

Newsletter on Bhagavad Gita by Dr. P.V. Nath

The following text is a compilation of the single issues of a regular newsletter by e-mail, composed by Dr. Pathikonda Viswambara Nath. It includes the original slokas of the Gita as well as the transliteration, translation and commentaries by Dr. Nath.

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**OM SAHA NAVAVATU SAHA NAU BHUNAKTU
SAHA VEERYAM KARAVAVAHAI
TEJASWI NAVADHEETAMASTU
MAA VID VISHAVAHAI**

**May He protect us both (the teacher and the pupil)
May He cause us both to enjoy (the Supreme)
May we both exert together (to discover the true inner meaning of the scriptures)
May our studies be thorough and fruitful.
May we never misunderstand each other.**

The Gita is in the form of dialogue between Krishna, the preceptor and the disciple Arjuna. Sanjaya, the narrator to King Dhritarashtra, intercepts now and then with a comment of his own. There are a total of 18 chapters with 701 verses (slokas.) Each of the chapters has a title and the title ends with the word "Yoga".

The word "**Yoga**" is derived from the word "Yuj" which means "Unite." Study of every chapter assists the seeker to unite with the Lord and hence the use of the word "Yoga."

The seeker is he/she who is looking for attaining the union with the "Parabrahman" and experience the "Eternal Bliss." In Sanskrit the name for the word "seeker" is "Sadhaka". The efforts of the sadhaka is known as "Sadhana".

To undertake the task, the seeker must have "Faith" and "Devotion" in the subject, the teacher and "Parabrahman."

Chapter 3: KARMA YOGA

Introduction

There are so many different angles one can look into to understand “karma” and “Karma Yoga”. Herein I have tried briefly to go into some of the different ways to explain the same and hope this helps in understanding the slokas in the chapter.

1.) The word “Karma” has a number of different meanings and in the context of this chapter we should take it as “action.”

“Yoga” means “Union”.

As the sacred text is about union with the Parabrahman, which is “Liberation”, we should consider “Karma Yoga” as the actions that assist the seeker towards “Liberation.”

The word “Karma” is pronounced with the emphasis on the letter “R” in it. For those who are not familiar with the Indian scripture, the pronunciation to include “r” might be difficult but not impossible. Making the “r” silent, what is said sounds like “kama” and gives a totally different meaning. “Kama” is “desire” and “karma is “action.”

2.)

Some of the other meanings of the word “karma”:

- a) Practice of religious duties.
- b) Destiny/fate.
- c) Moral duties.
- d) A ritual.
- e) Funeral rites (antya karma)

3.)

It is a fact of life that to get something we should be prepared to part with something else.

It is like paying money to buy the goods from the market. We cannot demand to get them free.

Without working we cannot get the wages and without wages we cannot buy what we want.

Taking this logic, “Moksha” does not come from “no action.” It needs input of efforts on our part. The individual who puts his efforts towards achieving it is known as “Sadhaka”, a spiritual seeker. Karma yoga gives the path for the sadhaka to attain moksha.

4.)

Yajna is dedicated action. To dedicate the results of actions with total faith and love towards the “Parabrahman” is the sure way to success for the seeker. Actions without faith and love do not get the desired result. Karma according to the instructions by the Lord really is to be considered as “Yajna.”

5.)

Karma yoga tells us what our duties are and teaches us the art of properly conducting the same. It tells us that our actions should not bring disruption or sorrow to any forms of life on this earth. This

includes the members of the family and friends, members of the society and citizens in other parts of the world.

Using the intellectual capacity of reasoning, assisted and blessed by the “consciousness” within, conducting actions towards universal welfare is true “karma yoga.” This needs control over desire prompted thoughts/speech/actions at the level of mind/speech/body (Mano/vak/kaya). The Lord refers several times in this chapter to “Loka Kalyana” which means “universal welfare.”

6.)

It is impossible to live without any actions. Our body/mind complex configuration makes it impossible to be free from actions. Likes and dislikes (raga/dwesa) propel one into actions. Human needs are for security and endless entertainment and both cannot be achieved without actions. The results of such actions bind us to further actions and it becomes an endless chain of events. The bondage we thus get trapped into is called “Samsara.”

7.)

Only positive, joyous, affirmative action’s conducted as an offering to the divine will liberate us from bondage. It is necessary for us to be involved in the work we do. After all each of us have duties to our own body, family and the society. Commitment to the work without attachment to the results of the work is the art of true karma yoga.

8.)

Man is in the transitional stage of evolution. He is in between the stages of animal and divine. Our duty is to evolve spiritually and move onwards to the next stage of evolution. Our actions will take us to divinity or let us fall down to lower levels of life. Karma yoga teaches the path to evolve spiritually.

9.)

It is important to note that man is a social animal. We have to live as part of the society and work for the society. From the time of birth till death we are the recipients of benefits in one form or other from the society. We take the same for granted or do not realise the same.

The Lord therefore tells us that it is our duty to offer joyfully the results of our actions to the society. But these actions should not be selfish motivated actions, He stresses. He makes it very clear that selfish actions are the root cause of destruction of the society. Karma yoga teaches us the way to overcome selfish motivated actions.

This chapter teaches us to do so by telling us “think before we act.”

10.)

The sastras tell us that what we are experiencing now, whether it be happiness or sorrow, is the result of

a) Our own actions of the past which includes actions from the previous births also

And/or

b) The results of corporate acts of the society of which we are also part of (through our actions or inactions).

In all cases we must not neglect our obligatory duties. There is no room for happiness or sorrow to rule over us and disturb the daily duties.

11.)

We must learn to discharge our obligatory duties, whatever stage of life we may be in; childhood, teenage, adulthood or old age, for welfare of:

Our own selves,

Our family,

Our society,

The life on this universe,

And finally for

The future generations to come.

We have basically two duties:

Duties to the Lord who resides within us. We must keep the body, mind and speech healthy and clean. Neglecting the body is like insulting the Lord within. Through these three instruments we must let the light of knowledge shine through. The “Light of Knowledge” should reflect the “Divinity” within.

It is better understood if we look at the example of a temple. The temple has the deity of choice installed in the inner sanctum sanctorum. The priests at the temple conduct the prescribed daily worship to the deity. The rest of the temple premises have to be kept clean and tidy to let the public come in and see the deity within and offer their worship. The temple where there are no prescribed worships of the deity or premises which is not kept clean does not attract the devotees.

To the society. The Lord within is not seen and so not realised as such by many. The same Lord is reflecting in the various people around and all other forms of life. We should learn to recognise this divinity and show respect to all. This should reflect in our actions as individuals/families towards the handicapped, the needy and the like. Later on in the Gita, we will learn that every form of life on this earth is the “Vibhuti” or “Glory” of the Lord. We should not only offer worship to the deity of choice as thanks for what little we have received so far but also worship through actions that contribute towards universal welfare. This is true reflection of the light of knowledge shining inside each one of us.

12.)

The actions can be voluntary/involuntary. Respiration and circulation have become involuntary actions and through these we keep the body healthy and alive. Sometime in the life of the foetus in mother’s womb, the light has been switched on for involuntary actions for the rest of our lives.

Similarly, we can make our actions involuntarily divine by keeping His teaching in our memory bank. This is known as “Nidhi dhyasa” one of the three requisites for dhyana/meditation.

13.)

From the point of view of the material world, “Karma” can also be defined as “actions that are the cause of bondage.”

“Karma Yoga” on the other hand is the word used with reference to the spiritual world. It means all actions should be according to the sastras, dedicated to the Lord and the acceptance of the result of such actions as Lord’s grace.

These should be actions at all the three levels of “Mano, Vak and Kaya.”

“Kaya” actions: these are ritualistic actions as enshrined in the sastras.

”Vak”: this refers to recitation of the mantras and speaking the “Truth”.

“Mano”: this refers to the act of “Meditation”.

14.)

The root cause of sorrow is not the material world around us but our own ignorance. The scriptures call it "Ajnana." We tend to look for an external source for the sorrow experienced and put the blame on it. It is only a superficial search for the cause of "sorrow." A deeper search will lead us back to our actions that resulted in the experience of sorrow.

The ignorance and the inability to search within deludes us and makes us experience all types of agitations. Sri Krishna is trying to teach us through the Gita the way to overcome the delusion. He is giving us the "Jnana" or "knowledge" to trace the cause of all our sorrows.

15.)

After the introduction to the Gita and summary of the same in the second chapter, we are taken to the chapter "Karma Yoga." Irrespective of who the individual is and where he/she hails from, everybody on earth has to "Work." To experience happiness we have to work and to overcome sorrow also we have to work.

"Karma Yoga" is the conduct of right actions that takes us back to experience the happiness that abides within. We are told that the happiness is not in the objects around us but our own perception of the same. The same object which is the source of pleasure for some is the source of sorrow for others.

The knife used in the kitchen to prepare the food, the knife used by a surgeon to operate on the sick, the knife used by a butcher in his profession is the source of happiness.

On the other hand the knife used to kill somebody or the knife that is taken as a tool to play can turn out to be source of sorrow. It is the bhavana / attitude towards the work and the object of work that makes all the difference.

Karma yoga is to teach the attitude to the work we undertake.
Ajnana is the lack of such knowledge in action.

Opposite to the sorrow is the state of happiness.

16.)

We will also be told in this chapter that even the happiness can turn out to be source of sorrow.

The happiness we experience from the world around us can be traced back also to ignorance. Happiness from around us has a time span fixed to it. After a while, the peak of happiness fades out and in some cases leads to sorrow also.

Longing for a child after marriage and getting a child out of wedlock brings in tremendous happiness. How long does it last? Birth of a child is not the beginning of eternal happiness but a mixture of happiness/sorrow as the child grows.

The day we change our bhavana and think in terms of duties towards the children our whole life changes.

If all our actions follow the code as given in the scriptures we find that our entire life is full of happiness without any room for sorrow to creep in. This state of happiness is "Ananda." Karma yoga gives us an insight into our duties and warns us of the consequences of wrong actions.

17.)

The Lord brings in a new word "Yajna" in this chapter. Yajna is offering to the Lord the results of all actions conducted according to the scriptures.

This attitude to work and the result of actions is "Karma Yoga." Kindness opens up in all the thoughts and actions of such a seeker. This frees the individual of bondage even in this life.

18.)

We, the humans have been given adhikara to work in this world. Escaping from the God given duty and fulfil the purpose of human birth is contrary to the scriptures. Our duties are simple: They are "Loka Sangraha," welfare of life on the earth and "respecting the nature."

Karma yoga is therefore a very important chapter. We must understand this chapter and learn the art of living and working within the space allotted.

19.)

According to Sri Ramana maharshi, karma yoga is "purification of the mind." Purification of the mind is avoidance of all thoughts that are egoistic and filling the mind with thoughts on the divine and the divine duties.

Sloka 1

Arjuna uvacha:

**JYAYASEE CHET KARAMANASTE MATAA BUDDHIR JANARDANA
TAT KIM KARMANI GHORE MAAM NIYOJAYASI KESHAVA**

Arjuna said:

O Keshava, if your belief is that knowledge is superior to action, why do you engage me in (this) dreadful battle?

If we can recollect the second chapter, we will note that both action and knowledge are extolled by the Lord.

An elaborate description of karma yoga was given through slokas 47-60 and through slokas 11-46 an elaborate description on jnana yoga.

The Lord ended the chapter 2 with an elaborate description on the qualities of a “Man of steady wisdom.”

We should also recall at this juncture that Arjuna was full of confidence in himself and went to the battlefield with Sri.Krishna as his charioteer. He requested Krishna to take the chariot to the middle of the battlefield so that he could see all the warriors who had assembled to fight for the evil Prince Duryodhana.

Suddenly he developed a serious doubt in his mind about the justification for fighting against the respected elders of his own extended family and his mentors. He lost the nerve and dropped his bow Gandeeva and asked Krishna to guide him on the right path of action.

From the point of taking for granted that Sri Krishna was his charioteer, Arjuna moved one step higher in his spiritual plane and saw in Krishna the aspect of a “Guru” and asked for guidance. The first step taken by Sri Krishna was to go through the four main paths of “Bhakti, Jnana, Karma and Dhyana” in the second chapter.

We can say that Arjuna, through this question in this chapter has certainly moved another step higher. But he still has in the heart of heart no inclination to fight. We seem to get the impression that he would rather give the kingdom without fight to Duryodhana and take up “Sanyasa ashrama” duties. That is to be understood by the last quarter of this sloka: “Why do you engage me in this dreadful battle?”

We can also presume that by referring to “Karma and Jnana” he has some doubt about his decision not to fight. It appears that he has a flicker of light of knowledge that he should act properly and the guide to help him to conduct the right action was “Krishna.” Krishna not as his charioteer but Sri Krishna as his master.

We must therefore learn the lesson that when we have any doubts on the correctness of our actions, we must approach the “Guru” and request for guidance. Arjuna did follow this path of asking for guidance and the result is “The Srimad Bhagavad-Gita”.

It is a jewel in the crown for the entire mankind irrespective of religion, faith, caste, sex or creed. Let us unfold our mind at the vicinity of the master and learn the lesson of right action in life with the sole purpose of “Loka Kalyana.”

Sloka 2

**VYAMISHRENEVA VAAKYENA BUDDHIM MOHAYASEEVA ME'
TADEKAM VADA NISCHITYA YENA SHREYOHAMAPNUVAAM.**

You confuse my intellect as it were with speech which appears paradoxical. Therefore, tell me that “one” path, by which I may attain the Highest.

In continuation of the first sloka, Arjuna is putting forward the doubts raised in his mind about “the need for right action and his doubt as to what is the right action?”

The important word to note here is “Vyamishrena vaakyena”: it means, “Paradoxical speech.” He says, “You confuse my intellect as it were with speech which appears paradoxical.”

Arjuna is not saying “you are confusing me,” but saying “as it were, confusing me.” This is the quality in a genuine seeker who looks upon his teacher as a “Guru.” After all, “Guru” is a “dispeller of darkness.” “Ignorance is darkness” is what the experts say. The student must be free to express his doubts but not in a spirit of challenge: “You do not know how to tell me.”

"I am confused and I need to have a deeper understanding of your words. The way I have understood your words is wrong and you have to help me to get a clearer understanding" is the plea.

Let us see which the confusing words are:

Sloka 31 - chapter 2: "For a Kshatriya, a righteous war is the only path to Liberation."

Sloka 45 - chapter 2: "Go beyond the three gunas."

Sloka 47 - chapter 2: "You have a right to work."

Qualities of a “Sthitaprajna.”

By listening to “go beyond the three gunas”, Arjuna probably thought that he should not be in the war and fighting the enemy. “I should not encourage any type of desires”, he thought. Desires meant that he should fight and not encouraging desires meant he should take up sanyasa.

But then Krishna said “you have a right to work”. It means that He is implying that Arjuna should be in the war and fighting the enemy.

Finally the description of a “Sthitaprajna” totally confused Arjuna.

Arjuna understood that “Jnana” meant “realising the Atman within and all around. and to take the individual away from the world of senses.” He understood “Karma” as “actions that keep one in the world of senses.”

He therefore finally asks, “tell me what is for my Shreyas?”

The path Arjuna wanted to take was definitely a noble one as it was meant to attain “Moksha.” As he was in a hysterical state when the advice was given, the message was not understood clearly. Like a sincere student he is asking for clarification.

Indirectly, through the medium of Arjuna, the sage poet Bhagawan Veda Vyasa is putting the question on behalf of all sincere seekers of Liberation. A true Guru is he who encourages his students to clarify all doubts. But the student must at the same time have full faith in the guru. Arjuna on his part also is to be looked upon as a sincere student with full faith in his guru.

The faith that my guru will help me to clarify my doubts and help me in achieving the final aim should be the attitude by all sincere seekers. Any doubt based on sincere trust is “Satvic doubt.” It is like the child putting forward questions to his/her mother to clear the doubts. The child does so with full love and faith towards the mother.

Sri Krishna wants Arjuna to develop the true understanding of the words He has used. Proper understanding only comes when the master encourages doubts in the mind of his students.

Sloka 3

Sri Bhagawan uvacha:

Sri Bhagawan spoke thus:

**LOKE'SMIN DVIVIDHA NISHTA PURA PROKTA MAYANGHA
JNANA YOG'ENA SANKHYANAAM KARMA YOG'ENA YOGINAAM.**

In this world there is a two-fold path, O sinless Arjuna, the path of knowledge of the Sankhyans and the path of action of the Yogins.

Anagaha: Sinless.

Sri Krishna addresses Arjuna as “sinless.” Why?

Arjuna was a kshatriya and had killed many in the past and was going to kill many in the present war. Killing of people was not a sin for a kshatriya. It was the duty of the kshatriya to “protect.”

The soldiers fighting for a country are supposed to be fighting for the country and follow the orders from the seniors. The sin for a wrong war falls on the leaders who call for the war. The ordinary soldier is fulfilling his role in the society by carrying out the duties of fighting.

Arjuna, one of the top few men in the war and a Pandava, younger brother of Yudhistira, was a righteous man and pure by nature. He decided to fight Duryodhana who was wicked.

“Sinless” refers to the mental purity of Arjuna.

Lok'esmin:

“In this world”:

“Loka” in this context refers to the variety of people in the world around. Every individual is conducting “actions” as part and parcel of his daily life. We all have been blessed with the power of reasoning capacity. The sloka refers to those who conduct actions using the intellectual capacity of reasoning.

Dvididha nishta:

“Two fold path”:

Sri Krishna refers to two broad categories of people who conduct actions. We should look upon actions here representing actions for attainment of “Liberation.”

In an ordinary sense, actions could fall under a number of categories. Here, we are expected to look at only such actions that fulfil the duties of birth in this world as humans.

Pura prokta:

"Has been said so in the past":

By making this statement, Sri Krishna is referring to the ancient scholars and wise men who gave advice to mankind towards ways of achieving Liberation. Please note that the word "I said so" did not come from the lips of the Lord. We can say that He is hinting at His Eternal state.

This statement held good in the past, correct at the time of the war and would be true in the future millenniums to come.

Jnana yog'ena sankhyanaam karma yog'ena yoginnaam :

- a) The path of Jnana by the men of knowledge and
- b) the path of action by the yogis (men of action.)

Yog'ena: yoga is the path that is taken to unite with the "Parabrahman" which is the same as "Liberation."

Both the groups of people have to take a path that leads to Moksha.

We have two main tools given to us by the blessing of the Lord.

- a) The intellect;
- b) The mind with the sense organs and the organs of actions.

We will later on be told about King Janaka as an example of one who belonged to the second category of men.

Those who follow the path "a" are considered as following the path of "Nivritti".
Others that follow the "b" path, are considered as following the path of "Pravritti".

Both groups of people are fit to be called "sadhakas" and the steps taken by them are known as "sadhana."

They are in search of "spiritual wealth" which is the meaning of the word "sadhana."

The word "sankhya" is to be associated with "Jnana". Jnana yogis are aware of the pitfalls by associating with the world of objects. The objects bring in a sense of "likes, dislikes" and many a time drag the seeker away from the spiritual path. They stick to their life of the study of the Vedas, Upanishads and sacred texts. The samyasinis are those who renounce the world and show signs of renunciation. They wear ochre robes which is only an outward symbol of formal renunciation. (Let us make it clear now that wearing the ochre robe itself is not the sign of sanyasi.) The example we have are the four eternal youth, children of Lord Brahma. They are "Sanaka, Sananda, Sanatana and Sanatkumara." They were asked by the creator Brahma to assist Him in the task of creation but refused to oblige. They are also known as "Antarmukhis": men with the vision of the Atman within.

The other group are those who take the path of action to attain Liberation. They follow the principle of "karma" as enshrined in sloka 47, chapter 2. This group of people get the education in the ancient texts and then decide to get married. They take up the "Grihastha Ashrama Dharma." They assist in sustenance of the universe by their actions. This group of men are considered as "Bahirmukhis". They see and concentrate on the God around in various forms of life and respect the same.

These two are not separate paths and there is no need to enter into an argument as which is the best.

The Vedas are classified into three sections:

Karma kanda

Jnana kanda

Upasana kanda.

The three are the steps that lead to the final act of “Realisation of Parabrahman.”

The Brahmin and Kshatriya children went to the guru kula ashrama to study the Vedas.

One group left after studying the first section and returned to take up their duties in the society. These are “Kshatriyas.”

Second group stayed a bit longer, received the knowledge of the Atman and returned to the society to take up the role of promoting the religious preaching. These are the “Brahmanas”.

The last group did not return to the society but got totally immersed in the task of experiencing the “Eternal Peace.”

Somewhere in the middle of evolution, the division between the path of action and the path of knowledge got separated and remained in the minds of many as separate entities.

Sri Krishna is re-iterating the fact that the division is not correct and both are the sadhana paths for spiritual seekers. He has blessed us with the present of the sacred text, “Srimad Bhagavad-Gita.”

Renunciation is not the path for majority. Karma yogis are grihastas (Householders) and follow the “Grihastha ashrama dharma” (household duties).

Let us understand the Gita in this sense. We have a choice to follow the path that suits our temperament and not bicker about which path is best. Try to become sadhakas, work for spiritual wealth, (sadhana) and attain Moksha.

Sloka 4

**NA KARMANAM ANARAMBHAM NAISHKARMYAM PURUSHO'SNUTE
NA CHA SANYASAD EVA SIDDHIM SAMADHIGACHATI**

**Man does not reach the actionless state of Brahman by non-performance of actions.
Man also does not attain “perfection” by renunciation only.**

Let us analyse the first half of the verse:

"Man does not reach the actionless state of Parabrahman by non-performance of actions."

Many have a wrong notion that as sin can only result from the actions performed, it is best to avoid actions altogether.

They also have a wrong notion that “Brahman is actionless.”

If I achieve “Liberation” I do not need to conduct any more actions, they assume.

We are told that all these assumptions are wrong. Why?

Each one of us is on this earth commissioned to live through and exhaust the fruits of our actions conducted in the past and continuing to conduct at present. To exhaust all the stored vasanas (vasana kshaya) and achieve the destruction of the so called mind of ours, (Manonasha) we have no choice but to work. Only on achieving the two conditions successfully, i.e.: “vasana kashaya and mano nasha,” we can realise the state of “Parabrahman”.

Even then, to consider that “Parabrahman is actionless” is also a wrong notion. Parabrahman is constantly at work for the maintenance of the universe He created.

The second half of the verse:

“Man also does not attain perfection by renunciation.”

A child gets perfection in walking after several attempts to crawl, to stand up and start learning to walk the first few steps.

One attains perfection in cookery after the first few failed attempts.

We have to live in this world, conduct ordained actions and learn from our mistakes.

Later on we will come to know this as “Jnana and Vijnana”. Knowledge by itself cannot make the individual perfect. Actions conducted with the knowledge, learning from the mistakes are necessary to attain perfection. We will be told later on in chapter 7 that one in a million tries to achieve perfection and a rare few among those who try will actually succeed in achieving perfection.

Graduation does not give the title of “Professor and Head of the Department.” The graduate has to pass through a number of stages of promotion from lecturer to Professor.

Thinking that we know all about “actions and results, both good and bad; happiness, sorrow” and decide to renounce all actions is a foolish assumption.

In continuation of the theme taken up in the previous verse, Sri Krishna is therefore stressing on the need to conduct actions.

In spiritual evolution we have to climb from being:

Stone man

To

Animal man

To

Man man

To

God man.

The final aim is to achieve “Liberation.”

The higher we climb the spiritual ladder, more responsibility is on us to conduct actions for the welfare of the universe.

Let us remember the verse 47, chapter 2:

Karmanyē vaadhikarasthe--.

Clearing the thought imprints needs conducting actions in the spirit of “offering the results of good actions to the Lord” and conducting actions “without any motive for selfish gains.”

Na karmanaam arambha:

This is the first quarter of the verse.

“Arambha” is beginning.

“Na karmanaam” means “not conducting actions.”

There is always a beginning and end to any work conducted.

There is no such thing as “not conducting actions.” The thought imprints on our mind which we carry as a result of past actions is the beginning for all actions. Sooner or later we have to work to burn all the stored vasanas.

Our philosophy tells us that we have all come from “Parabrahman” and we have to finally go back to Him.

The first day we came out into this world, not of this birth, but of the first ever birth into this world (of which we have no notion at all), we started to conduct actions. As we accumulate more and more vasanas due to desires and hatreds in the births we undertake, we have to:

- Purify our minds of all past thoughts
- To obtain jnana and finally
- To attain Moksha.

Actions performed with this principle are true karma. Such actions then become “Yajna.” Yajna is “dedicated action.”

The Vedas prescribe various duties to perform by the members of any one given community to suit the temperament of the individuals. We are part of the community we live in. We have to live in harmony with others. To keep the communities together each member of that community has to take up some form of work. No one in the community has a right not to work.

By asserting that “by not working one does not get Liberated”, Sri Krishna is giving us the motivation to work for the community.

Sloka 5

**NA HI KASHCHIT KSHANAMAPI JATU TISHTATI AKARMA KRIT
KARYATE HY AVASHAHA KARMA SARVAHA PRAKRITIJAIR GUNAIH.**

No one can ever remain, even for a moment, without performing work. Everyone, without his will, is made to do work by the qualities born of prakriti.

It is not so difficult to understand the first half of the verse. We all know that there are basically two types of actions:

Voluntary

Involuntary.

From the point of view of our own physical body, we conduct a number of involuntary actions. It is as though we do not know them but we carry on doing those actions according to a time clock set in our brain.

Act of breathing, circulation, digestion are some of the examples of involuntary actions we conduct. By nature, for the sole purpose of survival, we conduct these involuntary actions. Failure to breathe, failure of circulatory system end up with catastrophic consequences. Digestion is almost a continuous process within our body. We survive because of these involuntary actions.

The act of blinking is another example of involuntary action. It is to protect our eye, a delicate organ and an essential one for survival in this world. By nature, to protect the eyes, we conduct the act of blinking.

The second half of the verse is a little bit difficult to understand. The Lord says that everyone, without his will is made to work by the qualities born of prakriti. This refers to both voluntary and involuntary actions. We have looked at some examples of involuntary actions at the beginning of this verse. Let us look at some of the voluntary actions.

What we are and what we do voluntarily also to a large extent depends upon what we call as “thought imprints” called as “Vasanas”. These are stored in the mind and are the precursors of all our actions. The Hindu philosophy is based on the theory of rebirth after the physical death. We have no control over where we are born next, what form we take and when after death we are born again. The present life is considered to be one of several births and deaths in our life. The life is a sojourn of innumerable births and deaths that ultimately leads one to “Liberation.” We had many births before and will have many more births to come. Depending on the purity of thoughts and actions we either climb upwards towards the path of attaining final Liberation or fall down into the world of lower forms of birth.

Based on this theory of rebirth after the physical death, is the aspect of “Gunas.” The gunas are the thought imprints from the previous births stored in the mind at the time of the new birth into this world. The birth as human is to exhaust the stored vasana imprints and not to instil any new vasanas. This is a rarity and only rare souls manage to achieve this state of “no stored vasanas in the mind” and attain the final liberation.

“Prakriti” is nature. The word “nature” refers to one’s own nature and also refers to the five gross elements: “earth, water, fire, air and space.” Here, the word refers to our own nature.

The gunas are classified broadly into “Pure, Passionate and Indolent.” (Satvas, Rajas and Tamas.)

The Hindu philosophy classifies the entire population on the basis of these three qualities into the four following categories:

Brahmana
Kshatriya
Vaishya
Shoodra.

Brahmana shows predominance of pure thoughts and is recognised by his knowledge of the Self, the scriptures and the like. He is considered to be an evolved soul.

Kshatriya with combination of Pure and Passionate qualities, the pure predominating, is physically strong and conducts duties to protect the innocent and those under his shelter. The warrior class of people of the old ages belonged to this class. Arjuna belonged to this group.

Vaishya also with predominance of pure and passionate qualities, a touch of tamasic quality, but with passionate predominating. They conduct actions for personal gains. Business class of people belong to this group.

Shoodra, with a mixture of rajasic and tamasic qualities, tamasic predominating. They are not as clever as the other three class of people as such but physically strong and conduct duties pertaining to the menial tasks and work needing predominantly physical strength.

Each one of us is born into this world with a bundle of thought imprints that dictate the type of actions we conduct later on in our lives.

The Lord is particularly referring to Arjuna in this instance. Arjuna had taken shelter under Krishna at the beginning of this war. He was confused. He was born as Kshatriya and had a duty to fight and protect but wanted to escape from his duties and give away the kingdom to Duryodhana who was a personification of “unrighteousness.”

If he had absconded from his duties and went away to the forest, his thought imprints would not have changed overnight. He would still carry the gunas of a kshatriya and his association with life in the forest would have made him conduct actions sooner or later that befit his qualities.

This is the summary of this verse. By stopping here, one may get a wrong notion that if it is so, that the nature determines all our actions, there is no room for change. We are what we are and we can do what our thought imprints dictate. This is the wrong notion. The human birth is associated with having the “Intellect”, the reasoning capacity. There is room for the better in the form of influence by the parents and the society in the early part of one’s life. The education provided by the society is supposed to assist the individual in modifying his actions for the benefit of the society. In Hindu philosophy and tradition prominent role is given to the “Guru”, a learned master of the scriptures. His role is to impart the scriptural knowledge into the seeker and assist him in the path of spiritual progress.

These are voluntary actions. Let us understand this clearly. Yes, it is true that the gunas we are born with dictate the type of work we conduct. At the same time, we have an opportunity to change the thought imprints in our mind. This is a slow process and by what we call as “Practice” (Abhyasa) it is possible to change. Starting from the time of birth into this world, there is a latent period before the baby can become a child and then an adult. During this early period of one’s life, the immediate family (mother, father etc) and the society outside the family has an opportunity to bring in a change in the quality of thoughts. It is a slow process but not an impossible task.

The Puranas tell us the story of Prahlada to highlight this point. He was born in a demonic family as the son of the demon Hiranyakashipu. Destiny made his mother, while he was still in the mother’s womb, to reside in the abode of sage Narada. She was given discourses on the Lord Vishnu, the Supreme. This changed Prahlada’s thought imprints while he was still in mother’s womb from a demonical one to a saintly nature.

Sloka 6

**KARMENDRIYANI SAMYAMYA YA AASTE’ MANASAA SMARAN
INDRIYARTHAAN VIMOODATMAA MITHYACHARAHA ITI UCHYATE.**

He who, restraining the organs of action, sits contemplating on the sense objects with mind is called a hypocrite.

The Lord is referring to two instruments of knowledge: the sense organs and the mind. Eyes, ears, nose, tongue and the skin are the five sense organs. Their duty is to provide the mind with the details of the objects around.

The mind is to be looked upon as the superior officer to the sense organs. Its role is to analyse the impulses received from the sense organs and act accordingly. It acts also as the storehouse of the feelings experienced from the impulses received. In other words, it is also a memory bank that keeps a database of all past experiences. It is the most powerful computer and can carry out a number of skilful tasks.

We can broadly classify the experiences as those that are pleasurable and that are painful and filled with sorrow. The life is a mixture of experiences of both the types. Really speaking our life is a journey towards the abode of the “Supreme” and we say it is the “Spiritual Journey.”

The society in general is an admixture of different groups of people. Some are sincere seekers, some indifferent and some who are antisocial.

There is still another class of people who pretend to be the seekers of Truth. They make a pretence of sitting in a posture of meditation to draw the public attention. They follow the external rituals of meditation keeping their eyes shut and pretend to be contemplating on the Supreme. But their minds are filled with recollecting the happy experiences of past or contemplating on the future happy experiences they would like to go through.

This is only a pretence and the Lord uses the word “Hypocrites” to describe them.

Finally there is another group who try to sit in meditation and contemplate on the Supreme. But they do not know how to control their mind and restrain it from the thinking of the events from its memory bank.

The scriptures and the Gita do give a description of the correct method of meditation. They tell us to learn the art of controlling the sense organs by the mind, the mind by the intellect and the intellect by the inner conscience. This is a gradual process and takes a long time of sincere efforts and assistance by the learned.

Let us understand the same by an example:

Once there were two friends who decided to go and watch a film in another part of the town. They passed through an arena where there was a spiritual discourse by a master. They decided to go in and listen to the discourse. One of them could not concentrate on the discourse and decided to go to the picture. Both of them agreed to exchange their experiences the next day.

The one who stayed back to listen to the discourse confessed that his mind was not on the discourse but on the movie he had missed. The other one also could not describe the story of the movie and confessed that he felt guilty at not staying back for the discourse. His mind was thinking of the topic the master was giving the discourse. The term “Hypocrite” refers to the one who stayed back to listen to the discourse.

Let us quickly recollect the scene of the Gitopadesham. The horses are controlled by the Lord and the Lord at the same time is guiding Arjuna. The Lord in the form of “consciousness” inside us should be the overall master to control both our mind and the sense organs.

Sloka 7

**YASTVINDRIYANI MANASA NIYAMYARABHATE'RJUNA
KARMENDRIYAIHI KARMAYOGAAM ASAKTAHA SA VISHISHYATE**

But O Arjuna, he who controls the senses with his mind and engages his organs of action of karma-yoga, without attachment, is the best.

The Lord has brought out the three instruments of our body:

- The mind
- The sense organs
- The organs of action.

The sense organs are: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin.

The organs of action: the hands, feet, the tongue, the organs of digestion and excretion, the organs of reproduction.

As we have learnt before, the mind projects out into the external world through the medium of the sense organs of perception. We perceive the world through the sense organs. The sense organs bring in the impulses from the world around like the forms of objects, the sound etc.

We know that the external world is a massive area and has phenomenal number of objects in it. Without the medium of these sense organs we will not have a clue of what is around us. A blind person

cannot see the door in front of him and a deaf person cannot enjoy the conversation in a group. They help us to be part of the world and associate with the world.

The mind, the band leader, analyses the impulses received, stores them in its memory bank and takes actions accordingly. We all know the functions of the mind and we need not go through the basics of the same.

The mind then directs the organs of action as needed. When hungry, it takes action that is needed to get the food.

Sloka 8

**NIYATAM KURU KARMA TVAM KARMA JYAYO HY AKARMANAHA
SHAREERA YATREPI CHA TE' NA PRASIDHYED AKARMANAHA.**

**Do the obligatory duties as prescribed by the sastras;
It is superior to inaction;
By inaction, even the maintenance of the body is not possible for you.**

One can see from the tone of the statement that the Lord is not commanding but only giving a useful and practical advice.

He is advocating action and states that it is superior to inaction.

At the same time, He is directing the disciple towards "Sastras." The sastras have to be the authority and guide towards conducting any action or not conducting actions. A learned guru, who has mastered the sastras and lived the life as enshrined in the sastras is the most apt person to guide the seeker towards understanding the sastras.

Niyatam karma: it means "Obligatory duties". One may then ask: what do we mean by "obligatory duties?"

The duties that are "required and not optional" are obligatory duties." They become binding and we have to conduct them.

Arjuna wanted to drop all actions and become a sanyasi. He had understood that to be desireless one must drop actions. That was his basic misunderstanding of the sastras.

Each one of us has a duty:

To oneself,

To his family,

To his society,

To his country,

And last but not the least,

To his universe.

Some scholars say that the act of "bathing, eating, sleeping" are obligatory duties. When to bathe, what to eat, when to eat, when to sleep and how long to sleep are all given in the sastras. These are "required duties" to keep the body and mind fit to be a member of the society. They are not "Optional." They are binding duties on our part. By not eating, sleeping or bathing, the maintenance of the body becomes impossible.

As it applies to our own physical body, we do give some importance to these duties. We have to refer to elders/sastras on how to conduct these actions so that our body and mind are always fit and healthy.

(We will in chapter 6, sloka 17 learn more about control over eating and sleeping.) Let us not forget that the bodily existence with good physical and mental health is required to achieve the several ideals in life. Action is the means to keep the body fit.

Let us now look at duties to the society and duties to our own family and friends. One may say that these duties are optional and we will conduct them if we want to. It is up to our choice, they say. This is wrong. It is the main theme of the Gita and specially chapter 3. The Lord says it is about the need for one and all to act and fulfil their obligatory duties to the society. We should consider our duties to the family and the society also as “Obligatory duties” and bring out the best through those actions. It is the attitude to work that the Lord is referring to.

Some examples:.

Before becoming the doctor, one has to undergo a prescribed course of studies in a medical college and get the basic training. The society in one form or other runs the institution and sets a standard of regulation to teach and train the students. It also sets in a set examination to assess the skill obtained by the student to practice.

The society also played its role in providing the primary and secondary education needed to enter the university.

Even though, it appears that the student paid the college fees, the contribution by the society is more than the fees paid by the student. It costs millions of pounds to build and maintain the institution. The society maintains the roads, provides water supply, electricity etc to all. The student was able to go to the college because of the public services provided by the society. It is estimated that to bring out a graduate doctor, it would cost nearly a quarter of million pounds.

A graduate, be it a doctor or any other professional, therefore, on the day of graduation, comes out with a massive debt to the society. To work after graduation is therefore “obligatory”. The graduate has no option. He/she is required to work and repay the debt. The society does not demand the repayment of the costs incurred to make him a graduate. On the other hand, the graduate does get paid for his work either as an employee or earns by private practice. It is still to be looked upon as paid by the member/members of the society.

The attitude to work has to be:

I owe a massive debt to the society. It is my duty to serve the society by applying the skills learnt in conduct of my actions.

Every individual has therefore to conduct his daily duties in the form of offering to the society.

The same law applies to the members of a family in a household. It is the elders in the family who contribute towards the education and look after the needs of the children. Each member in a household starting from the mother has varied roles towards the other members of the family. The duties by the family members to each other have to be conducted in the same spirit of offering to the family and thereby offering to the society. The attitude to work of every adult member in the household should be “Let me also not fail in discharging my duties to my children who are going to be the torch bearers of the society in future.”

We are also told that the “action is superior to inaction.”

We have therefore to understand that we cannot drop any of the obligatory duties. Everyone is bound to his/her family and the society. If members in family or in the society fail to fulfil their obligatory duties, the progress in that family and society falters. Instead of experiencing the happiness at the results obtained, there will be sorrow and misery. The failure of the father in his duties to his offspring

can be catastrophic. No one should escape his duties is the firm commandment from the scriptures and reiterated by the Lord in this sloka.

By taking up premature sanyasa from the worldly duties, the progress in the spiritual path falters. Arjuna was going through this feeling/bhavana in his mind. Luckily, his earlier Vedic education, his respect towards the elders and acceptance of Lord Krishna as his guru, assisted in guiding him back into the right path.

“By inaction, even the maintenance of the body is not possible”.

This is not difficult to understand. Can we maintain our body and health by not drinking water, by not eating and by not going to sleep?

If we do not fulfil our duties to the family and society, they in turn also in their own way do not look after our needs. The love and respect the family or the society to he/she who does not fulfil the duties will diminish in proportion and sooner or later the individual who fails to conduct his/her duty is going to suffer. They find it hard to maintain their health either physical or mental health.

The sastras talk of four types of actions:

Nitya karma
Naimittika karma
Kamya karma
Nishiddha karma

Nitya karmas and Naimittika karmas refer to the daily duties for a householder. The description given above covers these two duties.

Niyta karmas:

These are obligatory daily duties.

The pancha yajnas fall under this category.

Deva Yajna, Rishi Yajna, Pitru Yajna, Nara Yajna and Bhoota Yajna are the five panch maha yajnas. They have to be conducted as a dedicated acts.

Deva yajna:

Worship of the deities in the form of daily morning and evening prayers is Deva yajna.

Rishi yajna:

Worship of the sacred texts, honouring the saints and savants, learning the sacred texts are considered as Rishi Yajna.

Pitru Yajna:

These are acts to worship the departed souls: parents, grandparents etc.

Nara Yajna:

Respecting other humans, ahimsa, and assisting those in need in the society is nara yajna.

Bhoota yajna:

Respect and non-injury to other forms of life is bhoota yajna.

We will learn more about these as we proceed to other chapters.

Naimittika karmas: acts that fulfil our dependency on other fellow humans and other forms of life is Naimittika karma. One can say that conduct of professional duties as naimittika karma.

Kamya karma: desire oriented actions are kamya karmas. These are to fulfil the desires that are not contradictory to the sastras.

For a true Hindu life is a journey to attain final salvation.

They are:

Dharma

Artha

Kama

Moksha.

Learn what dharma is and implement it in daily life.

Having understood what dharma is, we get the permission to earn so that we can conduct all actions which are righteous.

With the wealth earned, he/she can fulfil the desires. These should not be contrary to the sastras. For example: marriage is a kama karma provided one has learnt dharma and has earned righteously so that he can take care of wife, children and other dependants.

Finally, Moksha, the salvation.

Moksha is the spiritual aim in life for all Hindus and the entire life from birth is a journey towards achieving the same.

Nishiddha karma: these are acts forbidden by the sastras and the society.

In the process of evolution we have to evolve from:

Stone man to animal man

From animal man to man-man and

Finally climb up the ladder and become God man on earth.

Towards these we must conduct all obligatory duties.

In summary, we can say that every individual on earth must do his/her share of work in his/her field of activity to the best of one's capacity and not to let selfishness take over the individual mind.

Sloka 9

**YAJNARTHA KARMANO'NYATRA LOKOYAM KARMA BANDHANAH
TAD ARTHAM KARMA KAUNTEYA MUKTASANGAH SAMAACHARAH**

O Arjuna, work other than those performed for the sake of sacrifice, binds to this world. So perform the work for sacrifice, without attachment.

“Moksha” or “Salvation” is the goal for having taken the birth as humans, says the Hindu philosophy. It says that each one of us has gone through the process of innumerable births and deaths in the past and will continue to do so in future. It is the rare few who have completed the cycle and attain the final destination. The journey is known popularly as “Spiritual Journey.”

The man is known as “Karma jeevi”, the one who has to live a life of actions. From birth to death we have to conduct actions, either voluntary or involuntary. There are basically three results from all the voluntary actions conducted:

- they take us towards the upward path to Moksha; or
- they bind us to this world; or
- they take us to the downward path of hell.

Actions that are conducted contrary to the spirit of “Yajna” bind one to this world, He says. By this we should understand that all desire fulfilling actions are binding.

It is therefore necessary for us to understand the true meaning of the word “Yajna.”

Broadly speaking it means “Dedicated act.”

What is a “Dedicated act?” will be the next question that crops in the mind.

Every work is bound to give a result. Good actions give good results. Who is to benefit from the result of any good actions?

Only desireless actions, dedicated to the “Supreme” can be called as “Yajna.” All other types of actions, even though good actions, are not “Yajnas” in truest sense.

If the result is for the benefit of someone else, we tend to consider it as a dedicated act. For example, if I decide to give the wages for the day to my beloved, I look upon it as a dedicated act by me to my beloved. As it was conducted with an ulterior motive of pleasing my beloved and getting something more in return it cannot therefore be considered as “Yajna.”

“Where is the God and how can I dedicate my work?” will be the question by a sincere seeker. The “Supreme Lord”, the Parabrahman is without any form (Nirakara) and without any qualities (Nirguna), so says the Vedas. How can then one dedicate result of actions to Him?

As far as the individual is concerned, he/she is alive in the world and is able to be so because of the society around. Without other members of the society and other forms of life on this earth, man cannot survive in this world. He should therefore consider the rest of the society indirectly as the “Supreme” and offer all results of good work back to the society in one form or other. Then only, his work becomes a “Yajna.”

Work conducted in this spirit by the citizens of any country only will help the society in that country to prosper.

Arjuna as we know wanted to withdraw from the battlefield. He was in pursuit of Moksha and expressed his desire to Lord Krishna. He certainly did not want to go to hell. His misunderstanding was in thinking that he would incur sin by fighting the battle. Actions conducted in that spirit would not be “Yajna”. Only actions conducted in the spirit of Yajna would assist the seekers to be united with the Parabrahman.

Krishna is therefore indirectly giving Arjuna a hint to continue fighting and not to think of the consequences. Arjuna should have fought in this spirit: “My Lord Krishna is my divine Guru and my actions are dedicated to Him only and nobody else, including myself. He has tried to avoid the bloodshed and the death of innumerable soldiers but failed in his attempts to let Dhritarashtra and Duryodhana see justice. I am not fighting for benefit to my family but to the citizens of Hastinapura. Under the leadership of the evil Duryodhana, the subjects will suffer. I am therefore fighting the battle for Lord Krishna, the upholder of Universal justice.” This way, his actions would have been “Yajna”.

Let our aspirations be “Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu.” Let our work reflect the service towards humanity with no selfish motive. This will certainly lead us upwards in spiritual path towards “Moksha.”

Sloka 10

**SAHA YAJNAHA PRAJAH A SRUSHTVA PUROVAACHA PRAJAPATIHI
ANENA PRASAVISHYADHVAM ESA VO'STVA ISHTA KAMADHUK**

The Prajapati, having created mankind in the beginning with Yajna, said, “By this shall you prosper”. Let this be to you the milk-cow of desires, the wish-fulfilling heavenly cow, “Kamadhenu.”

It will be an interesting exercise to learn something about the two words “Prajapati” and “Kamadhenu.”

Prajapati means “Lord of creation.” “Praja” is “Propagation” and “pati” is “Lord.” It is a late Vedic cosmogonic concept. It is said that Prajapati formed living creatures out of his sacrificial offerings to the Gods.

It is said that there are 7, 8 or 10 or even more, mythological great sages and together they are known as “Prajapatis.” These are the “Mind-born” sons of Lord Brahma. (Brahma Manasa Putras.) Lord Brahma, on receiving the command from Lord Vishnu to create life on earth, created the Prajapatis and gave them the command to create the life on earth. These are considered to be the instruments of secondary creation.

“Svayambhu” is an epithet signifying the “self-existent” nature of Brahman. It is considered “unknowable and unfathomable”. It is said that Lord Brahma converted himself into two persons, male and a female. The male counterpart is “Manu Svayambhuva” and the female “Satarupa.” Svayambhuva is the name of the first Manu and there are 14 mythological creators who successively rule the 14 eras called “Manvantaras.”

Brahma then created the “ten great sages” who became the Lords of all created beings. The ten sages are:

Marici, Atri, Angirasa, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasishtha, Prachetas (Daksha), Bhrigu and Narada.

These are the progenitors of the various gods, godlings, demons, all species of animals and vegetable life on earth.

“Kamadhenu” is the “wish fulfilling cow of plenty” that emerged from the churning of the ocean by the “Devas and Danavas.” It is said to fulfil every desire. Surabhi, Savala, Aditi are some of its other names by which it is called. It symbolises the abundance and proliferation of Nature.

The mythological churning of the ocean is popularly known as “Samundra manthana.” One could say it is a “secondary” creation myth that regards all things as existing in potentia in the primordial ocean. Superhuman efforts will be needed to unearth the treasure that would benefit mankind.

The Myth:

The devas and danavas are lifelong enemies and in constant fight with each other. During one of the fights, the devas lose out to the danavas who come to occupy the heaven, the abode of the devas. Lord Vishnu was the only superhuman who could assist in turning the defeat of the devas into victory for the devas and benefit for mankind. The devas approached Lord Vishnu to help them to regain the “Indraloka” (Amaravati), the capital city of the Devas.

The devas needed to drink the nectar “Amrita” and become invincible. This immortal nectar, “Amrita” was deep in the ocean and needed to be unearthed. It could not be done by the devas on their own. They needed the physical strength of the danavas to churn the ocean. Lord Vishnu advises Indra to make peace with the danavas. In the pretext of getting the nectar out of the ocean, and sharing it with them, the devas request the danavas to take part in churning the ocean.

The devas chose Mount Mandara as a churning rod and coiled the serpent Vasuki around it as a rope to enable them to churn the ocean. The devas held on to the tail end of the serpent and the danavas held on to the headend. To prevent the Mount Mandara from getting submerged in the ocean due its heavy weight, Lord Vishnu took the form of “Tortoise” (Kurma Avatara) and let the Mount Mandara stand on His trunk. Various objects came out of the churning and here is a list of the objects that emerged:

1. Kamadhenu
2. Vaaruni, the Goddess of wine
3. The celestial Parijatha tree
4. Group of heavenly nymphs (Apsaras)
5. Cool-rayed Moon
6. Kalahala, poisonous gas
7. Dhanvantari, the Physician of the Gods holding on to the vessel of Amrita
8. Goddess Sri (Lakshmi)
9. The elephant Airavata
10. Uchraisravas, the white horse.

Majority of us, the humans, take the path of worldly desires and look for worldly objects that bring us pleasure. The needs of humans are plenty and variable. Let us remember that the resources have to come from mother nature. The nature is vast and plenty but not a “bottomless-pit.” The process of creation leads to multiplication of life on earth. Our ancestors having understood the rapid multiplication of life on earth in the years to come, realised the need to work that involved respecting nature and its resources.

They came up with the theory of “Yajna.” Only by dedicating the results of the work through “selfless acts” we could support nature and make life sustainable for the future generations to come.

The geologists agree that when the world was created, the cosmic forces came into existence first. The creative force of nature is an aspect of the Lord, let us understand this first. The force of nature prepared over thousands of years the field by their unselfish and dedicated work for the arrival of life on earth. In the earlier periods of life on earth, there was harmony between life and nature and there was harmonised growth of existence.

Man, when he came on to earth, was supposed to use his intellectual capacity of reasoning and work in harmony with the nature. Over the last few hundred years, the greed of man has predominated in his actions. He is overusing the nature’s resources and depleting it of the energy. We are destroying the harmony of existence.

By this message through the Gita, the Lord is reminding the mankind to check his desires, work for the society and dedicate his work for the benefit of life on earth. The work, will then, like “Kamadhenu”, become a “desire fulfilling tool” that is for the benefit of one and all.

Let us therefore remember that the Lord has created us with the capacity for service. No achievement is impossible for man only if he knows how to act in discipline and co-operation with nature.

Our prosperity comes from dedicated actions and is ruined by selfish actions. We can lift ourselves or ruin our lives. It is in our own hands.

Sloka 11

**DEVAN BHAVAYATANENEA TE’ DEVA BHAVAYANTU VAHA
PARASPARAM BHAVAYANTAHA SHREYAHA PARAM AVAPSAYATHA**

Cherish the Devas with Yajna. They shall cherish you. Thus cherishing one another you shall attain the Highest.

The term “Deva” has seven different connotations, (Swamy Chinmayananda)
He who shines, gives light,
He who bestows wealth,
He who blesses with good health,
He who shows the path,
He who makes others shine,
He who sends out music,
He who imparts knowledge and wisdom.

Quote:

Sri Ramakrishna:

“Whatever you offer to the Lord is returned to you magnified and manifold. Take care therefore, that you do not offer anything bad to Him.”

There are two sections of people referred to in this sloka. One of them is the Devas and the other one is us, the mankind. It is us who conduct actions either individually or in a group. Our actions can be either selfish or dedicated and the Lord is referring to the dedicated actions by using the word “Yajna.”

Devas: the word should be taken as “Illumined ones”. The one who is shining because of good deeds is a “Deva.” Our philosophy considers that the Devas are “Highly evolved souls.”

The cosmic forces are also called as “Devas” and this sloka can be understood better if we use the cosmic forces as an example.

In relation to our physical body, the Pancha Maha Bhootas, (Five great elements: the Earth, The Water, The Fire, Air and The Space) are our immediate Devas. We have already discussed about these five devas and their relationship with the five sense organs. Each of one these five is the presiding deity for one of the five sense organs of our body. Briefly they are:

- a) The Sun is the Deva for the eyes: the eyes cannot see without the light. The Sun, as we know is a massive ball of fire and therefore the fire is represented as light. The Sun is therefore considered to be the deva for the eyes.
- b) The Water is the deva for the tongue. (tongue tastes the food and the quality of taste represents the water.)
- c) The Nose is for smell. Earth is considered as the Deva for the nose.
- d) The ears are for hearing. We cannot hear in a vacuum, space is needed to transmit the sound waves. Hence, Space is considered as the deva for the ears.
- e) The skin is for the sensation of touch. “Air” represents the deva for the skin.

The five great elements together constitute the environment.

The environment has a great influence on our day to day life. Directly or indirectly we need to work to survive in this world. We work in the field of any one of or the combination of these five great elements. The deva in that particular field of work will confer their blessings on us. We should also remember that there is productivity dormant in any type of work. Any sincere effort has an influence to an extent on the results of the outcome. (The philosophy teaches us that some of our past actions also have an influence on the present actions.)

The farmer working hard will be invoking the deva, “Mother Earth.” The more efforts he puts in his work, the more sincere are his efforts, will proportionately get the blessings of the Mother Earth. If at

the same time, the results are dedicated to the higher powers, the acts conducted will become “Yajnas.”

The Lord states that “by cherishing one another you shall attain the highest good.” (Param Avapsyasa)
What do we understand by this?

We have the freedom to act the way we want. If we use our intellectual capacity of reasoning and conduct our actions, we will be benefitting the society and the society in turn will bless us. The highest benefit from dedicated actions is “Moksha” which is becoming one with the Supreme. Yajna has the capacity to bring in the union with the Parabrahman.

We can understand the same by looking at the example of “Firewood.”

We use the firewood and light it up with fire. What happens to the firewood when it is lit?

The firewood itself becomes the fire and loses its identity as the firewood. The firewood which is fuel in this case, has the capacity to become the fire itself. Similarly, we have the potential to become “one with God” only by losing our identity as the “individual.” (Ego)

Sloka 12

**ISHTAN BHOGAN HI VO DEVA DASYANTE YAJNA BHAVITAH
TAIR DATTAN APRADAYAIBHYO YO BHUNKTE STENA EVA CHA**

Cherished by sacrifice, the devas give you desirable enjoyments. He who enjoys objects given by devas without offering them is verily a thief.

This Sloka affirms the fact that we do get due rewards for conducting the yajna. The Lord has given us further instructions on how to use the benefits conferred by good acts.

It is true that majority would say, “I worked hard at it, I sacrificed a lot to receive the benefit, I deserve every penny of what I get and so I would like to enjoy the same.”

The scriptures consider it as a wrong attitude. The Lord therefore makes it clear that the benefits received are not just for the individual but have to be shared with others. He not only states that they should be shared but makes it clear who to share them with. He goes to the extent of saying that without offering the results to the devas, using the benefits for personal enjoyment makes one “a veritable thief.”

What does a thief do?

Yes, to an extent it is true, he puts in a lot of efforts and takes a lot of risks in the act of thieving. He would therefore feel right that what he gets is for his benefit only.

What should we do with the results of our sacrifice? Let us remember that we are discussing only the results of sacrifices conducted according to the scriptures. We are blessed to be able to conduct the yajnas. Each and every one of our actions has to be in the spirit of “Yajna.”

There are those who are unable to conduct the yajna because of poverty, ill health etc. Therefore the benefits we receive have to be shared with the needy in the society. Instead of saying “I will enjoy,” let us learn to say, “We will share and enjoy.”

It is also true to say that the “results reflect the effort put in.”

If our actions are true to the meaning of the word “sacrifice”, the “Illumined Ones” bless us in return with health, wealth, prosperity.

It is probably natural feeling in many that they should enjoy the results of their hard work. Scriptures say that it is the wrong attitude stemmed by “selfishness.” The sacred text is all about rooting out the evil called “Selfishness.”

We should remember the meaning of the word “I.”

The “I” that limits one to the individual only is the most common way of understanding. It is said to be a weak “I.”

“I” should include not only myself but those who I love.

To start off, “I and my parents”,

Then,

“I and my family,”

“I and my extended family,”

“I, my extended family and friends,”

“I, my extended family, friends and the society I live in,”

“I, my extended family, friends, the society, other forms of life”

The “I” thus gets stronger and stronger as we include others apart from us.

When we go to the temple, we go along with some form of offering to the deity and hand it over to the priest. The priest recites sacred mantras and offers the same to the deity. He then gives us back the offerings. This is the prasada we get. We then sit for a short while in the temple and share the prasadam. Wherever possible and practicable, we also take some to our house to share with our beloved family and friends.

We feel happy for having gone to the temple and receiving the blessings of the Lord. In India there used to be a number of beggars and handicapped in front of the temple waiting for alms by the devotees visiting the temple. We are expected to offer some prasadam to those outside the temple. This action of sharing bestows more meritorious points in the spiritual journey.

Not only the prasadam obtained at the temple but whatever we earn in our lives by righteous means should also be shared. Symbolically we should offer it to our “Ishta devata”. (Our beloved form of the Lord.) This is so because:

- without the society around, we cannot earn, and
- by the time we are ready to earn, we are already in great debt to the society. The society by providing the various forms of public services looked after our needs in childhood. It gave us assistance to assimilate some form of knowledge that helped us to earn.

When we receive any form of income, provided it is earned righteously, we should remember this Sloka and share the results with others.

If not we become “Thieves”. The thief gets caught sooner or later and has to receive the appropriate punishment. Let us not get caught and suffer the fate of a thief.

One must think of giving something back to the society rather than expecting always to be receiving.

The Lord who has given the entire universe for the life on earth does not expect any returns for himself personally. We need to, in His name, offer to the society and it is equivalent to having paid Him back for all His love and mercy.

Any member of the society who consumes more than what he is giving is acting against the injunction of the sastras. That member will be a liability on the society.

Sloka 13

**YAJNASHISHTASHINHA SANTO MUNCHANTE' SARVA KILBISHAIHI
BHUNJATE TE' TVEGHAM PAPA YE PACHANTI ATMAKARANAAT.**

The righteous that offer food to the Gods in sacrifice and eat the remnants, are freed from all sins. But those who cook the food to satisfy their own needs are sinners and verily eat sin.

This Sloka in a continuation of the last Sloka and elaborates more on theme of "Sacrifice."

One can say in summary that:

"Share what you have and what you earn by righteous means and survive or be selfish and go to hell."

Kilbisha: it means "Sin."

What is "Sin"?

"Sin" is defined as "Transgression against the divine law or morality."

"The righteous who offer food to the Gods":

Here, the word food refers to the wealth received/accumulated by actions. As described elaborately in the last verse, the wealth has to be shared. As a matter of fact the sastras have instructions on the way to use one's wealth.

They advise us to divide the wealth into five portions:

- a) To one's own personal needs. To be part of the society and discharge the obligatory duties, every individual has to look after his/her basic needs. After all, let us not forget that the physical body is the temple with the divine within. We have a basic duty to keep the body (temple) fit and clean at all times. The light of knowledge should illumine the body constantly.
- b) For the security of oneself and his/her dependants, when unable to discharge the duties for some reason or other. It is better as far as possible one should not be dependant either on the family or society. It is also very important that the dependants do not get into difficulties. Ill health, injury, loss of job, retirements etc come in this category.
- c) To take care of the needs of the dependants and repay the debt to the elders in the family who supported in education.
- d) A portion to the society and especially the handicapped therein.
- e) Towards upkeep of temples, religious institutions etc.

By these acts, every act becomes a worship of the divine, "Yajna" in the truest sense.

Eating the remnants of food: It means that we have right to use only a portion of our wealth (sections "a, b and c" of the above paragraph) we earn and that too after fulfilling the commands in the sections "d and e" of the above classification. We must learn to receive the benefits of all dedicated acts in life as "God's grace".

Offering the food to the Gods:

Who is the God we are expected to offer to?

Sections “d and e” in the above classification of sharing the wealth is the answer to this. In this context we must learn to respect both the nature and the society. We owe a debt to both.

When we do not respect the “Pancha Maha Bhootas”: it means, “the environment,” sooner or later, we are going to experience the wrath of nature. We hear almost every day of one natural disaster or other where many lose their lives or get hurt. If one can honestly trace the root cause for any of these disasters, we will find that it reflects on the society’s actions/inactions of the past. Therefore a portion of our wealth has to be for environmental protection also. Apart from this, we must endeavour our best not to damage the environment we live in by remembering that our actions of now will reflect on the environment for the future.

The simple prayer for this is: “Sri Krishnarpanamastu.” It means that “I offer all to my beloved Lord Krishna.”

Knowingly or unknowingly, we have committed actions that are contrary to the sastras either in this birth or in our previous births. By actions conducted according to the principles of “Karma Yoga” (according to the divine law and morality.) we will be able to free ourselves of the results of wrong actions. One single dedicated act of one day cannot wash the sins of our past. Our entire life has to be a “Yajna.” Hopefully, by His grace, either in this birth or in one of our future births we can be free of the sins of the past.

“But those who cook food to satisfy their own needs are sinners and verily eat sin.”

Let us for a moment look at the damage to our system by eating the wrong foods. What we eat, how we eat and when we eat reflect on our health in future. The medical professions and dieticians are strongly advocating the importance of right kind of food to one and all.

By not offering the wealth to the society and by being selfish, we are said to eat the sin. Here, eating the sin applies not to the physical body but to our mind. The thoughts generated in our mind as a consequence of wrong actions will have its own repercussions. The effect of eating “Sin” will reflect sooner or later either in this or in the future births.

So, if we want a better tomorrow for ourselves, our family, friends, and the society let us work and use the benefits of our work as per the principles of this Sloka.

One more explanation for kilbisha:

The sastras direct every individual to perform yajnas every day. They are called as “Nitya Yajnas.” (refer to Sloka 8, Nitya karmas) They are our daily obligatory duties. Any act contrary to it is considered to be a sin. Those who do not conduct the yajnas as directed are deemed to be selfish and are said to eat the sins of their selfish actions.

The verses 10-13 are considered to be the “Arthavada.” Arthavada is explaining the reason for any action (artha) to those who argue and put questions like “what, why etc” to whatever action to be performed. It is like the mother/teacher trying to explain the reason for any work they want the child to do.

“Vada” is an argument for establishing the truth. The lawyers have to resort to vada when they are cross examining the parties in the court of law. When the arguments is only to establish one’s own point of view or to let the other party fall down by hook or crook it is not considered as vada.

In scriptures we have established procedures for the seekers to question guru in establishing the final truth. Arthavada is one of those situations where the guru is giving valid reasons for the explanations he has given to his disciples.

Arthavada is in four sections.

1) Stuti:

It means “praise.” Trying to give all good points about the work is “stuti.” Trying to give the benefits that one can accrue from the action is stuti. In Sloka 10, the word that refers to this aspect of the vada is “vo’stvistakamadhuk.” Like Kamadhenu, the wish-fulfilling cow of plenty, you will get the benefit from the work.

2) Ninda:

Pointing out the harmful results from the action is “Ninda.” “You will verily be eating sin” refers to this aspect of the vada.

3) Prakriti:

“It is God’s act, ordained in the sacred texts and hence you must do it” is “Prakriti.” “Purovacha, Prajapati” refers to this aspect of the vada. (Prajapati, the creator said so and I am therefore saying that you should do this work.)

4) Purakalpa:

You will receive the blessings of the respective devas is “Purakalpa.” “The devas will bestow on you all your desires” from Sloka 12 refers this aspect of the vada.

Sloka 14 - 15

**ANNADBHAVANTI BHOOTANI PARJANYAD ANNASAMBAVAHA
YAJNAD BHAVATI PARJANYO YAJNAHA KARMA-SAMUDBHAVAHA.**

From food, beings are born. Food is produced from rain. Rain comes from sacrifices. Sacrifice is born of action.

**KARMA BRAHMODHAVAM VIDDI BRAHMAKSHARA SAMUDBHAVAM
TASMAT SARVAGATAM BRAHMA NITYAM YAJNO PRATISHTITAM.**

Know that the actions arise from the Vedas. The Vedas are born from the imperishable Brahman. Therefore, know that the Supreme Being is established in Yajna.

We need to join the two verses to understand the significance of the statements therein.

a) “From food, beings are born.”

We are born of food and live on food. Without food we will perish. It is needed for survival of life on earth.

Directly or indirectly, part of the food consumed by man gets converted into the sperm and that consumed by the woman gets converted into the ovum. The union of the sperm and the ovum results in the birth of the foetus. The foetus, nourished by the food consumed by the mother grows to become the baby. This is the meaning behind the sentence in this Sloka which says, “From food beings are born.” The same law applies to the birth of all forms of life on earth.

Where does the food come from?

b) “The food comes from rain”; it is reiterated in the second quarter of the Sloka.

The food comes from the soil in the earth. The presence of energy in the soil makes the earth fertile. It is further energised by the rains it receives season after season.

How is rain formed? What is the causal factor behind the production of rain?

c) The third quarter of the Sloka says: “Rain comes from sacrifice.” On the face of it, it does not sound right. We need to analyse the statement in greater depth.

The year is divided into four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. The rain fall is during the spring and summer months. When man respects nature and conducts actions correctly, the seasons follow in the right order and the rains come in due season. Of late, we have seen that the seasons do not stick to the right schedule and the rains are also not predictable. The experts have accepted that all these are because of lack of respect to the nature and the damage to the environment by our actions. Our actions have all become selfish and we do not care for what happens in other parts of the world by our actions. Individually and as society, we are all becoming more selfish.

If we change our ways, become less selfish, we will be indirectly worshipping the nature and the environment. The actions then are deemed to be in the spirit of “Sacrifice.” We can therefore say that the actions in the spirit of “Sacrifice” will result in the rains that are beneficial to life on earth. Shower of rains by correct actions from all of us individually and as corporate groups will fall on earth by the blessings of the “Higher Powers of Nature.”

The “shower of rains” can be interpreted as:

- 1) Rains as such that fall at the right time and in right quantity and help in the growth of the crops and also supply the water for drinking for all forms of life.
- 2) Rains of “Blessings” from the Higher powers of Nature on us in return for our actions which strictly adhere to the principles of “Dharma” as enshrined in the sastras.

So, the statement “Rains come from sacrifice” is to be considered most appropriate.

d) “Sacrifice is born of action,” says the last quarter of the sloka. The results of present actions (also, results of actions conducted in the past), determine the future for all of us. The food we get from the earth as a result of the rainfall is therefore essential for new life to come on to this earth and survival of the life already existent on earth. Our individual or corporate acts if conducted according to the spirit of righteousness becomes “Sacrifice.” Hence the statement “Sacrifice is born of Action.”

How then we conduct our actions? There should be a guideline and precedent for the way we conduct our actions. Our ancestral seers have gifted us the invaluable treasure, “The Vedas.” Our actions must therefore conform to the spirit of the Vedas. The Vedas being vast and in a language alien to many of the Hindus have been shortened into “Upanisads.” Again, the Upanisad language is foreign to many of us. Lord Krishna, out of compassion to mankind has blessed us with the Srimad Bhagawadgita.” It has given us the way to work in the spirit of “Do your duty, do not look for fruits of actions, let not the fruit of work be your motive and do not be attached to inaction.” This is the “Sacrifice in Action.”

e) This is the meaning to understand from “Know that the action arises from the Vedas.” Let the Vedas be our guide to all our actions which have to be in the spirit of Sacrifice. Our actions therefore have to implement the summary of the Vedas.

Where does the Vedas stem forth from?

f) The Vedas arise from the “Imperishable Brahman.”

In the beginning, there was no world and no forms of life in the entire universe we know of and the universe beyond. The only entity, if we can say so, was the “Primordial Energy” with no form or qualities. This, our most learned ancestors in their search for origin of life discovered and called it “Parabrahman.”

Parabrahman decided to play a game of creation. This, the seers said was His “Leela.” He created the four headed “Brahma” (the creator who is in constant action for the welfare of life on earth) and commanded Him to undertake the task of “Creation.”

Brahma after intense “Tapas” created the Vedas which were the precursor to life on earth. He received the gift of these Vedas from the “Imperishable Parabrahman” for His act of intense tapas towards fulfilling His role in the creation of life. The Vedas contained the essence of “Dharma” and incorporated in them all the details of “Karma” (details of the actions by men/women on earth which when conducted accordingly would assist in establishing Loka Kalyana). They gave an enumeration of the righteous way of conducting actions for survival of life on earth.

g) “The Supreme Being is established in Yajna”.

The Supreme Purusha, on His part, for having created the life on earth as part of His Leela, therefore has established Himself by His dedicated actions to all forms of life. Through the Vedas, He has given us all directions to work in this world created by Him.

Righteous acts of work performed according to the Vedic injunctions receive shower of blessings from the “Supreme.” They become “Yajnas.” Brahman is therefore said to reside in the Vedas. Incorporating the principal of the Vedas in our actions is equal to invoking the Brahman and hence the statement “Brahman is established in the Yajnas (dedicated actions conducted in the spirit of unselfishness).”

The experts say that what is given in these two slokas constitutes “Dharma Chakra.” “Dharma Chakra” means “The wheel of righteousness.”

Sloka 16

**EVAM PRAVARTITAM CHAKRAM NANUVARTAYATEEHA YAHA
AGHAYUR INDRIYARAAMO MOGHAHA PARTHA SA JEEVATI.**

The man who does not follow the cycle thus set revolving, is a sinner, rejoicing in the senses. He lives in vain, O, Partha.

Here, the Lord has taken the role of advisor/carer and giving the consequence of not following the sastras. The “Dharma Chakra” is to be considered as the “Wheel of Nature” and it is set up by the Lord for nursing, training, disciplining and elevating all beings from being “Stone men to God-men” on earth.

In the cycle of “Brahma - Vedas - Karma - Yajna,” we, the humans come in at the stage of “Karma and Yajna.” The Lord, through Brahma has given us the Vedas and Upanisads and now, the sacred text, Srimad Bhagawadgita. We have great spiritual masters who can guide us in understanding the sacred texts.

The Vedas are born of Brahman and we are also born of the same Brahman. By offering the fruits of the right actions according to the sacred texts, we are offering the Vedas and ourselves back to the Lord. “O, Lord, you gave us the instructions to right Actions and commanded us to follow the same.

We are following those instructions and accordingly offering all the returns from our efforts including ourselves to you and Mother Nature. Please bless the life on this universe with health, happiness and prosperity”, has to be the constant prayer to the Divine.

Who are the ones that do not follow the advice?

- a) Those who are ignorant of the Divine and the role of the Divine.
- b) Those who are immersed in actions only for their personal welfare and which are detrimental to the welfare of others.

Let us remember that the Lord commanded us to follow the sastras. Whether knowingly or unknowingly we do not follow His command, either way, we are deemed to have committed a sin and have to face the consequences.

By acting contrary to the advice, apart from harm to others, in the long run, we will be harming ourselves and our family. Our inaction or wrong actions in a way will set an example for many more and in course of time the society will come to harm. This is what is meant by the word, “He lives in vain.” - “Such people are living in sin, (aghayu), rejoicing in senses, (indriyaramaha)", says the Lord.

Contrary to it, by living according to the injunction of the sastras, we can say that we rejoice in living in Godhood. We then are said to be “Atmaramaha.”

He who is an “Antararama” will fulfil his life; and the “Indriyarama” will destroy his life. “Indriyaramas” one can say have forgotten the God and in a way forgetting God itself is a sin. Forgetting His command is an additional sin. We have to pay the price for both the sins.

So, let us all know our roles in the society and let the cycle of “Brahman, Vedas, Karma and Yajna,” keep on running. The wheel of motion is set by the Lord Himself and let us not be obstacles in the path of the smooth running of the wheel. We will achieve the final union with the Brahman for our role and taken part in fulfilling the desire of the Lord: “Loka Kalyana.” Let it be our solemn duty to keep the cycle constantly in motion and let us not be responsible for not bringing it to a halt.

Sloka 17

**YASTVATMA RATIR EVA SYAD ATMATRIPTASCHA MANAVAHA
ATMANYEVA CHA SANTUSHTASTASYA KARYA NA VIDYATE**

But the man who rejoices in Atman, who finds satisfaction in Atman, who is contended in Atman, has no work to perform.

After having given advice exhaustively about “karma” in the sense of “Duty to perform”, The Lord has now taken up the topic of the “Liberated Soul” who has directly experienced the Supreme Self and is released from the operation of the “Law of Karma.” Such a realised sage is very hard to find indeed. For the majority of us Karma yoga is the inevitable law of action to perform. We should avoid the dangerous delusion of abandoning karma and taking up life of renunciation.

The realised sage is not deemed a sinner for not performing the actions. But, if he works, he does so for the benefit of mankind. There is no harm whether he works or does not work. Some scholars compare such a soul to a “Paramhansa.” Hansa is a swan and is said to be gifted with the peculiar power of separating milk from water. The realised sage has mastered the art of separating the delusory world from the spiritual land he has come to live in. He is described as “Atmarati, Atmatripta and Atmasantushta.”

Atmarati: He rejoices in the Atman. All the manifold joys from the material world do not tempt him. He finds greater joy from the Atman within and understands that compared to the temporary joys from the material world the perfect joy of the Atman within is matchless.

He is satisfied with the inner joy and does not find any need to go in search of joy. He is therefore described as “Atmatripta.” It means “Satisfied with the Atman.”

Atmatashta: Because of the above two qualities, his life is said to be an ocean of contentment.

In summary, such a yogi is different from the rest of us. His last activity would have been to establish himself in the Atman, realising and overcoming the momentary happiness and sorrows of the material world. The quality of the Atman within is “Bliss” and the mind that is established in that would automatically be free from innumerable attractions and attachments to the world. Even if he is working, he has not any trace of attachments to the work or its fruits.

Sloka 18

**NAIVA TASYA KRITENARTHO NAKRITENEHA CHAKASCHANA
NA CHASYA SARVA BHOOTESHU KASCHID ARTHA VYAPASHRAYAHA**

For him, there is in this world no interest whatsoever by work done or not done. He does not depend upon any being for any object.

We have a continuation of the theme taken up in the last Sloka.

Majority would like to attain material benefits from work done and pray the Lord to bless with Moksha at the end. But the Liberated soul, who is like a Jeevanmukta, does not harbour either of the two desires.

He is a real jnani and continues to work for the universal welfare wherever there is an opportunity to do so. He has no personal interest either in the work to be done or the results that come as a result of the actions performed. His actions will include imparting the knowledge of the sacred texts to those desirous to learn. Overall he does set an example for others to follow.

It is interesting to note that the Lord has not said that the jnani should abandon work. He has not advised Arjuna to fight or not to fight.

We have the right to fulfil the purpose of human birth. The “right” is not in getting personal material gains but in being a useful member of the society wishing for the welfare of one and all. Let us therefore learn the sacred text, listen to the masters and conduct actions accordingly.

Sloka 19

**TASMAD ASKTAHA SATATAM KARYAM KARMA SAMACHARA
ASAKTO’ HY ACHARAN KARMA PARAM APNO’TI PURUSHAHA.**

Therefore do the work that has to be done, do it always without attachment. For, by performing action without attachment, you will attain the Supreme.

If we skip the word “always” in this Sloka, the meaning would be:

“Therefore do the work that has to be done, do it without attachment. For by performing action without attachment, you will attain the Supreme.”

One can see then that the lord is advocating Arjuna to fight the righteous battle without actually commanding him to do so. “Forget about the relationship of those assembled here for the battle and do your duty of fighting for upholding righteousness and by this way you will attain Moksha” is the message for Arjunas of the world. We can say that this is the nearest to the direct command Sri Krishna has given to Arjuna to pick the bow and discharge his duty.

As the word “satatam” (always) is included in the Sloka, the message is for the mankind in general. One of the main prerequisites for Moksha is purity of mind. The purity comes only in the absence of “Kama”. Kama, (desire) is the hurdle towards keeping the mind pure. “Nishkama” (no desires) at all times is the sure means to attain the Supreme. This can be achieved only when there is no attachment to the work and results thereof. The sastras should be used as the authority to differentiate between what to do and what not to do.

Nitya and Niamittika karmas have to be conducted at all times.

Kamyas karmas will have to be the fulfilment of those desires that conform to the sastras.

Nishiddha karmas are actions prohibited by the sastras and cannot be undertaken at any time (refer to Sloka 8, chapter 3).

This is the secret of Karma Yoga.

Moksha, let us not forget, is possible only by “total purity of the mind.” Mind can only be purified by nishkama karma. This chapter is all about “Karma” and the means to achieve Moksha through the path of karma. Whatever we do has to be that which pleases the Lord and He will automatically bless us with the due rewards. On our part, we should do so without expecting the benefits and this is “Nishkama Karma.”

Sloka 20

**KARMANAIVA HI SAMSIDDHIM ASTHITA JANAKADAYAHA
LOKASANGRAHAM EVAPI SAMPASYAN KARTUM ARHASI**

King Janaka and others attained perfection by action only. Even with a view to protecting the masses you should perform actions.

King Janaka was a unique individual who was a Kshatriya by birth and considered to be a Brahmin by his power of knowledge. He was the father of Sita, consort of Lord Rama from the Treta Yuga. He was noted for his just rule and piety. He showed by his actions that a pious Kshatriya is as fully qualified to perform sacrifices as a member of the priestly class. He was considered as a “Rajarshi” which means he was both a ruler (raja) and a priest (rishi). It is said that he used to conduct regular discussions on the Vedas in his court and renowned rishis and scholars joined in the discussion. Many a number of rishis also came to learn the meaning of the sacred texts from him. He was a “Jivanmukta”, a liberated soul while still living.

Despite the fact that he had mastered the Vedas, he did not shirk from his duties as a king. He protected his subjects with love and affection and at the same time propagated the Vedic teaching. Mother Sita who was well known for her role as a dutiful wife to Lord Rama learnt the Vedas and rules of marriage from her father. He could have renounced the kingdom and went to the forest to live the life of a mendicant. But, he chose to rule the kingdom and continue to propagate the Vedas.

If all the learned ones decide not to work and pass the knowledge to others, there would not be any progress in the community and no scope for inventions that would benefit the community.

Krishna is reminding Arjuna about the role played by King Janaka who was also a Kshatriya like Arjuna. If Arjuna considered that king Janaka protected masses, he should also be following the footsteps of that renowned king and protect the subjects. It could be possible only if he continued to be a Kshatriya and assisted his brother Yudhishtira in winning over adharma, propagating dharma and protecting the masses.

Note the word “you should perform actions”, by Krishna. Krishna does not say “you must perform actions.” It shows that the Lord wanted Arjuna to assimilate what was taught and make up his own mind on the action to take.

Sloka 21

**YADYACHARATI SHRESHTAS TAD EVETARO' JANAHA
SA YAT PRAMANAM KURUTE' LOKAS TAD ANUVARTATE'**

Whatsoever a great man does, that other men do (imitate). Whatever he sets up as the standard, that, the world follows.

It is a well known fact that what the elders do in a household, the young children imitate. The children tend to follow the standard set up by those they adore. It is the duty of the elders in any household to see that they set themselves a high standard of moral living. Their children, just by observing them do develop some of those virtues. Of course there are exceptions to the rule. Overall one can say in general that the children are copycats and the parents have to be very careful in whatever they say or do.

The same rule applies to the learned elders in the society. Being eminent and great in virtues is a rare gift from the God. To justify one's actions, one refers to the example of great men. Those who acquire leadership and get a prominent position in the society should therefore be very careful of their speech and actions. It is their social responsibility to the society.

There is an ancient saying, “Yatha Raja, tatha praja.” It means, “As the king, so are the subjects.” History shows that whenever there was a bad king, there was a band of his followers who followed the king's way of actions and there was anarchy in that kingdom. Arjuna had a duty to follow the rules of living as an eminent leader of Kshatriya clan and not to corrupt the minds of people. If he took up to sanyasa there would have been a possibility of sowing the seeds of laziness in the minds of masses.

The elders and the gifted men in any society have a duty to be beacons of that society. They can set a personal standard of life for others to follow. We are unfortunately seeing bad examples set by men in high position in political and sports fields. The younger generation are coming to accept it as the right way of living. It heralds a bleak future for tomorrow to come.

If the masses have to cultivate the faith in God and the law of the sastras, the masters in spiritual field should set an example of righteous living by following the rules of “Atma Dharma.”

In any household if the elders themselves do not know the sastras and do not follow the rules of the society, how can their children learn? What will be the society like when such children grow up and become the leaders of the community?

It is no use by talking philosophy without following it in one's daily actions. Krishna is reminding Arjuna of his duty to implement the sastras which he had learnt in gurukula and from the elders in his family.

Sloka 22

**NA ME' PARTHAASTI KARTAVYAM TRISHU LOKESHU KINCHANA
NAANAVAPTAM AVAPTAVYAM YARTA EVA CHA KARMANI.**

There is no duty for Me to do in entire three worlds, O Partha. There is nothing unattained or to be attained for Me and yet I am also engaged in work.

“I am also engaged in action.”

Sri Krishna is pointing to His role in the battlefield. He was engaged in action as the charioteer for Arjuna and as the supporter and well wisher of the Pandavas. He could have easily destroyed the Kauravas using His divine weapon, “The Sudarshana Chakra”. He had already demonstrated the power of His chakra when He beheaded the wicked Shishupala during the Rajasuya Yaga conducted by Yudhishtira. Yet, He was engaged in action during the battle as the charioteer. He was, as the story of Mahabharata tells us, engaged in action all through His life. As a child he had put an end to so many wicked demons and as a young boy had destroyed the wicked Kamsa. All through His life He has demonstrated many acts of bravery and annihilated many wicked people.

We have to have faith in the fact that He, Lord Vishnu, incarnated as Krishna for the destruction of evil and protection of righteous. As Vishnu He is the master over the three worlds: The Bhooloka, Patala Loka and Swarga Loka. (The earth, the netherworld and the heavens.) He created the Nature and life on earth as His leela. As he created the life, He has taken the role of protecting what He created. When He is the master over the three worlds, what else is to be gained by Him? There is really nothing unattained by Him or to be attained by Him. Everything in the three worlds really is His and only His.

Because He created the life, He also has undertaken the role of protector of what He created. He has given the freedom to act for us, the humans, and yet constantly abiding in each one of us as the Atman. As the individual Atman in each of us, He does not leave us till we attain Moksha. On death, we have discussed before, the Atman is encased in the subtle mind and intellect and goes to the subtle world (Moola Prakriti) to be reborn again at the appropriate time decided by the Parabrahman.

There are some, at different periods of time, forgetting the divine role they have to play in the world, act according to their whims and fancies and conduct actions that are harmful to the nature, fellow humans and other forms of life. They create hardship to others on earth that includes the righteous too.

Even though there is nothing unattained by Him or to be attained by Him, Krishna is constantly trying to protect what He created. He is trying to protect the righteous and the innocent on earth. He is constantly in action and at the same time not attached to actions and the results of action.

He is setting an example for others to follow the path of karma yoga. We have to look at Him as the greatest karma yogi on earth.

Let us not forget that He has through the Gita given us the Vedas in a format easy to understand and follow.

Let us realise the grace He has bestowed on mankind by giving the guide for right action. It is impossible to describe the role played by Him. His actions speak for themselves. To accept this we need to have sraddha and bhakti in Him and His teaching.

Sloka 23

**YADI HYAHAM NA VARTEYAM JAATU KARMANYATANDRITAHA
MAMA VARTMANUVARTANTE MANUSHYAHA PARTHA SARVASHAHA.**

If I am not engaged in action relentlessly, without relaxation, men would follow my path in every way, o Arjuna.

In continuation of the last verse, we are now given a definitive statement by the Lord on the imprint in the minds of masses of the negative karmas (wrong actions) by great men.

Sri Krishna through the first half of the verse is confirming the fact that He is engaged in action relentlessly and without relaxation. This statement is in no way to be looked upon as boasting by the Lord about His relentless duty for the universe He created. If Krishna did really relax for a while and did not engage in actions, there would be quite a few who would use it to offer their own personal excuses for inaction in their lives. They would say, "After all, a great man like Krishna did not do it. There must be some reason for Him to do so. It will therefore not be wrong if we do not work also."

Let us admit that we are always good at giving excuses. We cannot actually say as to how many would actually follow the good example set by great men. On the other hand, it is true when it comes to laziness, inactivity from actions, a momentary indiscretion by great men will remain in the memory of many.

Some people have a divine gift and become great. They have a great responsibility on their shoulders. They should guard themselves against anything they might/might not do or utter/do not utter which might have a bad influence on others.

On a day to day basis, this law applies to the elders in any family. Excessive relaxation, laziness in actions by elders will leave an impression on the minds of children. It is easy for them to follow such negative actions of their elders.

One of the very important words in this Sloka is: "Atandritaha". It means "without relaxation." We, the sadhakas in spiritual path towards attaining Liberation, should follow this rule of continuous sadhana without relaxation. We should be always on the alert for the dangers of maya. We can easily be knocked off in our path by the worldly attachments that bring with them dual enemies of happiness and sorrow as a result of our desires and hatreds in relation to the world around us.

The sastras warn us by reminding of the truth: "Pramado vai mrityuhu". Which simply means, "Negligence is death." Negligence/forgetfulness of the awareness of Brahman in the form of Atman within us is "death", says so Sanatkumara (one of the sons of Brahma).

Sloka 24

**UTSUDAYURIME' LOKA NA KURYA KARMA CHEDAHAM
SAMKARASYA CHA KARTA SYAM UPAHANYAM IMAHA PRAJAHA**

These worlds would perish if I did not perform action. I would be the author of confusion and would destroy these people.

Further to the continuation of the last verse, Sri Krishna is saying that if He stops work even for a second, the world would perish.

We can understand this if we substitute the word “Krishna” with “Energy.”

The Primordial Energy, in the form of “Subtle Energy” is pervading the entire world and is unmanifest. It gets converted into various forms of manifest energy that is essential for survival of life on earth. Why, earth, the entire cosmos would perish if there is no energy or there is some disturbance in its working even for a fraction of a second. If there is no manifestation of energy the world would perish and it is the truth we cannot contradict.

The experts all over the world agree that there is orderliness and precision in everything that is happening in our cosmos. The scientists tell us if there is even a minute fraction of change in the speed of revolution of the earth on its own sphere and around the orbit, it would cause unimaginable havoc.

Let us not forget that this movement of the earth is also due to the power of energy. There must be a power somewhere which we are unable to visualise that is silently working constantly and is maintaining the balance on the earth and in the cosmos. Our philosophy attributes it to the “Power of Parabrahman” .

Sloka 16 of this chapter talks about the “Dharmachakra.” The Lord said that He has set the wheel of righteousness in motion and we have to do our duty too and continue to keep the wheel in motion.

On an individual basis, if I, the elder in the family do not conduct my ordained duties, I would be the author of confusion in my family and my family would perish.

The worth of any man is noticed by the actions he undertakes in his society.

What is the difference between a dead and a living?

The one who is living is recognised by his movements and activities.

Not working at all is surmounting to being dead. The body of a dead disappears and is absorbed back into nature while that of a living dead lives the life of a wretched existence.

The society all over the world has different ways of recognising the righteous acts of welfare by individuals or groups.

On the other hand, the one who acts contrary to the sastras leaves a trail of bad memories behind him and the society would not like to remember his/her name.

Sri Krishna, the Purushottama, who is the eldest of the family of all forms of life created, is telling us that if He did not perform the actions needed the world He created would perish. The cosmic stability is the result of His karma and He is discharging it most efficiently. We should understand that He values service to life on earth and He is living the life of constant righteousness.

We should, as the seekers of Truth, do what is most pleasing to our lord. We are after all, the representatives of God on earth as we have been blessed with the physical body and a working intellect over our soul. We should discharge our duties as per the law of karma and make the world a beautiful garden.

Even now, amidst all the chaos and suffering, the world is still in some order and stability and this is due to the righteous actions of a lot of good people in it.

The impersonal attitude to work, “Karma Yoga” in the form of “work is worship” is the most pleasing service we can do to our master.

Sloka 25

**KARTA KARMANI AVIDVAMSO YATHA KURVANTI BHARATA
KURYAD VIDVAMS TATHASAKTAS CIKIRSUR LOKASNGRAHAM.**

As the ignorant men act from attachment to action, o Bharata, so should the wise man act without attachment, wishing the welfare of the world.

The mind, sense organs and the organs of action are the instruments in our hand. The instruments are the same for both the wise and the ignorant. How one makes use of his own organs of action depends upon the evolvement of his intellectual capacity of reasoning.

Both the wise and the ignorant work and conduct nitya and naimittika karmas. The wise on his part works without desire for the fruits of actions conducted and the ignorant works with desire for the fruits of action.

Both may work with full zeal. The wise on his part works wishing the welfare of the universe and in the spirit of “Sri Krishnarpanamastu.” He has no sense of doership in his work. The ignorant think that they are the doers of work and work for their own personal satisfaction.

Because of the attitude of work, the wise are said to be on the path of Liberation. On the other hand, the ignorant are on the path of self destruction and get caught in the mesh of cycles of birth and death.

It is all because the attitude to work is like that of a knife. The knife used wisely by a surgeon cures someone else’s illness and the same knife used by a criminal brings harm to another life.

So let us use the great instruments of action we are blessed with and work for “Lokasangraha”(universal welfare) and as a result become eligible for Liberation.

We should all be working, instead of for personal fulfilment of desires but with nobler thoughts of universal welfare.

The principle of work, the Lord is repeatedly reminding Arjuna, is detachment in action. We have discussed this in great detail already while studying the Sloka 47, chapter 2.

Sloka 26

**NA BUDDHIBEDHAM JANAYET AJNANAM KARMA SANGINAAM
JOSHAYET SARVA KARMANI VIDVAN YUKTAHA SAMACHARAN.**

The wise men should not disturb and confuse the minds of the ignorant attached to action. They should perform all actions with yogic equanimity. They should make the ignorant do accordingly.

Continuing the theme of advising the wise, Krishna is indirectly hinting that the thought of sanyasa which had cropped in the mind of Arjuna was wrong. Arjuna wanted to run away from the battlefield and take up the life of a mendicant.

The Lord, the wisest among all, by giving us the sacred text, has acted as Jagadguru and is to be considered as the best teacher in the world.

There are a lot of wise people in the world but most of the wise are not good teachers. Teaching is a special art. A poor teacher not only fails in giving proper explanation to his students but might even confuse their minds.

Let not the wise take up the role of teachers and confuse the minds of ignorant is the sincere advise by the Lord.

Majority of people conduct actions but in the form of “sakama.” Sakama is fulfilment of personal desires. They conduct many a rituals as prescribed by the sastras but do so with a prayer to the Lord to fulfil their desires.

The law of karma as per Sloka 47, chapter 2 which advocates actions without the desire for the fruits thereof is very hard for a common man to understand and implement. This philosophy of action is too high for the majority. It is wrong to criticise such people. It gets them more confused. No one should take to life of inaction by abandoning all their attachments and responsibilities.

Between action and inaction, action is far superior. Tamasic life is inferior to rajasic life. In rajasic life there are examples to learn from both good and bad actions. In tamasic life there are no lessons to learn. Indolence makes one a living dead man.

The lazy man should be roused to ambitions and led towards actions for pleasures and prosperity. In course of further development he will mature to become satvic.

Krishna wants Arjuna to set an example to the masses by not running away from the war of righteousness and to discharge his dharmic duties.

Work with yogic equanimity is the advise to Arjuna. What does it mean?

“Yoga” is union of the ego with the “Atman” within and the union of the Atman with the Paramatman.

Equanimity is conduct of actions with a balanced mind which is not perturbed by success or failure. The actions have to be divine with no selfish motive behind and according to the law of karma.

One can say that as a good teacher, Krishna is actually patting the back of Arjuna. “You are a wise man and therefore work wisely” is the “Guhya basha” in this Sloka.

Mahatma Gandhi set an example for masses all over the world by not preaching them to learn Gita but showed Gita and the Law of Karma in actions. That should be the duty and responsibility of the wise that are blessed with the capacity to understand the sastras.

Sloka 27

**PRAKRITEH KRIYAMANANI GUNEIH KARMANI SARVASHAHA
AHAMKARA VIMOODATMA KARTAHAM ITI MANYATE.**

By the qualities of nature, all actions are performed, in all cases, but one whose mind is deluded by egotism, thinks, "I am the doer."

“By the qualities of nature”: The Lord is referring to the three inherent gunas, “Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.” We have discussed these several times already and we will get a detailed description of these in chapter 14.

What is “Nature?”

Generally one tends to refer the world around us as “Nature.”

This is true, but only partially. Why?

Because, we are two in one and we should know who we are really and that should be our Nature. We are made up of:

- The Atman and
- The physical body consisting of “The Intellect, The Mind, Jnanendriyas and Karmanedriyas together with Ahamkara.”

Which of the two are we?

We are truly “The Atman”, the Vedas declare loudly and clearly. They say “Tat-Tvam-Asi.” (Thou Art That.) This is “Tatva shuddhi buddhi”, which is buddhi purified by the knowledge of the Atman.

According to this way of understanding, “The Nature” is with reference to our own physical body and the world around us.

As we associate ourselves with the physical body, we consider “The Nature” as the world around us. This is “Dehatma buddhi” which is understanding, albeit, wrongly, as a result of attachment to the physical body.

In this Sloka, the Lord, through His advice to Arjuna, is referring to the nature as the “Mind Intellect equipment” in us.

This will help us to understand clearly His statement, which is: “By the qualities of Nature, all actions are performed.”

We have referred to these already as “The Vasanas.”

All our actions are the result of the stored imprints in our mind. These have been brought forward from our past, including past births.

Every good/bad thought or impulse is a seed we sow in our subconscious mind which forms into the imprint, Vasana.

When nurtured vasanas grow into an act, every act we perform has its rebound effect which we may experience immediately or at a later date and time.

Because of our past actions, we are moulded into the three gunas which are our inherent nature.

We act and react to situations and it becomes our nature.

Without our knowledge, we are drawn into the situation wherein we develop the sense that “we are the doers of actions.” As we grow, this feeling matures and we develop “The Ego.” It is “The Ahmakara” or “Pride” which takes us into downward path in our spiritual journey.

The second half of the Sloka refers to this “Pride” in Arjuna.

Arjuna, drawn by the powerful Kshatriya vasanas in his subconscious mind has developed a strong sense of “Ahamkara.” He has expressed to his master that it would be wrong on his part to kill the

respected elders and Gurus in the opposite camp and also be responsible for the death of so many soldiers on both the sides.

"I am going to kill the enemy and win the battle" is the feeling he went to war with.

This type of thought is acceptable to an ordinary person.

But, Arjuna was not an ordinary person. He had learnt the Vedas in the Gurukula and Krishna was his companion/mentor in life.

He was supposed to be a wise man.

The duty of the wise man is to analyse his thoughts.

Arjuna had to realise that it was a war of righteousness, approved by Sri Krishna and he himself was just an instrument of Lord's leela.

Krishna does not want Arjuna to be deluded by "Ahamkara" but to conduct the duties for the protection of dharma and leave the result to God.

Sloka 28

**TATTVAVIT TU MAHABAHO GUNAKARMA VIBHAGAYOHO
GUNAA GUNESHU VARTANTE' ITI MATVA NA SAJJATE.**

But he, who knows the truth, understands the divisions of qualities and functions, o mighty armed Arjuna,. He knows that the gunas function through the senses amidst sense objects and are not affected by them. Thus knowing, he remains unattached.

Tatvavit: The knower of the Truth.

What does Tatvavit know?

Tatvavit knows the difference between the "Seer and the Seen". He knows who the real "Seer" is. He associates himself with the Atman and considers that the physical body and the world around form the "Nature" and are clouded by the qualities of the Nature in the form of the three gunas.

Ignorant is he who does not know this truth. Majority of us are ignorant and in this instance, Arjuna is also ignorant.

Krishna is trying to boost Arjuna's morale by addressing him as "Mahabaho." "Mahabaho" means "mighty armed." Arjuna by his prowess in the art of battle was referred to as "Mahabaho" by those well versed in the art of warfare.

Krishna is referring to Arjuna as a "Mahabaho" but with a totally different meaning attached to it. It is the "Guhya basha" in this Sloka. (the word with a secret meaning.) "Mahabaho" is not in comparison to his physical prowess but to his wisdom.

Use your wisdom and fight the ignorance by knowing the divisions of qualities and functions of Nature is Lord's message to Arjuna.

Guna Karma Vibhagayoho: The divisions of qualities and functions of Nature.

Guna vibhaga is division of the gunas. This is the division of the gunas into "Satva, Rajas and Tamas."

Karma vibhaga: The division of functions. We need to understand this statement.

At any one time, one of the three gunas predominate and the actions bring out that particular guna into focus.

In the same context, any one individual by the aggregate of the gunas in him, will show the actions that will put him in one of the following four categories:

- a) Brahmana: expresses all Satvic qualities. He is pure and the light of knowledge emanates from him. Nowadays it is referred to as “Priestly class of people”.
- b) Kshatriya: expresses combination of Satva and Rajas. He is passionate and actions which amount to selfishness emanate from him. Warriors and leaders of people are said to be “Kshatriyas.”
- c) Vysya: expresses a combination of all the three qualities. The present day business man is considered to be a “Vysya.”
- d) Sudra: expresses the “Tamasic” quality. He has a strong physique for a hard manual job but does not possess the intelligence of the other three groups.

Arjuna belonged to the Kshatriya clan and his duty was to fight and protect the masses.

Gunas are inherent in the form of “Vasanas” in every individual, including the “Tatvavit.” He knows the principal of any action and remains as a witness to all actions by developing the “Atma Buddhi.” He understands that

- The gunas are abiding in the mind/intellect equipment,
- The jnanendriyas bring in the impulses of the outer world to the mind,
- The mind makes use of the appropriate karmendriyas to take actions as needed concerning the sense objects,
- The sense objects are any of the manifold objects animate/inanimate in the vast world around.

This process in turn brings in the “attachment” to the objective world.

The subjective world of “The Atman” remains in the shadow in majority of the individuals.

The wise man is not affected by the impulses received from the objective world and remains constantly in a state of “Detachment.” He remains uncontaminated by any thing physical or material.

Sri Krishna is instructing Arjuna to fight as a Kshatriya and uphold dharma but without the attachment to the results of his action. The “Tatvavit” conducts all his actions with this understanding, He says.

Remain as the “Seer” and not be involved with the “Seen” is what we have to understand from this Sloka if we want to walk in the spiritual path.

Sloka 29)

**PRAKRITAIR GUNA SAMMOODAHA SAJJANTE’ GUNAKARMASU
TAN AKRITSNAVIDO MANDAN KRITSNAVIN NA VICHALAYET.**

The man of knowledge should not confuse the minds of those men of imperfect understanding, who, deluded by the gunas of nature, are attached to actions in the material world.

Guna sammoodaha: Persons deluded by the gunas.

Sajjante’: Attached.

Guna karmasu: In the function of the gunas.

Akritsnavidu: Of imperfect understanding. Those who are attached to the body, mind and the senses and thereby attached deeply to the material world.

Mandan: Dull witted.

Kritsnavid: Man of perfect knowledge.
Na Vichalayet: Should not confuse.

This Sloka is reiteration of the Sloka 26 in this chapter by the Lord. It is directed to the so called men of knowledge about their role in guiding the ignorant.

Why is the Lord repeating the same message again and again?

We come across in the 701 verses of the Gita many instances where the same message is brought out through different slokas.
One may ask, “why?”

We can understand this by looking at the painting of a picture by an artist. The artist gets an idea and wants to project the same in the minds of the public. He takes up his brush and draws a picture on the canvas.

He then steps back and looks at it from different angles. He goes back and makes a few changes and inspects his work again. He does so till he is satisfied that he has given the message to the public.

Similarly, Sri Krishna is bringing out the same message in different slokas so that we can get the message well and clear.

The way we understand depends on the plane we are looking from. It depends on the identity of our true self.

The entire Gita and our sastras is to drill into us the “Eternal truth” that we are really “The Atman” and the physical body is like a suit on the Atman.

Those who have realised this and show it in their relation to the material world are “Kritsnavid”. (Men of knowledge.) Unfortunately not many such learned ones are to be seen.

Majority of us associate ourselves with the physical body and the Lord says we are, “Akritsnavid” (of imperfect understanding,) and “Mandaan.” (dull witted.) We are dull witted because we do not see the truth as such and get attached to the function of the gunas inherent in our mind/intellect equipment.

Generally it is the duty of the learned to teach the ignorant. The teacher is he who knows the art of explaining to the ignorant what he does not know or understand.

Unfortunately, not all learned can profess to be teachers. To be a teacher is a special art. The Lord is “Jagadguru”, the teacher for the entire Jagat (all of creation). He knows how to teach us all.

There are two ways to teach anything. First method is to know how to be a teacher and then teach. The second method is to set an example by one’s own actions.

The learned are therefore asked by the Lord not to confuse the ignorant by high flown language about the Vedas and Upanisads . He wants the learned to show the true meaning of the sastras by their own actions and thereby set an example for others to follow.

The actions He wants the learned to show the ignorant are those that fit in with the true meaning of the Sloka 47, chapter 2, which is: Conducting all actions with detachment in attachment, offering the fruits of actions to the Lord and not to stop the conduct of ordained duties.

The learned should not advocate abandoning one’s duties to the family and society. The learned should help the ignorant to develop sraddha and bhakti in the Lord and give them the necessary knowledge.

Like a seed maturing to become a full grown tree, every individual has the opportunity to mature into a learned man but it takes several cycles of births and deaths to achieve the end result.

Saint Purandara Dasa, a great South Indian poet, composer, scholar says in one of his compositions:
“Do not teach Brahma Vidya just because one asked for it. “
To receive the same, the recipient should have the maturity of mind.

Sloka 30

**MAYI SARVAANI KARMANI SANYASYADHYAATMA CHETASA
NIRAASHEER NIRMAMO' BHOOTVA YUDHYASVA VIGATA JWARAHA.**

Surrendering all actions in me, with the mind fixed on the self, free from hope and egotism, fight without fever.

We are given the path to follow by a true spiritual aspirant.

The minds of people can broadly be divided into:
Troubled minds and Peaceful minds

Troubled minds are those that are immersed in actions with a sense of ego and pride. They get deeply attached to their work and express feverish passions in such work. Peaceful minds are those that surrender the fruits of righteous actions at the feet of the Lord.

We should be able to recognise the symptoms of mental fever and approach the Guru/master for help. Do we not approach the doctor for help when we have fever and ask for remedy?

Fight without fever:

Arjuna was in a fight. He was fighting a righteous war for his brother. To get the best out of his Kshatriya potential, Arjuna was asked to fight without the mental fever. He needed purity at the levels of his mind, speech and actions which is “Trikarana shuddhi”.

Purity of actions:

All actions conducted according to the spirit of “Dharma” and surrendering the fruits of the actions at the feet of the Lord is purity of actions.

Arjuna, by deciding to drop his bow and arrows was not expressing trikarana shuddhi in relations to the actions about to be performed.

Mind fixed on the Self:

One should learn the art of fixing the vision of the God on his/her mind at all times. He/she should not forget that “Atman” is the real. “I” and the physical body including the mind is the servant of the “Atman.” Purification of the mind is in removing the sense of ego in all the actions performed. While working as the servant of the Atman, the mind should assert authority over the sense organs and organs of action. We all have a duty to listen to the voice of Antaratma coming from within. It is not wrong to say that we are all guilty of not listening to our Atman before the conduct of any actions.

Free from hope and egotism:

It is referring to “The results of actions” to be performed. It is the outward expression of “Ahamkara” or egotism. By not fighting in the war, Arjuna was hoping for entry into heaven. His speech was not pure as it showed the sense of pride and ignorance of the sastras.

This law applies to all of our actions.

Fight without fever:

We should not hope for the results of actions. Before starting any field of work we must look at what we are getting into and analyse the rights and wrongs of actions according to the spirit of dharma. Once having taken the decision to work and get the mind in the mood for work, the concentration should be only on the work and nothing else. There should not be any agitations concerning anything else including the results of actions.

As Swamy Vivekananda says:

Cause and effect of action:

When there is a cause, the effect will materialise sooner or later.

The effect for which we are working for brings the cause into focus. For this the mind should be focussed on the cause only and nothing else.

Some of the students who get admission into the college for a selected course decided by them and approved by the college authorities develop second thoughts about the course selected. Some of them even drop out of the selected course.

When one has fever and is in bed, he is extremely restless and tosses about. The unsettled individual also expresses similar agitations.

Arjuna is therefore asked to drop attachment to the fruits of actions and not show mental agitations.

Victory over passions like “I”, “Mine” in one’s battle of life is true victory.

The Vedas and learned elders therefore do not advocate inaction but advocate actions with a sense of detachment and surrendering the fruits to the Lord.

This is true spirit of “Karma Yoga.”

Sloka 31

**YE’ ME’ MATAM IDAM NITYAM ANUTISHTANTI MANAVAAHA
SRADHAVAANTO ANASSUYANTO’ MUNCHYANTE’ TE’PI KARMABHIHI.**

Those men who constantly practise, this, my teaching, with faith and free from ill-will, are also freed from bondage to actions.

Those men:

It applies to all irrespective of sex, caste, colour, creed or religion. Gita is to be looked upon and studied in the spirit of “universal message to all.” It should not be taken as message only for men.

Matam Idam: This, My teaching:

The Lord is referring to “The Bhagawadgita,” His teaching. He is not referring to any specific religion.

Nityam anutishtanti: Practices constantly.

Emphasis is laid on constant practice. Karma Yoga is union with Parabrahman following the path of Karma. Each one of us has varied duties in any set 24hrs of the day. Each of those duties should be done in the spirit of “Nishkama Karma and Karma Phala Tyaga.” “Anutishtanti” means, “puts into practice completely”.

Sraddhavaan: with faith.

What is “Faith”?

Faith in the Lord, His teachings, The Guru, Scriptures and one’s own self are essential to succeed in the spiritual path. Faith helps us to get around a daily routine of programmes that is beneficial to our

own body, the nature and to the society which includes one's own family and friends. This has to be "Satvika" or "Pure Faith."

Free from ill-will:

Animosity/enmity to others is one of the great dangers that can befall on any human being. Ill will comes from deep sense of attachment to oneself and to one's own family and friends. It breeds hatred and in turn results in injury to oneself and others also. Strong sense of "I or Ahamkara" will breed the feeling of ill-will towards others.

Example:

Suppose there are 2 bright students in the same class. If "A" gets distinction, "B" develops "Asuya" or ill-will to "A". This brings about obstacles in his own progress. Instead, "B" should analyse closely and find out his own faults and correct them. Also, should realise that "A" got the distinction as a result of his past karma which has been fructified now.

Free from bondage:

The final destination for the spiritual seeker is "Liberation." Freeing oneself from the attachments in one's life and at the same time following the principles of "Karma Yoga" the aspirant is free to enter the realms of "Moksha."

The Gita is the summary of all the Upanisads and made easier to understand by Lord Krishna. But for the ordinary mortals immersed in the worldly life it is very hard to understand. Repeatedly reading the text, listening to the experts and reading the explanatory texts available, in course of time, will make the subject easy to grasp. As we continue to read repeatedly, we tend to get clearer and clearer understanding of its essence.

Faith and absence of ill-will are the two requisites to succeed in understanding the philosophy and attain the goal of life.

Sloka 32

**YE' TVETAD ABHYASUYANTO' NANUTISHTANTI ME'MATAM
SARVAJNANA VIMOODHAMSTHAN VIDDHI NASHTAANACHETASAH**

But those who carp at my teachings and do not practise, know them as men deluded of knowledge, devoid of discrimination and doomed for destruction.

The Lord points at two defects that are responsible for the downfall of man in his spiritual path. The spiritual path is in elevating from the state of "Stone man to that of God man on earth."

It is indeed a blessing and good fortune to be born as human. For what good that has been done in the past we are blessed to be born as humans with the intellectual capacity of reasoning. It is the birth right of every individual to make use of this precious birth, progress in the spiritual path and achieve the end goal: Moksha. To do so one should be able to learn, understand and practice the sacred texts with sraddha and bhakti. The Bhagawadgita is the summary of the sacred texts given to mankind by the Lord Himself.

Those who criticise His teaching and who do not practice what is taught by the Lord are to be considered as deluded. What is learnt has to be put into practice. It is no use by knowing all the Vedas if one does not understand the same and puts it into practice. The learned who do not practice what is learnt are not truly learned. They are also deluded, the Lord says.

He warns that they are doomed for destruction because they are devoid of discrimination between “Eternal and Non-eternal and between Truth and Un-truth.” They are deluded by the worldly pleasures and laurels they receive for their knowledge. Their destruction takes them down from the plane of man-man on earth to stone man on earth. They have to go through further series of births and deaths in the cycle of samsara.

Sloka 33

SADRUSHAM CHESTATE SVASYAHA PRAKRUTER JNANAVAN API PRAKRITIM YAANTI BHUTANI NIGRAHAM KIM KARISHYATI

Even a Jnani acts according to his own nature. Beings will follow nature, what can restraint do?

For a clearer understanding of this Sloka it is advisable to read it in conjunction with the next few slokas that follow.

The Lord is emphasising the power of tendencies that each one of us is born with and not trying to discourage the practice of self-restraint. Self-restraint is needed but only on clearer understanding of the scriptures and that too to be practiced slowly and steadily.

Let us understand the two words “Jnani and Nature” in this Sloka.

Jnani is a man of knowledge and he still has to go through life and experience the result of actions conducted according to his understanding of what he has learnt. It is like getting a degree in a speciality. We get theoretical knowledge and get the degree of choice. Even though we do get some practical lessons to get the degree, it is not the same as the practice we take up when we start work. We learn by the results we receive as a result of actions conducted.

In this sense, the Jnani referred to in this Sloka is a man who has learnt the sastras and has only a theoretical knowledge of the same. Mere learning the sastras is not enough. One need to put it into practice in day to day’s life. Wisdom, on the other hand comes by experiencing the results of actions. Jnani in this sense is a man of knowledge but still immature.

We need to recollect the meaning of the word “Nature” referred to in this Sloka.

As we have studied before, each one of us is a combination of two: “Purusha and Prakriti.” “Purusha “is the divinity/Atman within. It is un-manifest but brings the physical body (Prakriti) to life when it comes into contact with the same.

Like Purusha, Prakriti is also un-manifest and comprises of all the Gunas or samskaras (thought imprints from the previous life carried through the subtle body at the time of death.) from previous births. It comes to life when it comes into contact with the Purusha and evolves into what is known as the 23 Tatvas or evolutes.

The 23 Tatvas are:

Buddhi or intelligence,

Ahamkara, the “I” sense,

Mind,

The five Jnanendriyas: Eyes, Ears, Nose, Tongue and the Skin which develop from the Satvic element of Prakriti,

The Five Karmendriyas: Hands, Feet, Tongue, Excretory organs and Sexual organs which develop from the Rajasic element of prakriti,

The five gross elements in their subtle form known as Tanmatras: Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell. (Shabda, Sparsha, Roopa, Rasa, Gandha.),
And finally the five gross elements in their gross form known as Panchamaha Bhootas: Space (Akasha), Air (Vayu), Fire (Agni), Water (Apo) and Earth (Prithvi).

The Nature referred to in this Sloka refers to the “samskaras” from the past birth in the form of the unmanifest gunas. These have a great influence on our life. Our lives really revolve round the thought imprints on our mind. Every strong thought imprint gets its manifestation sooner or later in our present births or future births.

The second half of this Sloka:
"Beings will follow nature, what can restraint do?"
has to be understood in this context.

We, the ordinary mortals still in the process of intellectual evolution will succumb to our own past unfulfilled desires and hatreds. We are bound to our family, friends and possessions. Attachments rule our lives. Obstructing the worldly ways of life in others is a wrong method of correction by those who have knowledge of the scriptures. The right way for spiritual growth would be to induce them to evolve in tune with their nature.

Slow sublimation of their nature is the greatest service to the mankind the jnanis of the world can give, is one way of interpreting this Sloka.

We can understand this statement by two examples:

The children by nature act on impulse. Every day they do lot of mistakes. It takes few years for the parents to correct the children and takes several more years for the teachers to put them in the right path. Restraining the children slowly and steadily is the rule to follow in bringing up the children.

A charioteer who has control of the horses, does not use the force to stop the horses. Using the reins, he will slowly and steadily control the running of the horses and see that he reaches the destination safely.

“Restraint by force is more harmful and can be dangerous and the men of knowledge should remember the same is the Lord’s advice,” is one way of interpreting this Sloka.

Another interpretation of this Sloka:

Jnani refers to a learned man who intellectually understands the principles of religion and philosophy. He has yet to realise “The Truth.” Mere intellectual understanding the scriptures is powerless to control the power of natural instincts the individual is born with. Even a Jnani will act according to his nature. The Sloka is to remind the Jnani to think before acting and act according to the scriptures what he has learnt.

“If this is so, how difficult for the ordinary men and women to restrain the instincts is Lord’s message to mankind”, is another interpretation of this Sloka.

If we continue with the next few slokas we will find that the Lord is actually advocating self-restraint as the means for Liberation. Let us not misunderstand this Sloka and be under the false impression that we should not restrain our thoughts and actions.

“What can restraint do?": It can be both beneficial and harmful. Knowledge or jnana is the means to develop the art of slow and steady restraint. The next chapter to follow is “Jnana Yoga” and it gives us the means to learn the art of self-restraint.

Sloka 34

INDRIYASYE INDRIYASYARTHE RAGA DWESHO VYAVASTHITITOU TAYORNA VASHAMAGACHET TAU HYASYA PARIPANTHINO.

In each of the senses abide attraction and repulsion for the object of the senses. One should not come under their sway, for they are man's enemies.

In the chariot of life, the spiritual seeker is fighting his way through the battlefield of life. This is depicted as the scene of Gitopadeshm wherein Krishna is on the chariot holding on to the reins that control the horses and Arjuna is sitting at the back of chariot overcome by vishada (despondency).

In this picture, the four horses represent Kama, (desire) Krodha, (anger) Lobha (greed) and Moha, (delusion), which are the four dreaded enemies in the path of spiritual progress. (There are two more associates of these four enemies and they are: Mada which is Pride or arrogance and Matsarya which is enmity). The resulting reactions from these six will bring in either raga (attachments) or dwesha (hatred) in relation to the objects from the world around.

The reins represent the sense organs. Krishna and Arjuna represent the intellect and the mind respectively.

When we let the intellect come to the forefront in the decisions we take, it is like leading Krishna in front and letting Him be the master over us. When we let the mind come to the forefront and not take notice of the intellect, it is like letting our ego be the master in our lives.

Raga is when the impulses are pleasing and dwesha when one feels hatred. It is like saying: "It is pleasing to the eyes, pleasing to hear etc." or "I hate to see this or touch this". These two are sum of reactions that result when the sense organs bring in impulses from the objective world. It is of course the mind that makes this decision of likes and dislikes. The same object which is pleasing to one may be displeasing to the other. In the same individual, the same object that is pleasing at one time may bring displeasure at a different time.

The mind depending upon raga or dwesha makes use of the organs of action to get the object or to run away from the object or go to the extent of even killing the object. As humans we are supposed to let the intellect guide us in taking the right decisions that benefit us in the spiritual path and benefit the society.

There are four different ways of reactions to the impulses from the world around as brought in by the sense organs.

- a) One can totally close the sense organs and stop totally the impulses entering the mind. By doing so, the common man is not going to survive in the world. After all we have our obligatory duties to the world around. By blocking all the impulses, we are said to be "Tamasic" in our reaction to the world around. (Stone man).
- b) One can let the mind/ego decide on the action to take and not make use of the capacity of reasoning. We are then said to be "Rajasic." (Animal man.)
- c) We can use the intellectual capacity of reasoning and conduct actions that do not harm the world around. This is "Satvic" reaction. (Man man)

d) We can use the intellectual capacity of reasoning with the “Antaratma” or “Soul” guiding us, the resulting actions will then become “Divine.” (God man.)

This is the process of human evolution or decline in the so called journey of life depending on whether we move up or go down this ladder.

As we have discussed before:

“The God Man - The Man Man - The Animal Man - The Stone Man” is about decline of the man. It is spiritual downfall.

The human personality, the Lord is saying, by controlling the raga and dwesha, can ascend to the divine man from the stage of stone man.

Let our goal in this birth therefore be to mature from subhuman personality to human and from human to that of the divine. Let the senses not become the stumbling blocks in our path. It is in this context the Lord says, “The senses are man’s enemies.” We need to make the same senses our friends by making use of the Buddhi guided by the Lord within.

The Gita and the scriptures are to change our attitude to life from the base to the noble.

How to achieve this?

We should refer back to the qualities of “Sthithaprajna”, slokas 55-72, for an answer to this question.

Sloka 35

**SREYAAN SWADHARMO VIGUNAHA PARADHARMAT SVANUSTHITAT
SWADHARMO NIDHANAM SREYAHA PARADHARMO BHAYAVAHAH**

One’s own dharma, though devoid of merit, is better than the dharma of another even if well discharged. Better is death in one’s own dharma, the dharma of another is fraught with fear.

In this context, the word “Dharma” has to be understood as “Action.” “Swadharma” is “One’s own duty” and “Paradharma” is the duty of others.

Arjuna was trained to act as a warrior. He was a Kshatriya by birth and trained to fight. He was considered to be a great and well respected warrior. In the present situation, he was in the process of discharging his own duty, fight for his brother and uphold the dharma.

But, he developed a deep rooted fear that his actions were unjust and he should not be fighting some of the well respected elders in the opposite camp even though they were on the side of “Adharma.” He was prepared to surrender the kingdom to his cousin Duryodhana and be willing to live the life of a mendicant. Even though his intentions of living the life of a mendicant were honourable, he was not ready to enter into the next stage in his life.

To understand this we should briefly look at the “Ashrama Dharmas” according to the Hindu tradition. Ashrama dharma is duties at the four main stages in life. These are:
Brahmacharya - Grihastha - Vanaprastha - Samnyasa.

Arjuna had completed his Brahmacharya ashrama duties by undertaking the prescribed studies. He had entered into Grihastha ashrama. His chosen profession was that of a “Kshatriya.” He had matured into a great warrior during the period and was at the peak of Grihastashrama life. He had several more years to fulfil the duties as a warrior and then take up retirement.

It was in order during that period for a retired grihastha to go to the forest and learn to live the life of a mendicant. This would have been the “Vanaprastha” duties. After many years of such duties he would have developed the mental stamina to live the life of a samnyasi and strive for “Moksha.”

At this period of the great battle, his swadharma was “Kshatriya dharma” and paradharma was “Vanaprastha dharma.” By switching over his ashrama dharma and jumping prematurely into the next stage of life would have resulted in the following scenarios.

a) Duryodhana, the personification of adharma would have become the ruler and the citizens of Hastinapura would have suffered as a consequence. On his part, Arjuna for having absconded from his duty would be considered as having fallen from the spiritual path of progress towards moksha and face the consequences of his sinful action. Instead of heaven, the place for a dutiful warrior, he would have entered hell.

b) On entering into the forest to live the life of retirement, his body and mind would not have been prepared to such life. His mind would be longing for pleasures of life and his body not prepared to live on roots and vegetables. On encountering those who would have been living in the forest at that time, without his knowledge, he would start working for their welfare as a Kshatriya.

Thus we can see that the vanaprastha dharma he wanted to embrace was fraught with fear. It would have been preferable to fight for dharma and face death in the battlefield rather than abandoning the war.

There is a lot more to study and understand in this Sloka. For those who want an in-depth analysis, there is a detailed explanation in the texts following.

1)

“Swadharma” is one’s own duty. To do so, one must have an answer to the question “Who am I?” As we have studied so far, each one of us is really the “Atman” within and the physical body is not the real “I”. The duty would be therefore that of “divinity” which is the nature of the “Atman.” The duty of the divine is “Welfare of all.”

Swadharma is our actions as humans on earth. It would be to use the physical body as the eternal servant of the divine and fulfil the role of the divine. Our swadharma is the law of the Self and is for Self-realisation. Fasting, penances, conduct of vratas, and practice of prescribed studies and duties are the swadharma sadhanas pertaining to Atma dharma. Thinking that these are futile, I am not making any progress and abandoning such practices is paradharma. Vacillation or wavering the mind takes the seeker away from sadhana and the knowledge of the Gita helps the seeker to overcome this weakness.

“Paradharma” is duty foreign to one’s nature. Actions pertaining to identification with the physical body and forgetting the divinity within becomes paradharma. Having forgotten that we are the servants of the Atman within and instead of working for the welfare of all, working to fulfil one’s own pleasures of life becomes an alien dharma. Paradharma is the law of the objective world and is for the pleasures from the pluralistic world.

Swadharma would ultimately lead to attainment of Moksha. It is difficult to practice but not impossible.

Paradharma would lead to many more births and re-births into this world and as a consequence face the pains and pleasures of life. It is not difficult to practice but it takes us away from the ultimate goal of life which is “Purushartha of attaining Moksha.” It is fraught with dangers.

2)

Dharma according to the “Varnashrama”.

It is the duties pertaining to the four castes, the system evolved in the Hindu philosophy. Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vysya and Sudra are the four main castes for the Hindus. (We have discussed these before and there is no need to go into its basics again.)

Each of the four castes has specific duties pertaining to that cast. On that basis, swadharma is duties pertaining to the caste one belongs to and paradharma is conduct of duties pertaining to other castes.

Forgetting the caste system, let us enter the present way of the world. The professional duties vary from individual to individual. There are a number of professions and each individual has to take up certain duties and earn a living. To be eligible to work in any profession needs a basic training and understanding of the work involved. The learning period is known as the period of education. Usually, it is allocated to the early part of one’s life and one expects to complete the basic education between the ages of 16 - 25 yrs.

We all know that it is easy to train the mind of a child when compared to the mind of an adult. Trying to impart education for an adult is not impossible but difficult. Swadharma in this context is duties pertaining to the profession one is trained into and paradharma is duties pertaining to other professionals.

Similarly, even during education, higher level of education can be looked in from this angle. Swadharma is studying for the profession selected into and paradharma is diverting to other professional studies leaving the professional education selected and entering into a different course of education.

3)

Chaturashrama Dharma:

The four basic ashramas are: Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Samnyasa.

Brahmacharya is the period of education, grihastha is the period of family life and earning a living, vanaprastha is the period of retirement and samnyasa is the final stage of renunciation from all and preparing to enter into the new world of either moksha or another re-birth.

Swadharma is conduct of duties that befit the period/stage in one’s life. Paradharma is conduct of duties of another stage in life. A student has to learn and not enter into family life. By doing so, he can concentrate on studies to the maximum and get the best out of education system and come out as a graduate in reasonable time.

In a similar scenario, it is like the adult education system where one tries to learn after the age of 30 - 35 yrs. We all know how difficult it is for adult education both for the teacher and the student. It is not impossible but at the same time, the proficiency of learning will not be as great as when compared to education in early part of one’s life.

Running away from family life and trying to become samnyasi is to be looked upon as paradharma. As a matter of fact, what Arjuna wanted by abandoning the war was paradharma.

Example: (Sri Ramaakrishna Paramahamsa)

An established farmer continues farming duties of cultivation even if there be a terrible drought for few years. But a weaver who takes up agriculture, gets disheartened on encountering the drought. Similarly, a true devotee, does not deviate from the path of devotion for any reason.

Sloka 36

Arjuna uvacha:

**ATHA KENA PRAYUKTOYAM PAPAM CHARATI PURUSHAHA
ANICHHAN API VARSHNEYA BALAADIVA NIYOJITAH.**

Arjuna said:

O Vareshneya, constrained by force as it were, by what does man commit sin even against his wish?

Krishna is addressed as Vareshneya as he comes from the race of Vrishnis.

It is a sincere and pertinent question by Arjuna who is to be considered as a representative of all spiritual seekers.

As a matter of fact one can classify the population into three categories:

- a) Those who are free from evil and sinful acts. The force of maya does not affect them. They are the Jivanmuktas on earth. Very few individuals fall under this category.
- b) There are sincere seekers who know some acts and thoughts are sinful and do not wish to do evil. They are aware that there is a mysterious force that makes them do such acts and would like guidance to overcome this force.
- c) Those that do evil knowing it to be evil as such. They are digging the grave for their own destruction and commit the sin of harming others. Duryodhana once made a statement on this issue. When asked if he knew what he was doing was wrong, he said: "I know it is bad but I cannot stop it. It is my nature."

We can see that Arjuna has started to look introspectively within himself for the cause of this thought of sinful act and sincerely wanted help to fight the same. It is "Swadhyaya" or "self-study". It is the best way forward for the seeker. Having heard the master, he does not hesitate to put forward a question so that he could get the clear-cut answer for the same from the horse's mouth as it were. He sincerely does not want to commit a sinful act and is desperately seeking guidance from the master.

It is always better to foresee a danger and take steps to avoid the same. Human nature is such that though we know it is wrong to tell a lie, we tell lies. Not only that, we try our best to cover our lies. What could be the mysterious force that makes us do such acts?

We will see that the Lord comes up with the statement that both the devil and the divine are inside each of us. There is a constant battle for the seeker between the two forces. Let us see what the Lord's reply is for this question (in the slokas coming).

Sloka 37

Sri Bhagavan uvacha:

KAMA ESHA KRODHA ESHA RAJOGUNA SAMUDHVAHA

MAHASHANO MAHA PAPMA VIDYENAMIHA VARINAAM

**The Lord said,
It is desire, it is anger, born of rajoguna. It is all devouring and sinful. Know this as the enemy here.**

The soul within each one of us is the divine force and the physical body is human composed of matter. The force and the matter complement each other and bring out the various forms of life in this universe. The divine force is constantly pure and remains as a witness to the actions of the body at all times. The actions conducted by the physical body on the other hand can vary from being pure satvic to the indolent tamasic.

When rajoguna is predominant, our thoughts and actions demonstrate the will to fulfil a desire. It is “kama” that is referred to in this Sloka. As we have studied before, a number of reasons would bring out “krodha”, (anger) the close associate of kama. These could be like not being able to get the object of desire, someone else snatching the desired object or losing the desired object that is already possessed.

The first line of this Sloka highlights the fact that desire and the subsequent angry reactions are the result of predominance of the rajoguna.

Kama/desire is the leader of the devil’s team inside us and krodha/anger is its immediate and constant companion. These are followed by the other members of the devil’s team in the form of lobha, moha, mada and matsarya. One can say that kama is the cause and krodha is the effect.

Desire is nothing but an agitation arising in the mind of the individual as a result of the impulses received from the objective world. The stronger the agitations, greater are the actions that follow. Someone or something from the objective world comes between the subject and the object of desire. When one does not get what he wants, depending upon the degree of the want, anger stems forth in varying degrees.

Kama has been compared to the fire. We all know the quality of the fire - it keeps on consuming more and more of what is offered to it or what comes in its vicinity. Its thirst for more cannot be quenched. Hence the adjunctive used by the Lord: “it is the big devil, (Maha shani).”

How can one conquer this evil? The attempt to satisfy the fire by adding oblations of ghee and oil will make it grow stronger. Let no fuel be added to the fire and it slowly burns itself out. Similarly, we should not make any attempts to satisfy the kama and let it die its natural death. Learning the art of rejecting the desires as soon as it is born is the answer to the problem. Constant inquiry into the nature of the Atman which is Sat, Chit, Ananda itself will eliminate the kama from the mind.

The anger that stems forth dulls the mind and makes it lose its discriminatory property. The consequences of rights and wrongs of any action are not thought of before the start of actions that stem forth due to anger. When such discrimination between dharma and adharma is lost, sinful actions follow. The greater the anger, worst will be the actions that stem forth. Hence the lord says it is “Maha Papma.” (Great sin.)

Know this as the enemy here: “Here” refers to this world we are living now and the actions we conduct.

The entire Gita is about bringing awareness of the fact that there was a past that is responsible for the present and the past and present that shape the tomorrow for each one of us. The actions conducted “Now” will shape our future. If we are looking for a healthy and peaceful tomorrow, we need to give

great attention to the present. By mastering over the rajoguna traits in us (controlling the desire and anger), we can hope for a better tomorrow in our lives.

It does not mean that we should not have any desires in our lives. Desires are the fuel that move us in this world. If our path is towards “Liberation” and in contributing to “Universal Peace and Harmony” our desires should turn to be “Satvic”. They should fit in with the concept of “Sanatana Dharma” which in turn is the concept of “Purushartha”, the goal of life. This is as we have read before, “Dharma, Artha, kama, Moksha.” Human needs for security is “Artha” and for entertainment is kama. Dharma should be the basis for both. Needs for security are to be fulfilled following the path of dharma and only then the dharmic desires are to be entertained.

The first and foremost duty is to know what is dharma and learn the art of instilling it in all our thoughts and actions.

“Artha” is the means for achieving the object or purpose of life. By strictly following the rules of dharma one should work for “Artha.”

Only after these two comes the “Kama.” Whatever wish we have in life has to be according to the principles of righteousness. We should have the means/capacity to get what we desire. By this we mean, the principle of “beg, borrow or steal” should not be the means for fulfilling any desires.

Keeping the final aim of “Moksha” at all times, conducting the dharmic actions that fit in with every stage of life should be the “Satvic desire” in our journey of life.

Rajoguna will act as the enemy in the path to salvation for those who thrive on life of pleasures. Such people are to be considered as ignorant and let us pray for the message of the sacred text to reach as many as possible and lift them up to higher planes of life on this earth.

Sloka 38

DHOOMENAVRIYATE VAHNIR YATHADARSHO MALENA CHA YATHOLBENAVRUTO GARBHAS THATHA TENEDAM AVRITAM

As fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as the embryo by amnion, so is the knowledge of the Self enveloped by kama and krodha.

Through this verse, the Lord is reiterating the fact that there is “Chit” or the light of the Atman in every individual without any differentiation due to religion, race, creed, sex or caste. We should not forget that the sacred text is universal and the message in it is applicable to one and all. This light of the Atman, ever shining, is the divine knowledge the scriptures talk about. Each and every individual has the right to realise the true meaning of the maha vakya “Tat Tvam Asi.” This aspect is brought out in the words:

Idam Avritam: it means, “This” is enveloped. “This” is a pronoun and in this context is “The knowledge of the Atman”

The smoke, dust and amnion refer to the kama and krodha about which we have discussed in the last verse.

Fanning clears away the smoke that hides the fire within, rubbing the dust off with a clean cloth brings out the shine from the mirror and when the amniotic sac is removed the baby comes out free from the womb. The fire has always been present but the smoke blocked its presence; the reflecting quality of

the mirror is its basic quality but is hidden by the dust and the baby is inside the amniotic sac in its own right but hidden by it. The smoke does not extinguish the fire, the dust does not make the mirror lose its original purity and the amnion as such does not harm the baby within.

Kama and krodha are like the smoke, the dust and the amnion. They envelop the atman within but do not affect the true state of purity of the atman. The atman does not get touched or transformed by them. The only result evident by their presence is blocking the brilliant light of the ever effulgent atman.

If this is so, why is the differentiation between individuals?

This question is answered through this verse.

The three examples given refer to the three basic gunas which envelop us all. Through the vasana samskaras we carry in our mind, we demonstrate any one of three qualities at any one time in our day to day life's activities.

As the fire is enveloped by smoke:

This reflects the satvic quality. The smoke that accompanies the fire does disturb the eyes of the seer. It is also true that at the same time it can be pushed away by the simple process of fanning.

The satvic quality has the thin veil of "ego" that hides the purity of the individual. By constant fanning away any thoughts about pride of being satvic, the seeker can reflect the brilliance of the self effulgent Atman. If he fails to do so, the thin smoke becomes a cloud of thick smoke and hides the true light of knowledge within.

As a mirror is enveloped by dust:

This reflects the rajasic quality. The clean and spotless mirror gives a true reflection of the individual/object. The dust, grease etc that falls on the mirror, if not cleaned, disrupt the quality of reflection of the object. Clearing this is more difficult and takes a long time.

Similarly, the rajasic quality distorts the light of Atman and it is hard work to clear this quality. It takes a long time to clean and polish off the rajasic quality.

As the embryo by the amnion:

The amniotic fluid and the sack hide the foetus within. The human foetus takes nearly 40 weeks to grow and come out of its covering. The baby finally comes out with the assistance of the tender love and care the mother of the unborn baby gives during the period of gestation.

The tamasic quality hides the true knowledge. It takes a long time for the spiritual knowledge to emerge out from its sack of ignorance. This can be eliminated by the individual's constant attempts to grow this spiritual knowledge within himself and assisted by the grace of the guru. Just as it takes nearly 40 weeks for the baby to come out, the seeker needs a long time to express his/her basic divinity.

It is the basic duty of every individual to take off the covering of kama and krodha , realise his/her essential nature and let the divinity of the indwelling glorious atman shine.

Sloka 39

**AVRUTAM JNANAM ETENA JNANINO NITYA VAIRINAA
KAMARUPENA KAUNTEYA DUSHPORENANALENA CHA**

O Arjuna, knowledge of the Self is covered by this everlasting enemy of the wise in the form of desire, insatiable like the fire.

This Sloka clarifies the meaning of the words “mahashana and idam” in the last two slokas.

In Sloka 37, we come across the word “Mahashanaha” which means “all-devouring.” The Lord says that the “Desire” is all-devouring. In this Sloka, by using the word “Analena cha” which means “like fire”, He is telling us that the desires are like fire and are all-devouring.

In Sloka 38, we come across the word “Idam” as “Tenedam avritam”. It means “This is enveloped”. What is it the Lord is referring to when He uses the adjective “Idam”? In this verse He says “Avritam jnanam” which means “Knowledge of the Self is enveloped.” Desire envelops and hides the knowledge in every individual is the reply by the Lord to Arjuna’s question which we discussed in Sloka 36 of this chapter.

Let us not forget that the sacred text is an Upanisad. The guru is sitting at a higher platform than the student. The student is sitting very close to the guru keenly listening to the instructions. Every movement and expression on the face of the student is noticed by the teacher in such situations. The guru, who is an expert teacher can read the mind of the student well before he comes out with any questions. After all, “the face is the index of mind” is the proverb we are all familiar with. The expression on Arjuna’s face when Krishna used the words “Mahashana and Idam” in slokas 37 and 38, prompted the teacher Krishna to give a clear explanation for them.

In Sanskrit “Alam” means “enough”. “Analam” means “not enough.” Fire as we know is never satisfied. It never says “enough”. The more one offers oblations like ghee, the fire keeps on devouring it. Anala is the Sanskrit word for fire which is never satisfied.

We get a categorical statement by the Lord who says that it is the everlasting enemy of the wise. Who are the wise?

Wise are those who know the rights and wrongs of any of their thoughts and actions. The spiritual seekers who are trying to realise the eternal truth are the wise ones referred to in this Sloka. Even such people succumb to the temptations of desires.

The theme of the sacred text is in guiding the seeker in his spiritual path. It is important that the seeker can anticipate all the different problems that can be encountered in life and learn the means of overcoming them. Among these, “kama” is the worst and the Lord is giving importance to it.

Why are the desires everlasting enemies?

An enemy is considered a foe who is hostile. In our day to day life, we have instances where an enemy of today actually becomes a friend of tomorrow. One cannot say that the relationship of hostility is permanent. There are many families where the subsequent generations have become friends. The fire, as an enemy does not belong to this cadre.

For the wise, desires can never be friends but are constant enemies. They are the “Nitya vairies”, permanent enemies. Even the desire to become satvic and attain moksha would harm the seeker in the latter stages of his spiritual progress. Hence the adjective “everlasting enemy” is used.

The only solution for the problem is to declare a total war on desires. There should be a constant battle between the seeds of desire brought in by the senses and stored in the mind and seeds of divinity sown by the learned caring elders and the guru.

Quote: Sri Ramkrishna:

The indicator on the balance scale moves away from the middle point when there is more weight on one side. The mind of man moves away from the God allured by the weight of lust and greed.

Sloka 40

**INDRIYANI MANO BUDDHIRASYAD ADHISHTANAM UCHYATE
ETAIR VIMOHATYESHA JNANAMAVRITYA DEHINAAM.**

The senses, the mind and the intellect are said to be its seat. By these it deludes the embodied by veiling the wisdom.

This verse is advice by the Lord to all men with rajasic temperament. One can say that the kshatriyas are rajasic by nature. They belong to the warrior class of people. They are full of desires and like to accumulate wealth and hold on to power. Arjuna as we know is Kshatriya by birth and Krishna is giving the knowledge to him. He is therefore using explanations to fit in with the nature of Arjuna.

Who is a true warrior?

The following qualities refer to a true warrior. They are:

He wants to know who his enemies are and all the details about them.

How powerful is the enemy?

Where does the enemy reside/hide?

How does the enemy show his presence?

Who are the friends that can help him to fight the enemy?

Kama is the enemy of the seeker and we had elaborate description of the same in the last few slokas. Along with kama come his associates, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya. The six together constitute “Arishadwargas” which means the group of six (enemies).

Kama resides in the senses, the mind and the intellect, the Lord says. As the senses bring in the impulses from the outside world to the mind we can accept that the senses and the mind are its seats. We can say that the mind is the house the senses are its windows. Even in the absence of live impulses, the mind can live on the stored memories in its bank.

But the Lord says that the intellect is also its seat. Why?

This is so because the intellect is not a separate organ as such. It is only the discriminatory aspect of the mind. Strong and powerful desires have the power of blocking its discriminatory capacity.

Sloka 41

**TASMAAT TVAM INDRIYAANY ADOU NIYAMYA BHARATARSHABHA
PAAPMANAM PRAJAHI HYENAM JNANA VIJNANA NASHANAM**

O best of Bharatas, therefore, control the senses first, kill surely this kama, the sinful destroyer of knowledge and wisdom. (Self-realisation)

We are now approaching the end of this important chapter in the Gita. We are getting the summary of what has been said so far.

Sri Krishna is reiterating the dangers of succumbing to the dreaded enemy called “Kama” and giving us the means to overcome him.

It is also important to note the word, “sinful destroyer of knowledge.” We have to remember that there is already the existence of “Knowledge” within each of us. “Knowledge” is the “Chit” aspect of “Sat, Chit, Ananda.” Our true identification has to be with this “Sat, Chit, Ananda” and not to the physical body with name and form. Through the passage of several births, accumulation of vasanas, our karma phala from the past actions has put a veil on the “Chit” and we have forgotten our true identity. The Vedas boldly declare the maha mantra “Tat Tvam Asi.” Forgetfulness of our true identity is referred to in this Sloka as “Destruction of Knowledge”. In our spiritual journey, it is a sin to forget our true identity. The destroyer of this knowledge is “Kama” and this has been described as “sinful destroyer of knowledge and wisdom.”

The spiritual seekers are those who strive to attain Moksha. The most powerful enemy in their path is “Kama”. The objective world is the focus of desires for the ordinary men/women. The world is full of objects/beings that arouse the interest of the individual which progresses to the stage of desire of acquiring the same.

The senses are the first channel of entry into the mind of the impression of the outer world. It is the duty of the seeker to control the senses.

If we compare this physical body as representing the chariot, the horses on the chariot represent the “kama, krodha, lobha and moha” and the reins represent the sense organs. The intellect is the charioteer and the mind is the rider. We can say that the mind is the jiva that is going through the passage of births and deaths. When this jiva (mind) joins with the sense organs, the effect of kama, krodha, lobha, moha makes the jiva “the enjoyer”. He who has no discrimination and whose senses are not under control will find that the chariot will not lead to the desired destination. In the hands of a good driver, the horses are under control. Similarly, the sacred texts say that the intellect or the reasoning capacity should be the charioteer and have control over the mind and the senses. Only, such a spiritual seeker who will let the God inside him take control over his mind and the senses will get the blessings of the Lord and realises the “Eternal Truth” (Sat).

Sloka 42

**INDRIYANI PARANYAHUR INDRIYEBHYAHA PARAM MANAHA
MANASASTU PARAM BUDDHIRYO BUDDHEH PARATASTU SAHA.**

They say that senses are superior to the body. Superior to the senses is the mind. Superior to the mind is the intellect. One who is superior to the intellect is He. (the Self.)

The Srimad Bhagawadgita is part of the great epic Mahabharatam. Mahabharatam is the epic story of the fight within the same family between good and the evil. It depicts in a story form the power of evil with the support of “Kama and his associates” over good. It tells us that when the good takes the shelter under the Lord Supreme, the Lord assists in total annihilation of the evil. The finale of this is the scene of the battlefield Kurukshetra with the mighty Kauravas on one side and the Pandavas with the support of Krishna who is the mightiest of all on the other side. The winners at the end are the Pandavas and they did so because of their devotion and total surrender to Krishna.

This Sloka has to be looked upon the life as a battlefield in the fight against the six evils “kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matasarya” which hinder the path to spiritual progress and final attainment of Moksha. In this battlefield, we are given a graphic description of the army with soldiers ranging from lower rank to the highest ranking officer.

In our own physical body we have the following instruments in the ascending order of superiority:

The physical body with arms, feet, abdomen etc.
The five sense organs.
The mind.
The intellect.
The Atman.

As we ascend from the level of the physical body to that of the Atman, we can see that the preceding organ is subtler than the previous organ. The sense organs are subtler than the gross body and the mind is subtler than the sense organs and so on and so forth.

The law of physics tells us that that which is subtle is always superior to the gross. Desires that finally lead attachment to the body, mind and intellect drag down the individual to the lowest planes of existence. Using the power of the Atman one can fight the evil desire and pull the individual to the plane of the Atman.

In Sloka 41, the Lord advocated sense restraint as the remedy for spiritual progress. In this Sloka we are given the means to achieve self restraint. To defeat the enemy one must manage to climb over the enemy and destroy him. To do so, one needs to acquire greater power. This can be done by making use of subtler powers to win over the grosser powers.

To protect the hands and feet, we need to use the sense organs. To protect the sense organs, we need to use the mind. To protect the mind, intellect is needed and finally to protect all of the bodily instruments the power of the Atman is needed. Atman being the subtlest of all is most powerful instrument we have.

The senses, like the foot soldiers are not strong and fall easy prey to the enemy desire and his associates. The mind is more powerful than the senses and it should be brought to use in controlling the senses. If not, the senses would run amuck and ruin the individual.

Unfortunately, the mind which is a store house of previous experiences and vasana imprints also can fall prey to the evil enemy desire. The desires enter into the mind and take shelter and in course of time take over the running of the house. The intellect is needed to control the activities of the mind.

The intellect has the “Antaratman” (Atman) on one side and the mind with its store house of imprints on the other side. The antaratman sends in the voice of the divine to the intellect. But the intellect also receives the impulses of the physical world through the mind. In most cases, in the tug of war between these two forces, intellect falls prey to the enemy “Kama” residing in the mind and refuses to hear the inner voice of the Atman.

The spiritual seeker who knows this truth and strives hard with sraddha and Bhakti, can, by the use of the Atman, win over the temptations from the outer world. The knowledge of the Self within is the sword that can cut the knot between atma and anatma. (the physical body is anatma.)

This chapter, Karma yoga, is all about the advice to Arjunas of the world who are running away from their duty to uphold dharma and to help them in learning the proper conduct of actions according to the principle of “Nishkama karma and karmaphala tyaga.” The union of the lower self (ego) to the higher Self by the conduct of nitya Karmas is “Karma Yoga.”

The Atman within is the king and the Lord and it is our duty to make use of our physical body to let the glory of the Atman (through divine actions) shine forth for all to see.

Sloka 43

EVAM BUDDHEH PARAM BUDDHYVASAMSABHYATMANAM ATMANA AHI SHATRUM MAHABAHO KAMAROOPAM DURASADAM

O Arjuna, mighty armed, thus having known what is greater than the intellect, namely Atman, and restraining the self by the Self, conquer the foe in the form of desire which is indeed hard to overcome.

The second quarter of this Sloka (last half of the first line) says “Atmanam Atmana.” We need to understand this clearly.

Atmanam: the self.

Atmana: by the Self.

“Atmanam” refers to the senses, body, mind and the intellect. The self referred to here has the little “s”.

“Atmana” refers to the “Atman.” The Self referred to here has the capital “S”.

The enemy called desire has to be conquered by the Atman which should control the body, senses, mind and the intellect.

It is important to understand the real from the unreal.

The real is that which is constant in relation to time and space. It is the “Eternal Truth” and the scholars say it is “Nitya.(constant)” The Atman within is the constant factor in the life of the individual during his sojourn in the form of several births and deaths.

The unreal is not constant in relation to time and space. It is false in its truest sense. The physical body of the present life goes through the journey of life and takes several names and forms in its course. As it is not permanent, it is said to be unreal and the scholars say it is “Anitya (not constant).”

The constant process of analysing the “Nitya anitya” is the process advocated by the scholars to the sincere spiritual seekers of Moksha. They advice the seeker to conduct daily “Nitya anitya viveka vicharana.”

The body has the appearance of reality and it is due to ignorance of the real Self within. We have accepted the unreal as real and forgotten the real. The real in the form of the Atman is our constant companion in life and He is the real knowledge and bliss. The Atman radiates its power to the bodily instruments and its light of knowledge is reflected on to the intellect. From the intellect it is reflected to the mind and from the mind to the sense organs. From the sense organs it is reflected on to the objects in the material world. So far, so good. Through our bodily organs we become capable of understanding the objective world. The problem comes with the next chapter that follows.

The light that is reflected on to the objects makes the object visible. This light reflects back on to the sense organs which take the information to the mind. This is supposed to be taken from the mind to the intellect and from the intellect to the Atman. Many a time, this process stops at the level of the mind and even the intellect or reasoning capacity is not made use of. When this stops at the level of the mind, it is to be recognised as “ignorance.” When it stops at the level of the intellect it has the chance to become “egoistic”. Both avidya and ahamkara are dangerous for the spiritual seeker.

If the reality, Atman, is experienced by the intellect and the intellect uses its superior power to subdue the mind and the mind in turn subdues the sense organs and the organs of action, the seeker has won the battle against the enemy “Kama.” In the spiritual journey there is only one enemy and that is “Kama.” Kama is most powerful and has powerful followers in the form of “krodha, lobha, moha,

mada and matsarya.” To fight the enemy, the warrior has to be mighty armed. Arjuna is addressed by Krishna as “Mahabaho” which means “mighty armed.”

The scholars say that the power in the arms represent Indra, the Lord of heaven. Mythologically, Arjuna is the son of Indra. One needs to be as powerful as Arjuna, son of the Lord of heaven to fight the enemy called “desire.” Therefore, Krishna has used the word “durasadam” in the second half of the Sloka. “Durasadam” means “hard to overcome.” The Lord agrees that it is difficult to overcome the enemy but does not say it is impossible.

He wants Arjuna to learn to understand the difference between the real and unreal. The knowledge of this difference is the weapon that can asunder the knot between “Atma and Anatma.” By joining the Atman with the anatman we have temporarily made the Atman into Jivatman. Nishkama karma, karma phala tyaga is the true karma yoga and it is possible by acquiring “Jnana” and it is the next chapter to follow.

The cause of all sorrow and misery we experience is due to this ignorance of the real Self. Jnana yoga helps us to understand the real Self and then only we can make all our actions divine. The Lord therefore stresses the fact that we are beyond even the intellect which is the reasoning capacity in us. By clouding the reasoning capacity with the “pride of knowledge” we fall down from the heights of progress we have made so far in the spiritual journey. Our birth as humans shows that we have made great stride in our progress and let us not fall down to lower planes of existence by our actions which are tainted with desires. Let us all therefore awaken our spiritual consciousness and let our body including the intellect serve the master within. Let us learn to destroy the little “self” in us and make the big “Self” shine forth by all our actions.

Thus completes the third chapter, “Karma Yoga” in the Srimad Bhagawadgita which is a Upanisad, Brahma Vidya and Yoga sastras in the form of a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna.