

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 6: DHYANA YOGA

Introduction

This chapter is also known as "Atma Samyama Yoga" that deals with control of the lower "self" and unite the same with the higher "Self." This chapter will end the "Tvam" aspect of "Tat Tvam Asi". The message from this shatka to the sincere seekers is,

"What you are looking for (Tat) is in reality nothing but "You". It is not the "you" that relates to the ego but to the Atman within you which is the real you."

It is not to be confused with "Hata Yoga" which is totally different and which deals with severe austerities in control of the "self."

Dhyana is control of the senses. In this context the senses include "sense organs, mind and the intellect." It is not just control of the senses but concentrating on the Atman within.

Atma samyama yoga means "Yoga of self-control." Atma refers to the lower self. The other title for this chapter is "Dhyana Yoga" which means "The yoga of Meditation." The method of controlling the senses through the process of meditation is highlighted in this chapter.

The Atman within which is the spark of Parabrahman is present in all forms of life. The human life is the most highly evolved among all forms of life. Really speaking it should bring out the divinity within in thoughts, action and speech in all humans. But due to the ignorance of the "Self", deep involvement with the sensual world around, there is a great, almost inexhaustible accumulation of vasanas in the mind. The vasanas form the basis of the nature of the individual and instead of "true humans" caring for humanity the man turns out to be an animal man or a stone man.

The Atman within is the lotus flower within which is a true example of "inaction in action and detachment in attachment." There is a need to unfold this lotus flower, "The Self" within, and this can be achieved by "Self-contemplation."

First step in meditation is:

Reduce the quantity of thoughts generated and stored in the mind.

The next step is:

Change the quality of thoughts. Lift from tamasic thoughts to rajasic thoughts, rajasic to Satvic thoughts.

Finally divert the thoughts on to the Atman within.

This is to say that we should:

Train the mind,

To transform the thoughts and then to transcend the thoughts.

This final state is known as "Samadhi" which is "intellectual equanimity."

By a slow and steady process the seeker has to work at inner revolution in character, attitude and values of life and experience the "Bliss" within by becoming one with it.

Sloka 1

Sree Bhagawaan Uvacha:

**ANASHRITAH KARMA PHALAM KARYAM KARMA KAROTI SAHA
SA SANYASEE CHA YOGEE CHA NA NIRAGNIR NA CHAKRIYAH.**

He who performs his prescribed duties without depending on the fruits of action is a sanyasi and yogi, not he who gives up worship of the fire and who remains without action.

In general there is a misunderstanding /misconception concerning the meaning of "Yogi and Sanyasi".

When someone sees a person wearing an ochre robe, he is revered as a "sanyasi." Whereas when they see someone in solitude in places like a mountain cave or a forest having given up all work, they consider that person to be a "Yogi". Giving up all work is considered to be the way of a yogi. Sri Krishna has cleared this misconception.

Just by wearing an ochre robe does not make one a sanyasi and living in solitude in a far off place giving up all is not a yogi. They are only external signs. What is needed is inner purification.

Let us first of all learn the art of giving up our own opinions and take the opinion of the greatest master in spiritual science. True sanyasa is abandonment of ego which is the dearest and the worst possession we do not want to give up.

The true purpose of practicing yoga is about union with the Parabrahman. It is to develop the technique of God realisation and union with God contemplated upon.

Whether one is a yogi or a sanyasi, he must learn to perform all his/her duties. Duties involve conduct of actions and actions in turn do bring results. We, the mortals, do get attached to the fruits of our actions and get caught in the web called "Samsara." Learning the art of not depending on the fruits of actions makes one a yogi and a sanyasi says the Lord.

The first three quarters of the sloka:

**ANASHRITAH KARMA PHALAM KARYAM KARMA KAROTI SAHA
SA SANYASEE CHA YOGEE**

Highlights the qualities of a sanyasa/yogi.

It means:

"He who performs his prescribed duties without depending on the fruits of action is a sanyasi and yogi."

There are no differences as "sanyasi or yogi." Performing of prescribed duties is the first requisite and not depending upon the fruits of action is the second requisite.

The Lord has used the prefix "Prescribed duties." "Perform prescribed duties", we are told. In chapter 3 we have been given the details of "Karma" and chapter 4 gives us the knowledge needed to conduct karma. Each one of us has to conduct "Nitya Karmas and Naimittika Karmas." (refer to sloka 8, chapter 3).

Depending upon spiritual maturity we can conduct "kamyas karmas" to fulfil our wishes. As we get mature spiritually our work should be directed toward s universal welfare and not to fulfil personal pleasures.

We should never conduct forbidden actions, "Nishiddha karmas."

The expected results from actions to be conducted in the different stages/ashramas in our life should not be the motive for our work. "Knowing what to do, how to do and what are the good and bad results of actions" is the Jnana we should develop. To know all about the results of actions before deciding on the action and then doing the duty is our job. Getting to depend/day dreaming on the fruits of actions bind us to this world. We fall into the trap of maya that makes us experience sukha or dukha and develops likes and dislikes.

CHA NA NIRAGNIR NA CHAKRIYAH.

Says the last quarter of the sloka.

It means,

"not he who gives up worship of the fire and who remains without action."

"Worship of the fire": this refers to the lighting of the fire of knowledge and conducting the daily prescribed duties. These are:

The "Pancha Maha Yajnas" which are:

Deva Yajna,
Rishi Yajna,
Pitru Yajna,
Nara Yajna,
Bhoota Yajna.

We are told not to give up these five sacred duties. We should do these in the spirit of "Yajna" which is "a dedicated act." The results are dedicated to the Lord.

No one should be without any action is Lord's message to mankind.

Slokas 48 and 38, chapter 2 give us a better understanding of the word "Yogi".
He who practices yoga is a yogi.

Who is a yogi?

Sloka 48: Yogasthaha kuru karmani - - -

O Arjuna, do your work, be steadfast in yoga, giving up attachment, unmindful of success or failure. Such equanimity is Yoga.

It clearly states that the seeker has to do his duties but at the same time fix his concentration on the Supreme and His teachings and work according to His command. He clearly states that the seeker has to be unmindful of success or failure.

Regarding the statement "unmindful of success or failure":

Sloka 38:

Having an equal mind in pain and pleasure, gain and loss, victory and defeat, engage in battle and thereby you will not incur sin.

It is clearly a call for seeker to fight the battle of life and applies to one and all.

Even though Sri Krishna, the Lord himself, was the charioteer and guide for Arjuna, He did not guarantee success to His devotee. Even though we say that success is the blessings of the Lord and failure is the fault of ours and we should not blame the Lord for failure, we must remember that both are His decisions.

Sri Krishna in the role He played also experienced failures in His actions several times. But at the end He proved that His was a life of incarnation to establish dharma. This is to highlight the fact that "Equanimity is Yoga." (samatvam Yogam uchyate)

He also says "Naivam papam avapsyasi". He who does the work on the principle of "Equanimity of Yoga" gets the chance to burn the existing vasanas and will not accumulate new vasanas.

The successes in life should act as a tonic to develop more faith in Lord and not develop the "Ego." The failures in life should act as a reminder to continue to keep faith in the Lord and fight the battle following the path of righteousness.

This is the method of inner purification which is the true sign of Yogi/sanyasi and not the colour of the cloth worn or the place one lives.

Sloka 2

**YAM SAMNYASAM ITI PRAHUR YOGIM TAM VIDDHI PANDAVAHA
NA HI ASAMNYASTA SAMKALPO' YOGI BHAVATI KASCHANAHA.**

O Pandava that which is called samnyasa, know that to be yoga also. No one becomes a yogi without giving up desires.

We have a definitive declaration from the Lord that there is no difference between a Samnyasi and a Yogi.

The fact that Sri Krishna makes it a point to make this statement means that even 5000yrs ago there were many who used the words „Samnyasi, Yogi“ and that they considered the two as different. Unfortunately this is still going on and there is a large number who consider that sanyasi and yogi as two different types of people.

This is the gist of the first half of this sloka.

The word to understand clearly in this sloka is „Asamnyasta Samkalpo“:

We have to split this into three words:

„A“

„Samnyasta“

„Samkalpo“

„A“ is used as negative statement.

„Samnyasta“ refers to „acts of renunciation.“

„Samkalpa“: (resolve) majority of the Hindus are familiar with this word. Whenever they conduct a ritual under the supervision of a priest, the priest makes them take what is known as „Samkalpa“.

Taking up „samkalpa“ is deeply rooted in the minds of those who undertake auspicious acts like „Satyanarayana pooja, Ganesha Pooja, wedding ceremony etc“. Samkalpa is referred to actions conducted with the desire for fruits of action.

The priest who conducts the ceremony first of all recites the date of the ceremony (as per the Hindu calendar), the place where it is held, the auspicious time it is conducted and then makes the individual repeat his/her lineage, (gotra), birth star, own name, name of the family members and take up „Samkalpa.“

In this act the individual conducting the action is made to repeat the words, „to fulfil my desire --- (by the conduct of such and such an act), I perform this ceremony.“ In other words he/she is praying the Lord to fulfil their desire. This is „Samkalpa“.

„Samkalpa“ is therefore an act to create an imagination in the mind about the fruit of action. We should realise that there is an element of selfishness in the act. After all we are humans and we have desires. What we learn from the scriptures is that there should be a gradual elimination of desires as we progress in our lives. We will learn as we proceed with the study of the sacred text that we should first of all move up from „Laziness, (Tamas)“ to „Passion, (Rajas)“ and from passion to „Pure, (Satva)“.

The seeker in the spiritual path is desiring for „Liberation.“ As he matures he must learn to conduct actions without even the desire for „Moksha.“ This chapter is „Dhyana“ which is meditation to unite with the Supreme and become one with It. Therefore there is a need not to have the desire for the same.

Samkalpa which is selfish motive behind an action must be absent.

Who becomes a yogi?

The Lord is making a negative statement by using this phrase „Asamnyasta Samkalpo“.

„Samkalpa Samnyasi“ is he who has renounced all samkalpas. He has no desires.

„Asamkalpa Samnyasi“ is he who does not renounce samkalpas. (He cannot be called a yogi.)

What we have to understand is,

Conduct all actions that are according to the duty of station of life we are in (ashrama dharma),

Do not do so with the desire for the fruits of action,

And finally,

When the fruits do come from the actions as it is the norm,

Offer the fruits at the feet of the Lord with the feeling of „Sri krishnarpanamastu.“

By desire-less performance of action which is „Yoga“ (could be Karma, Jnana, Bhakti or Dhyana) one can develop the faculty to renounce the desires for the fruits of action which is „Samnyasa.“

With this explanation, we go back to the beginning of this sloka that says Samnyasa and Yoga are one and the same.

The householder who conducts all his actions in this spirit is a true yogi and a samnyasi.

One final point to note:

As a matter of fact the priest who conducts the ceremony also includes a sentence which the individual is made to repeat: it is „Na mama“. It means „Not mine.“ Whatever I expect to get from this action is not mine and it is all the property of the Lord. Many do not realise this statement which they repeat during the ceremony.

Sloka 3

**AARURUKSOR MUNERYOGAM KARMA KARANAM UCHYATE
YOGARUDASYA TASYEVA SHAMAHA KARANAM UCHYATE.**

For a muni, who wishes to attain yoga, action is said to be the means. For the same sage who has attained to „yoga“ inaction is said to be the means.

Let us analyse the correct meaning of the words, „Aruruksho, Muni, Yoga, Yogarudha and Sama“ used in this sloka.

This chapter is on meditation, (dhyana) and so the word „Yoga“ used in this sloka refers to „Dhyana Yoga.“

„Aruruksho“: aspiring to ascend. He, who would like to climb the spiritual mountain of Himalayas, is „Aruruksha.“

Yogarudha is he who has managed to reach the peak of the spiritual mountain.

The mind is like a horse, it is fickle and difficult to control. It needs to be controlled by the intellect. When the intellect (Krishna) firmly controls the mind and sits on the mind (horse's back), the state achieved is „Yogarudha“.

„Sama“ is the perfect control of the mind. There should not be any trace of ego. The mind has to be in a state of tranquillity and bliss. Achieving this state of the mind is „Sama.“ This is the state of „inaction.“ Where there is no ego, there is no action.

The word „Muni“ applies to the true spiritual seekers. „Mounam Charati iti Munihi“ is the definition of a muni. He who walks in the path of silence is a muni. The spiritual seeker who wants to climb the spiritual mountain has to first of all learn to control his senses. His mind has to be kept silent and not agitated by the sense objects of the world.

The first half of the sloka would then mean:

For a muni - who is a spiritual seeker wishing to climb the spiritual mountain,
Who wishes to attain yoga - who would like to learn and master the art of „Dhyana“,
Action is said to be the means.

The second half of the sloka would mean:

The muni that is successful in attaining the dhyana,
Could do so only by inaction.

We can understand it better by looking at our standard education system in the secular field of studies.

There are three grades of education:

Primary school and high school,

Graduate studies,

Post-graduate studies.

The students who would like to consider becoming Post-Graduates, first of all have to learn the basic subjects and become graduates. To do so they have to work hard and get basic knowledge.

Once they have graduated, to take up to Post-Graduation, they must learn to develop a strict control of their mind. They cannot let the mind wander at all. Their intellect (which has to be concentrated on the higher studies,) must control the mind very firmly. There should not be any external distraction.

The spiritual seeker in quest of the experience of „Eternal Bliss“ from within cannot do so in the initial stages by running off to a jungle and keeping his eyes closed. He has to go through the high school and graduation courses in spiritual science. Hence, the Lord emphatically states that „Action“ is the means to attain to dhyana yoga.

„Action is said to be the means“: action referred to is „Nishkama karma and Karma Phala Tyaga.“
This is true karma yoga.

Jnana Yoga gives help to conduct actions in this spirit.

To reach to the state of dhyana yoga in chapter 6, one has therefore a need to go through the preliminary chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the Geeta.

This preparation helps to steady the mind free from any further actions. This is „Sama.“ When the purity of the mind is achieved by nishkama karma and karma Phala tyaga no further actions are necessary. As a matter of fact, the actions drop off on their own accord in the latter stages of sadhana. Through the process of „Sravana, Manana and Nidhi Dhyasa“ (Hearing, reflecting and concentrating) the seeker succeeds in experiencing the bliss from within.

Any hasty actions are of little benefit. After all every seeker has to manage to bring about „Vasana Kshaya“ of all his past vasanas. The past samskaras have left a number of unfulfilled vasanas in the mind. These have to be burnt out totally to experience the „Peace“ which will remain constantly. Otherwise, every experience of peace the seeker gets is only temporary.

Perfect purity of the mind is obtained only when there is total destruction of „ego.“ When the ego is banished, the seeker automatically lives in union with the Parabrahman. Where there is no ego, there will be no more agitations due to desires, anger, greed, delusion, pride and envy. Where there are no such agitations, there is constant joy. When we are full of such spiritual joy, we do not work (no ego) but the Lord works through us.

Sloka 4

**YADA HI NEDRIYARTHESHU NA KARMASVANUSHAJJATE
SARVA SAMKALPA SANYASEE YOGARUDASTADOCHYATE**

When a man is not attached to sense objects and actions, having renounced all thoughts, he is said to have attained to yoga.

We discussed about „Yogarudha“ in the last verse. Herein we have a definition of this word. Yogarudha is he who has attained perfection in his sadhana.

Three conditions which are really three steps of a ladder to perfection are the means to achieve this state.

Not attached to sense objects;
Not attached to actions;
Renouncing all thoughts.

Not attached to sense objects:

We live in a world of manifold objects. As a matter of fact in course of our life time we get attached to some of these objects either animate or inanimate. Those we get attached to become the sense objects for us. It is an individual feeling of attachment. What is liked by me may not be liked by other person. The other person may be disinterested in the object I like or might hate it.

Yoga is union. Strictly speaking it applies to spiritual life and not to material life. Union in spiritual life is that of our physical body with the Atman within and the Atman with the Paramatman. One tends to use the word for achieving the material possessions and it is not strictly correct.

When we say our body, in the sense of yoga, it applies to the subtle body of ours which is the mind and the intellect. The mind being the band master has jnanendriyas (sense organs) that bring in information from the outer world and karmendriyas (organs of actions) that assist in getting (what we like) or getting rid of objects (what we do not like). It has the capacity to retain the information about the objects. Contact with the object can bring about any of the following feelings:
Like the objects;

Do not like the objects;
Not bothered about the objects;
Hate the object;
Frightened of the object.

Depending upon the feeling, the mind uses the organs of actions:
To get the objects, or
Not to react, or
Run away from the object,
Depending upon the object and the situation.

Not attached to actions is the second stage in progress.

The experience from actions brings about the sensation of happiness, sorrow or fear.

We, the ordinary mortals, like to enjoy the pleasures from the objects and this is the cause for attachment. We are ignorant of the consequences of getting attached and subsequent losing of the same which in turn brings in sorrow. The life becomes a series of actions and reactions that result in happiness or sorrow.

The mind which is a store house of these feelings (vasanas, thought imprints of the objects) likes to look for happiness whenever possible from the objects.

The first step in spiritual practice is to understand the consequences of attachment to objects and develop the strong will of not getting attached to them. The word used is „Yada hi neendriyartheshu nanu shajjate.“

To experience the bliss the mind needs to be diverted towards the Atman within. Whereas the Atman is only one and not seen, (ekam and na drishyam), the objective world is manifold and visible (bahunaam and drishyam). The search light for Atman which is „Bliss absolute“ has to be operated by the mind only. Normally the mind operates using the search light for happiness by projecting it outwards.

By the process of self-enquiry and self-analysis which is a slow process the seeker has to learn developing non attachment to sense objects.

In general most of us are self-oriented and our personal happiness takes the priority in our lives. Without our knowledge many of us are really selfish. We consider ourselves as separate and do not see „unity in diversity.“ We do not recognise the „Atman“ within us which is the same „Atman“ in all forms of life.

The perfect yogarudha has overcome this separateness by developing perfect mastery over his mind. The word „Nirvana“ used by Buddhists refers to „Yogarudha“.

What is „Meditation“?

It is an art developed by self-study, self-analysis, self-patrol, wherein we learn to lean on to the „Power“ within. In our daily transaction we depend upon some object from the material world, be it the spouse, children, house etc. When the support we lean on to weakens or disappears, we fall down and get hurt and experience sorrow.

Renouncing all thoughts:

The support of the Lord as the only support in life will help us not to fall down and get hurt. As a matter of fact, the more we surrender to the Lord, we will realise that we get everything in life. Dependence on the Lord makes us truly independent.

Sarva Sankalpa sanyasee:

The first step in acquiring anything is „Thinking“ about the object of desire. The stronger the thought to acquire the object, the greater will be the effort to acquire it. „Samkalpa“ is the determination to get the desired object. As the life is an endless journey to acquire objects of desire, the only way to find „The Bliss within“ is to drop of all samkalpas. The process of dropping of all the samkalpas is „Sarva Samkalpa sanyasa.“ The end result of this sadhana is emptying the mind of all stored vasanas.

„Manu Smriti“ says that desires are born of „samkalpa.“ „Yajnas“ (dedicated actions) are born of samkalpa. When there are no more desires left, no more vasanas are stored, intense meditations becomes a reality.

The seeker who has reached this state of perfection is a true „Yogarudha.“ Just because he is thought free, does not mean he is sleeping. (sloka 69-chapter 2: when the rest of the world is sleeping he is truly awake and when the rest of the world is awake, it appears that he is sleeping.)

Sloka 5

**UDDHARED ATMANATATMANAM NATMANAM AVASADAYET
ATMAIVA HYATMANO BANDHURATMAIVA RIPURATMANAHA**

Let a man raise himself by the Self, not let the Self go down. For, this Self is the friend of the self and the self is the enemy of the Self.

It is one of the most important slokas in the Gita and the advice given to mankind by the Lord is full of subtle meanings.

Let the man raise himself by the Self: Uddhared atmanat atmanam:

Uddhared: lift/raise;

Atmanat: by the Self;

Atmanam: himself/self.

As we have learnt already, we are two in one. We are the physical body which is referred to as „self“ with little „s“ and the „Atman“ which is referred to as „Self“ with the capital „S“.

One can say that the „Self“ is „Mr. Hyde“ and the „self“ is „Mr. Jekyll.“

In the story of Jekyll and Hyde, Jekyll is the real good professor and Hyde is the wicked form of the Professor. As Professor he projects as the learned scholar and is respected whereas as Hyde he is despicable and public hate him.

We somehow are like these two film characters. When the divinity in us shines, good actions come forth and we are the friends of the public. When the selfishness shines forth our actions make us enemies of the society.

The mind can be compared to „Hyde“ and the intellect to „Jekyll.“

Our mind can be lifted to spiritual heights by:

The grace of the Lord and

Grace of the Guru.

But to receive the grace from these two, we have to become true sadhakas and purify ourselves. The reasoning capacity in us (the intellect) has to be the master and the mind has to be subservient to the wishes of the master.

Hence the first quarter of the sloka which says:

„Let the man raise himself by the Self.“

As mind is man, „himself“ refers to the mind;

And the „Self“ refers to the Divine Energy within us.

We should lift ourselves by our individual efforts and our sincere actions will be blessed by the grace of Guru and the Lord. „See with your own eyes, walk with your own legs, use your sense organs and mind properly“ is His command. We must feed ourselves to satisfy the hunger. Food eaten by somebody else does not take away the hunger in us. Nothing comes free in this life. After all we have to pay to get what we want and in spiritual field also, we have to pay to get the Liberation and experience the Bliss. The price is sincere sadhana.

Let us take few examples.

(a) Let us assume that there is a precious diamond at the bottom of the sea. First of all one should know there is the precious diamond. The next step is to find means of getting it out. This involves learning deep sea diving and associated actions to lift it up.

Similarly, there is a precious diamond at the bottom of the sea called the mind. By engaging in numerous worldly affairs we do not recognise its presence and its value. This diamond is the thought that „I am the Self.“ Ocean full of worldly thoughts is hiding our own reality of „Sat, Chit, Ananda.“ By study of scriptures and guidance by the guru, we have to learn the technique of lifting that thought out and make it uppermost in our efforts. It is important to remember that in the process of recognising our divinity, we should not develop the pride „I am Brahman and I can do it all by myself“.

(b) In the early days of our lives, our parents wash and clean us. As we grow older, we must learn to wash ourselves.

In spiritual path we must learn to wash our mind of all impurities. It must be done regularly because impure thoughts keep on entering the mind and making it impure. Children need the help of learned elders and it is their duty to do so. They have to instil the feeling of Sraddha and Bhakti in the Supreme. As we grow older we have to keep on purifying our mind daily for the rest of our life.

(c) If one is ill, he must know he is ill and get help from the specialists. He must then follow the instructions given by the specialist. He must take the prescribed medicines as per their advice. The medicine may be bitter or the operation to cure will be painful but it is worth the efforts.

We are all mentally sick by the disease known as „selfishness“ but we are not aware of it. We must go to our doctors (sastras, guru) and get the medicine.

The second quarter of the sloka:

Na atmanam avasadayet:

Atmanam: the Self

Na avasadayet: not let go down.

It means: Not let the “Self” go down.

When we forget the divinity within and act without respect to the divinity and the scriptures, it is like letting down the Divinity. Truly speaking the “Self” is ever effulgent and ever pure. There is no such

thing as letting it down. By our actions we make the light of divinity get locked within. It is like the servant letting the master down.

The third and the fourth quarters of the sloka:

Atamaiva hyatmano bhandur atmaiva ripuratmanaha:

Atma eva (atmaiva): Self only

Hy: because

Atmano: to oneself

Bhandhu: friend

Atma eva: self only

Ripuhu: enemy

Atmanaha: of the Self.

Two contrasting points are brought out in this section:

The first point is: The “Self” only is the friend of the “self.”

We go through the life developing contact with so many people. The life teaches us that none of them are permanent contacts. Either they leave us or we part company with them. It can be due to differences between each other, growing older, developing new contacts or finally the dreaded death. We all need someone to lean on to at times of distress or to experience happiness. We have to shift the supporting pillar from one person to another as we grow older. This is the way of life.

By this way of analysing we can understand that none of the people from the world including our own close family can be called as our permanent friends who would act as “Friend in need is the friend indeed.”

The Atman within is the only true friend who does not desert us. He is our constant companion from birth to death. He cannot be seen but is always ready to be the pillar for us to lean on to. We keep on running round the pillar of divinity within us but when we are exhausted or tired or distressed we should learn to lean on to Him. He will never say no.

On the contrary, the last quarter of the sloka asserts that “self is the enemy of the Self.”

The “self” we have to understand is the “ego” within us. The ego is the enemy in the path of “Self Realisation.” It is not actually the enemy of the Atman. The Atman has no enemies and it does not hate anybody. But, the Atman which is spark of the Paramatman follows the promise of the Paramatman to the mankind. The promise is “Yada yada hi dharmasya” (chapter 4). If we lean on to the Atman within and make Him our sarathi in life, He will help us to protect dharma by rooting our adharma.

The parables from Ramayana and other mythological stories tell us that people like Ravana; Hiranyakashipu hated the Lord and considered Him as their worst enemies. But the Lord did not hate them. He loves all His children. He killed the ego in them and took them to His abode. It is His greatness.

So let us remember that we are responsible for the good things in our life and also the bad things in our life. The role by the others in these events is but secondary. The ascent is always hard and descent is easy. But because it is so easy, there is more scope for hurting oneself in the descent. The need for perfection is within us. We are the architects of our destiny. Every seed by proper care will grow into the tree to which the seed belongs. Mango seed grows to become a mango tree and not a nectarine tree.

Similarly, we have a number of seeds within us. This includes the “God seed.” By proper care and nourishment the “God seed” will grow to be “God on earth.”

It is better to start practicing the following way of life:

If it is a good act, let me do it now itself.

If it is a bad act, let me postpone it for tomorrow. Tomorrow may see the action in a different vein and bad can be turned to good.

Sloka 6

**BHANDUR ATMAATMANAS TASYA YENATMAIVA ATMANA JITAHA
ANATMANASTU SHATRUTVE VARTETATMAIVA SHARUVAT:**

The Self is the friend of the self for him who has conquered himself by the Self. But to him who has not conquered the self, the self itself acts like an enemy.

This sloka is further reiteration of and clarification concerning the message from the previous verse.

The sloka appears as though it is riddled with the word “Atma” so many times. As explained in the previous verse, “Atma” applies both to the “Self” and the “self”. The context it is used should make the point clearer for the student.

Bhandur atma atmanas:

Bhandu: friend.

Atma: the higher Self

Atmanas: the lower self.

The “Self” is the Atman, the divine energy which is specific to each individual. It is only a spark of Parabrahman inside us. It is always the friend of the body (mind and intellect) to which it is attached to. It is constant companion from birth to death. Not just from birth to death but also companion in future cycle of births and deaths. It will be the same spark till the individual loses its identity and merges with the Supreme. Therefore it is not wrong to say that the “Self is the friend of the self.”

But for who and when it is the friend?

The secret word in this sloka is “Tasya”.

Tasya means “for him”.

The Self is the friend of self for “him”.

Who is that “Tasya”?

The second quarter of the sloka makes it clear.

It says:

Yenatmaiva atmanaha jitaha.

Yena: by him

Atmaiva: by the Self

Atmanaha: the (lower) self

Jitaha: conquered.

By him who has conquered himself by the Self.

By him: by the individual

Who has conquered himself: who has conquered his mind (ego)

By the Self: by the Atman within.

It means that each of us have to conquer our minds by the Atman within. As we have reiterated so many times the Atman within is the real guru for us. It is the Krishna, the friend of Arjuna who decides to surrender and ask for guidance on the right path to lead in life.

If we surrender to the Krishna inside us and pray for His guidance He is surely going to lift us up to the top of spiritual Himalaya mountain. We can then experience the “Sat, Chit, Ananda” and live the life of constant Bliss which is “Moksha.”

When is the Atman not a friend of the mind?

Anatmanastu shatrutve vartet atmaiva shatruvat:

Anatmanastu: who has not conquered the self

Atma: the mind (ego)

Shatruvat: acts like an enemy

Shatrutve eva: as an enemy.

The spiritual sadhana is all about realising our true identity and conquer our mind (ego). We should go for war and conquer our mind (ego). This is the meaning of the word “Anatmanastu”.

If we have not conquered our mind:

Our own mind acts like an enemy.

It harms us at the end by its egotistic way of life. This is the meaning of the word “Shatrutve eva.”

The spiritual war between dharmic and adharmic forces is taking place in our own mind. When we do not make use of the Krishna within us (Self), our mind (ego) becomes our enemy and the adharmic forces will destroy us.

The sadhana is to learn the art of making our mind our friend so that it takes the guidance from the intellect (Krishna) within us. This is the “Arjuna” way of life.

On the contrary, if we act like Duryodhana, (the mind not conquered by the Self) who did not get the guidance of Krishna, like Duryodhana we get destroyed.

Let us decide whether we want to be Arjunas or the Duryodhanas of the world and that decision will either take us to Moksha or to our own destruction.

This is the art of dhyana discussed in this chapter.

Sloka 7

**JITATMANAHA PRASHANTASYA PARAMATMA SAMAHITAH
SHEETOSHNA SUKHA DUKHESHU TATHA MANAPAMANAYOH**

The man who has subdued his mind is full of peace. He experiences the Supreme Self under all conditions in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour.

Whether one is a yogi or a bhogi, there is bound to be an influx of impulses from the nature and the life around. The yogi is he who is in search of experiencing the Supreme Self which is “Sat, Chit, Ananda”. True “Ananda” is experienced when one learns to live in peace within himself.

When we analyse the reactions from the intellectual level, we feel proud when we receive praise and disgraced when we face dishonour. This is “manapamanayo” in the sloka.

At the mental level we feel pleasure when we experience love, kindness etc and pain when we experience hatred, cruelty. This is “sukhadukheshu” in this sloka.

At the physical level we feel heat or cold from the climate around and this is “Sheetoshna” used in this sloka.

What we are asked by the Lord is to develop equanimity in reaction at all the three levels. He says “Samahitaha.” Develop the balanced reaction is the advice for a yogi who is practicing the art of meditation.

What is the result of developing this balanced reaction?

The result is experience of/union with “Sat, Chit, Ananda.” The yogi has to learn to live in peace in all circumstances to experience the “Ananda.”

After all “Sat, Chit, Ananda” is the Supreme Self and “Nama, Roopa” is the individual self.

The yogi is practicing to break himself from the attachment to “Nama, Roopa”. To succeed in this effort, he must develop the equanimity in reaction to the “Dwandwas” (opposites) in life. Once this detachment takes place, attachment to “Sat, Chi, Ananda” is the next step in progress at meditation.

This is the lesson for “dhyana Yoga”. Subdue the mind and become a Yogaroodha says the Lord. The first word in this sloka is “Jitatmanaha”. It is victory over the mind. It is the nature of the mind to go through various moods and passions but to overcome this nature of the mind is the training for a dhyana yogi.

The intellect of the yogi who has to succeed in this practice of subduing the mind should be like a huge mountain. Small or large ripples of waves from the ocean (which is the mind bombarded from the impulses received by the sense organs,) should not shake the huge mountain.

Sloka 8

**JNANA VIJNANA TRUPTATMA KUTASTHO VIJITENDRIYAHA
YUKTA ITY UCHYATE YOGEE SAMA LOSHTASHMA KANCHANAHA**

The yogi who is satisfied with knowledge and wisdom, who remains immovable, who has conquered the senses, who looks equally on mud, stone and gold, is said to be harmonised.

Jnana Vijnana truptatma: satisfied with knowledge and wisdom.

As we know knowledge is “Jnana” and wisdom is “Vijnana.”

Theoretical knowledge is Jnana and practical knowledge is Vijnana.

In earlier days of our study we learn Jnana and in higher studies we get Vijnana.

The student who acquires both the theory and practical knowledge of the speciality subject he/she chooses is then a graduate. He will be ready to take up the professional duties and serve the community. Of course, even after taking up professional duties, years of practical experience makes him a specialist in that field of work.

Even in spiritual studies, the seeker must work to get both theoretical and practical knowledge. He should not be satisfied until he acquires practical knowledge. True Vijnana in this sense is perfect “Self Realisation.” For a yogi, this perfect Self realisation brings in “Trupti”. (satisfaction) Content with the understanding and union with the Atman within is “Truptatma.”

This is the meaning of the first quarter of the sloka.

Learn about Truth, dharma and acquire practical knowledge of living the life of Truth and dharma is the Lord's advice to youngsters in the field of spiritual studies. It does not mean that the wisdom is learnt only by practical experience. It can also be learnt by observation of life around and maturity of wisdom. We have been fortunate enough to have so many Puranas and mythological stories to give us examples of rights and wrongs of living as members of a society and thereby helping us to live as useful members of the society.

Kootashta: koota is the iron block used by blacksmith. The blacksmith places the items that need to be modelled on to the block and uses the hammer to get the right shape for the article. All the while the block remains the same and does not undergo any change.

In a similar vein, the perfectly controlled mind should be like the block, says the Lord. Let it receive any number of impulses from the outer world. Use your intellect and hammer those impulses and get them into the shape you want, is His advice.

In spiritual sense, Kutastha is used to refer to the "Atman." Let the atman of the seeker which has become the Jivatma and gets association with the world around and looks for enjoyment from without become firm and steady. Let it not get perturbed by the impulses from the sensual world, says the Lord.

What do you get out of this process, one may ask?

The answer is "Vijitendriyaha."

Indriyaha is senses, jita is victory and vijita is perfect victory.

Achieve perfect victory over the senses, says the Jagadguru. By making use of our intellect in this way we can climb up the spiritual ladder easily. We can learn by both good and bad that happens to us or to the society and make corrections in our reactions to the impulses that reach our mind.

Sama loshtashma kanchanaha: looks equally on mud, stone or gold.

This is the example using the natural resources from nature. Depending on the place one lives and his needs the values for these commodities varies. Anything that is available freely does not fetch high returns. For example water fetches a lot of return in Middle East where there is scarcity of water and petrol fetches a lot of return in the western countries where it is not freely available. A millionaire on a desert is ready to give all he has to get a glass of water.

Every object is a combination of five natural elements. The Jnani looks upon mud, stone and gold as natural elements only.

This is to stop the individual from hoarding on to the object and thereby create artificial scarcity. This is one of the ways the business community increases the price of commodities and make a huge profit for themselves.

The men of Self realisation, (yogaroodha) see only the substratum of "Atman" in all the three and their vision is equal and balanced.

Yukta iti uchyate yogi: yogi is said to be harmonised.

The hallmark of a yogi is "harmony." Harmonious way of living assists in bringing about a peaceful society. The seeker who wants to live in harmony with the contemplation on the Atman within should live this way of life to experience "Sat, Chit, Ananda."

Sloka 9

SUHRUN MITRARYUDASINA MADHYASTHA DWESHYA BHANDUSHU

SADHUSHVAPI CHA PAPESHU SAMA BUDDHIR VISHISHYATE

He who is equal-minded towards good-hearted friends and enemies, the indifferent, the neutrals, the hatefuls, relatives, the righteous and unrighteous, he excels.

Having given us the instructions on how to react to the world of objects in the last verse, we are now given instructions on how to react to the world of men/women. After all, most of our day to day communication is with fellow human beings.

For survival in this world, we need to depend on the society and the nature. There is a need to learn the art of not only receiving from society but also of giving to others. There are many ways of giving back to the society like giving one's time, knowledge, physical efforts, money, food etc. Most important of what one can give back is "Love." There is an ocean of love within each of us but we tap it only superficially and that too for selfish gains. The Lord within us is an ocean of love. This ocean does not go dry. The more we give, that much more is multiplication of stock of love within and it is His grace. There is a strong need in today's world for giving love and compassion to fellow humans and other forms of life.

The first word in this sloka is very important and it is "Suhrut". "Suhrut" is that good-hearted person who gives help in need without expecting any return favours. He does not act like a businessman who looks for profits all the time.

Let us look at the meaning of rest of the words used in this sloka.

Mitra: friend

Arih: enemy

Udasinaha: neutrals, neither a friend nor an enemy.

Madhyastha: arbiter between two parties in dispute

Dveshyaha: haters

Bhanduhu: relatives

Sadhuhu: gentle natured, righteous person.

Papihi: unrighteous.

Sama buddhir vishishyate: The individual who excels, according to the Lord, is he, who is a kind-hearted (suhrut) person who shows "sama Buddhi" (equal mind) towards all the above categories of people. He has equal regard to all types of people he encounters in his daily transactions.

For ordinary mortals it is but natural to show varied reaction at varying levels of social contact and relationship. But here we have the reaction of a "Yogi" who has managed to become "Yogarudha". It is like the view from the top of a mountain. From the peak of a tall mountain, everything at the bottom of the mountain looks the same. He has learnt the art of seeing the same divinity in all. Not only that, he is also aware that the entire life is but a drama staged by the Supreme. For the manager of a stage play, all the actors are the same. He shows the same respect to all the actors because it is the combined action by all the actors that makes the play a successful one. In this life's drama every other person we encounter is another actor and he is playing his role. Expressing the nature of a "Suhrut" towards all is the hallmark of spiritual maturity.

"Drishti" is a Sanskrit word which means "View, vision."

Our vision varies according to the plane of vision.

Accordingly the vision is classified as:

Dehadrishti - viewed at the physical plane

Mano drishti - viewed at the mental plane

Chittadrishti - view at the intellectual plane

Atmadrishti - view from the level of Atman.

The final step is reached when we have conquered our ego. Living in harmony with nature and the world is “sama buddhi” and this quality is to be developed by practice of “Dhyana”. Meditation is not just in simply closing one’s eyes and thinking of the Lord but it is learning the art of seeing the same Lord in all. “Please learn to behave with respect to all” is the advice by the Jagadguru. Let us learn not to depend on how the others conduct towards us. It is our conduct to others more important in our Self-unfoldment.

Sloka 10

**YOGEE YUNJEETA SATATAM ATMANAM RAHASI STHITAH
EKAKEE YATA CHITTATMA NIRASHEER APARIGRAHAHA**

The yogi sitting in a solitary place, alone, self-controlled, without desire, without receiving anything from others, should unite the self with the Atma.

We are now introduced to the method of conducting meditation. This and the following slokas give a detailed description of the method of conducting meditation.

Who should conduct meditation?

The first two words used are “Yogi and yunjeeta”. The seeker who wishes to unite with the Atman within and see the Atman in all is a true “Yogi” in context of this sloka. It is also understood that the seeker has progressed in his/her spiritual education wherein he has understood what is Jnana, Karma (chapters 3, 4, 5).

Yunjeeta: merge with the Atman.

The seeker should develop the art of meditation so that he finally loses his/her ego and merges with the Atman within. It is like salt dissolving in water and losing its identity.

Satatam: “Always.”

Two ways of understanding the meaning of “always.”

One way is to do so every time one sits for meditation. This applies to the early stages of sadhana.

Every time one sits for meditation he should merge his ego with the Atman.

The other way is to be united with the Atman at all times. This is for later stages of progress wherein whatever he is doing in a 24 hour day/ 7days of the week/4 weeks in a month/12 months in a year/every year of his life he should be united with the Atman.

What should be united with the Atman?

Atmaanam: here, it means “The mind.” The mind of the seeker which is the seat of ego should unite with the Atman.

Rahasi sthitaha: “rahasi” means “a solitary place” and “sthitaha” means “Stationed.”

The seeker should be stationed in a solitary place. The yogi practicing meditation is not to receive any admiration from others but to unite with his own Self. In the early stages of practice, the act of dhyana should be in a solitary place. Let me make it clear at the outset that it does not mean that every seeker for meditation should go to a forest for meditation. To assist in this step our elders have recommended having “a prayer room” in every household.

The solitary place is that where there is no disturbance from the outer world and the sense organs will not get an opportunity to get distracted. As we know our sense organs are very fickle and get easily distracted. The mind is still more fickle and it plays with its memory bank every so often and goes day dreaming on other issues.

Of course it would be great to have the peaceful nature all around for meditation. Hence we hear of many saints and tapaswins living in a forest and conducting meditation under the shelter of a tree or in a cave. The bank of the river is another place for solitude.

In the present world and for the average householder this is not practical. Hence, the need for a quiet room in the house that can be used also as the prayer room. Really speaking the prayer room should be in that part of the house where there is least disturbance. It should not be near the entry for visitors to the house, it should not be near the kitchen and dining rooms where the noise and smell from the kitchen disturb the peace.

Ekaki: “alone”. There should not be any other person during meditation. Many a times, where there are a group of people meditating, the practitioners in meditation get distracted by the others. It is hard to stop looking at others who are meditating. In the practice of Bhakti it is recommended to have a group of seekers getting together but for meditation, the seeker has to be alone.

What should the seeker be doing in a solitary place and all alone?

“Yata chittatma”: self-controlled. Here, the word “self” includes the sense organs, the mind and the intellect. The sense organs should be controlled by the mind, the mind by the intellect and the intellect by the inner conscience. Withdraw constantly from disturbances arising from any of these sense organs is the advice to the seeker.

How should he act and react to the outer world?

Two important prerequisites are given. They are:

Nirashee: without desires;

Aparigraha: without receiving anything from others.

“Do not have desires” has been repeated so many times and will be repeated many more times. The distraction during any of the four methods of yoga: karma, Bhakti, Jnana and dhyana will drop the seeker from the heights of yoga achieved. We have learnt also that one should not take the literal meaning of the word “no desires.” It all depends upon the spiritual maturity.

A child in kindergarten and primary school education has to be tempted with rewards to make progress. As the student progresses in his educational career he/she should not have the rewards as the temptation to study. The student should do so out of own volition. The Post-Doctorate student will not have any desires but works for the sake of work.

Similarly, in spiritual education, whatever may be the path taken, the desire to attain Moksha is the first step. Dhyana yoga can be considered as the last of the four methods of yoga and desirelessness is essential prerequisite. Greater the desire to unite with the desired deity by the seeker, greater is the chances of failing to achieve the objective. This is because, in his eagerness to unite, as soon as he feels he has united with the deity, the seeker would immediately open his eyes in elation and comes back to the present world around him.

Aparigraha: not receiving anything. Let us be clear at the outset that anything offered for the bare maintenance of the body may be taken. Minimising the bodily requirements is essential for spiritual progress. The advice is not to receive any gifts from others. The seeker who sits in a solitary place in meditation, day after day, will attract the attention of others. Many people passing by, will out of reverence bring in items of food, clothing etc to the seeker in the solitary place. The mind of the seeker is distracted at the sight of these and develops likes and dislikes for what has been brought. Hence, it is stressed that he should not receive anything.

Sloka 11 + 12

**SHUCHOU DESHE PRATISHTAPYA STHIRAM ASANAM ATMANAHA
NATYUCCHRITAM NAATI NEECHAM CHAILAJINA KUSHOTTARAM**

**TATRAIKAGRAM MANAH KRUTVA YATA CHITTENDRIYAKRIYAHA
UPAVISHYASANE YUNJYAD YOGAM ATMA VISHUDDHYAYE**

Having established on a clean spot, a firm seat, which is neither too high nor too low, covered by cloth, deer skin and holy grass one over the other.

There, having made the mind one-pointed, with the actions of the mind and senses controlled, let him practice yoga for self purification.

What is the purpose of conducting dhyana yoga?

Like the other three yogas, Karma, Bhakti and Jnana, dhyana yoga is also for uniting with the Atman within and the Atman with the Parabrahman. It is to experience the Eternal Bliss and be one with it.

Sloka 11 is about the place one has to sit and sloka 12 is about the control over the mind and senses needed for meditation. The first step in meditation is self-purification. “Atma Vishuddhaye” says the Lord. Nothing is attained without purity of the body, mind and speech, Trikarana Shuddhi, the scriptures declare.

Shuchou deshe: clean spot. The seeker should find a spot which is clean and with clean surroundings. This is simple basic hygiene. Especially in a country like India where there are many mosquitoes and insects it is essential to have a clean spot to meditate upon. Not just that, there should not be any smell from stench and drains. It is to invigorate and elevate the mind to spiritual heights. Siddhah yogis who have mastered the art of meditation can sit and concentrate their mind on meditation in any surroundings.

Pratishtapya: having established (in clean surroundings)

Sthiram asanam atmanaha: established on a firm seat. The seeker should sit comfortably and be established in a suitable posture. We will get the details of the posture to establish in the next sloka.

The time one sits for meditation has to gradually increase from few minutes to many hours in a day and many days of a week. It is therefore necessary to get established in a firm seat. A wobbly seat will distract the mind away from concentration.

Natyucchishtam naati neecham: neither too high nor too low.

The seat one takes up should not be too high from the ground nor too low. Sometimes in meditation one may actually nod off to sleep. When this happens there is a possibility of falling down and get hurt. There is also danger of falling down and injuring during states of unconscious state one reaches during intense meditation. Hence the seat has to be not too high from the ground.

At the same time it is possible for creepy crawly insects to get on to the physical body of the seeker in meditation and hurt him. Also, dampness from the ground would cause health problems.

Chailajina kushottaram: (placing) a cloth, skin and kusa grass one over the other.

This is to keep the seat clean, firm and levelled. Kusa/holy grass is laid on to the floor first and on top of it is laid the deer/tiger skin and a clean cloth. This is advocated to stop the body’s positive energy flowing from the Mooladhara towards the negative energy of the ground.

Kusa grass is to keep the seat warm and preventing the dampness harming the body. The kusa grass is rough to sit on and is prickly. It is also uncomfortable to sit on. Therefore a deer/tiger skin is to be placed on top of it. Finally a clean cloth is placed over it. Even though the deer skin is soft, it is possible to get allergic reaction from it. At the same time sitting directly on animal skin makes the body sweat and the seat becomes uncomfortable to sit on. In the modern day there are many cushions made up of synthetic material that are soft, non allergic and comfortable to sit on. It is not wrong to do so.

We now move on to the next sloka which tells us to have a control over the mind and body.

Taitrakagram manah kritva: make the mind single pointed.

The mind is the band master and if the band master makes a mistake the entire concert is a failure. On one side it is exposed to the outer world through the sense organs and on the opposite side it has the Atman within. There are too many objects in the world outside and they are not constant also. Hence it is not possible to develop single pointed concentration from outside. To get an object of desire (kama) there is a need for single pointed concentration but on getting the object we develop attachment. As we studied already attachment leads to krodha and this in turn leads to self destruction.

It is comparatively easy to develop single pointed concentration on to the objects of the world but they lead finally to ruin of the individual. On the contrary, even though it is difficult to concentrate on the Atman and even though it is only one, it does not lead to destruction but leads to Liberation.

Yata chittendriya kriyaha: controlling the activities of the mind and the senses.

The activities of the sense organs are to send the information about the world outside and that of the mind is to analyse these and make a judgement using the intellectual capacity of reasoning. The mind also is in the habit of recollecting from the stored imprints and acting upon them as needed. The seeker should draw the mind constantly away from attachment to the objects of the world and from the stored vasanas which lead to day dreaming using the memory bank.

The senses should be controlled by the mind. The mind should know what impulses to receive and not to receive from the five sense organs. It is like the picture of the three monkeys. One monkey has kept the eyes closed, the other closed the ears and the third monkey closed the mouth. Speak not, hear not and see not is the message from the picture (of those that are contrary to the sastras.)

Upavishyasane: being seated on the seat,

Yunjat: let him practice

Yogam: the yoga,

Atma Vishuddhaye: for self purification.

The seeker should then proceed to practice the yoga of meditation.

The physical body is cleaned by act of bathing. The mind has to be kept pure by washing off the vasanas and not get distracted by them. It is not just enough to wash the mind but it needs feeding also. The food to be provided is the thought on the Parabrahman, His Leela and His divine qualities.

Sloka 13 + 14

**SAMAM KAYA SHIRAGREEYAM DHARAYAN ACHALAM SHTIRAHA
SAMPREKSHYA NAASIKAGRAM SYAM DISHASCAN AVALOKAYAN**

PRASHAANTATMA VIGATABHIR BRAHMACHARIVRATE STHITAH MANAH SAMYAMYA MACHITTO YUKTA ASEENA MATRARAH:

Let him hold the body, head and neck erect, gazing at the tip of the nose, without looking around,

Let him sit serene-minded, fearless, firm in the vow of celibacy, self-controlled and balanced, thinking of Me, the Supreme Goal.

Samam kaya shiragreyam: the body, head and neck kept erect
Dharayan achalam sthiram: holding it still and steady.

When the head, neck and body are kept erect, the spinal cord is vertical and at right angles to the brain stem. It is said that in this posture the bodily energy flows freely through this column. The spiritual energy is stored along the spinal cord in the vertebral column and the brain and the posture aids in the movement of this energy. By doing so the current of flow is free and it moves unobstructed towards the brain centre called the "Sahasrara." It is important to hold the body still and steady in this posture.

This posture is for the physical fit and healthy and has to be practiced from the days of the life as a youth. It is true that there are either not physically fit due to health related problems or develop diseases in the later stages of their life. The rule of holding the body erect does not apply to those. They can meditate in any posture that they feel comfortable.

The rule of thumb is that the posture should not make the individual all tensed up. It is like the military training. The cadets are asked to stay in attention and then relax. Once can see that the way they are standing relaxed is also a disciplined standing. The same rule applies in spiritual practice of developing a posture to meditate.

Samprekshya naasikagram: fixing the gaze on the tip of his nose.
Syam dishascan avalokayan: not looking around.

The seeker is asked to practice fixing his gaze on the tip of his nose and not look around. The two practiced go hand in hand. One can appreciate this by observing those who are seriously concentrating on reading a book or in writing. Their eyes are small and their gaze is focussed on to the book. Those who are seriously immersed in their studies do not see what is happening around them. Their eyes do not wander freely looking for something different.

Opposite to these are the children in the classroom who are not seriously listening to the teacher but looking for distraction from their surroundings.

Closing the eyes in meditation would make the seeker fall into a state of sleep rather than concentrate on the Atman. Looking around negates the true purpose of meditation.

The perfect example of one who is in deep meditation and not distracted by surroundings is Lord Shiva. He is depicted as sitting in deep meditation and snakes crawl over his body. There is a lesson to learn from this picture. Shiva is so immersed in deep meditation that he is totally not distracted by anything from the surroundings. Even the crawly snake does not disturb him. We should also realise that the snake also does not get threatened by Shiva and hence moves freely over his body.

Sloka 14 is about the attitude of the seeker in meditation.

As the meditation is for attaining union with the Supreme, the seeker should have the following four virtues.

a) Prashaantatma: Peaceful.

It is important to remain peaceful during the period of meditation. All mental agitations have to be brushed aside. Any useful progress in meditation should be accompanied by reduced agitations of the mind. Agitation is an expression of ego which is disturbed. The ego has to be totally destroyed for total success in meditation. It would take many years of one's life or even many human births to attain the final goal. One has to be prepared to accept that the Lord would be compassionate and give him/her an opportunity to continue his spiritual practice in the next birth and give him/her the birth in the surroundings which are beneficial for the continuation of practice that was terminated in the last birth by the inevitable process of physical death. (We will get this promise from Him to the mankind towards the end of this chapter.)

b) Vigata Bheehi: free from fear / fearless.

„Vigata“ is „free“ and „Bheehi“ is „from fear“. Fear comes from so many quarters and distracts the mind of the seeker. Many are of the opinion that meditation is for sanyasis and not for householders. This is a wrong notion. Meditation is a practice that is a must in all the four stages of life. Meditation is not just contemplation on the Lord sitting in a quiet room but it is an art of single-pointed contemplation on the work ahead at any time of the day, at any place and to consider work as „worship.“ Free from the opinion of others on the rights and wrongs of meditation, every individual must practice meditation at least a part of every day.

This is specially so for youth when the peers laugh at what they consider as spiritual practice in the youth of one's life. After all meditation is for Liberation and why fear to take the path that leads to Liberation?

The meditation should not be practiced to achieve a desired wish and approaching the lord for the same. If it is done with that intention there will be a fear whether God will bless and fulfils the wish.

By practicing the meditation in a clean place as suggested, the fear of creepy crawlies will not be there.

Then there is the question of whether one can progress in the path for Liberation by practice of meditation. By having the knowledge of what is Atma and what is Anatma and what are one's duties to their body, family, society and nature the practice of meditation becomes easier.

Having the guidance and blessings of a guru the practice becomes simple and there will be no room for fear.

c) Brahmachari: firm in the vow of celibacy.

This word is understood better if taken in this context.

Celibacy is essential for spiritual life. The body and the mind acquire tremendous spiritual energy by this process.

„Brahmacharya“ means actually living and being in Brahman. Ordinarily the word refers to the control of thoughts and acts concerning sensual pleasures in relation to the physical body. What is needed is lustful thoughts should not be allowed to enter the mind of the aspirant. He should keep the mind and the body pure.

He is a brahmachari who, untouched by lust, is pure as a baby in thought, word and deed.

With this explanation, it would be better to give the meaning to the word as „firm in the vow of chastity.“

d) Manah samyamyā: having controlled the mind
Machchittaha: thinking of Me.

Thus, with total control over body, mind and speech, the seeker should be constantly thinking of the Lord. To be successful in meditation there should not be room for any other thoughts than that of the Atman. The thoughts like the horses pull the chariot of life the way they want and the occupant of the chariot will miss reaching his target in life.

Yuktaha: balanced.

Everything in life has to have a balance. Moderation in whatever we do is the rule of thumb in actions. Even the act of meditation has to have a balance. Regular practice is the key to success in any field of activity and meditation is no exception.

The child has to attend the classes for nearly 8 out of 12 months in a year to get mastery over the subjects taught that year.

Aaseeta: let him sit.
Matparaha: having Me as the Supreme Goal.

It does not mean that one should physically sit thinking of Him and having Him as the supreme goal in life. It is not the physical posture but the posture of the mind. The sincere seeker in dhyana yoga should make his mind sit on the thought of Brahman and not let the senses drag the mind away from reaching the target.

The example of Olympic runner would help the reader to understand this principle. The athlete has to practice for years to win the Olympic gold medal. It needs many years of dedicated practice. He who has the Olympic gold medal as the Supreme Goal, will have to control his senses and put all his efforts in practice to achieve success.

Faith in the Lord, in the scriptures, in the guru and finally faith in oneself are essential for achieving the end result. Success is for he who has total faith (Sradha) and devotion (Bhakti) in his actions, works at getting the knowledge (Jnana) of the same and conducts actions (Karma) accordingly.

Concentration on all these aspects is „Dhyana“.

Sloka 15

**YUNJANNEVAM SADAATMANAM YOGEE NIYATA MANASAHA
SHANTIM NIRVANA PARAMAAM MATSAMSTHAAM ADHIGACHAHATI**

Thus, the self-controlled yogi, always keeping the mind balanced, attains peace abiding in Me which culminates in the highest bliss of Liberation.

The spiritual seekers are in search of „Moksha“ which is „Liberation.“ It is liberation from sorrows of this world. As the sorrows follow the joys of life, it has to be liberation from both joys and sorrows. The mind does not remain in a calm state either in happiness or sorrow. Also we do not know when these joys and sorrows come into our life.

It is therefore necessary first of all to learn the art of self-control.

„The self“ which is the „ego“ is always in search of happiness from one source or other. „Ego boosting“ has become the way of life for majority.

The senses bring in the impulses and the mind analyses the same. By keeping the mind balanced in its reaction to the impulses brought in by the senses and by not letting the mind dwell on the vasanas from the memory bank, there is the opening of gateway to „Peace.“

This has been discussed in the last few verses.

Niyatamanasaha: of controlled mind

Yunjannevam: held in meditation on Atman

Evam: thus

Sadaa: constantly

Atmaanam: the mind

„The yogi, thus constantly controlling the mind holds it in meditation on the Atman,“ is the meaning of the first half of the sloka.

Let us not forget the word „Sadaa“. It has to be a constant effort. Nay, the effort has to culminate in constant control of the mind. While continuing to discharge our „Nitya and Naimittika karmas“ we must keep constant control of the mind and as we progress it has to be effortless control. We should not feel sorry or tired of the efforts we are putting. There is always „light at the end of the tunnel.“

The effort is the price we have to pay.

„Pay for getting what?“

What do we get by this practice?

Shantim: Peace

Nirvana paramam: the highest bliss of Moksha

Matsamsthaam: of My being

Adhigachati: attains.

We attain Peace, says the Lord.

Where is this Peace? It is not a commodity one gets from this world. It is not a business transaction.

„Peace“ is the very nature of the Supreme. He is „Sat, Chit, Ananda“ the Vedas declare. Hence the Lord uses the word „matsamsthaam“.

The Peace is „My Being“ and the seeker would attain that state by meditation, says the Jagadguru.

Moksha is the highest everlasting peace and can only be attained by merging with the Atman within and this is what the sincere seekers of dhyana yoga have to strive for.

Sloka 16

**NATYASNATASTU YOGO'STI NA CHAIKANTAM ANASHNATAHA
NA CHAATI SVAPNA SHEELASYA JAGRATO' NAIVA CHARJUNA.**

O Arjuna, yoga is not possible for him who eats too much or who does not eat at all. Nor, for him who sleeps too much or who does not sleep at all.

This sloka is about moderation in food and sleep.

Why should I show any moderation at all? With a determined mind I can do anything, may be the logical question by some.

Moderation in whatever we do has great benefit. Even the modern day physicians ascertain this truth. Preventive medicine is more than 5000yrs old and not something that has started in the last few hundred years or so. This sloka is a proof of it.

Why specifically point out to eating and sleeping?

Na: not

Atyashnataha: he who eats too much

Asti na: is not

Ekantam: at all

Anasnataha: who does not eat at all

Na: not

Cha: and

Ati swapna sheelasya: of one who sleeps too much

Na eva: not even

Jagrataha: one who is awake

The physical body has to be light and strong to take up meditation as a way of life. Spirituality is closely connected to the state of the body. When one is apparently healthy, he feels confident that he can do anything and achieve anything in life. When striving for Moksha, a healthy body is essential. We cannot foresee what will be our state of health tomorrow. At least by developing balanced way of eating from childhood we can prevent some of the future health problems we may have to face. An unhealthy body is the greatest obstacle for spiritual practice. It disturbs the concentration of the mind.

Eating too much makes one lethargic and it is not good to be lethargic during meditation. Also eating too much makes the mind develop likes and dislikes and on end of one meal it starts looking forward for the next meal. Desire for food is not good but need for food to keep a healthy body is not wrong.

Not eating has its problems too. The natural instinct is to make one feel hungry for food. The mind starts thinking of the food and if this habit is continued the body gets weak and weak body distracts the mind in the sadhana. So, balanced food is essential.

Sick body, by not eating or eating too much is subject to pain and suffering and distracts the mind in its track of spirituality.

A healthy and strong body will make the mind free from bondage to the body and assists in meditation.

So, the answer is to take up the middle path and eat what is essential. It is always a good habit, the learned say, to get up from the table before the mind asks for another helping because it is tasty food. When the stomach is half full it is sensible to drink a glass or two of water and make the stomach three quarters full.

Stop craving and develop sensible eating habits is the advice by the medical profession and the spiritual masters too.

Let us now move to the second aspect of sleep.

Sleep is normal bodily requirement. It is to rejuvenate the bodily organs for the next day. Developing a rhythm of day and night is a good practice.

Sleep as we know is tamasic. But even in tamas there are three types:

Satvic
Rajasic
Tamasic

One of the questions seekers would like to know is “how long should one sleep, how much should one eat, what types of food be eaten?”

There is no hard and fast rule for this. It depends upon each individual and his professional duties. A hard manual labourer needs a large quantity of food and a good sleep of nearly 8-9 hours.

Those with not great physical activity, (students) will benefit from sleeping for 6-8 hrs a day.

The spiritual seekers should learn to sleep for 4-6 hours a day.

It is always sensible to go to bed early and get up early in morning.

To get up just before sunrise is good for health of the mind and the body.

To spend some time on repeating chants/keertans before going to bed would prepare the mind for a Satvic sleep.

Too much of sleep would bring inertia and lack of interest in whatever one does.

Too little sleep would make one weak in course of time.

Let us now complete the commentary by taking up an example.

A string musical instrument needs the string to be in correct tension. The strings should not be too loose or too tight. The music that is produced is of poor quality and the strings can break too.

The body is a musical instrument of one sort. It also brings out music. To bring the divine music, the strings should be of the correct tension. This is obtained by control in eating and sleeping.

Sri Ramakrishna says that what we eat should not heat our body too much and not excite the mind.

Let us learn not to punish our body and mind and at the same time not be lazy too.

Sloka 17

**YUKTAHARA VIHARASYA YUKTA CHESTASYA KARMASU
YUKTA SWAPNAVABODHASYA YOGEE BHAVATI DUKHAHA**

For him who is moderate in food and recreation, moderate in exertion in all actions, moderate in sleep and wakefulness, yoga destroys all pain and suffering.

Emphasis is placed on „Yukta“ which means „Moderation“ in this context.

In a 24 hour a day we spend our time:

Awake and Spend time

on eating and drinking,

on relaxation and

professional activities;

and the rest of the time spend in sleeping.

Yuktahara: moderation in food: we have discussed this in the last verse.

Slokas 8, 9 and 10 of chapter 17 is specifically on the food habits. Food is not only for the body but for the mind also. The mind also needs spiritual food for its development. In spiritual practice mind plays a greater role and it is essential to keep it in right shape.

Yukta viharasya: moderate in recreation.

Recreational activities during day time are also essential. A few moments of recreational activities like taking a stroll in the park, keeping feet up and watching TV or listening to music etc makes us get back to work with greater zeal.

Yukta chestasya karmasu: moderate in actions. Here, „actions“ refer to one’s duties in life, be a student, an office worker, a housewife etc.

In the name of efficiency and production, the 21st century has brought in the new way of making the staff members work in an office for more than 10-12hrs a day. This is along with the incentive of bigger pay packets.

Sooner or later we are going to face a number of problems because of this. Apart from burning out the energy of our young generation this method is stopping the youth of the day from taking up any other activities. Their mental and physical health is going to get damaged. Not only that, the hefty pay packet for some gives more incentive on spending for luxuries which sometime may grow out of proportion. This would also lead to developing habits like drinking, smoking etc.

Yukta swapnavabodhasya: moderation in wakeful state and sleep. „Avabodhasya“ is wakefulness and „Swapna“ is state of sleep. This has also been discussed in the last verse.

What is the benefit of „Moderation“ in all of these activities?
„Destroys pain and suffering“, is the answer.

„Be moderate and avoid excess“ is the command from the Lord. Excessive indulgence in both good and bad is the cause of suffering. The yogi has to strive for self-control and thereby let the body and mind function which will be the greatest asset in achieving union with the Parabrahman. As we know union with Parabrahman is „Bliss“ and real blissful state is „no feeling of pain and sorrow“.

Excessive zeal in the earlier stages of meditation will burn out the energies both physical and spiritual and many will drop out of the practice within a short period of starting meditation.

It is also a fact that many students who burn the midnight oil out of excessive zeal fail miserably as they cannot continue the practice of keeping awake longer hours daily.

Law of nature is moderation and be a „Yukta“ commands the Lord.

The story of „The hare and tortoise“ was the example for us in our childhood as an example for moderation. „Slow and steady“ wins the race is a well known proverb. In our younger days when I was in boy scouts, there was a practice called „Komala Pada“. For covering a distance of a mile, we were taught to walk a few minutes and run a few minutes and we were made to cover the distance in 20minutes.

Sloka 18

**YADA VINIYATAM CHITTAM ATMANY EVA AVATISHTATE
NISPRUHAHA SARVA KAMEBHYO YUKTA ITI UCHYATE TADAA**

When the perfectly controlled mind rests in the Self, free from longing for all enjoyments then it is said that the yogi is united.

After learning the art of moderation as described in the last two verses, we are now given the conditions to be fulfilled to actually unite with the Atman and thereby experience the “Eternal Bliss”.

What are the conditions?

Yada: when
viniyatam chittam: the perfectly controlled
Chittam: mind

“The mind to be totally controlled,” is the first condition. We should look at the mind as the chariot and the horses as the thoughts. The thoughts pull the chariot and the one who knows the art of controlling the horses will be able to reach the final destination.

With reference to the scene of Gitopadesham,
The chariot is the body,
Arjuna, the mind,
Krishna, the intellect,
The reins are the sense organs
And
The horses are “Kama, krodha, lobha and moha”. (desire, anger, greed and delusion.)

By saying that the mind has to be controlled means that the Arjuna’s in the life’s chariot need to control their senses which are dragged into the world by the four passions of desire, anger, greed and delusion.

Thoughts make us move forward in this world and it is necessary to know which type of thoughts we need to entertain and which ones we should not. Towards this, we need guidance from our intellect which in turn has to be resting on the Atman. The intellect resting in the Atman is represented as Krishna in the chariot of Gitopadesham.

This state of total control over the mind is “Mano nasha” (destruction of the mind). The mind as such is not destroyed but the “I” sense (ego) has to be destroyed.

What should such a mind do?
The answer is the second condition to be fulfilled.
“Atmany eva avatishtati”: rests in the Self.

The mind should surrender to the intellect which should surrender to the Atman within. When the intellect which has become the boss over the mind rests in the Atman, it is included that the mind also rests in the Atman. As Atman denotes “Bliss” (Peace within) resting in the Atman means “to remain in a constant state of Bliss.” This is the “Ananda”, the scriptures declare. This is the Eternal Truth declared as “Sat” and the true knowledge of this state is “Chit”. The declaration by the masters is that the true identity of Parabrahman is “Sat, Chit and Ananda” and the seeker should unite with the thought of Eternal Truth and experience the state of “Ananda”.

The last condition to be fulfilled is “Nispruhaha sarva kamebhyo”.
“Nispruhaha” is free from longing,
“Sarva kamebhyo:” from all desires.

As we discussed in the beginning, the thoughts are the desires in the lives and they are the horses. The Lord does not say “Free from desires” but says “Free from longing for desires.”

For example, it is not wrong to have a desire to become a professional but it is wrong to become a professional to fulfil a number of personal desires that are contrary to dharma. It is not wrong to have a desire for “Moksha” but it is wrong to be so selfish in the desire and forget the society and one’s duty to the society.

Let us not forget the word “Sarva kamebhyo”. This is the guhya bhasha (secret word) in the sloka. “Sarva kamebhyo” (all desires) means desires for pleasures in this world and also for the pleasures in the other worlds.

This is true “Tatva Jnana” which is “Knowledge of The Eternal truth.”
Desirelessness (Nispruhaha) is Vasana kshaya,
Control of the mind (chittam viniyatam) is mano nasha and
Atmany evavatishtati (rests in Atman) is tatva jnana.

The mind free from disturbances (both from without and within) can rest in the Atman within and it is true “Dhyana Yoga”. (No disturbances from the impulses sent by the sense organs and no disturbances from the stored vasanas.)

Sloka 19

**YATHA DEEPO NIVATASHO NENGATE SOPAMA SMRUTAA
YOGINO YATA CHITTASYA YUNJATO YOGAM ATMANAHA**

“As a lamp in a windless place does not flicker”, is the comparison of the yogi of controlled mind practicing the yoga of the Self.

In the latter stages of dhyana yoga, the mind of the yogi who has mastered the art remains constantly on the thought of Brahman. His light of knowledge is said to be steady.

This knowledge has been compared to that of a lamp placed in a windless place. When there is no wind such lamp remains steady without any flickering.

Any student of physics knows that the flame actually consists of fast continuous flickering particles (of the matter that is being burnt particle by particle.) Bunsen burner is a perfect example. There is a steady flow of particles through the burner and it makes it possible to have a continuous non-flickering flame used for chemical experiments.

Similarly, the mind of yogi steady in dhyana produces sparks of thoughts on Brahman continuously. There is no room for any other thoughts to enter and contaminate the flow of thoughts. His knowledge is said to be so perfect that the light of knowledge that is shining in him is like the non-flickering lamp. The windows which are the five senses are perfectly controlled and no wind blows from them to disturb the lamp of knowledge.

Sloka 20

**YATRO PARAMATE’ CHITTAM NIRUDDHAM YOGA SEVAYA
YATRA CHAIVATMANATMANA PASHYANNATMANI TUSHYATI**

When the mind rests, restrained by the practice of yoga, and when seeing the Self by the Self, one is delighted in Self.

Yatro paramate' should be read as „yatra uparamate“:

Yatra: where

Uparamate: rests

Chittam: the mind

The first quarter of this verse is „when the mind rests.“

When does the mind rest?

- a) When the mind is not receiving the impulses from the sense organs and
- b) When it does not dwell in the past by using the stored memories.
- c) In deep sleep.

This verse is about the mind when the individual is awake.

One way of not receiving the impulses from sense organs is to shut them by force. This can be achieved by closing the eyes/ears/nostrils, shutting mouth. When one does not want to listen to a particular conversation that is taking place, the steps taken are to put the hands over the ears so that the conversation does not enter through the ears. We all know that it is not possible to do so as the mind is curious to know what is happening around. The mind immediately goes into a state of day dreaming. The same pattern applies to the other sense organs.

This is not about the mind resting totally but about the mind resting from its task of receiving impulses from outside. For dhyana yogi, it is in the task of experiencing the bliss from associating with the Atman within. For the sake of the latter, rest from the former is necessary.

It is like the teacher and the students in the classroom. The teacher would want the children to have attention on what will be taught by him. At that time, the students must give a rest to their mind from entering into the world outside the classroom. The students in the classroom should not nod off to sleep and also not see/hear/smell from outside.

In relation to dhyana yoga, „when the mind rests“ means, the mind not dwelling on the objective world either physically through the sense organs or mentally by making use of the stored memory bank.

Niruddham yoga Sevaya:

Yoga Sevaya: By the practice of yoga

Niruddham: restrained.

This is the second quarter of the verse. It should read as „when the mind is restrained by the practice of yoga“.

The task ahead for the seeker is „contemplation on the Atman within.“ Towards achieving this objective, the seeker has to practice giving rest to the mind from its normal day to day activities. The practice of yoga that has been described in the last few verses should be undertaken by the seeker. The horses (they represent the thoughts) should be restrained by two simultaneous actions. One is by putting the reins on them and the charioteer taking hold of the reins and restraining them accordingly. The second action is to put the blinkers on the horses so that their vision is straight ahead and not distracted by what is on the sides of the road.

Yatra chaivatmanatmanam pashyati:

Yatra cha: where

Atmanaa: by the self

Atmanam: the Self

Pashyati: seeing.

„The „self“ which is the mind, sees „The Self“, the Atman“, is the meaning of the third quarter of the sloka.

It is the mind which is most important organ in the practice of yoga. The atman by association with the mind and intellect has become the „Jivatma“ and perceives the world. It is caught in the web of samsara because of this association. The task for the seeker is to recognise this truth and dissociate the mind from its attachment to the physical world. This can be achieved only when the mind starts seeing the „Self“ within by the practice of yoga.

Atmany tushyati:

Atmany: in the Self

eva: only

Tushyati: is delighted.

Seeing the Self only from within and is delighted.

The secret word in this sloka is „Eva“ which is included in the word „chaivatmanatmanam“. The delight should come from seeing the Atman within only and not from anything else. The seeker should not experience delight from the external physical world but only from the „Self“ within.

Sloka 21

SUKHAM ATYANTIKAM YAT TAD BUDDHI GRAHYAM ATEENDRIYAM VE'TTI YATRA NA CAICAYAM STHITAS CHALATI TATVATAHA

Where established, the yogi knows that bliss which transcends the senses, which is understandable by the purified intellect only and from the experience of the Self does not even move from the reality.

Sukham atyantikam: bliss infinite

yat tad: which, that

“that infinite bliss” is the meaning of the first quarter of the sloka.

Which bliss?

“The bliss one experiences on seeing the Self within” is the bliss in context of this quarter of the sloka.

Buddhi grahyam ateendriyam:

Buddhi: purified intellect

Grahyam: can be grasped

Ateendriyam: transcending the senses.

“That bliss which can be grasped by the purified intellect and which transcends the senses” is the meaning of the second quarter.

The bliss discussed above can only be grasped by the intellect. It is not possible to do so by the senses. One has to transcend the senses to grasp this bliss.

It is important to note the word “buddhi”. “Buddhi” is purified intellect.

The intellect can be Satvic, rajasic or tamasic.

Purified intellect is Satvic,

Egoistic selfish intellect is rajasic

And dull, lazy intellect (clouded by selfishness) is tamasic.

Vetti: knows
Yatra: where
na: not
caivayam: and even this
sthitaha: established
chalati: moves
Tatvataha: from the Reality

“Where established he never moves from the Reality.” Is the meaning of the second half of the sloka.

Once established with that bliss which is the Reality, (by the purified intellect) he who does not move from the Reality experienced is the real knower. He has understood the meaning of the statement by the scholars who say “Jagat mithya Brahma Satya”. (the world is false and the Brahma is the Truth). He has realised that he is not the “ego”.

The first step is to let the ocean of thoughts in the mind remain in a calm state and that the thoughts do not produce any disturbances. Towards this the assistance of the intellect is needed. The reasoning capacity should come into operation and the seeker should transcend the thoughts. Towards this the seeker has to learn the art of bringing out the reasoning capacity, sharpening the same and analyse every thought is the way forwards for the seeker.

What will he get by this practice?
We get the answer for it in the next sloka.

Sloka 22

**YAM LABDHVAA CHAAPARAM LABHAM MANYATE NAADHIKAM TATAHA
YASMIN STHITHO NA DUKHENA GURUNAPIVICHALYATE.**

Which having obtained, he does not think any other gain superior to it. Wherein established, he is not moved even by great sorrow.

Yam labdhvaa: which (having) obtained.

„Having obtained the bliss from experiencing the bliss of union with the Atman within“ is the meaning of the first section of the sloka.

What will such a seeker do after having obtained the bliss?

Cha: and
Aparam: other
Labham: gain
Manyate: thinks
Na: not
Adhikam: greater
Tataha: than that.

The seeker would understand that there is no happiness in this world and the heavenly abodes which is greater than the bliss he has experienced.

„Tataha“ is the guhya bhasha in this sloka. Nothing greater than „That“. The seeker who has started looking for the „Eternal Truth“ which is „Sat, Chit, Ananda“, by process of elimination (N’eti) has

come to realise that „Tat“ (Eternal reality) is within himself, he is it and his body is only „Upadhi“ (vehicle) to experience it.

Yasmin sthitho: in which established

Having the total conviction of the reality, he is firmly established in the union with the Atman within.

What next?

Na: is not

Dukhena: by sorrow

Guruna: heavy

Chaapi: even

Vichalyate: is moved.

He is aware that his physical body is still alive, he has to live in this world till the Lord decides to take him away and he will experience happiness and sorrows in life. He knows that all his vasanas have to be cleared totally. Whenever he experiences pains in life, he would look at them as blessings from the Lord. He would learn to say, „O' Lord, many thanks. You are so merciful. You have taken notice of me and my past actions. By giving the results to my actions from the past (many of which I do not even remember) you have burnt some of the vasanas.“

In this frame of mind he is not moved by major sorrows even. He looks upon his body as shadow and not the real self. Whatever may be the harm done to the shadow does not hurt the body. He who is established in such a state of union with the Atman has no fear from anything in this world and is not hurt by any events in his life.

Sloka 23

**TAM VIDYAD DUKHA SAMYOGA VIYOGAM YOGA SAMNJITAM
SA NISCHAYENA YOKTAVYO YOGO' NIRVINNA CHETASAHA**

Let it be known as yoga, and that yoga which is free from sorrow should be attained by the undespairing and determined mind.

The practice of meditation with determination to unite with the Self and experience the bliss of the Atman is “Yoga”. The end result of union with the Self is also “Yoga”.

In this sloka the Lord is talking about the practice and the end result.

The end result is that frame of mind which does not feel any event in life as sorrowful. In a negative way it also includes “any event that does not produce happiness”. This is because the precursor of pain is happiness.

We all know that it is impossible to live without experiencing pain or sorrow in our lives. The reaction to both the past and the present actions give those results.

The seeker may have taken up to meditation and received the guidance for the same from guru and scriptures but he has not cleared the vasanas from the past. The results of these will continue to present themselves at various stages of the sadhana.

The Lord has said

Sa nischayena: with determination.

Be determined in your efforts and be confident that one day you will achieve the end result, is the advice.

Not just that,

But we are also told:

Yogo'nirvinna chetasaha: (this should be read as: yoga anirvinna chetasaha.)

Anirvinna chetasaha means with un-despondent mind. During the period of experiencing the pains in life, the seeker should not be despondent. He should not be saying or feeling, "I have been so good in my practice, I have left all attachments in life, why is the Lord still making me experience the painful states in my life?"

With un-despondent mind and determined mind the practice of dhyana yoga has to be pursued.

The important word in this sloka is:

Dukha samyoga viyoga:

Dukha: sorrow

Samyoga: union

Viyoga: severance

It means "severance from union with the sorrow."

Really speaking the meaning should be read as follows:

"To detach from attachment that produces pain and sorrow".

As we have discussed so many times in the past we should learn to detach from attachment that produces both happiness and sorrow. The detachment should be at physical, mental and intellectual planes of our existence. "Attach yourself to the Real and learn to bear with the unreal" is the sincere advice to all the seekers. The goal to be achieved by the seeker is to let the mind merge with the Atman and experience Supreme peace and bliss and learn to see the Atman all around in all forms of life and in nature. The Atman is not like a material object that is seen by the eyes, heard by the ears but it can only be experienced by intuition. In this context seeing means "experiencing the Atman".

This is the way to practice yoga by the sincere seeker.

The message to mankind is:

Be determined in the practice of yoga of meditation. Do not despair because of upsets in the path of spiritual progress in your life. You are bound to succeed and see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Arjuna had gone into a state of despondency on thinking about the consequences of war. He is asked to practice meditating on what has been said so far. Dhyana is not just sitting in a jungle detaching from the world but meditating on the teachings of the Lord and incorporating His advice in our daily activities.

Sloka 24 + 25

**SANKALPA PRABHAVAN KAMAANS TYAKTVA SARVAAN ASHESHATAHA
MANASAVAIINDRIYAGRAMAM VINIYAMYA SAMANTATAHA.**

**SANAIH-SANAIH UPARAMED BUDDHYA DHRITI GRIHEETAYA
ATMASAMSTHAM MANAHA KRITVA NA KINCHIDAPAI CHINTAYET.**

Abandoning all desires born of sankalpas completely, restraining the entire group of senses with the mind from all sides,

Slowly and steadily, let him attain quietude, by the intellect held firmly; and fixing the mind in atman, he should not think of anything else.

These two slokas elaborate further on the technique of conducting the dhyana yoga.

In sloka 24 we have been given two techniques to practice.

- a) Abandoning all desires.
- b) Restraining all the senses.

We have discussed several times already about the “desires.” Abandoning all the desires is the most important requisite to experience the bliss of the Atman and hence the subject of desires has come up several times and will continue to be repeated in the chapters to come.

Desire is “Longing for the possession of” is the meaning from the English dictionary. It is the possession of that/those which gives us a feeling of happiness. The senses do their duty of bringing in the impulses from the material world to the mind and it is the law of nature of the sense organs.

The reaction of the mind to what has been brought varies from object to object and individual to individual. In course of time every individual develops his/her own likes and dislikes. The happiness one experiences from the object is individual oriented and varies from person to person. It applies to any items like food, jewellery, clothing, partner in life, housing etc.

The mind repeatedly wishing for an object/desired result makes that “the object of desire” for each individual. In our scriptures we use the word “Sankalpa”.

“Sankalpa” means “resolve.”

“Sankalpa prabhavaan kamaan”: desires born of sankalpa.

Tyaktva sarvaan: abandon all.

Every seeker who is practicing dhyana yoga is asked to drop all “sankalpas.”

Not just abandoning but an adjective is added to it. It is “Aveshataha”. “Sesha” means “that which remains.” “Avesha” means “nothing remaining.”

“Do not have any remains of desires left in you” is the advice for the seeker.

This word “avesha” is the important guhya bhasha to understand. All the desires must be abandoned. Even the desire to attain Moksha must be abandoned. There should not be any trace of likes and dislikes.

In our daily activities we conduct both voluntary and involuntary actions. We cannot survive without conducting actions. Breathing, circulation, digestion are some of the examples of involuntary actions. We all wish to live and towards this our autonomic nervous system has been triggered very early in our life and we continue to conduct these actions. They are not desire triggered daily actions anymore.

Similarly towards the task of experiencing the Bliss we should learn to conduct actions as per the Lord’s instructions and make those as involuntary actions too.

In days gone by they used to say that there should not be any trace of enemy allowed to survive. They felt that it would give opportunity for the enemy forces to recoup and get stronger once more.

In the present day context we can say that there should not be any trace of fire left. A spark of fire allowed to remain can turn into great fire and some of the forest fires of the recent days can be traced to this cause.

The physicians of the day would like to see that there is no trace of disease left and the patients get totally cured.

Similarly we should practice sincerely, faithfully and with determination so that there should not be any trace of desires left in us. This is because the desires may become the cause for our downfall in the spiritual path.

All desires include both good and bad desires including the desire to attain Moksha.

The second half of sloka 24 tells us:

Manasa: with the mind

Eva: only

Indriyagramam: the group of senses

Samantataha: on all sides

Vinyamya: restraining.

“restraining the entire group of senses with the mind only from all sides,”

The group of senses: ears, eyes, nose, tongue and the skin are the five sense organs.

On all sides: from every angle of reception for each of the sense organs

Restraining: the practice of dhyana yoga implies restraint,

This restraint has to be: “entire group of senses”

Finally this has to be:

Manasa eva: with the mind only. This is the guhya bhasha in this sloka. All the senses send in the impulses to the mind and this is the organ that should have a total control over all the impulses received from every angle of every sense organ.

Going back to the example of the chariot:

The horses held by the reins and with the blinkers on (senses controlled) should be under the firm control of the mind. (charioteer: the mind under the control of the intellect).

It is therefore said that one should control the senses by the purity of the mind acquired through discrimination and dispassion.

The question asked by the seekers is “How to control the mind”?

This is answered in the next sloka 25:

Sanaih sanaih: slowly and steadily.

Upameva: attain quietude.

Buddhaya: with the intellect

Dhriti griheetaya: held firmly

The first half of the sloka says,

Slowly and steadily, attain the quietude with the intellect held firmly,

What should be held?

Manaha: of the mind.

The purpose of dhyana is to develop the art of keeping the mind calm. Apart from the time when one is in deep sleep, it is very hard to keep the mind calm. This is because of the input of a number of impulses from the sense organs and the store house of memories within the mind.

Forcible control of the mind is harmful to the body. Its control has to be slow and steady. Regular practice of dhyana over several months/years would be needed to achieve the required state of calmness of the mind.

Like the horses on the chariot, good charioteer is he who uses the reins to gradually slow down the speed of horses. If not, sudden tension on the reins would topple the chariot and injure the passengers.

One should not apply breaks suddenly while driving a car as it leads to many accidents. The Highway Code recommends safe breaking distance in relation to the speed of driving. The faster one is driving a car, longer the time is needed to bring it to a halt without any injury to the occupants of the car.

To get the attention of the children in the classroom by the teacher it takes several years of training from kindergarten days to high school days.

The thoughts in our mind are always running so fast especially when we want to sit for meditation. The process of controlling the thoughts has to be slow and steady is the advice by the teacher.

The control has to be undertaken by the mind only and the intellect has to guide the mind towards achieving the success. The intellect has to be very firm in its control of the mind.

The perfect example is to be learnt from observing the soldiers in the army. The junior cadets take command from their senior officers and learn to develop perfect discipline. The training makes the cadets good soldiers who can show the benefit of disciplined training of their mind at times of war.

Atmasamstham: placed in the Self

Manaha: the mind

Kritva: having made

Na: is not

Kinchit: anything

Api: even

Chintayet: let him think

The second half of the sloka means “let the mind be placed in the Self and not think of anything else”.

The seeker is asked to concentrate on the Atman within and nothing else. By constant practice for some part of the day, every day, in course of time he would succeed.

Dhyana as we know is oneness with the object of meditation and in dhyana yoga it is meditation on the Atman. It is to experience the Peace from within. As the seeker experiences the peace, he should attempt to keep his mind in that state longer and longer. It should be carried on day after day, every day of his life. Slow and steady wins the race eventually.

Patience is the virtue of a true dhyana yogi.

Sloka 26

**YATO YATO NISCHARATI MANAS CHANCHALAM ASTHIRAM
TATAS-TATO NIYAMAITAD ATMANY EVA VASHAM NAYET:**

Towards whatsoever sense-objects the moving and unsteady mind wanders away, from them all it should be withdrawn and fixed in the Atman.

We learnt from the last sloka that the process of controlling the mind has to be slow and steady. There might be some who would misunderstand the sloka. Thinking that, “Anyway, it is going to be a long

time to succeed in experiencing the Peace within”, they might lapse into mediocrity. This sloka is to correct such a misunderstanding.

The Lord says,
Yato yato: from whatever the cause
Nischarati: wanders away
Manas: the mind
Chanchalam: moving/fickle
Asthiram: unsteady.

“From whatever cause the fickle/moving unsteady mind wanders away” (the first half of the sloka).

It is true that the mind is fickle and unsteady. Whenever we try to concentrate on something our mind tends to slip off from concentration by wandering on to some other different object.

What should be done when it wanders away?
The most important thing is to realise that it has wandered away. Then,

Tatas-tato: from that
Niyamya: having restrained
Yetad: this
Atmany: in the Self
Eva: alone
Vasham: control
Nayet: bring.

It should be restrained from that and should be fixed in the Atman alone. “Keep a constant vigil on the mind by the intellect and control the same. As soon as it slips off from concentration, bring it back to concentrate on the Atman,” we are told. We have to do it again and again and be aware that it would take a long time to bring a perfect control over the mind.

There are two types of people in this world, the ignorant and the non-ignorant. In spiritual terms, ignorant are those who identify themselves with the mind. Such people do not understand how the mind is wandering away.

The non-ignorant are those who are aware of the instrument of intellect in their body and try to bring it to action at all times. They start questioning their thoughts and learn the art of correcting them. Towards this there is a need for a guide and teacher and a desire to learn.

We can understand this by taking the example of the teacher and students in the class-room. In the earlier term and in the earlier years of education, it is natural for the mind of the young students to wander away while listening to the teacher. Often the teacher uses the word “Attention”. Sometimes he shouts loudly and several times “attention” to bring the students back to listening to the lessons.

In the latter term and in senior classes, the word “attention” is not used often as the students having realised the importance of lessons learn the art of controlling their wandering mind.

The same law of reasoning applies to those who take up to dhyana yoga. In the earlier days they should develop the vigil over their mind by the intellect and control it. Once they master the art of concentration their mind does not slip off from the concentration on the Atman. Having realised the fleeting nature of happiness from the objects of the world they move on to experience the everlasting peace from within.

Control over the mind so that it does not open its Pandora's box of past memories is the lesson for the seekers of dhyana yoga.

Sloka 27

**PRASHANTA MANASAM HY ENAM YOGINAAM SUKHAM UTTAMAM
UPAITI SHANTA RAJASRAM BRAHMABHUTAM AKALMASHAM.**

To this yogi, whose mind is quiet and peaceful, of subdued rajas, who has become Brahman, free from evil, comes Supreme Bliss.

The seeker who has practiced the steps enumerated in the last few slokas has managed to remain peaceful and his mind is kept quiet.

There are three levels in spiritual progress.

A) To get up from the state of sleep that includes laziness, indolence etc. He should come out of his tamasic nature. Get up from bed, see the beautiful world, see the variety and experience the same. Start becoming active is the first step to take. Move from tamas to rajas.

B) In the process of experiencing the world and enjoying the world, the seeker would go through the pains/sorrows, victory/defeat and gains/ losses. He experiences happiness and sorrow at different stages in his life. After analysing the reason for these varied reactions by the study of the sacred texts, blessings of the guru he would have to subdue the rajasic tendency. He has to stop adding more vasanas into his memory bank. (keep mind quiet) He has to move up to the next stage of satva.

C) After moving to higher and higher stages of rajas, he would reach the state of satva. (purity) The mind not only remains quiet but is also peaceful. He is now ready to become one with the object of meditation, ie: Brahman.

The important word in this sloka is "Akalmasham".

"Kalsmasha" is dirt and "akalmasha" is free from dirt. In this context it refers to the evil tendencies of six dreaded enemies kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya.

We can understand it by the following example.

We move into a new house of residence. What do we do first?

The house would be dirty to start off.

The new owner has to clean the house from top to bottom before he moves in.

He is happy to stay in a clean and spotless house.

Soon, he would bring in many things that clutter the house and also dirt as such accumulates. If he does not on a regular basis clean the house he would get health problems also. All of these would make him unhappy.

If by constantly keeping in mind this scenario and as recommended by the elders, he maintains regular cleaning habits and does not clutter the house, he would remain peaceful and contented in the house.

Let us now revert back to our body.

It is like the house we moved in. The jivatman has taken a new body. It will have the previous (Sanchita, past) vasanas. We need to start clearing the mind of the accumulated vasanas.

In the process we should not bring in new vasanas (present).

If we do not clear the past vasanas and keep on adding more vasanas, our future (agami) will be painful. We cannot be in peace. We cannot be happy.

If we follow the path of dhyana and keep the mind quiet and peaceful, our tomorrow will be happy and we will be fit to attain union with the Parabrahman.

Prashanta Manasam: of tranquil mind
Shanta rajasam: of subdued rajas
Brahma bhutam: becoming one with the Brahman
Akalmasham: free from dirt
Enam yoginaam: to that yogi
Uttamam: supreme
Sukham: joy
Upaitihi: indeed

To such a yogi of tranquil mind, of subdued rajas, becoming one with Brahman (by the practice of dhyana yoga), freed from dirt/evil, indeed comes the Supreme Joy.

Sloka 28

**YUNJANNEVA SADATMANAM YOGEE VIGATA KALMASHAHA
SUKHENA BRAHMA SAMSPARSHAM ATYANTAM SUKHAM ASHUNUTE**

Thus, the yogi free from evil, practicing yoga always attains easily the highest bliss resulting from contact with Brahman.

This sloka is just another picture on the canvas depicting the same scenario but with few touches added to it with the paint brush.

Evam: thus
Sadaa: always
Atmanam: the mind
Yunjan: uniting with the Atman (dhyana yoga)
Vigatakalmashaha: free from evil (impurity)

Always keep the mind united with the atman by dhyana yoga and keep the mind free from impurity.

The word “sadaa” is the key word in this sloka. In whatever way we are engaged in the day, let us learn to have total concentration on the work and consider the work as dedication to the Lord. After all every manifestation of life is Lord in some form or other.

After all what is “dedication”? According to the English dictionary, it means, “to give oneself totally to a worthy cause.” Not bringing selfish desires as the motive for work and considering the work as a service to the society/nature, the work becomes a dedicated act. When there is no selfishness in the act, it becomes free from impurity (vigata kalmashaha).

Yogee: the yogi
Sukhena: easily
Brahma samsparsham: realisation of Brahman
Atyantam: ever lasting/without an end.
Sukham: happiness
Ashnute: attains.

Such a yogi easily realises Brahman and attains infinite happiness.

The practice may feel difficult in the earlier stages and may take several years or even several births to experience the end result. But that yogi who is immersed in the spirit of yoga does not feel it to be a hard practice and enjoys every minute of the dhyana yoga.

Brahman is infinite bliss and the yogi practicing thus experiences the bliss. All the experiences of happiness by contact with the objects in the material world have a beginning and an end. The experience of happiness that is ever lasting is “atyantam” and this is only possible by “Brahma samsparsham” which is “realisation of Brahman.”

We are given two steps in this sloka to attain Brahman:
They are:

The mind has to be:

- free from impurity/selfish thoughts and tendencies;
- brought to dwell in Atman by the practice of dhyana yoga.

Free from evil is purity of mind, body and speech.
Practice of dhyana is “action/karma.”

Purity and practice are the two steps to experience and unite with the Supreme.

Sloka 29

SARVA BHOOTASTHAM ATMANAM SARVA BHOOTANI CHAATMANI IKSHATE' YOGA YUKTATMA SARVATRA SAMADARSHANAHA

The yogi harmonised in yoga sees the Self in all beings, and all beings in Me (Self). He sees the same everywhere.

Yoga yuktatma: he, who is harmonised in yoga.

Sarva Bhootastham: existing in all beings

Atmanam: the Self

Ikshate': sees

Sarva bhootani: all beings

Chatmani (atmaani cha): and in the Self.

The purpose of yoga is to unite with the Supreme. The one who has achieved this unity and remains harmonised with the Supreme at all times is “Yoga yuktatma.”

What does he see everywhere and how does he perceive the Lord?
This is answered in this sloka.

He sees the Self in all beings, in all forms of life, in all the varied manifestation of nature.
He sees the entire manifold universe in the Supreme Parabrahman. He sees the Lord in the form of Vishwa Roopa.

Let us understand this clearly.

“The Self” referred to here is “Sat, Chit, Ananda” aspect of the Supreme without “Nama, Roopa”. It is the Nirakara, Nirguna aspect of the Parabrahman. He does not see the external qualities of the individuals around and does not see them as individuals with name and form. Of course as he has to live in this world he would be identifying the individuals with names and forms but gives more

importance to the Self within them and respects the same. He considers that each individual is one form of representation of the Divine on earth for the sole purpose of demonstrating the various qualities both divine and asuric that are in existence in this world around. He will fulfil his role on the stage play in which he is but an actor with a specific role. But he does not let the role get to his head and boost his ego. Even in the animal and plant life, he sees the existence of the divine energy.

His vision of the Lord is that of Vishwa Roopa, he sees all forms of life in this universe within the Supreme.

This understanding makes him develop:

Sarvatra: everywhere

Samadarshanaha: seeing the same (Atman).

He lives in the total bliss of Sat, Chit, Ananda.

He recognises the manifold world as a projection of the Supreme. He only sees the “Eternal Truth” (divine energy) in all.

When one sees the life as man, woman, animal etc it is called as “Deha Drishti”, vision of the external features of the body.

When in the same person he sees father, mother, sister, teacher etc it is “mano drishti.”

Finally by maturity, through the practice of yoga he learns to see the Atman everywhere, it is “Sarva Atma Drishti.”

The guhya bhasha in this sloka is “Pashyati”. Even though the word means “sees”, it is not the seeing with the sense organs but with the intellectual eye of wisdom. He perceives the Supreme and experiences the Supreme everywhere. As the Supreme is bliss, he experiences bliss everywhere. As the Supreme is the “Sat” he sees the eternal truth everywhere.

To receive the grace of the Lord, let us learn to get the spiritual knowledge, be absolutely pure and develop equal vision.

Sloka 30

**YO MAAM PASHYATI SARVATRA SARVAM CHA MAYI PASHYATI
TASYAHAM NA PRANASHYAPI SA CHA ME’ NA PRANASHYATI.**

He who sees Me everywhere, and who sees everything in Me, he never gets separated from Me and I do not get separated from him.

Yo maam: who, Me

Pashyati: sees

Sarvatra: everywhere

Sarvam: everything

Cha: and

Mayi: in Me

Pashyati: sees.

“He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me” is the meaning of the first half of the sloka. It is reiteration of the meaning of the previous sloka.

Sri Krishna has used the word “Me” three times and “I” once in this sloka. This “Me and I” are different to the “Me, Mine, I and My” used by Arjuna in the first chapter of the Gita. Whereas those words used by Arjuna represented his “ego” in this sloka the words represent “Sat, Chit, Ananda”

(Truth, Knowledge and Bliss) of Nirguna, Nirakara Brahman (formless and without qualities) and not Sri Krishna, son of Devaki, Vasudeva, the cow herd boy.

“He” in this context refers to the yogi who has developed the equal vision and sees the Lord everywhere and everything in the Lord.

The guhya basha in this sloka is “Pashyati”. Literally it means “sees”. In the spiritual context it means “who sees with his intellectual eye of wisdom that transcends the mind and the senses.”

When I see a fruit, the difference between baby who sees the fruit and me is that I know all about that fruit. Similarly when I see a snake I know about it and its bite may be poisonous and lethal. The difference in vision of the baby and me is that the baby can see with the physical eye whereas I see it with my understanding of the same. Likewise, when the individual sees the Lord everywhere in all forms of life and sees all in the Lord he is called a ”Yogi” who has succeeded in his efforts to unite with the “Eternal truth.”

What happens to such a yogi is answered in the second half of the sloka.

Tasya: of him

Aham: Me, I

Na: not

Pranashyami: perish/vanish/separated

Sa: he

Cha: and

Me: Me

Na: not

Pranshyati: vanishes/separated/perishes

“He never gets separated from Me and I do not get separated from him” says the Lord in the second half of the sloka.

We have to take it as Lord’s grace on such a yogi. The Lord has no partiality and does not show differentiation due to religion, sex or creed. His grace is bestowed on those who develop such great universal vision and have no trace of “ego” left in their thoughts/actions/speech.

This vision of “seeing the Lord everywhere and all in the Lord” is known in Vedantic terms as “Sarvatra Sama Drishiti” (equal vision in all). Some others say “Sarvam Vishnumayam jagat” (the entire universe is Vishnu and His glory.) Ishavasya Upanisad says “Isavasyam idam sarvam” which means “everything in the universe is pervaded or clothed by the Lord.” The vision is same in all these statements.

Sloka 31

**SARVA BHOOTASTHITAM YO MAAM BHAJATY EKAM ASTHITAH
SARVATHA VARTAMANO’PI SA YOGEE MAYI VARTATE**

He who worships Me abiding in all beings and who is established in unity, that yogi abides in Me whatever be his mode of action.

Sarva bhootasthitam: abiding in all beings

Yo (read as yah): who

Maam: Me

Bhajati: worships

Ekatvam: in unity
Asthitaha: established.

The first half of the sloka says “He, who worships Me abiding in all beings and who is established in unity.”

“He” refers to the yogi who is practicing dhyana yoga as described so far in this chapter. He should do so with the clear understanding that the Lord abides in all beings. The Lord has stressed on this point already. We have been told that the seeker has to be established “in unity in diversity.” Manifestation of life in the universe is diverse but the essential life principle, “Divine Energy” is the same in all.

The important word in this sloka is “Bhajati”. Those who believe in the God principle do conduct worship of the Lord. The method of worship may vary but the act of worship is common to all. The understanding of worship is not clear to many. Majority consider the ritual act of worship as true worship of the deity of their choice.

The act of worship is to please the Lord so that he would bestow His grace on the worshipper. It is impossible to ritually worship the Lord who is abiding in all beings. We can understand by taking the example of our own physical body. The body has so many different parts each doing its specific role to keep the body healthy and they all work in unity. This unity is both in thought and action.

If each of us would conduct the work on this principle the universe would be the happiest place to live and the Lord will be pleased to see that all His creation is happy. This should be the way of worship referred to in this sloka. “Work is worship” and the yogi has to worship the Lord in this spirit.

This point is made clear in the second half of the sloka.

Sarvatha: in every way
Vartamanaha: remaining
Api: even
Mayi: in Me
Vartate: abides.

“Abides in Me in whatever way he is acting”, we are told.

“Bhoota” is past, “Bhavishyat” is future and “Vartamana” is present. “Whatever we are doing now” (present) has to be as per the principle brought out in the first half of the sloka.

We can interpret it as though the reference is to all the four castes of people without differentiation into Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vysya and Sudra. Any one of the four castes of people can take up to meditation in this spirit of “Work is worship” but the work has to be in the spirit of “dedication to the Lord.”

Or it would be read also as, “Whatever one is doing now” which refers to “Jnana, Bhakti, Karma, Dhyana”. (Study of spiritual science, act of devotion, work and meditation.) Any one of the four ways of yoga are acceptable to the Lord provided one learns to see the Lord in all, strives for universal welfare and does not harm others. Love all, be kind and friendly to all and such a devotee is the most beloved of Me says the Lord in chapter 12 which deals specifically on worship. In this sloka instead He says, “That yogi abides in Me, whatever be his mode of action”. Service to the society is worship of the Lord.

Like the mariner’s compass whose needle is always pointing to the north, the mind of the yogi has to be fixed on the Atman (present in all) whatever may be his mode of action at any time in any particular day.

Sloka 32

**ATMAUPAMYENA SARVATRA SAMAM PASHYANTI YO'RJUNA
SUKHAM VAA YADI DUKHAM SA YOGEE PARAMO MATAHA.**

He who judges pleasure or pain everywhere by the same standard as he applies to himself, that yogi is considered to be the highest.

The theory of universal love and compassion is the theme of this sloka.

Atmoupanyena: like to his own self

Sarvatra: everywhere

Samam: equal

Pashyanti: sees

“He who sees equally everywhere like his own self”

In this sloka the emphasis is on reaction of the individual to the events in day to day's life. Each one of us goes through so many events every day of our life and experiences the results of those events. Some results/events make us feel happy and others bring sorrow.

Sukham: happiness

Vaa: or

Dukham: sorrow

How do we react to the pleasure, pains/sorrows of others?

“Others” is a broad word and encompasses the world around. The emphasis of the Lord is on “Universe” as one unit.

Normally we include close family and friends/pets in the circle nearest to us and they become one unit. Then in order come:

Relatives, colleagues, people in our street, town, district, county, state, country and so on and so forth.

We develop a yard stick in relation to the reaction to pains and pleasures. That yardstick becomes a standard of measure of our reaction. The reaction to the pleasures and pains of our nearest and dearest are almost as near to what we experience ourselves.

He who applies the same yardstick to all the life on earth is the highest according to the Lord.

He says: “Sa yogee paramo mataha.”

“That yogi is the highest, (paramo) it is my opinion (mataha)”.

One can see that the Lord is emphasising on universal love and affection. This is because the entire universe is His creation. He is both the father and mother of all. As a truly loving parent He feels for all His children.

It is up to us to look upon others as our brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts etc and show the same love and affection as we do for ourselves and our close family, friends etc.

Dhyana yoga is not just meditation but meditation in the form of universal love and affection to one and all. “Let your feeling of the happiness/sorrow of others be the same as your reaction to those events in your life” is the advice to mankind.

The pangs of hunger, bereavement etc of other people should be of the same nature as his own self. It not only includes humans but other forms of life too. We can say “ahimsa and karuna” are most dear to

our Lord. “Love others as you love yourself and feel for others as you feel for yourself” and you will be most dear to Me, says the master.

Sloka 33

Arjuna Uvacha

YO’YAM YOGASTAVA PROKTAHA MADHUSUDHANA

ETASYAHAM NA PASHYAMI CHANCHALATVAAT STHITIM STHIRAAM.

Arjuna said

O Madhusudhana, this dhyana yoga taught by you and attainable by equality of the mind, I am not able to see on account of unsteadiness of mind.

Yo: which

Yam: this

Yogas: the yoga

Tava: by you

Proktam: said

Samyena: attainable by equanimity of the mind

Madhusudhana: slayer of (the demon) Madhu

“O slayer of the demon Madhu, which, this yoga said by you and attainable by the equanimity of the mind” is the meaning of the first half of the sloka.

Arjuna has interrupted the teaching to express a concern of his. His doubt is about the capacity to develop equanimity of the mind. He is referring to the subject of dhyana taught by Sri Krishna, so elaborately so far.

By addressing Krishna as Madhusudhana, Arjuna is indirectly saying, “O Lord, you are an extremely competent warrior and killed the demon Madhu who was so powerful and full of magic tricks. I am sure you will be able to kill my ignorance which like Madhu is playing tricks on my mind and preventing me from clearly understanding what you have taught so far.”

He says,

Etasyam: of this (Yoga)

Aham: I

Na pashyami: am not able to see

“I am not able to clearly understand your teaching”,

And continues by trying to say why he thinks he is unable to understand,

Chanchalatvaat: on account of unsteadiness of the mind

Sthitim: state

Sthiraam: firm

“Any stability for it on account of unsteadiness of the mind.” is the meaning of the last quarter of the sloka.

“The subject matter taught by the teacher is not stably retained in the mind because of the nature of the mind which is unstable,” Arjuna confesses his weakness.

Through this statement, poet sage Veda Vyasa is expressing the concern of majority of us who have got this weakness inherent in us. Most of our minds are unstable. We get easily distracted. We cannot keep our concentration steadily on any one thing at any one time. The object of concentration cannot become clear unless the unsteady mind can be retained on the subject in question which is “Meditation on the Atman.” But, alas, like monkeys, our mind jumps from one thought to another so fast and dhyana is not an easy option.

Arjuna wants guidance on overcoming this problem and expresses this concern more vividly in the next sloka.

Sloka 34

**CHANCHALAM HI MANAH KRISHNA PRAMATHI BALAVAD DHRUDAM
TASYAHAM NIGRAHAM MANYE VAYORIVA SUDUSHKARAM.**

O Krishna, the mind verily is restless, turbulent, strong and unyielding. I think it is as difficult to control as the wind.

In continuation of his doubts/inadequacies Arjuna brings out four attributes of the mind. They are:

Chanchalam: restless

Pramathi: turbulent

Balavad: strong

Dhrudam: firm, unyielding.

Therefore he says:

Tasya: of it (mind)

Nigraham: control

Vayoriva: like the wind

Sudhushkaram: very difficult.

He adds the word:

Manye’: I consider/I think.

The subject of dhyana yoga is to teach how to keep the mind firm and steady on the thought of the Atman. By the time one decides to take up this path, he/she would have gone through so many births and many years of the present life. In that process one would have fed the mind with a number of worldly things and made it strong in relation to the association with the objective world. It is difficult to change its path and concentrate on to the Atman within.

The seeker would experience severe restlessness in his attempts to remain in continuous meditation. The stored vasanas are like the objects kept in a large trunk. The trunk is so full and its contents are like spring trying to spring out at every opportunity. On top of that the input of impulses from sense organs adds to the contents of the trunk which is the store house. It defies all attempts to bring it under control. The interest constantly shifts from one object to the other. Hence the use of adjectives “chanchalam and dushkaram.”

We all know how strong the wind is. Gale force winds are so strong and cause great havoc. All attempts by man to control such forces are futile. Hence the Lord has used the word “Vayo’riva”. “Dushkaram” means “difficult” and “sudushkaram” is “extremely difficult.” We all know the idiom “The lazy mind is a devil’s workshop” and Arjuna’s concern brings out the true meaning of this idiom.

Arjuna was an excellent student and hence Krishna selected him to receive the teaching. We can understand it by the words he has used and must learn the ways to react with our teachers.

He says:

Aham Manyate': I think.

He admits to his position of ignorance and so says "I think so". He is getting the upadesha from the master and is on a lower platform to that of the teacher. The humble nature of Arjuna is brought out by this word. Any sincere seeker has to develop this quality if he wants to make any progress in his efforts to take up the study of the sacred text and implement the teachings in his life.

It is interesting to know another meaning of the word "Krishna" which fits in with the title for this chapter "Dhyana Yoga."

"Krish" means "to Plough and process."

"na" means "The Lord of".

The teachings of Krishna are to assist the seeker in taming and controlling the mind. Krishna is the Lord who guides us to plough and process the mind.

Sloka 35

Sri Bhagawan Uvacha

**ASAMSHAYAM MAHBABHO' DURNIGRAHAM CHALAM
ABHYASENA TU KOUNTEYA VAIRAGYENA CHA GRUHYATE.**

The Lord said

O Mahabaho, doubtless the mind is restless and difficult to control. But by practice, O son of Kunti, and by dispassion it is controlled.

Sri Krishna readily agrees with His disciple's statement. He confirms that the mind is restless and difficult to control.

Mahabaho' means "mighty armed." Arjuna was a powerful well trained warrior who could face a large powerful army of soldiers and win the fight. Physically he was strong but alas he could not control the forces in his own mind. Krishna wants him to become a mental Mahabahu and fight the army of enemy forces in his own mind that are hindering the spiritual progress.

Nigraham: difficult to control. Nigraha is control and durnigraha is impossible to control.

A true warrior does not run away on seeing the strength of the enemy forces but with the advice from his ministers and commander-in-chief finds way to combat the enemy forces. The test to find the power of the true warrior is in his capacity to overcome the toughest obstacles in the battle.

Sri Krishna, as a teacher and guide has therefore given the means to overcome the problem. In a nutshell he gives two methods to control the powerful tendencies of the mind. They are:

Abhyasena: by practice

Vairagyena: by dispassion.

By these two methods the mind can be:

Gruhyate: is restrained/controlled.

Let us analyse the word “Abhyasa.” In simple words it means “Practice.” How does it apply to the mind?

The mind is a powerful instrument of ours. The impulses received and analysed by the mind about the objective world makes the mind develop likes and dislikes. These become the precursors of our actions and indirectly we develop a certain nature. Our nature is nothing but the sum total of our habits. We have given in to the demands of our mind from childhood and developed so many habits, some good and some bad. Abhyasa is an attempt to change our nature.

We can take the example of sportsmen around the world. They are different from others in that they develop a number of good disciplines in their life. As part of their training they change their habits and practice with a strict regime of discipline. Eventually some of them become great sportsmen and win medals in championship games/sports.

By sowing the seeds of good habits and nurturing the seeds sown with love and affection one can gradually change his/her nature. The parents of the child are good examples. Through several years of love and dedication they change the restless mind of their child so that their child can become a member of the society he/she lives in. A spiritual guide/guru could do miracles in assisting the disciple to change the habits and develop capacity to meditate on the Atman.

As parents if we can make our children get up early, brush the teeth, wash and pray and develop that into a habit. Later on it should become a way of life for the child when he/she grows up.

Abhyasa/practice by the blessings of learned elders/teachers/guru will undoubtedly help the individual to change for the better.

Why is mind restless?

Because of the likes/dislikes the mind starts running after objects. It develops attachment to the objects of the material world. This is “raga”. The stronger the attachment that much more difficulty in weaning off from such attachment. There is a strong need to put down the force of passion and thereby control the mind. Discrimination between right/wrong, good/bad will eventually win the battle and the mind can be made to sit in meditation on the Atman.

Detachment from attachment is “Vairagya.” This detachment we have learnt before has to be:
From attachment to the objects around and
To the fruits of action.

Do not seek for the illusory painful pleasures and instead go in search of the eternal peace is the message from the Lord to sincere seekers.

Sloka 36

**ASAMYATATMANA YOGO DUSHPRAPA ITI ME' MATIHI
VASHYATMANA TU YATATA SHAKYOVAPTUM UPAYATAHA**

It is my view that yoga is not attainable by one whose mind is not controlled. But the self-controlled, striving can attain it by proper means.

Samyat: controlled
Atmana: the mind

Samyatatma: of balanced mind
Asamyatatma: uncontrolled mind.

Yogaha: union with the Atman
Dushprapa: not attainable (Prapya: attainable)
Me' matihi: My view.

In the first half of the sloka we get the reiteration of the fact that union with the Atman is not possible to those whose mind is not controlled.

Again, the Lord makes it clear that it is His view. We see so many times in the Gita Sri Krishna using the word "Me' mataha" (My view/opinion). This is very important. If Krishna had not used this word, it would mean that according to Him union with the Atman is not possible when the mind is not under control. It would become "Krishna school of thought." Another school of thought would spring up sooner or later. So, let us understand that the Vedas are the authoritative source and Sri Krishna is the Universal master giving the sacred text to the mankind in a simple language to understand and follow.

How do we control the mind?
In the last verse we have an answer to this question.
It is "Abhyasa and Vairagya."

He says:
Vashyataman tu yatata: but by one of self-control and striving
Upayataha: skilfully
Avaptatu: to obtain
Shakyaha: is possible.

It is possible to obtain by he who has self-control and is striving to unite with the Atman. This has to be skilful action.

Yatata: Strive
Upayataha: skilfully

Be skilful in your efforts and strive for attaining the end result which is "union with the Atman" is the message for the earnest seekers.

Let us take the example of two great heroes who climbed the Mount Everest, Edmund Hilary and Ten-Sing. How did they succeed in the mission?

They undertook "Abhyasa" and developed disinterest in everything else. Their aim was to climb the peak of the Mount Everest. They strived several years and put in hard practice regime to achieve the end result. They used the skill to combat the adverse weather and altitude problems. Towards it, they got instructions from specialists and collected specialist tools recommended by the masters. With faith, devotion, single minded concentration and guidance from the right sources they reached the peak.

We see in war zones during battle, sometimes the commanders strategically withdraw from the front, recoup and proceed further again. They use all their skills in achieving victory.

This is what we have to understand from this sloka. We should be skilful in controlling the mind and not by authoritative use of the intellect. We must develop techniques to slowly divert the mind from the phenomenal world towards the internal spiritual world. The mothers skilfully give item "a" to take away item "b" from their children.

The process of transforming an enemy into a friend is not easy but possible. The mind which could be an enemy in our progress spiritually should be made to become a friend. After all, it is only the mind that can lead us to the Supreme and all other organs are only tools to help in the process.

Sloka 37

Arjuna Uvacha:

**AYATIHI SRADDHAYOPETO' YOGAAT CHALITA MANASAHA
APRAPYA YOGASAMSIDDIH KAM GATIM KRISHNA GACHATI**

Arjuna said:

Though possessing faith, yet uncontrolled, what end does the yogi whose mind falls from yoga, meet if he departs without attaining perfection in yoga?

Herein we have a very interesting question from Arjuna. He is asking on behalf of those faithful seekers who are practicing yoga, whose mind is still strong and mischievous. They slip frequently in their practice and are carried away by worldly desires. Arjuna is asking if such a yogi meets his death before succeeding in his spiritual efforts where will he go next?

Yati is he who has controlled the mind and "Ayati" is the seeker who has not controlled the mind.

Sraddhaya: with faith

Upeto: possessed

Yogaat: from yoga

"The seeker practicing yoga with faith and not totally managed to get the mind under total control" is the meaning of the first quarter of the sloka.

The purpose of yoga is to get the mind under control and not deviate from the selected path. After all we are all human and not perfect.

- a) There has been a past for the seeker and he does not know what he did in his past birth/births. He has also had a past in this birth before taking up to yoga.
- b) He has developed interest in yoga now, (the present) and faithfully started to practice.
- c) He has a future and he does not know it.

Chalita manasaha: having fallen away in mind.

This applies to the yogi in level "b" of the above classification.

"Having fallen away" means having failed to keep the mind under control and succumbed to the temptations of the world. This is the meaning of the second quarter of the sloka.

Aprapya: not having attained

Yoga samsiddhi: perfection in yoga

Because he has not attained total perfect control of the mind, the mind succumbs to the impulses received from the world around. Or it gets the memory bank opened up, started playing with it and deviates from the concentration on the Atman.

This is the meaning of the third quarter of the sloka.

Kaam gatim: what fate

Gacchati: meets

“O Krishna, what fate does such a person meet?” is the question that is in the last quarter of the sloka.

What will happen to such a yogi?
Where does he go next?
Will all his efforts be a waste of time?
Has he to start afresh his spiritual practice all over again?

Everyone wants happiness (Ananda) in life. Arjuna wanted “Brahmananda” and in the process denied “Atmananda.” If he meets death before experiencing “Brahmananda”, alas, he never had any happiness in life. Could this be right?
Arjuna is seeking answers for this question.

“Death is just another event in one’s life” is the Hindu philosophy. The Hindus believe in a series of cycles of births and death that culminate one fine day in the individual attaining union with the Brahman. Every individual has a birth right to attain salvation. Yesterday is dead and tomorrow is yet to come. Every second we are dead and reborn every second. These are all links in a chain.

Our philosophy says,
“Tomorrow is nothing but continuation of yesterday but modified by thoughts and actions of today” is the message from our sacred texts.

Sloka 38

**KACCHINNO’BHAYA VIBRASHTAS CHINNABHRAMIVA NASHYATI
APRATISHTAM MAHABAHO’ VIMOODO BRAHMANA PATIHI.**

O Mahabahu, not established in yoga, and deluded in the path of Brahman, fallen from both does he not perish like a rent cloud?

In continuation of the theme of doubt that has cropped up in his mind, Arjuna is now using an example of clouds.

The purpose of the clouds is to shower the rains on earth. Thick, heavy mass of dark clouds forestall a heavy rainfall. It so happens sometimes, a great gust of wind blows from nowhere and breaks the thick mass clouds into small clouds which disappear into oblivion soon.

The clouds that gathered together so strongly to bring the rainfall failed in their attempt. The small clouds that remain after the passing of the wind and which disappear into oblivion are called as “rent clouds.” The Sanskrit word for it is “Chinnabhram”.

These rent clouds fail to bring the rainfall and on top of that disappear soon. They lose their distinctiveness as clouds.

Kachit: is it that?
Ubhaya vibrahashta: fallen from both
Chinnabhram iva: like a rent cloud
Nashyati: perishes?

Apratishtam: without support
Vimoodaha: the deluded
Brahman pathi: in the path of Brahman

An individual takes up to yoga under the spiritual guidance from the masters and the sacred texts. He gathers all his senses under control and concentrates with vigour on the Atman and takes up to the path of meditation.

In the process, he has sacrificed sense pleasures so that he can experience the “Joy” of the union with the Atman within. All his thoughts on the Atman join together and formed into a mass of thick clouds are ready to bring in a mass of shower of “Joy”.

Alas, one of the sense pleasures/vasanas stored in the mind suddenly comes out in gusto. Like a gust of strong wind, his thought on the Atman has shattered.

So, in the present world of strict control and spiritual sadhana, the seeker who repressed all his worldly pleasures for the sake of “Eternal Joy” failed in living the life of pleasures here and experiencing the pleasures hereafter.

He failed in experiencing “Swarga” - heavenly pleasures
And
He failed in attaining “Moksha” - Eternal Joy.

He failed in getting pleasures from both the worlds, temporary pleasures of the present or the eternal joy of the hereafter.

This is Arjuna’s doubt.

If I desert the battlefield and remained in the path of meditation one day I would succeed in getting Moksha,
If I win the battle of Kurukshetra, I will enjoy the pleasures of life,
But, alas, if I die in the battlefield,
What would have I achieved?

Whom should Arjuna approach for an answer?
He addresses this issue to Sri Krishna in the next sloka.

Sloka 39

**YETANME’ SAMSHAYAM KRISHNA CHETTUM ARHASYASESHATAHA
TVADANYAHA SAMSHAYASYASYA CHETTA NA HY UPAPADYATE**

O Krishna, you ought to dispel my doubt completely. I cannot indeed get another like you fit enough to clear it.

Yetan Me’: this, my
Samshayam: doubt
Chettum: dispel
Arhasy: competent
Aleshataha: without any trace, (completely)
Krishna: O Krishna

O Krishna, you are the competent person to dispel this, my doubt completely, says Arjuna. He adds another adjunctive in the second half of this sloka.

Tvat anyaha: another like you

Samshaya: doubt
Asya: my
Chetta: to dispel
Upadyate: is fit.

To dispel my doubt, there is no other fit like you.

This statement from Arjuna confirms the faith and devotion he had in the guru he had selected to take shelter and guidance from during the peak period of depression when facing the force of enemy in the battlefield. The depression had made him blind to the reality.

This should be the attitude of the sincere seeker. First of all he should find the competent guru to dispel his ignorance. He should with full faith approach the guru and request for guidance and compassion.

Let us make it clear that there was no selfishness on the part of Arjuna. He was not showering praises to get what he wanted. He had genuine belief that Sri Krishna is the only person to clear his doubts. As we proceed further in the chapters to come, we will find that Arjuna making the statement to the effect that Krishna is none other than the Supreme Ishwara Himself. Who other than the topmost person competent to answer his questions?

Indirectly, we should understand that pride and arrogance are not to be expressed in front of God, guru and elders.

Sloka 40

Sri Bhagawan Uvacha

**PARTHA NAIVA IHA NAMUTRA VINASHASTAYA VIDYATE
NA HI KALYANAKRIT KASCHID DURGATIM TAATA GACHATI**

O Arjuna, neither in this world, nor in the next there is destruction for him. O my son, never indeed anyone who does good ever comes to grief.

Partha: Arjuna
Na eva: (naiva) verily not
Iha: here
Namutra: not in the next world
Vinashas: destruction
Tasya: of him
Vidyate: is

“O Arjuna, neither here nor in the next world there is destruction of him”, is Krishna’s answer to Arjuna’s questions (sloka 37.38.39).

This sloka confirms Krishna’s assertion that there is life after death. The Vedas declare that the life is a series of births and deaths till the individual attains final union with the Brahman. They also admit that it is not easy and takes several births to achieve final salvation.

He who has been good by taking up to sincere spiritual practice will reap its benefit. He will find the benefit in his future life if by chance he leaves his mortal body in the middle of the sadhana.

Na Hi: verily not

Kalyanakrit: he who does good
Kaschid: anyone
Durgatim: bad state
Gachati: grief
Tata: son

O My son, listen, anyone who does good verily not comes to grief, He adds.

Kalyanakrit:
Kalyana: welfare/good
Krit: to do
Kalyanakrit: to do good/to do acts of welfare.

This applies to any individual who is conducting actions of welfare. The Lord is not just referring the seeker following the path of dhyana but all the other three paths of “Karma, Jnana and Bhakti.” Conducting duties following any of these paths come under “kalyanakrit”.

If you are engaged in good work, if you have failed to achieve perfection in this life, you will not suffer destruction, says Jagadguru. This is the blessings of compassion by the Lord to all sincere seekers.

Sloka 41

**PRAPYA PUNYAKRUTAAM LOKAAN USHITVA SASHVATEEHI SAMAHA
SHUCHEENAAM SREEMATAAM GEHE' YOGA BRHRASHTO'BHIJAYATE**

The yogi who has fallen from yoga, attains the worlds of the good, and having lived there for many years is born in the house of the pure and prosperous.

The Lord is now tracing us the path taken by the yogi who dies without attaining perfection in yoga.

First half of the verse describes the immediate sphere the departed soul (of the yogi) would enter. The departed soul enters the worlds of good and stays there for many years.

Prapya: having obtained
Punya kritaam: attainable by the good
Lokaan: the worlds
Ushitva: having lived there
Sashvateehi: many
Samaaha: years

We get the confirmation that there are many higher spheres above the sphere of earth and all these are attainable by the conduct of good actions while one is resident on the earth which is, “karma Bhoomi”.

If we can recollect the names of these spheres, they are:

Bhoohu: the earth we live in
Bhuvaha: the Gandharva Loka
Suvaha: the heaven

Depending on the meritorious points accumulated by action conducted on earth, the departed soul enters into any of the above lokas.

We know that the life span gets longer and longer as one traces the longevity from lower to the higher lokas. The life span in Satya loka is the longest and the life on earth is the shortest. Humans live for about 100yrs on earth and in higher lokas for thousands of years. (It is hard for us humans to imagine someone living for thousands of years. When we are happy we would want that state of happiness to last much longer. One can say that our learned elders of the past, knowing this weakness of man, have brought out the concept of thousands of years of happiness in higher lokas. To tempt us, the children in the spiritual path, to conduct acts of welfare/kalyana they have introduced the concept of heavenly abodes with residents/devas having a life span of many thousands of years.)

The departed souls that enter these higher lokas stay in those spheres as long as their meritorious points deserve (as decided by the Lord Himself) and then are sent back into a new birth on to the earth.

What sort of human birth these yogis get is described in the second half of the sloka.

Shuchenaam: of the pure
Srimataam: of the prosperous
Gehe': the house
Abhijaayate': is born

“Is born in the house of the pure and prosperous.”

The Lord is full of compassion, especially on those who do take up acts of “Kalyana”. The yogi who has conducted acts of welfare (kalyanakrit) after completing the stay in the higher lokas is born in the house of pure and prosperous.

Let us analyse this statement further.

The Lord is giving further opportunity to continue the sadhana. This is much easier if the members of the family such a yogi given next birth are righteous and live the life of purity. The atmosphere in such family is so congenial for shaping the mind of the young child.

Acts of pure living like getting up early, conducting the daily rituals, partaking in prayers, reading sacred texts, acts of welfare etc are undertaken in the house of the pure. The newborn is soon guided into that path.

It is interesting to note the Lord uses the words, “Pure and Prosperous”. Of these, “pure” is first and “prosperous” is next.

There are different types of prosperity like wealth, health and knowledge. It does not apply to only rich in wealth. One way of understanding the word ”prosperity” is where the basic needs of life are met and there is no struggle for survival.

It is well known fact that the priority of a hungry man and a man without shelter are to get food and a place of residence. The immediate priorities of such a person are these two.

By giving the birth in the house of pure and prosperous to the yoga bhrashta, Parabrahman is making sure that the new birth would lead quickly to continue the spiritual discipline and reach better heights of progress.

Sloka 42

**ATHAVAA YOGINAAMEVE KULE BHAVATI DHEEMATAAM
ETADDHI DURLABHATARAM LOKE' JANMA YADEEDRUSHAM**

Or, he is even born in the family of the wise yogis. This kind of birth is indeed very difficult to attain.

The last sloka is about the spiritual seekers in general who take up to yoga but meet death before making great strides in their efforts.

This sloka is of those yogabhrastas who have already made great strides in their spiritual discipline.

Athava: or - by using this word the Lord is referring to the advanced yogis.

Dheemataam: the wise

Yoginaameva kule': in the family of yogis

Bhavati: is born

The seeker is born in the house of the wise yogis. The wise as we have learnt before are those who have mastered the art in making use of their intellect which is guided by the Antaratma.

Why? What is the benefit from such a birth?

The wise yogis would act as gurus and guide the yoga bhrashta (in his new birth) from very early in life towards the practice of yoga.

Etad dhi: verily this

Durlabhataram: very difficult

Loke': in this world

Janma: birth

Yad: which

Edrusham: like this/this kind of

Verily, the birth like this/this kind of birth in this world is very difficult, says the Jagadguru.

Sri Krishna is making it clear that most of the people in this world are oriented towards the physical world in their outlook and very few really take up to serious attempts at uniting with the Parabrahman. But, he admits that such yogis do exist. In His great compassion to the faithful, sincere and devoted seekers He promises birth in the family of the yogis.

It is a fact that great men of spiritual realisation are born in the family of those who have conducted great acts of tapas.

We can see that the Lord is giving every opportunity to complete the practice of yoga as quickly as possible for the sincere seekers.

Sloka 43

**TATRA TAM BUDDHI SAMYOGAM LABHATE' POURVA DEHIKAM
YATATE CHA TATO' BHUYAHA SAMSIDHO KURU NANDANAHA**

O Arjuna, being born in the family of yogis, he comes to be united with the knowledge acquired in their previous birth, and again strives for perfection in yoga.

In continuation of the last sloka, Sri Krishna says that the yogabhrashta is not only born in the family of yogis but is going to be blessed with unity with the knowledge acquired in the past birth. We need to expand on this to understand its significance.

Each one of us has a past, present and future. In this sloka we are told about our future after the death of the present body.

It is evident that we do not carry the gross physical body with us to the next birth. Nama and roopa (name and form) will be totally different and we do not remember our past names, forms etc. At death the five elements go back to the five gross elements. (Earth, water, fire, air and space.)

The subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect with the causal body (Atman) moves to the moola prakriti awaiting further journey.

The mind is the main tool for us. It is a storehouse of vasanas (desires/hatreds from the past) that are not fulfilled yet. This information we have learnt already. What we do in the next birth is influenced by these stored vasanas. But, inadvertently in the new birth we get so quickly trapped by the new surroundings and instead of trying to empty the stored vasanas we get caught in the web of the present life and its contacts.

The subtle body not only carries the mind but also the intellect. Intellect is the reasoning capacity and we are expected to make use of this tool in any decision making process. The intellect is next to the Antaratman. Antaratman is the divinity within us. It is constantly talking to us in its own language but we do not take notice of it. The mind is so busy receiving the impulses from the world around that it becomes deaf to its own Antaratma's talk.

The prologue so far is to bring the readers to the main point of this sloka and understand it clearly.

Tatra: there (in the family of yogis)

Tam: that

Buddhi samyogam: contact with the yogic intellect

Pourva dehimam: pertaining to the previous birth

Labhate': gets

The first half of the sloka reads as,

“being born in the family of the yogis, he gets yogic intellect pertaining to the previous birth.”

The important word is “Buddhi samyogam.”

The subtle body of the yoga bhrashta carried with it the intellect which had guided the mind in the previous birth towards the path of yoga. The mind of that subtle body was united with the intellect and not to the gross world around in the previous birth. That intellect was in close contact with the “Antaratma” and hence comes to be designated as “Buddhi”. (When the intellect gets clouded by ahamkara it is designated as “durbuddhi” which is perverted intelligence.) The life of the yoga bhrashta in the previous birth was that of yoga and unity with the Atman within.

The Lord says that in the new birth the seeker not only is born in the family of yogis but is also united with the intellect from the past which guides him to:

Tato: by that

Bhuyaha: again

Samsiddhou: for perfection in yoga

Yatate cha: and strives again.

“Strive again for perfection in yoga”.

We can understand this by taking examples of students in schools and colleges.

Let us say that Balu was in class 8 and had to move to another city with his parents. If he was a sincere and clever student, the head teacher in the new school would assess his capacity and lets him join in class 9. Being a clever student and sincere in his attempts, he would remember what he was taught in the previous school and continue where he left. He would make rapid progress in the new environment.

On the other hand, if he got caught in the city life, new friends etc his progress might be hindered. He may fail miserably and either stay in the same class the next year or get demoted.

Balu who would get promoted to the new higher class is he who was blessed to be in a suitable environment and make use of his buddhi, remembered the lessons from the past classes and continued where he had left.

Balu, who would be demoted or fail would not have used the buddhi, not remembered the past lessons and got caught in the new worldly life.

The same scenario applies to the yogabhrashta. The Lord would bless him to make use of his buddhi and carry on from where he had left his spiritual practice in the previous birth.

What we have to understand from these slokas is that we are the makers of our own destiny. We reap what we sow, so let us therefore sow the seeds of good habits so that whatever happens to this body, in the next birth we can carry those good seeds and get a better start in life.

Let us also remember that good and bad, knowledge and ignorance follow us from birth to birth. As nothing that is done goes to waste, let us do japa, tapas, dana, dharma as enshrined in the scriptures and strive for unity with the Parabrahman quickly.

Sloka 44

**PURVABHYASENA TENAIVA HRIYATE HY AVAHOSO'PI SAHA
JIJNASURAPI YOGASYA SHABDA BRAHMA ARIVARTATE**

By the force of practice in the past births, he is drawn to yoga without volition. Though desirous only of the knowledge of yoga, he transcends beyond Shabdabrahma.

The result of past practices is highlighted in this sloka. Stronger the tendencies from past birth, that much easier to proceed in the path taken before. The yogi who has reached degree levels in past birth, would find the path easier to proceed further to post-graduate studies and to Post-Doctorate studies.

The fish take to water very quickly and the bird takes to air so fast. Similarly for the yogi who has strived hard in the previous births to unite with the Brahman the effort has not been a waste. He would quickly reach higher levels of yogic practice in the present birth and be that much nearer to uniting with the Brahman.

Purvabhyasena eva: by the force of practice in past births itself

Tena: by that

Hriyate hi: is drawn indeed

Avashaha api: even without volition

Saha: he

“He, by the practice from past births is drawn without volition” says the first part of the sloka.

“Drawn to where” is the question. This is answered in the second half of the sloka.

Jijnasurapi: though desirous of knowledge,
Yogasya: of knowledge
Shabdabrahma: the Vedas
Ativartate’: transcends.

“Even though desirous of knowledge of the Vedas, he transcends the Vedas” says Bhagawan.

We have to understand the word “Shabdabrahma” clearly.

“Shabda” means “Sound”.

Scripturally speaking, Parabrahman desirous of creating the life on earth, first produced the sound, the sound being “OM”. This, they say, pervaded the entire space.

Parabrahman is “Nirguna, Nirakara”, without form or qualities. This is “Sat, Chit, Ananda.”

“OM” which is the first creation is “Sakara, Nirguna”, with form but no qualities.

“Hari”, Parabrahman who is “Saguna, sakara”, with form and qualities is next in line of creation.

Then it proceeded further with creation of Vedas, life on earth etc.

Shabdabrahma refers to the Vedas created by the Parabrahman. The Vedas are considered as “Srutis” which means, “those that are heard.” They were sounds produced by Parabrahman which were heard by the great rishis during intense meditation in search of the answer for “who am I, where do I come from, where does the body go after death etc.”

What does he transcend?

In this context there are two explanations given by the learned scholars.

One school of thought says that “Shabdabrahma” refers to the fruits of actions that are described in karma kanda of the Vedas. According to this explanation, the yogi referred to in these slokas moves straight forward to Upasana Kanda and Jnana Kanda of the Vedas and is that much nearer to uniting with the Parabrahman.

It takes several births to really understand karma kanda and live such a life on earth and the yogi will not go through the births needed to complete the study of karma kanda of the Vedas.

The second school of thought say that “Shabdabrahma” means “Indirect knowledge arising from the study of the scriptures.”

Whatever that comes from the study of the texts is still only an indirect knowledge. One has to put the theory into practice to proceed further in life. The seeker has to move from Jnana to Vijnana (theory to practice; knowledge to wisdom) which is the theme for the next chapter.

By the sincere and dedicated practice of yoga, the yogi will develop wisdom and soon unites with the Parabrahman, is the explanation from the second school of thought.

Even though initially the seeker started study of the Vedas with a desire to know the Vedas, (Jijnasurapi) by his dedicated practice he proceeds further in his studies and practice but meets death and this is described as yogabhrashta in this chapter.

Such a seeker will be given birth in the family of pure and prosperous and will reap the benefit given in this sloka.

Sloka 45

PRAYATNAAD YATAMANASTU YOGEE SAMSHUDDHA KILBHISHAHA ANEKA JANMA SAMSIDDHAS TATO YATI PARAAAM GATIM

The yogi who is practicing sincerely and hard, having acquired perfection through many births attains Supreme state purified of all sins.

It is true that if we want to acquire something we have to practice sincerely the ways of acquiring the same. For majority it is not just practicing sincerely but also trying hard to acquire. Of course it goes without saying that one needs knowledge to acquire what one wants. It does take a long time to succeed in our efforts.

The young children who go to school to acquire knowledge have to try hard and sincerely to understand the subject, get good grades in exams, go to higher studies and become graduates. On an average, from kindergarten days to getting a degree it would take about 20yrs or so.

There is no quick and easy way to success. Success needs planning and determination. With the blessings of the Lord success will come eventually.

Similarly in spiritual studies, to acquire knowledge of the scriptures is the first step and achieving Moksha is the next step. It takes a lot of practice and determination to get the knowledge and takes still longer to achieve salvation. The seeker who is trying is called a yogi, what he practices is called yoga and what he achieves at the end is also called yoga.

Because of the vasanas from several births and the input of impulses from the world around that bring happiness or sorrow the process of acquiring spiritual knowledge takes a long time for an average individual. Many of the seekers probably are mature adults but are beginner students in the path of yoga.

It is therefore not possible for majority to achieve salvation in the present birth. It takes several births, says the Lord. Clearing all the stored vasanas is to be known as the process of purifying all sins. Not accumulating new vasanas is also a process of purifying the sins.

By realising what is permanent and what is impermanent, (Nitya Anitya Viveka Vicharana), Vairagya (dispassion to worldly objects) shatsampadi (sama, dama, uparati, titikshatva, Sraddha and samadhana) and having a burning desire to achieve salvation (mumukshatva) one will succeed and there is no doubt about the same. We should be prepared to wait for several births and not get disappointed if the success does not come in this birth.

Human weakness is that we want the results to be seen and experienced now, in this birth itself.

Just like the example of a student, even a businessman needs to work sincerely and hard for several years to enjoy what the benefits of profits.

Hence the sloka says:

Prayantnad: with efforts

Yatamanastu: striving

Tu: but

Yogee: the yogi

Aneka janma samsiddhaha: perfected through many births

But, the yogi striving hard, achieving perfection through several births.
The guhya bhasha is “Tu” which means “but”.

The yogi may be striving hard BUT has to develop perfection through several births.

Striving hard and putting all the best efforts is not enough to produce the results now.

It takes several births.

It is not just the physical birth and death the Lord is referring to, but
The reference has to be many births and deaths of experiences in life.
Every experience will either purify or add impurities in our mind.

So,

Samshuddha kilbhishaha: purified of all sins

Tataha: then

Paraaam: supreme

Gatim: state

Yaati: attains.

Another word of importance is “tataha”.

Only THEN (what was described in the first half)

Purified of all sins, he attains the Supreme State. (Salvation).

Let us not forget what the Lord has said in the previous sloka:

He has said that good done in the past does not go waste. He will see that the seeker would get proper environment to continue where he left in the previous birth.

Just to summarise,

The three conditions to experience freedom from births and deaths (salvation) are:

Sincere striving,

Continuously practicing and

Purity.

Let all sincere seekers understand the importance of this statement and implement the advice in their efforts and be assured that they will get due reward in due course.

Sloka 46

**TAPASWIBHYADHIKO' YOGEE JNANIBHYO'PI MATODHIKAHA
KARMIBHYAS CHADIKO YOGEE TASMAD YOGEE BHAVARJUNA**

The yogi is thought to be greater than the ascetic, even superior to men of knowledge. He is also superior to men of action. Therefore, strive to be a yogi, O Arjuna.

The aim of spiritual study and life is to unite with the Atman within and realise the presence of Parabrahman in every form of life on this universe. Having achieved the unity it is then imperative that the seeker expresses the divinity within via speech, thoughts and action. Thus comes about the welfare of life on earth. This is the end result of becoming a true yogi mentioned in this sloka. This chapter is “Dhyana yoga” and the emphasis is on “Dhyana.”

As a matter of fact the Lord while dealing with specific chapters like Jnana, Karma, Bhakti has stressed in those chapters the superiority of that path in relation to others. Let us not misunderstand this statement. Every path is important and superior in its own way to the people who have that temperament. It is the temperament of the individual that takes him/her to a particular path.

True dhyana yoga is about total meditation (dhyana) in whatever path one takes. Dhyana/meditation while conducting karma as per the instructions in chapter 3, worshipping as described in chapter 12 and scriptural studies also makes such a seeker a true yogi.

In this sloka we are told the yogi is:

a) Superior to ascetic:

It is commonly understood that an ascetic is one who does intense tapas that involves voluntary mortification of the body. By doing so he is said to please the devas who come down from their celestial abode and grant boons. Certainly the yogi is far superior to such an ascetic who conducts penance for celestial powers and enjoyment. The Geeta tells us that real tapas is all about purification of speech, thoughts and actions.

b) Superior to men of knowledge:

Here the knowledge referred to is the study of the Vedas and upanisads. Just a theoretical knowledge of the Vedas is certainly not superior to the way of life of a yogi. Knowledge acquired from the study of the sastras has to match with efforts to implement the teaching in day to day life.

c) Superior to man of action:

Here the reference is to karma kanda of the Vedas. Men of action referred to are those who study the karma kanda of the Vedas and conduct actions like worship of the fire etc.

Tapswibhy adhiko: superior to ascetic
Jnanibho'pi: superior to men of knowledge
Mata: view
Karmibhyascha adhiko: superior to men of action

Finally the Lord says:

Tasmaat yogee bhavarjuna:
Therefore be a yogi, O Arjuna.

Even though it is not a command, the Lord prefers His disciple to be a yogi in its truest sense as described so far in this chapter.

Karma: union between men and entire humanity.
Dhyana: union between the lower self and Higher Self.
Bhakti: union between the individual and his God of Love.
Jnana: union of all existence.

Sloka 47

**YOGINAM API SARVESHAAM MADGATENA ANTARATMANA
SRADDHAVAAN BHAJATE YO MAAM YUKTATAMO' MATAHA**

Even among all the yogis, he who worships Me with mind fixed in Me, full of faith, is deemed to be the most devout.

Yoginaam: among the yogis

Api: even
Sarveshaam: all

“Even among all the yogis”.

This is the last verse in this 6th chapter, the Dhyana Yoga and also the last chapter in the first triad of 18 chapters that constitute the Gita. The group of each six chapters is considered as “one shatka”.

The first six chapters are considered as “karma Shatka”. We had karma yoga, jnana yoga and dhyana yoga in these six chapters.

The yogees referred to in this sloka refers to any one of the three groups. The Lord is making a final judgement and calls all of them as “yogees” as they are striving to unite with “Him.” Everyone of them is a sincere spiritual seeker.

Madgatena: fixed in Me
Antaratmana: with the inner Self.

All the yogis are trying to unite with the inner Self which is “The Lord” himself. The Antaratma is the voice of the Lord from within. The effort of the seekers is to unite with Him. Sri Krishna is saying “Madgatena” which means “fixed in Me.” When He is saying “Me” He is pointing that He, Krishna is the manifestation/avatara of the Supreme with a name and form. He is giving us His true identity.

How should the yogi be conducting the yoga of his choice, be it karma, jnana or dhyana? How would the seeker get His grace?

Sradhhavaan: with faith
Maam: Me
Bhajate: worships.

The yogee should show utter faith in the Supreme and His teaching and also worship Him. Faith and worship are two prerequisites for receiving His grace.

Me’ Mataha: My view.

This is My view, says Krishna.

One can say that this is the view of Krishna, the cowherd, son of Devaki and Vasudeva. He is giving Arjuna the fact that He, Krishna is Supreme Parabrahman.

The importance of worship as an ingredient of expression of love of Supreme is stressed by the Lord several times. As a matter of fact, the next six chapters constitute “Bhakti shatka”. The last chapter in this shatka, the 12th chapter is “Bhakti Yoga”. We are now led to the theme of Bhakti which should be an ingredient in all the forms of yogas.

If one considers that the three yogas described in this shatka are the seeds sown in the mind of the seeker, devotion/Bhakti is considered as the water that soaks the seeds, gives the nourishment and assists in the growth of the seeds that culminates in the bearing of fruit. The fruit being “Divine Bliss” which is “Salvation”.

It goes without saying that the farmer who is looking for the production of the fruit and sows the seeds has to have complete faith in the Lord. He does not question any decisions of the Lord at any time and accepts life as it comes and puts his efforts sincerely and with love.

Hence the Lord uses the word “DHYANA YOGA” (sloka 41, chapter 2). “Vyavasaya” is agriculture and the seeker has to be a farmer in the truest sense who works incessantly for experiencing the “Divine Bliss.”

The six chapters that are completed now are all about “Jivatman”, the soul expressing as the individual by association with the mind and intellect and using the jnanendriyas and karmendriyas to experience the life around. How this Jivatman can elevate to the level of the Atman within has been described so far.

This is the “Tvam” aspect of “Tat, Tvam, Asi.” “Tvam” means “Thou”.

We are now led to the next six chapters which is all about “Parabrahman” and deals with “Tat” (That) aspect of “Tat, Tvam, Asi.”

The history of spirituality has been the efforts by great mahatmas of the past who have gone in search of an answer to the questions, “Who am I, where do I come from, where does the life go after death” and the culmination of their quest is in the Mahavakya, “Tat, Tvam, Asi.”

As it needs total devotion to understand the importance of “Tat” the next shatka is considered as “Bhakti Shatka.”

Let me repeat what I have said in the introduction to this chapter,
Train the mind by dhyana yoga,
“Transform the thoughts and then transcend the thoughts.”
Automatically the seeker can transform himself (through identification and unity with Him) to his real “Self” which is “Brahman.”

Thus completes the sixth chapter, "DHYANA 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.