classification of Divine and Demoniatic Attributes). Based on the Karmas in the past life, each one is born into this world with Divine and/or Demoniatic properties. These properties can be improved upon from Demoniatic to Divine or worsened from Divine to Demoniatic by good or bad Karmas respectively in this life. As long as the Self is associated with Nature one or the other quality will dominate. The conflict between those holding Divine and Demoniatic properties will continue incessantly as long as creation continues. The repeated stories of battles between Devas and Asuras depicted in the Puranas are intended to demonstrate this fact. Devas represent the divine qualities within each person and the Asuras (demons) represent the evil qualities within.

Puranas depict Devas attaining heaven (the world of sensual pleasures) through good deeds and Asuras usurping it through force. Asuras retain heaven for a very short time whereas Devas cherish their paradise for a much longer term. In both cases, the heaven attained is not for ever. Even in heaven, Devas live in fear of Asuras who could develop their powers to defeat the Devas through severe penance.

Those who are devoted to Truth should, therefore, develop their divine qualities for worship of the Supreme Self with liberation from the transmigration cycle as their goal and not for worlds of pleasure hereafter. For this purpose, one has to fight the demoniac qualities within oneself and annihilate them as well.

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 1 to 3: Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and Yoga; charity, control of the senses, Yajhna, study of Sastras, penance, uprightness, non-injury, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquillity, absence of calumny, compassion to beings, generosity, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness; boldness, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of pride – these belong to one inheriting a divine state.

In these verses, the Lord lists out the qualities present in a person who inherits the divine state.

Verse 4: Ostentation, arrogance, self-conceit and anger as also harshness and ignorance belong to one who has inherited a demoniac state.

A short list of demoniac qualities is presented here by the Lord. Demoniatic qualities will be dealt with in detail in the forthcoming verses.

Verses 5 & 6: The divine state is deemed to make for liberation, the demoniac for bondage; grieve not O' Arjuna, you have inherited divine attributes. There are two types of beings in this world; the divine and the demoniac. The divine has been described at length; hear from Me of the demoniac.

Liberation comes from divine qualities, whereas demoniac qualities bind one to births and deaths. Lord assures Arjuna in these verses that the latter possesses divine qualities and there is no reason for concern. Explanation of demoniac qualities commences from the next verse.

Verses 7 to 20: The persons of demoniac nature know not what to do and what to refrain from; neither is purity found in them nor good conduct, nor truth. They say, "the universe is without truth, without a (moral) basis, without a God, brought about by mutual union, with lust for its cause, what else?" Holding this view, these ruined souls of small intellect and fierce deeds, rise as the enemies of the world for its destruction. Filled with insatiable desires, full of hypocrisy, pride and arrogance, holding evil ideas through delusion they work with impure resolve. Beset with immense cares ending only with death, regarding gratification of lust as the highest and feeling sure that this alone is true, bound by a hundred ties of hope, given over to lust and wrath, they strive to secure by unjust means hoards of wealth for sensual enjoyment. "Today I have won this; I shall fulfil that desire soon, this wealth is mine and this also shall be mine in future. That enemy has been slain by me and others also shall I slay, I am the Lord, I enjoy, I am successful, powerful and happy. I am rich and well-born. Who else is equal to me? I will sacrifice, I will give gifts, I will rejoice" – bewildered by many a fancy, covered by meshes of delusion, addicted to the gratification of lust, they fall down into a foul hell. Self-conceited, haughty, filled with the pride and intoxication of wealth, they hypocritically offer nominal worship, defying sacred rules. Possessed of egoism, power, insolence, lust and wrath these malignant people hate Me in their bodies and those of others. Those who hate and are wrathful, who are the vilest among men in this trans-migratory life and who are impious - I perpetually fling into demoniac wombs. Obtaining demoniac wombs and deluded birth after birth, not attaining Me, they thus fall into a still lower condition.

In the present day world, one need not look far to see the presence of demoniac qualities. May be it was so always. Demoniac qualities are the results of ignorance. The ignorance is due to identification of the Self with body, senses, mind, intellect, community, nation etc. Know that everyone, Devas as well as Asuras, loves Self, but few know the true form of Self. Asuras identify their Self with their narrow circle and works only for the benefit of what they identify as their Self. On the other hand, the Devas being devoted to the Lord worships Him with deeds beneficial to the world as a whole. It should be borne in mind that nothing else other than Self is loved by any one. Everyone works for the benefit of Self. Self is what is worshipped by all. But the notion of Self differs from person to person. Therefore, true knowledge of Self and worship of the same (in order to sustain true knowledge) are the only ways to escape from development of demoniac qualities. Because of the misconceived actions of the Asuras due to their ignorance, they incur sins which bind them to the world of birth and death. In the case of Devas, though they have earned higher worlds through their good deeds, they fail to escape from the transmigration cycle, because of their attachments to pleasures and desire for power to sustain the pleasures.

Verses 21 & 22: Triple is this gate of hell, destructive of the self – lust, anger and greed – therefore, one should forsake these three. The man who has got beyond these three gates of darkness practices what is good for him and thus goes to the Goal Supreme.

The Lord specifically identifies here three demoniac qualities that take one to the world of darkness. These are lust, anger and greed. Lust is uncontrolled desire for sensual pleasures; anger is the negative emotion against those who stand in the way of attaining one's desires; and greed is the desire to accumulate possessions which can be used as inducements to buy pleasures. A sadhaka should be wary of these three and shun them as obstacles to his goal.

Verses 23 & 24: He who setting aside the ordinance of the Sastra, acts under the impulse of desire, does not attain perfection, nor happiness nor the Goal Supreme. So let the Sastra be your authority in ascertaining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having known what is said in the ordinance of the Sastra, you shall act here.

Lord holds Sastras (Spiritual Science) as the guide for the sadhaka in his efforts for realization of Truth. The goal of knowledge of Truth cannot be attained by those who follow methods of their own, not in line with the Sastras. Therefore, Arjuna is also urged to adhere to the ordinance of the Sastras and perform his Dharma.

Here ends chapter 16.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Chapter 17 – Sraddhatrayavibhagayoga

This chapter is titled Sraddhatrayavibhagayoga (Yoga of the classification of threefold Sraddha)

Arjuna said:

Verse 1: Those who, setting aside the ordinance of the Sastra, perform sacrifice with Sraddha (faith), what is their status – O' Krishna? Is it Satvic, Rajasic or Tamasic?

The query by Arjuna is what happens to those who perform sacrifices with faith, but not in accordance with the scriptural ordinances, due to laziness or other difficulties in conforming strictly to the rules of Sastra.

Blessed Lord said:

Verses 2 to 4: Threefold is the faith of the embodied, which is inherent in their nature – the Satvic, Rajasic and the Tamasic. Hear of them. Each one's faith conforms to his inner sense. Predominantly man consists of his faith; he is what his faith makes of him. Those of Satvic faith worship the Devas, Rajasic the Yakshas and the Rakshasas; the Tamasic the Pretas and the host of Bhutas.

Lord answers Arjuna by analysing faith in the light of the three Gunas of Nature. The importance of faith in man-making is stressed by the statement that man is what his faith makes of him. Faith is also of three types, Satvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. Those who possess Satvic faith worship Divine Beings, those with Rajasic faith worship Beings of wealth & power and Tamasic folks worship dead souls and ghosts. Sadhakas should bear in mind that it is not the name and form attributed to the Object of Worship that is relevant here. It is the frame of mind behind the worship that determines the true Object of Worship.

Verses 5 & 6: Those who practise severe penance not enjoined by the Sastras, given to ostentation and egoism, endowed with the power of lust and attachment, senseless as they are, torture all the organs in the body and Me dwelling in the body within; know them to be of demoniac resolve.

The penances conducted in variance from the scriptural diktats, with senseless tortures on one's own body in order to demonstrate proudly one's physical endurance are to be known as demoniac. These types of penances though may be helpful in developing willpower and satisfaction of sensual desires, cannot lead one to knowledge of Self.

Verses 7 to 10: The food also which is liked by each of them is threefold, as also Yajhna, penance and charity. Hear their distinction. The food promoting longevity, strength of mind, power, health, comfort and pleasure, which are delectable, oily, firm and appetising appeal to men of Satvic temperament. The food which pleases those of Rajasic temperament is excessively bitter, sour, salty, hot, pungent, harsh and burning; they cause pain, suffering and ill-health. The food dear to the Tamasic is ill-cooked, tasteless, smelling, decayed, refuse and impure.

Types of food are also classified into three based on the three Gunas. It is important for sadhakas to stick to food of Satvic type as other types of food could lead to development of Rajasic and Tamasic qualities in the sadhaka forming obstructions to his unveiling of knowledge.

Verses 11 to 13: That Yajhna is Satvic which is performed by men desiring no fruit, as enjoined by ordinance with their mind fixed on the Yajhna only, for its own sake. Know that the Yajhnas, which are performed with attachment to their fruits and for ostentation, are Rajasic. Yajhnas performed without heed to ordinance, in which no food is distributed, which are devoid of mantras, gifts and faith are to be considered as Tamasic.

Yajhnas (vedic rites) are also classified here into three types as Satvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. It is only Satvic Yajhnas that has the ability to lead a sadhaka to true knowledge.

Verses 14 to 16: Worship of the Devas, the twice-born, Gurus and the wise, purity, straightforwardness, continence and non-injury are called the penance of the body. Speech which causes no vexation, is true, agreeable and beneficial as well as regular study of the Vedas are said to form the penance of speech. Serenity of mind, kindness, silence, self-control, honesty of motive – these are called the mental penance.

What is meant by the word Tapas (penance) is clarified here. Penance is to be practised physically, verbally and mentally. These are explained in these verses.

Verses 17 to 19: This threefold penance practised by steadfast men, with great faith desiring no fruit is said to be Satvic. That penance which is practised with the object of gaining welcome, honour and worship here, with ostentation, is said to be Rajasic. They are unstable and transitory. That penance which is practised out of a foolish notion, with self-torture or for the purpose of ruining another is declared to be Tamasic.

Penance is also classified into three types based on the objective for which it is performed. Satvic penance is performed without desire for fruit, aiming at knowledge of Truth and welfare of all. Rajasic penance is performed with pomposity with desire for honour, fame and acceptance by masses. Tamasic penance is performed involving self-torture and intended to harm others.

Verses 20 to 22: A gift given at the right time and place to a deserving recipient who cannot make a return for it, with the thought that "It is good to give a gift", is a Satvic gift. It is said to be Rajasic when offered unwillingly, with expectation of a gift in return or with an eye to some advantage. A Tamasic gift is one improperly and insultingly given at the wrong place and time to undeserving recipient.

Charity is analysed here in the light of the three Gunas. Salient features of a Satvic charity is:

1. It is performed at the right time and right place.
2. The beneficiary is one who deserves it.
3. Nothing in return is expected of it.
4. Only reason for performing it is that it is for a good purpose.

Rajasic charities are performed expecting something in return or to gain some advantage. Tamasic charities are those performed cursing and unwillingly. The beneficiary is an undeserving person and it is performed at the wrong time and wrong place.

Verses 23 to 26: It is held that reference to Brahma is three-fold as Om, Tat and Sat. Thus of Yore were fashioned the Brahmins, Vedas and sacrifices. Therefore uttering Om are the acts of sacrifice, gift and penance as enjoined in the ordinances always begun by the followers of the Vedas. Uttering Tat, without aiming at fruits are the various acts of Yajhnas, penance and gift performed by the seekers of Moksha. The word Sat is used in the sense of reality and of goodness; and so also the word Sat is used in the sense of an auspicious act.

Om, Tat and Sat are the three names used to mean Brahma. Brahmins, Vedas and Yajhnas are said to have been created using these three terms. Yajhna, charity and penance are begun by the followers of Veda uttering the word Om. Seekers of liberation perform Yajhna, charity and penance by uttering the word Tat. The word Sat signifies reality and goodness and is used in all auspicious acts.

Verses 27 & 28: Steadiness in Yajhna, penance and charity is also called Sat as also action in connection with these (or action for the sake of the Lord). Whatever is sacrificed, given or performed and whatever penance is practised without faith, it is called Asat. It is naught here or hereafter.

Sat, the name of Brahma signifies steadiness in the three activities of Yajhna, charity and penance also. These are to be performed always by a Sadhaka, until realization dawns. All actions performed for the sake of the Supreme Self is also Sat. Whatever is done without faith is Asat (unreal and bad). Such acts will not yield any good results either in this life or life after death.

Here ends Chapter 17.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Chapter 18 – Mokshasanyasayoga

This chapter is titled Mokshasanyasayoga (Yoga of Liberation in Renunciation). This is the concluding chapter of Srimad Bhagavad Gita. The final end to be reached by the sadhaka is Moksha (liberation from the transmigratory cycle). Since births and deaths are only creation of Maya and have no existence in reality, liberation is not something to be attained. It is shedding one's ignorance and uncovering the Truth within. Sanyasa (renunciation) is the act of shedding the ignorance that leads one to liberation. It is the realization, that like a dream, the births and deaths experienced do not have any reality and the Self ever remains pure, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. All that appeared to have happened was due to one's not realising the Power of Assumption of the Self (Maya, the Mother of the universe). Having realized this Truth, a realized person shall ever remain devoted to the Supreme Self, the true form of all beings, with due respect to the Mother of the universe.

Arjuna said:

I desire to know, O' Krishna, the distinction between the truth of sanyasa (renunciation) and that of Tyaga (relinquishment).

The chapter begins with Arjuna asking Lord Krishna the difference between Sanyasa (renunciation) and Tyaga (relinquishment).

The Blessed Lord said:

Verses 2 to 6: The sages know renunciation to be the rejection of actions prompted by desire for their fruits. The wise declare the relinquishment to be the giving up of the fruits of all actions. Some philosophers declare that all actions should be relinquished as evil, whilst others (say) that Yajhna, charity and penance should not be relinquished. Hear from me the final truth about relinquishment. For relinquishment has been declared to be of three kinds. Yajhna, charity and penance should not be relinquished but it should indeed be performed. Yajhna, charity and penance are purifying to the wise. But even these actions should be performed without attachment to them and to their fruits; such is my best and certain conviction.

Lord answers Arjuna's query by defining Sanyasa and Tyaga. Sanyasa is keeping away from actions with desire for fruits, while Tyaga is performing actions giving up fruits of all actions. Some are of the opinion that all actions are evil and so one should keep away from actions. Others say that Yajhna, charity and penance should not be given up. According to the Lord, Yajhna, charity and penance are purifying actions and these should always be performed without attachment and desire for fruits.

Verses 7 to 9: But the relinquishment of obligatory action is not proper. Abandonment of the same from delusion is declared to be Tamasic. Out of fear of bodily trouble if action is relinquished as painful, such relinquishment is Rajasic. Such relinquishment will yield no fruit. When obligatory work is performed, only because it ought to be done, leaving attachment to it and its fruits, such relinquishment is regarded as Satvic.

Lord once again stresses that obligatory actions should not be given up. Giving these up out of ignorance is Tamasic. If such actions are given up out of fear of exertion, it is Rajasic. These types of relinquishment of action will yield no fruit. In other words, such relinquishment will not be helpful in shedding one's ignorance. The only way to true knowledge is performance of work with a sense of duty without attachment to work and desire for fruits. This relinquishment is Satvic.

Verses 10 to 12: The Tyagi endued with Satva and a steady understanding and with doubts dispelled hates not a disagreeable work nor is attached to an agreeable one. Actions cannot be relinquished entirely by an embodied being, but he who relinquishes the fruits of action is called a Tyagi. The threefold fruit of action – disagreeable, agreeable and mixed – accrues, after death to those who do not relinquish, but not to those who relinquish.

As long as the work is obligatory, it should be performed whether such work is agreeable or disagreeable. None while alive can relinquish all work. Therefore work should be performed relinquishing fruits of actions. This is real Tyaga. Only a true Tyagi, who is really a Sanyasi, escapes from the bondage of Karma.

Verses 13 to 17: Learn from Me, the five causes set forth in the Samkhya system as promoting the accomplishment of all works. (These are) the ground, the agent, the instruments, different functions of manifold kind and the presiding divinity as the fifth of these. Whatever action a man performs by his body, speech and mind – whether right or not – these five are its causes. Such being the case, he who through non-purified understanding looks upon his Self, the Absolute as the agent – he of perverted mind sees not. He who is free from the notion of egoism, whose intelligence is not affected (by good or evil), though he kills these people, he kills not, nor is bound (by the action).

Now, the Lord explains based on Samkhya system the causes for action and accomplishment of work. These are ground (body), the agent (the doer or the delimited self), instruments (various senses), the manifold movements (of breath, organs of action etc.) and the presiding divinity. Each sense organ and organ of action as well as mind, intellect, ego, memory etc. has a presiding deity as per Vedas. Whatever action a person performs by body, speech or mind are done by these five causes. The person without knowledge considers the agent as Self, without knowing the true nature of Self which is Absolute, Pure and Actionless. It is only the wise who knows the true nature of Self and such a person is not affected by the results of action. Even if he kills he does not kill, as he is not bound to his action. His actions will always be in the light of Dharma.

Verses 18 & 19: Knowledge, the known and the knower form the threefold inspiration for action. The action, the object and the agent (doer) are the threefold basis of action. Knowledge, action and doer are declared in the Samkhya philosophy to be of three kinds with reference to the distinction of Gunas. Listen to a factual statement of these also.

Actions have their basis in knowledge, known and the knower as well as action, the object and the doer. Knowledge, action and doer are analysed in the light of the three Gunas constituting Prakriti, based on Samkhya philosophy.

Verses 20 to 22: Knowledge by which the one immutable existence is seen in all beings, non-separate in the separate, is to be known as Satvic. But the knowledge which sees in all beings various entities of distinct kinds as different from one another, know that knowledge as Rajasic. That knowledge which sticks to one single effect as if it were whole and whose content is trivial, without reason, and without foundation in truth is declared to be Tamasic.

The knowledge that understands all beings as one comprehensive existence is Satvic. That which sees each being different from one another is Rajasic. Tamasic knowledge has no real idea of existence, considers part as a whole and views existence as having no foundation in Truth.

Verses 23 to 25: An ordained action done without love or hatred by one not desirous of the fruit and free from attachment is declared to be Satvic. But the action which is performed with desire or with self-conceit and with much effort is declared to be Rajasic. That action is declared to be Tamasic which is undertaken through delusion, without heed to the consequence, loss, injury and (one's own) ability.

Obligatory actions done without attachment or aversion without desire for the fruits are Satvic. Actions performed for selfish gains with pride in such action are Rajasic. Actions performed without proper knowledge and intended to harm others are Tamasic.

Verses 26 to 28: An agent who is free from attachment, non-egotistic, endowed with fortitude and enthusiasm and unaffected in success or failure is called Satvic. He who is passionate, desirous of the fruits of action, greedy, malignant, impure, easily elated or dejected; such an agent is called Rajasic. Unsteady, vulgar, arrogant, dishonest, malicious, indolent, desponding and procrastinating; such an agent is called Tamasic.

Performer of action who acts without ego and attachment and who will not be affected by success or failure of action is Satvic. Performers of actions who are easily elated or dejected and whose actions are motivated by fruits of action, lust, greed, malice and other impure goals are Rajasic. Tamasic agents are those who perform vulgar, arrogant, dishonest and harmful actions in a lazy manner without caring for time.

Verses 29 to 32: Hear from Me exhaustively and severally, the triple distinction of intellect and fortitude, according to the Gunas. That which knows the paths of action and renunciation, right and wrong action, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberation – that intellect is Satvic. That which has a distorted comprehension of Dharma and its opposite and also of right action and its opposite – that intellect is Rajasic. That which enveloped in darkness, regards Adharma as Dharma and views all things in a perverted light – that intellect is Tamasic.

The three types of intellect based on the three Gunas are dealt with here. They are:

1. Satvic – the one which knows the path of action, renunciation and liberation, that which can distinguish between Dharma and Adharma, fearless in performing Dharma, fearful of Adharmic actions.
2. Rajasic with an incorrect view of Dharma and Adharma as well as what is to be done and what should not be done.
3. Tamasic that is totally ignorant and holds Dharma as Adharma and Adharma as Dharma.

Verses 33 to 35: The fortitude by which the functions of the mind, the Prana and the senses are regulated unswervingly through Yoga is Satvic. But the fortitude by which one regulates (one's mind) to Dharma, sensual desire and wealth, desirous of the fruit of each from attachment, that fortitude is Rajasic.. That by which a mean-minded person does not give up sleep, fear, grief, despondency and also overwhelming conceit, that fortitude is Tamasic.

The Dhrti (fortitude) governing the functions of the mind, breath and senses are analysed here. That fortitude that holds the mind, breath and senses unswervingly to Yoga is Satvic. That which leads to Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth) and Kama (sensual pleasures) ever desirous of fruits of action is Rajasic. Dharma is included here as Rajasic because without Vairagya (detachment from worldly desires) Dharma cannot be treated as Satvic. Attachment to sleep, fear, grief, despair, laziness and arrogance demonstrate Tamasic fortitude.

Verses 36 to 39: And now listen to (the elucidation of) threefold pleasure: That in which, through practice one delights, reaching the end of pain. That which is like poison at first, but like nectar at the end; that happiness is declared to be Satvic, born of the translucence of intellect due to Self-realisation. That which arises from the contact of object with sense, at first like nectar, but at the end like poison, that happiness is declared to be Rajasic. That happiness which begins and results in self-delusion arising from sleep, indolence and miscomprehension is declared to be Tamasic.

Pleasures are now analysed. Satvic pleasure is everlasting (a world without misery) although pains may have to be encountered during attempts to attain this goal. Rajasic pleasures are sense-based, momentary and at the end boring and painful. Tamasic pleasures are sleep, laziness and ignorance which are all delusive in nature.

Verse 40: There is no entity on earth, or again in heaven among the Devas, that is devoid of these three Gunas born of Prakrti.

In all the three worlds there is nothing free from the hold of the three Gunas of Prakrti. Everything created is governed by the three Gunas.

Verses 41 to 45: Of Brahmins, Kshathriyas and Vaisyas as also of Sudras, the duties are distributed according to the Gunas born of their nature. The control of the mind and the senses, penance, purity, forbearance as well as righteousness, knowledge, realisation, belief in a hereafter – these are the duties of the Brahmins, born of their own nature. Prowess, boldness, fortitude, dexterity, non-flight from battle, generosity and sovereignty are the duties of the Kshathriyas, born of their own nature. Agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade are the duties of the Vaisyas, born of their own nature. Actions consisting of service are the duty of the Sudras, born of their own nature. Man achieves perfection through devotion to his allotted work. Listen how one wins perfection through such devotion.

Chaturvarnyam was dealt with in detail in the fourth chapter. In this verse, the Lord explains the duties of each Varna. Performance of work allotted to each with devotion enables one to win perfection.

Verse 46 to 49: From whom all beings evolved, by whom all this is pervaded, worshipping Him with one's own duty, a man attains perfection. Better is one's own Dharma (though) imperfect than the Dharma of another well performed. He who does the duty ordained by his own nature incurs no evil. One should not relinquish the duty to which one is born, though it is attended with evil; for all undertakings are enveloped by evil, as fire by smoke. He whose intellect is unattached everywhere, who has subdued his heart, whose desires have fled, he attains by renunciation to the supreme perfection consisting of freedom from Karma.

All beings have evolved from a single source – the Supreme Self, which is all-pervading. Worshipping him through one's allotted work entails no evil. Relinquishment of one's responsibility with a view that the work allotted is disagreeable is against Dharma. No action is entirely free from evil and it is always preferable to stick to the duty one is born fit for. Varnas are constituted only for establishment of Dharma in this world and do not form basis for enlightenment. Enlightenment is a result of detachment from this world, service to fellow-beings, devotion and genuine thirst for knowledge of Truth.

Verses 50 to 53: Learn from Me in brief, how reaching such perfection he attains to Brahma, that supreme consummation of knowledge. Endued with a pure intellect, subduing the body and the senses with fortitude, relinquishing sound and such other sense-objects; abandoning attachment and aversion, resorting to a sequestered spot, eating but little, body, speech and mind controlled, ever engaged in meditation and concentration, possessed of dispassion, forsaking egoism, power, pride, lust, wrath and property; freed from the notion of "mine" and tranquil; he is fit for becoming Brahma.

The process of attaining one's own true form, which is the consummation of knowledge is summarized herein by the Lord for the benefit of all sadhakas. The process involves:

- Purification of intellect through constant devoted remembrance of the Supreme Self.
- Subduing the body and the senses with Satvic fortitude.
- Avoidance of unnecessary contact of senses with sense-objects.
- Avoidance of attachment and aversion to worldly matters
- Moving away from crowds to isolated spots so that more time is available for meditation.
- Moderation in food and speech
- Control of body and mind through meditation and concentration on the true form of Self.
- Abandonment of passion, ego, power, pride, lust wrath, property and possessiveness.

Verses 54 to 57: Having become Brahma, tranquil-minded, he neither grieves nor desires; the same to all beings, he attains supreme devotion unto Me. By devotion he knows Me in reality, what and who I am; then having known Me in reality, he forthwith enters unto Me. Even doing all actions always, taking refuge in Me – by My grace he attains the eternal, immutable State. Resigning mentally all deeds to Me, having Me as the highest Goal, resorting to Buddhi-Yoga (Yoga of Intellect) ever fix your mind on Me.

The mental equanimity thus attained by sadhaka enables him to overcome all aberrations and be fully devoted to the Supreme Self. With the purification of mind and intellect and nothing separating the Jiva from its true form, the Jiva merges with the Paramatma. Actions then performed have no impact on him. Arjuna is asked here to surrender totally to the Supreme Self through the Yoga of knowledge, ever concentrating on his own true form.

Verses 58 to 60: Fixing your mind on Me, you shall by My grace, overcome all obstacles; but if from self-conceit you will not listen to Me, you shall perish. If, filled with self-conceit, you think "I will not fight", vain is this resolve of yours; your Prakrti will constrain you. Fettered, O' Arjuna, by your own Karma, born of your nature, what you do not desire to do, out of delusion, you shall inevitably do.

Arjuna is urged to know his own true form of Self and act. Nothing can stand in the way of such a determined fighter. Arjuna is also warned that if he fails to listen to his own inner-self and abandon action, he will be the loser as his nature will certainly compel him to act later much against his wishes.

Verses 61 & 62: God dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing all beings, by His Maya to revolve, as if mounted on a machine. Take refuge in Him with all your heart; by His grace you shall attain the eternal abode of supreme peace.

Arjuna is made aware of the presence of God in the hearts of all beings. Gita uses the word God here uniting the Vedanta philosophy with religion. The term "God" used in religion and "Paramatma" in Vedanta are the same and stands for the true form of Self of all beings. It is only by taking refuge in God with full heart that one attains supreme peace. Religion and philosophy goes hand in hand overcoming all dualities in creation and arriving at the hidden Truth behind the creation.

Verses 63 to 66: Thus has wisdom, secret of all secrets, been declared to you by Me; reflecting over it fully, act as you like. Hear my supreme word again, the profoundest of all, because you are dearly beloved to Me; therefore I shall speak what is good for you. Occupy your mind with Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me; Truly do I promise unto you that you shall reach Myself. You are dear to Me. Relinquishing all Dharmas take refuge in Me alone; I will liberate you from all sins; grieve not.

Having declared the Secret of all Secrets, Arjuna is allowed to choose his own course of action. There is no compulsion on sadhakas to act in any particular manner. They have to use their own discretion and decide on the course of action best to them. Role of a Guru ends with revealing the right knowledge to the disciple. It is then for the disciple to prove his loyalty to the Guru.

All beings are dear to Supreme Self as He knows that there exists none other than Him. It is only the Jivas, who with their feeling of separation have attachments and aversion. Lord has revealed the secret of secrets to Arjuna because Arjuna has taken full refuge in Him. It is certain that the Lord will treat all sadhakas the same who take refuge in Him with unshakeable faith. Ever remember the Lord, bow down to Him, be devoted to Him, sacrifice fruits of all action for His sake and the Lord is sure to include such a sadhaka among His chosen few. The aim of sanyasa is to reach this stage and once the Lord is taken as sole refuge all Dharmas can be relinquished. Having known that the Paramatma alone exists and the entire creation is an illusion, the sadhaka is liberated from all sins.

Verses 67 to 71: This is never to be spoken by you to one who is devoid of penance or devotion, nor to one who does not render service, nor to one who cavils at Me. He who with supreme devotion to Me will teach this deeply profound philosophy to My devotees, shall doubtless come to Me alone. Among men there shall be none who does dearer service to Me and there shall be none dearer to me on earth than such a person. And he who will study this sacred dialogue of ours, by him shall I have been worshipped by the Yajhna of knowledge - such is my conviction. And even that man who hears this full of faith and free from malice, he too liberated, shall attain the happy worlds of those of righteous deeds.

The Lord now declares who merits the knowledge of Gita. Gita is not intended as a tool for religious propaganda and is to be advised only to earnest seekers of Truth. He who devotedly teaches this to genuine and devoted seekers of true knowledge is blessed by the Lord as one who does service dear to Him. Similarly the earnest student of Gita is also blessed. He is considered to have performed a Jhnana Yajhna (Worship of Knowledge). Even a person who hears Gita with attention and devotion is blessed with happier worlds.

Verse 72: Has this been heard by you, O' Arjuna with an attentive mind? Has the delusion of your ignorance been destroyed?

Lord completes his instructions to Arjuna with a question whether he has heard the advice with attention. He wants to know how the advice has been taken by Arjuna.

Arjuna said:

Verse 73: Destroyed is my delusion and I have gained my memory through Your grace, O' Krishna. I am firm; my doubts are gone. I shall act according to your words.

Arjuna confirms that all his doubts are destroyed by the Lord's grace. He assures that the Lord's words will be obeyed. The dialogue between Arjuna and the Lord ends here.

Sanjaya said:

Verse 74 to 78: Thus I have heard this wonderful and thrilling dialogue between Lord Krishna and the high-souled Arjuna. Through the grace of Vyasa have I heard this supreme and most profound Yoga, direct from Lord Krishna Himself, the Lord of Yoga declaring it. O' King, as I recollect again and again this wonderful and holy dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, I repeatedly rejoice. Calling to mind again and again that most wonderful (Cosmic) Form of Lord Krishna my amazement waxes and I rejoice again and again. Prosperity, victory, development and stable order are there, wherever Krishna, the Lord of Yoga and Arjuna, the wielder of the bow are present,— such is my conviction.

Sanjaya concludes his dialogue with the blind king Dhrtarashtra expressing how pleased and rejoiced he is to recall again and again the dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna as well as to recall the Lord's cosmic and divine forms. He concludes his words stating that victory, prosperity, development and stable order are sure to be there, where Lord Krishna and Arjuna are present. Lord Krishna is described as the Lord of Yoga and Arjuna as the wielder of the bow. An earnest Jiva seeking true knowledge and ready to work for it is represented by the bow-wielding Arjuna. The Supreme Self, the embodiment of Supreme Truth and lover of all beings is represented by Lord Krishna. What is there to fear or worry for a true sadhaka?

Here ends Chapter 18.

The book concludes here.

Om Tat Sat

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah

Om Parthasarataye Namah

Sri Gitamahatmyam **(Greatness of Gita)**

It is normal for all scriptural books to end with phalasaruti (a chapter dealing with the results that can be gained by the recital, study and/or use of it in a rite of worship). Gita, as such, does not contain such a chapter. Therefore it is a practice with sadhakas to end the recital of Gita with this chapter from Varaha Purana which extols the greatness of Bhagavad Gita.

Dhara (the Earth) said:

Verse 1: O' Blessed Lord, O' Supreme Ruler, how may one, who is held by Praarabdha Karma (results of past actions which has brought about the present life and will influence it until its close), obtain unswerving devotion?

Lord Vishnu said:

Verses 2 & 3: If one is devoted to the constant practice of Gita, even though he is restrained by Praarabdha Karma, yet he is Mukta (liberated), happy, in this very world. He is not tainted by (new) Karma. No evil, however great, can affect him who meditates on the Gita. He is like the lotus leaf untouched by the water.

Verses 4 & 5: Where there is the book of Gita, where its study is proceeded with, there are present all the holy places, there verily, are Prayaaga and the rest. There also are all the Devas, Rshis, Yogis and Pannagas, so also the Gopaalas and Gopikas, with Naarada, Uddhava and their whole train of comrades.

Verses 6 to 9: Where the Gita is read, forthwith comes help. Where the Gita is discussed, recited, taught or heard, there O' Earth, beyond doubt, I myself unfailingly reside. I abide by the Gita, Gita is My chief abode. Standing on the wisdom of the Gita, I maintain the three worlds. Gita is My Supreme Knowledge; it is undoubtedly inseparable from Brahma – this Knowledge is absolute, imperishable, eternal, the essence of My inexpressible State – the Knowledge comprising the whole of the three Vedas, supremely blissful and consisting of the realisation of the true nature of the Self – declared by the All-knowing and Blessed Krishna, through His own lips, to Arjuna.

Verses 10 & 17: He, who with steady mind recites the eighteen chapters daily, attains the perfection of knowledge and thus reaches the highest plane. If the whole cannot be recited, then half of it may be read; and he who does this, doubtlessly, acquires merit equal to that of the gift of a cow. By the recitation of a third part, he gains the same merit as by bathing in the Ganga. By the repetition of a sixth part, he obtains the fruit of the Soma-sacrifice. He, who reads, with full devotion, even one chapter daily attains the Rudraloka (the world of Lord Siva) and lives there for a long time, having become one of those attending on Lord Siva. He, who reads daily a quarter of a chapter, or of a Sloka (verse), O' Earth, attains human birth throughout the duration of a Manu. He who recites ten, seven, five, four, three or two Slokas or even one or half of a Sloka of the Gita, certainly lives in Chandraloka (the world of Moon) for ten thousand years. He who leaves the body while reading the Gita obtains the world of Man. Again, practising the Gita, he attains Supreme Mukti (liberation). The dying man uttering the word "Gita" will attain the goal.

Verses 18 to 20: One, who loves to hear the meaning of the Gita, even though he has committed heinous sins, attains Vaikunta (the world of Vishnu). He lives there blessed by Lord Vishnu. He who constantly meditates on the meaning of the Gita, he is to be regarded as a Jivanmukta (liberated while alive) and after leaving his body he attains the highest plane of knowledge. It is so sung that with the help of Gita, many kings like Janaka became free from their impurities and attained the highest goal.

Verses 21 & 22: He, who having finished the reading of the Gita, does not read its Maahatmya (greatness) as declared here; his reading is in vain; it is all labour wasted. He who studies the Gita, accompanied with this discourse on its greatness, obtains the fruit stated herein and reaches that goal which is hard to attain.

Suta said:

Verse 23: He who will read this eternal Greatness of the Gita, declared by me, after having finished the reading of the Gita, will obtain the fruit described herein.

Here ends the discourse designated "The Greatness of Gita in the Vaaraha Puraana.

These declarations may seem to some as mere flights of extravagant fancy. They may be explained as Arthavaada (a statement of glorification meant to stimulate a strong interest in the study of the subject). Studied regularly, Gita could by the force of the truth and grandeur of one or other of its teachings, strike an inner chord of the heart, so much so as to change the whole nature of the student for good. The "reading" and "reciting" and so forth, of the whole or a part, may not be taken in their ordinary sense, as meaning lip-utterance – but in view of the great results indicated, they may be reasonably construed to mean the assimilation of the essence of the Gita teaching into the practical daily life of the student. No doubt, then, that such a person who is the embodiment of Gita would be a true Jhnani or a Jivanmukta or that he would, in proportion to his success of being so, attain the intermediate spheres of evolution and finally obtain Mukti.

Om Tat Sat

Ajhnanat vismrter bhrandhya yannyunam adhikam krtam
Tatsarvam kshamyatham Devi prasida Paramesvari

Karacharanakrtam vagkaayajam karmajam va
Sraavanayanajam va manasam va aparadham
Vidhitamavidhitam va sarvameetat kshamasva
Siva Siva karunabdhe Sri Mahadeva Sambho.

Kayena vacha mansendriyair va
budhyatmana va prakrter svabhavat
Karomi yatyat sakalam parasmai
Narayanayethi samarpayami.

Namassivaya Sambaya Haraye Paramatmane
Pranataklesanasaya Yoginam Pataye Namah