

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 7: JNANA VIJNANA YOGA

Introduction

Chapters 7-12 of the sacred text constitute the second triad “Bhakti Shatka”.

In the last verse of the last chapter the Lord tells Arjuna that the most devout yogi is he who worships Him with faith.

To develop faith one needs to have the knowledge of the nature of the Lord. This comes from the study and understanding the scriptures. It is no use just having a theoretical knowledge but one has to implement the knowledge in his/her daily activities.

In the earlier stages one is bound to make mistakes in practical application of the theoretical knowledge. The mistakes if recognised and corrected will make the individual a better person. Theoretical knowledge is like getting a degree and practical knowledge is in implementing the theory into practice at the designated work place.

The child has to develop the faith in her mother. To do so she must have the knowledge of the nature of mother who loves and cares for her welfare. The independent nature of the child makes her attempt to walk the first few steps in her life. Mother shows her how to stand up properly and walk and gives support in the initial stages. She has seen the members of the family walking and would like to walk on her own. She would make mistakes hundreds of times, fall, get hurt, get up, make corrections and try again. In course of time she would become proficient in the art of walking.

She is then said to have become wise in the art of walking. This is Vijnana. It is not just being wise but it should be the way of life and carried on involuntarily. Theoretical knowledge of walking is jnana and practical knowledge of walking is Vijnana.

In our secular education we come across this aspect of learning also. The students learn all about the speciality subject during their period of studies in the university. After graduation they take up professional work. They are bound to make mistakes in practical application of the theoretical knowledge. As and when they become proficient and not make mistakes, they move up in the ladder of the career they have chosen.

Junior Houseman at the hospital works under supervision of the seniors. When he has developed perfect wisdom he is eligible to become the Head of the department and so on and so forth.

Thus, it is imperative to have the knowledge of the Parabrahman and realise His presence inside in the form of Atman. It is also necessary to remember that one is part of the universe and has a duty socially to the society. The wise is he who would implement the doctrine of Satya, Dharma, Ahimsa, and Karuna in his reaction to the world around. He would drop his ego and act as a servant of the Lord expressing the divine qualities in all his thoughts, actions and speech.

Our spiritual masters of the past are the wisest who have selflessly worked for the welfare of life on earth. Sage Poet Veda Vyasa has given us the Srimad Bhagawadgita as part of his work on the Mahabharata. It has been the light of knowledge for thousands of years and will continue to be so till the time of dissolution of life on earth.

The love for the Lord increases as one understands His nature and Glory. This chapter deals with His excellence and Supremacy and then leads to the eighth chapter that describes His “Omniscience, Omnipotence” nature.

The purpose of religion is to make the individual a man of wisdom. The scriptures give the knowledge and implementing the doctrine in daily life makes one wise.

In short, experience of the knowledge that is to be known, (i.e.: Atman) is Vijnana.

Sloka 1

Sri Bhagawaan Uvacha:

**MAYYASAKTA MANAHA PARTHA YOGAM YUNJAN MAD ASHRAYAHA
ASAMSHAYAM SAMAGRAM MAAM YATHA JNASYASI TAT SHRUNU**

The Lord said:

O Partha, how with the mind intent on Me, practicing yoga and taking refuge in Me, you shall know Me fully, doubtlessly, thou hear.

The Lord starts this chapter by giving the means to understand Him fully. He tells us what are the tools needed for the task.

“Know Me fully” He says:

In relation to any person/object one can be:

Indifferent

Like or

Dislike.

Those who are indifferent will not have any inclination to know the object/person.

There are broadly three groups amongst those who like:

Like;

Eager to know;

Extremely eager to know.

Those who are extremely eager would have to know Him fully.

The seeker is asked to develop the thirst to know Him fully.

The word used in this sloka is “Samagram” which means “wholly, fully.”

There are three ways by which one can relate to God:

I want God;

I want God also;

I want God alone. The seekers would have to develop this thirst.

The Lord is:

Dukha vinashaka: remover of sorrow

Shanty pradayaka: bestows Peace.

To get the Peace,

The next point stressed by the Lord is “Asamshayam” which means “without doubt.”

It is important that the seeker who is intent on merging with Him totally should not have any doubt about the Lord. If the shelter taken is to fulfil a desire, there is bound to be a doubt if that desire is not

fulfilled. Or if one desire is fulfilled then human mind being human, one is tempted to approach God to fulfil some other desire. As long as everything is going on smoothly people have total faith in the Lord but as soon as problems come up and things do not go on according to plan they start doubting the existence of the Lord and His capacity to clear the problems faced in life.

Do not entertain any doubt and know Me fully is His advice to all seekers.

We have examples in mythology like demons Hiranyakashipu who wanted to know the Lord fully but with an arrogance and audacity to face Him in a combat.

The intention of the seeker on the other hand is to unite with “Him.”

To do so, the seeker has to:

Mayi: in Me

Aasakta manaha: with the mind intent.

The mind which is the band master must be intent to unite with Him. It should not deviate towards any other objects. The mind we have learnt is a search light. Our sense organs direct it most of the times towards the physical world. It should be directed inwards towards the Atman instead, we are told.

Next advice is:

“Madashrayaha”: refuge in Me.

The seeker should take total refuge in Him only. If we want to get an illness cured, we need to take shelter under the protection of the medical and pharmaceutical profession. We must know about the specialist we are going to and have total faith in him. We should take the prescribed medicines according to the instructions given.

Similarly, to get cured of the illness called “samsara bhandana” (attachment to samsara) we should take shelter under the Jagadguru. He will give us the means and strength to overcome the attachments and achieve unity with Him and thereby experience the “Eternal peace.”

Let us also remember that the bliss one experiences is only an experience and it cannot be explained in words. Individual effort is needed to experience the same. Our mind should be like a sponge absorbing all information about Him.

Towards this the seeker has to practice yoga. One can see that there is no reference made to any particular yoga. It could be:

Karma,

Jnana,

Dhyana.

As we learnt before, Bhakti is common ingredient in all the three.

To summarise:

Madashrayaha: consider Lord as sole refuge

Aasakta manaha: mind intent (in Lord)

Yunjan Yogam: performing yoga.

Ashraya under the lord automatically means:

No dependency on anything else. No dependence on the fruits of action, name, fame etc.

Sloka 2

**JNANAM TE 'HAM SAVIJNANAM IDAM VAKSHYAMI ASHESHATAHA
YAT JNATVA NE'HA BHOONYONVA JNATAVYAM AVASHISHYATE**

Knowing which there shall not be any other to be known in this world, that knowledge combined with experience I shall declare to you totally.

The Lord is telling Arjuna that He will teach him that knowledge, experiencing which, there would be nothing else to know.

There are three ways by which one can know about an object or a person.

- a) By the mind that receives the impulses from the outer world. One can say that it is derived from the sight. Here the word “sight” (perceived) applies to what is received from all the senses and not just by the eyes.
- b) By the intellectual analysis of what is received by the mind. Here if the intellect is not pure, has egoistic tendency, the analysis will not be perfect.
- c) By the intellectual analysis of the pure intellect that is guided by the “Antaratma.”

The last way of analysis is known as “insight”.
It is better to have insight than just the sight.

The learned elders, gurus, scriptures can teach the seeker about the Lord. This is tuition.
But, intuition, with a pure intellectual analysis is the best way to learn about the God and God principle.

World of objects, emotions and thoughts are interpreted to us through the vehicles of body, mind and intellect respectively.

Objects - via the body

Emotions - via the mind

Thoughts - via the intellect.

Aparoksha anubhuti: This is intimate experience of the reality/direct experience (Paramananda) of Reality. It is the first hand experience of the Parabrahman.

Paroksha anubhuti: through somebody's eyes. (second hand)

(A para aksha anubhuti: Aksha - eyes, Para aksha - somebody's eyes).

The Lord is going to describe to Arjuna how to realise the Parabrahman by direct experience. This is the wisdom derived by conducting actions using the knowledge acquired (Jnana) and making a pure intellectual analysis of the results of the actions. This is “Vijnana”.

In the scriptural studies,

Knowledge of the Brahman derived from the studies of the Vedas and Upanishads leads us to “Sabdabrahma.”

Realisation of the Atman by direct experience of putting theory, the spiritual study into practice and in the process learning by mistakes will lead the seeker to experience the “Parabrahman.”

Sri Krishna says that He will teach the truth fully and completely.

One can summarise and say that the best way to know everything in this world is by knowing the divine essence in all. The seeker has to aim at knowing that by which the essence of everything else is known.

Sloka 3

**MANUSHYANAAM SAHASRESHU KASCHIT YATATI SIDDHAYE
YATAAAM API SIDDHANAAM KASCHIN MAAM VETTI TATVATAHA**

Among thousands of men, one strives for perfection and even among those who strive and succeed only some will know Me in essence.

This is not a statement to discourage any from taking the path of realising the Brahman. We have learnt in the last chapter (slokas 41-45) that no effort gets wasted in spiritual practice.

It is extremely hard to be perfect either in secular or spiritual life. Majority take up to one form of study or the other and a small minority strive for attaining perfection in their studies/work.

In the world whose population is in several trillions there are still a fair number who strive for perfection and succeed in their efforts. But, of these who attain perfection only some will know Him in essence.

“Know in essence”: It means realisation of the presence of divinity in every atom of life, understanding the omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient nature of the Parabrahman, remember to act as the servant of the divine and express divinity in thought, speech and actions and always striving for universal welfare.

The guhya bhasha is “Tatvataha”: “In essence”. Superficial knowledge in any field is not enough.

The Lord is perfect in His analysis of human behaviour. We can see a number of great spiritual Masters in every millennium but rarely one or two among them who are respected and recognised as “Divinity on earth”. Mahatma Gandhi, Swamy Vivekananda, Mother Theresa are some of the examples of those who have fulfilled the criterion of “knowing Him in essence.”

Competency to attain divine perfection needs:

- The right attitude, (be aware of variety of human nature and not develop hatred towards anybody,)
- Clear understanding and analysis of “Nitya, Anitya”, (Permanent and impermanent); of what is divine, human and animal behaviour,
- Perfect adjustment of behaviour and reaction to the events in life,
- Total application of spiritual knowledge (Jnana), develop wisdom (Vijnana) from practical application of the knowledge acquired.

These will be analysed in detail when we come to the qualities of a Bhakta, (chapter 12), qualities of a Jnani (chapter 13), qualities of Gunatita (chapter 14), the divine and asuric qualities (chapter 16).

Hence the saying that each one of us has to undergo 8.5 millions of births and deaths before attaining salvation. It means that everyone does get salvation but after an extremely long journey.

We can see examples in sportsmen/women in the world. Compared to trillions of men/women on this globe, only a few thousands train to become great athletes and among them few hundred reach perfection. Among these, only one gets the Olympic medal.

Manushyanaam: among men/women
Sahasreshu: in thousands
Kaschit: someone
Yatati: strives
Siddhaye: for perfection

Among thousands of men/women only someone strives for perfection

Yatataam: of those who strive
Api: even
Siddhanaam: of successful ones
Kashcin: someone
Maam: Me
Vetti: knows
Tatvatataha: in essence

Even among those who strive and are successful, only a handful will know Him in essence.

Sloka 4

**BHOOMIR APO'NALO VAYUHU KHAM AMNO' BUDDHIR EVA CHA
AHAMKARA ITEEYA ME' BHINNA PRAKRUTIR ASHTADHA**

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, reason and ego are the eight fold division of My nature.

- In the process of acquiring the jnana and developing the wisdom to live in this world as the instruments of the Lord to bring divinity on earth,
- In our study and understanding of the life principle that upholds this universe and every form of life on it,
- We need to know what constitutes life on earth and what is it made up of.

In this context the chapter starts with description of what constitutes the nature. We already have dealt on this during the introduction to chapter 2 and the readers are requested to refer to the same. Just to recollect the same in brief:

The world as we know is constituted of five gross elements known as “Panchamaha Bhootas.” These are:

The Water,
The Earth,
The Fire,
The Air and
The Sky.

The five instruments of knowledge in our body reveal the five great elements.

The tongue tastes the water;
The nose smells the earth;
The eyes recognise the form revealed by light or fire;
The skin because of tactile capacity feels the air;
The ear perceives the sound that travels in space.

Thus the five senses of perception are the means to associate with the five gross elements.

The mind is the instrument by which we feel and experience the physical world.

The intellect is the instrument of reasoning and analysing the experiences of the mind.

The individuality developed out of these seven instruments in our body is the “Ahamkara” (Pride).

All of these eight are said to be the eight fold division of “His Nature.”

When we proceed further in the study of the sacred text, in chapter 13, Kshetra Kshetrajna Yoga, we get a description of a total of 24 principles/tatvas of the Sankhya philosophy. The eight fold nature mentioned in this verse is included in the 24 tatvas.

Why?

Each one of us is considered as an individual only when we are alive.

None of the above eight aspects have any life, they are insentient by nature.

The five sense organs and organs of action constitute the physical body.

The mind and intellect and ahamkara form the subtle body.

Together they are called as “Prakriti”.

Both the gross and subtle bodies have no life of their own. They come to life when there is presence of “A life principle” and this is the “Atman” within. When the “Atman” departs from the physical body, the individual is no more an individual but a dead body with no life. This “Atman” is designated as “Purusha.”

“Purusha” is designated by the word “Me” in this sloka.

“Me’ Prakriti” in the second half of the sloka refers to “His nature”.

“Purusha” as such in “Nirakara and Nirguna” is without any form or quality.

It gets a form and develops qualities only by association with “Prakriti”.

“His” nature is expressed only when “He” is alive.

We, the manifold life on earth are the external manifestation of the “Divine Energy” which is within each one of us.

So, in this sloka, the Lord has enumerated the eight fold division of His nature.

Sloka 5

**APAREYAM ITAS TVANYAAM PRAKRITI ME’ PARAAM
JIVABHOOTAAM MAHABAHO YAYEDAM DHARYATE JAGAT**

O Arjuna, this is lower prakriti. Know my other nature, the higher prakriti, the life-element by which the universe is upheld.

The five gross elements, mind, intellect and ahamkara are said to constitute the lower nature of the Parabrahman.

The cosmic life principle is said to be His higher nature.

Apara: lower/inferior

Iyam: this (nature)

Itaha tu: but from this

Anyaaam: different

This nature which is inferior but different from this (first quarter of the sloka).

The eightfold division of nature described in the last sloka is said to be His inferior nature. It is known as “apara prakriti”. But there is another nature of His which is different from this. What is that?

It is:

Me’: my

Paraam: superior

Prakritim: nature

This being:

Jivabhootam: the life element

Yaya: by which

Idam: this

Jagat: universe

Dharayate: is sustained

The life element by which this universe is sustained.

O Mahabaho: O’ Arjuna

Viddhi: know

Arjuna, please know (this difference).

Both these, the lower and higher prakriti are part of His nature only.

The lower prakriti is jada-prakriti which has no life of its own.

The higher prakriti is jiva-prakriti and it has direct reflection of the life from the Parabrahman on it. It also has no life of its own but it reflects the power of the Atman.

It is extremely hard to understand this sloka. We need to take examples to understand the same.

Let us take the example of fire:

One can say that the sparks of fire are its higher nature and the smoke is its lower nature.

The pot, water and the reflection of sun in its water:

The pot and the water are said to be apara prakriti and the reflected sun is the para prakriti.

Comparison to the physical body:

The pot is the physical gross body;

The water is the subtle body;

And together they are the apara prakriti.

The reflected sun is the conscious principle and represents para prakriti.

Whereas, the real sun is the sun above and it is the true form of the Parabrahman.

Similarly, in our body, the Atman is real/permanent and the mind/physical body are only temporary suits over it.

When the pot is broken and the water spills over, the sun still remains in the sky.

Para and apara prakriti undergo modification but the Atman does not undergo any modifications.

Why does it say that Para prakriti upholds the universe?

The answer is simple.

The universe is there because we are aware of it. Without the consciousness which is the life principle within, our opinion of what the universe is cannot be sustained.

Whatever we do, consciously or subconsciously there is a sense of awareness in all our actions and this awareness is Para prakriti/higher nature of the Lord expressing Himself as Jivatman.

Sloka 6

**ETAD YONEENI BHOOTANI SARVANEETI UPADHARAYA
AHAM KRITSNASYA JAGATAHA PRABHAVAHA PRALAYAS TATHA.**

Know this prakriti to be the womb of all beings. I am the source of creation and dissolution of the whole universe.

All forms of life are to be found in this universe. Metaphorically one can say that the universe is the womb of all forms of life that were in the past, are in the present and will be in the future.

We have already discussed that this universe is “Prakriti” (Nature) and it is divided into “Para and Apra Prakriti.” (Lower and higher nature.) The first half of the sloka reiterates this fact.

Etad yoneeni: have these two prakritis as their womb
Sarvani: all
bhootaani: beings
iti: thus
upadharaya: know

“All beings have these two prakritis as their womb. Thus (you) know”.

From where did the beings come into the womb of the two prakritis?
Who is responsible for the dissolution of life on earth both individual lives and the entire forms of life?

This is answered in the second half of the sloka.
The Lord wants Arjuna to know that He is the cause of creation and of dissolution.
Aham: I (the Parabrahman)
Kritsnasya: of the entire
Jagataha: the universe
Prabhavaha: the cause of creation
Tatha: in the same way
Pralayaha: the cause of dissolution

The lower prakriti is made up of the five gross elements, the mind, the intellect and the ahamkara.
The higher prakriti is the life principle/conscious principle.
This we have learnt in the previous sloka.

The lower prakriti is insentient and
The higher prakriti is sentient.
The union of the sentient and insentient is the origin of life.
The separation of sentient from the insentient is the cause of dissolution of life.

Know that the power that unites and separates the two bringing life and causing death is the Parabrahman and I am that Parabrahman, says Krishna to Arjuna.

Going back to the example of the car:

We can say that,

The body of the car is the apara prakriti,
The driver (ego) is the para prakriti and
The fuel is the force that brings the car to life or to a halt as the case may be.
The driver brings the car to life by starting the engine.
He thinks that the car is under his control, but, we all know that if there is no inflow of the fuel the car will come to a halt.
The petrol on its own cannot start the car. The driver is needed to start the car. The body of the car moves because of the propelling force of the fuel.

None of the examples can really match the absolute truth which is “Parabrahman brings life and removes life from the womb which is the prakriti.”

The “Self” cannot manifest without the medium of the “Nature” and the “Nature” cannot come to life without the “Self”. Hence the “Self” is known as “Purusha” and the “Nature” as “Prakriti”.
Union of the two is life on earth and separation of the two is dissolution of life.

The Advaita philosophy says that the “Supreme” is just a witness of all creation and dissolution and is not affected by them. It also states that the entire universe is just a “Maya (illusion), the life never was and will never be.” The only constant factor is the “Supreme Parabrahman”.

Sloka 7

**MATTA PARATARAM NANYA KINCHIDASTI DHANANJAYA
MAYI SARVAM IDAM PROTAM SUTR’ MANIGANA IVA**

O Dhananjaya, there is nothing whatsoever higher than Me. All this is strung in Me, as clusters of gems on a string.

The principle of God, the primordial energy holding the world together is brought out in this verse by the use of a beautiful simile. The simile also brings out the idea that the God is higher than all in this universe.

The first half of the sloka ascertains the fact that “He, the Parabrahman” is highest.
“What is He comparing Himself to?” one may ask.

The answer is in the last verse, “The lower and higher prakriti”. He is higher than the entire nature what we see and understand and what we do not see and realise. Not only the universe we live in but that which is beyond and about which we do not know also is included in this statement.

Mattah: than I,
Parataram: higher
Anyat: another
Kinchit: anything
Na asti: is not/does not exist.

“Nothing higher than Me does not exist”, says the Lord.
“In what context?” one may ask.

We are given an example to explain this and let us analyse the significance of the example given.

Sutre’: on the thread
Manigana iva: like clusters of gems,

“Like the clusters of gems on a thread”,

“The clusters of gems on a thread” makes the gems an ornament like necklace or bracelet.

The gems could be of any variety. There are a number of gems of different shapes, colours and sizes. Gems are precious stones. When these are strung together they become an ornament to be worn. It brings out the beauty of the individual gems on the ornament. What a beautiful necklace, people exclaim.

“What makes them stay together and give the appearance of a unit, instead of individual, separate gems?”

The answer is “The thread/string”. The thread is not seen but is doing the job of keeping the gems together. The ignorant person does not recognise the presence of the thread. The children do not realise it. The thread is taken for granted and even the elders see only the necklace and do not take notice of the thread.

If the thread is snapped, the gems fall down and scatter all over. Their beauty as one unit becomes diminished on separation.

This is exactly what the Lord is doing. Like the thread He has united us all by keeping us all alive and together.

The world is made up of different living creatures including men/women of different races, cultures, religions etc. By saying like “gems”, we can understand that He considered all forms of life as gems, each one precious in its own way. The principle that sustains them together, without which they cannot exist, is “The divine energy”. This energy is known by different names in different parts of the world as “Isawara, Allah, Jesus” etc but is not seen.

The eye of knowledge only can recognise this truth,
The mind of the egoistical does not accept the truth.

Spiritual knowledge is all about recognising this force that holds all of us together and sustains us.

The body/upadhi as we know is insentient and comes to life only in the presence of the divine energy. Not realising this and giving importance to the body is foolish. Respecting the power within, without which one cannot survive in this world, is taught by the scriptures.

The guhya bhasha in this sloka is “sutre iva”. It means, “Like the thread.” Hence the Lord is known as “Sutatma - string like supporter of life in this universe”.

In the next four slokas we are going to know more about the glory of the Lord in various manifestations in this universe.

Sloka 8

**RASOHAM APSU KOUNTEYA PRABHASMI SHASHI SURYYAYOH
PRANAVAHA SARVA VEDESHU SHABDAHA KHE PAURUSHAM NRUSHAHA**

I am the sapidity in water. I am the light in the moon and the sun and I am the syllable OM in all the Vedas. I am the sound in ether and virility in men, O Kaunteya.

The entire Geeta is about “Dharma”. The Vedas declare that Brahman is “Dharma”. This sloka is about the glory of Parabrahman as dharma in some of the elements of nature, in the Vedas and in human beings in this universe.

In the first sloka of the first chapter, we have discussed the definition of “Dharma.” Let us recollect the same:

“It is the law of the being. It is the essential quality of a being without which the being has no existence.” The innate nature of all is “divinity”. There is a need to recognise the “Divinity” in every aspect of life on earth and in various aspects of nature. This knowledge would lead man to develop wisdom.

Each of the five sense organs, “eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin” recognise the dharma in “fire, ether, earth, water and air” respectively. These five elements of nature each have a specific quality without which they are not recognisable by the sense organs.

The principle of water is “sapidity”. The tongue is considered to be the organ for appreciating the sapidity in water and the element water is the deva for the tongue.

The principle of fire is brilliance and it is symbolised in the sun and moon. These two cannot be recognised if there was no light in them. The light from them when perceived by the eyes bring in the knowledge of colour, form, shape etc. In the next sloka we will hear that the Lord is the “Brilliance behind the fire”. The sense organ with this function is our “eyes.”

The principle of space is its capacity to transport the sound. The sound and its modifications are the languages and the language is the medium of communication. “Ear” is the organ for this function.

These important qualities of the three elements of nature have been brought out in this sloka.

Rasoham apsu: sapidity in water

Prabhasa: the light

Shashi: moon

Suryayaha: the sun

Shabdaha: the sound

Khe: in ether

The next example given is about the syllable “OM” and its relevance to the Vedas.

Pranavaha: the sound “OM”

Sarva Vedeshu: among all the Vedas.

“Om” we have studied before is the first manifestation of the “Nirakara, Nirguna” aspect of Parabrahman. The Vedas deal with Parabrahman and hence the statement “I am the syllable Om in all the Vedas”. If the dharma aspect of the Vedas are not understood and implemented there is no point in studying the Vedas.

Finally the Lord says:

Paurusham: virility

Nrushu: in men

“I am the virility in men”.

Let us not misunderstand this statement. The Lord is not boasting about masculinity. There is a need for propagation of species and also for propagation of dharma through the genes. Everyone carries the genes of dharma in him/her but unfortunately the influence from the physical, material world shadows

this underlying property of the genes. The vasanas from the world act as maya and cloud the knowledge within. Each one of us is divine but the amount we manifest varies. Through innumerable births we are given opportunity to exhaust the vasanas, clear the ignorance and let the divinity shine forth.

Another way to understand this statement is:

“Bring out the pure rajas in you and uphold the dharma. Annihilate the ego, ahamkara within you, destroy the six dreaded enemies (kama, krodha etc) and let the divine shine forth.”

“Become the Arjuna’s of the world and with the help of the Lord within bring out peace, prosperity and assist in universal welfare.”

Moksha is not having “to become” something but to be what we are, which is, “true to our real Self.”

To summarise,
Realise the presence of Lord in all,
Taste in water,
Light in sun, moon,
Sound in ether,
Om in the Vedas,
Virility in men.

For majority of us who cannot visualise the Lord, this is the means of seeing His glory in various manifestations.

Sloka 9

**PUNYO GANDHAHA PRUTHIVYA CHA TEJASCHASMI VIBHAVASOU
JEEVANAM SARVA BHUTESHU TAPAS CHASMI TAPASWISHU**

I am the sweet fragrance in the earth, the brilliance in the fire, life in all beings and austerity in ascetics.

Tejas cha asmi: and I am the brilliance
Vibhavasou: in the fire

In the last sloka we were told that “He” is the light in sun and the moon and in this sloka He adds that “He” is the “brilliance” in the fire.

Punyaha: sweet
Gandhaha: fragrance
Prithiviam: in earth

(I am) the sweet fragrance in the earth.

The sense organ for this is the “nose” that smells the fragrance in the earth.
This is highlighted in ritual worship where the incense (agarbathi) is lit that emanates sweet fragrance during the ritual.

Jeevanam: life
Sarva bhootanaam: in all beings

(I am) the life in all beings.

Whether it is the priest, emperor, tradesman, manual labourer or a beggar, all are able to manifest their existence only because of the presence of “Life” element within. The same law applies also to all other forms of life, be it a plant, insect or an animal.

Tapas: austerity

Cha: and

Asmi: am

Tapaswishu: among ascetics.

(I am) the austerity amongst all the ascetics.

“Tapas” as we have discussed before is purity of the mind, speech and actions. This is the best form of expressing divinity and even this is possible only because of the compassion of the Lord within. So, we are told that “He” is the austerity among ascetics.

The essence of everything is the Lord Himself.

Sloka 10

**BEEJAM MAAM SARVA BHOOTANAAM VIDDI PARTHA SANATANAM
BUDDHIR BUDDHIMATAAM ASMI TEJAS TEJASWINAAM AHAM**

O Arjuna, know Me as the eternal seed of all beings. I am the intelligence of the wise and I am the splendour of the splendid.

Beejam: the seed

Maam: Me

Sarva bhootanaam: of all beings

Viddhi: know

Sanaatanam: eternal

“I am the eternal seed of all beings, know this truth” is the statement by Sri Krishna to Arjuna. The Lord is making a categorical statement of fact that there is no question of whether the seed came first or the tree first.

One has to develop the total faith in Lord and accept His statement in this regard. The constant source of life in this universe is the eternal seed, the Lord Himself. It is therefore essential to respect every form of life and it is equal to adoring Him. The Lord is not to be seen in a remote corner or sphere in this universe but the learned have to develop the maturity (wisdom) to see Him everywhere and in all.

This point brings out another salient point again and that being “there is nobody high or low.” Transcending the separateness that appears to exist between various forms of life and men/women of different creed, race, religion or sex is the wisdom one has to develop. When the seed for all is God it is evident that He is the father of all.

When one looks from the angle of cause and effect, the effect is nothing but cause in a different form. The pot is mud in a different form.

It is not only the reaction to other forms of life that is important but it is important also to remember that we are not just the body with a name and form but with the seed of divinity within. “Tat Tvam

Asi” is the Mahavakya from Chandogya Upanisad. “Thou Art That” says the Vedas. None should be disheartened of the position they have been born into this world but strive to fulfil the role allotted by the Master.

During any ritual it is tradition that the “Gotra” (lineage) of the karta (performer of ritual) is asked for by the priest. The answer would be to say “Paramatma Kula Gotra” as we have come from Him. Our ancestors and their ancestors came from Him.

The wisdom of the wise is “Him”. It is necessary to realise this truth and learn to be humble and say “thank you Lord for giving me this wisdom”.

Such a person shines forth spiritually and this is the meaning when the Lord says finally in this sloka:

I am the splendour of the splendid.

The splendour in the diamond is “He”.

The spiritual splendour would not have been present but for the divinity shining forth from the individual.

Sloka 11

**BALAM BALAVATAAM ASMI KAMA RAGA VIVARJITAM
DHARMA VIRUDDHO BHUTESHU KAMO’SMI BHARATARSHABHA**

**O best amongst the Bharatas, I am the strength of the strong, devoid of desire and attachment;
and in all beings I am desire not contrary to dharma.**

This is a sloka with a wonderful meaning which is of great importance to all spiritual seekers.

Balam: the strength

Balavataam: of the strong

Asmi: I am

I am the strength of the strong.

“He” has given the life for us and each one of us has also got the strength in us. The strength one possesses may vary from person to person and from time to time. Even this strength can be expressed because we are alive. So, it is appropriate that “He” is the strength in all.

The way one uses/expresses his strength is more important. This is because we have the “divinity” within and also we have “individuality” (ego, ahamkara) in us and it depends upon which of the two is brought out during the expression of strength.

That strength which is devoid of desire and attachment is divine and this point is brought out in the second quarter of the sloka.

Kama: desire

Raga: attachment

Vivarjitam: devoid of

(Strength that is expressed which is devoid of desire and attachment is divine).

Here we have to take shelter under the great Spiritual Jagadguru Shankaracharya who has clearly defined the meaning of the words “kama and raga”.

He says:

Kama: desire for what the person has not got;

Raga: affection/attachment for what the person has got.

That strength which is used to:

Get what one has not got and not to lose that which he has got is the expression of “ego”.

When there is no selfishness in making use of the strength, it becomes divine.

Arjuna in the battlefield was expected to make use of his strength to uphold “dharma” and he took the guidance of Sri Krishna. The power he made use of in the battle after receiving the “celestial song” became “Divine”. It expressed the will of the Lord who had incarnated to uproot the evil and protect the righteous.

On the other hand, Duryodhana, an extremely strong warrior used his strength to fulfil his lifelong ambition of becoming the sole ruler of the Kuru clan. He took recourse to adharma to fulfil his ambition. That strength therefore became undivine.

The strength either spiritual or physical which is used to do good for the society (Loka kalyana) will become “divine”.

The second half of the sloka is about “desire”. We all entertain desires and our actions are towards fulfilling the same.

The Hindu philosophy says:

The purpose of life is to attain “Salvation” and towards it there should be: “Dharma, Artha, Kama”. These should lead one ultimately to “Moksha”.

This aspect of the sloka describes the

Dharma viruddho: not contrary to dharma

Bhuteshu: in all beings

Kamaha: desire

Asmi: I am

I am the desire not contrary to dharma, He says.

Chaturvidha Purushartha (the four goals of human life) is expressed as:

Dharma: righteousness

Artha: means to live

Kama: desires

Moksha: Liberation.

The first lesson in life is to understand what dharma is and learn to live righteously.

With this basic rule fulfilled, one should work to earn the means to live in this world and also to fulfil one’s obligation to one’s family and society.

Once we have the means to live by earning according to dharma, we can fulfil the desires in our lives. It is this aspect that is brought out in this sloka. The desires to fulfil should not be contrary to sastras.

One can have a desire to be a professional but it should not be for the sole purpose of fulfilling one’s desires. The duty as a professional is to work for welfare of the society.

One can be a businessman and needs to have the profits in the business transactions. But the profits earned have to be according to dharma. (fair trade)

Only on following this principle, the seeker in course of time becomes fit to attain Moksha.

The principle applies to all walks of life and to all the individuals.

All actions (physical), thoughts (mental) and ideas (intellectual) entertained by the seeker has to follow this rule.

Lord Hanuman, the mythological monkey who is revered as a God Himself, is the best example of “Balam Balavatam asmi”. He used all his physical strength only to fulfil the duties to his master, Lord Rama. He remained as the eternal servant of Rama. He is depicted to be sitting always near the feet of Rama ready to receive commands and fulfil the same.

Sloka 12

**YE CHAIVA SATVIKAA BHAAVA RAJASAS TAMASASCHA YE
MATTVA EVETI TAN VIDDI NA TVAHAM TE' MAYI**

Whatever beings that are pure, active or inert, know them to proceed from Me. But, I am not in them, they are in Me.

The entire population on this universe (irrespective of religion, caste, creed, sex etc) can be classified broadly into three groups:

Satvic - pure

Rajasic - passionate

Tamasic - inert.

We had a brief introduction to the three gunas in sloka 45, chapter 2 (traigunya vishaya vedaha) and we will have an entire chapter dedicated to the three gunas later on. (chapter 14) There has been reference to gunas several times and we will get the reference to them in the chapters to follow.

The gunas are the qualities expressed by individuals. They are inherent as vasanas in the mind. The entire nature (Prakriti) is constituted of the three gunas and this Prakriti is born of Purusha, we have discussed before.

The Lord says that the three gunas proceed from him and He is not in them.

We can understand the meaning by taking the example of the ocean and the waves. The ocean is the substratum and the waves are in it. The waves proceed from the ocean and merge back into the ocean. The Lord is the ocean and the Prakriti (manifest life) is the waves. The life proceeds from the Lord and merges back into Him.

One cannot say that the ocean is in the waves. The waves are in the ocean is a fact.

The gunas due to the vasanas from several births act as a veil and hide the divinity within.

The pertinent point to note from this sloka is about the phenomenon of cause and effect.

The cause for this universe is the Parabrahman. The effect is the manifold life on this universe. The nature can never be the cause for the creation of Parabrahman. The power of appearing as the nature is

inherent in Parabrahman and hence the statement by the Lord in this sloka “I am not in them, they are in Me.”

Matta eva iti: proceed from Me only
Taan: them
Viddhi: know
Na: not
Tu: but
Aham: I
Teshu: in them
Te: they
Mayi: in Me.

“Know them to proceed from Me, still I am not in them, they are in Me.”

Sloka 13

**TRIBHIR GUNAMAYAIR BHAVAIREBHIHI SARVAMIDAM JAGAT
MOHITAM NABHIJANATI MAMEBHYAHA PARAM AVYAYAM**

Deluded by these natures, composed of the three gunas, all the world does not know Me, the higher and imperishable.

Why are we not able to see, think and contemplate on the Parabrahman?
The answer would be “Ignorance”.
This ignorance in spiritual terms is “Maya”.
“Maya” is made up of the three gunas we have learnt.
The gunas are due to the stored vasanas in our mind.

The Atman is beyond the indriyas, mind and the intellect. Whatever we do and see can only be due to our senses, mind or the intellect. The one beyond that which is transcendental can only be attained by becoming one with it (dissolution of the Ego).

The Primordial energy is without any form or shape and has no properties of its own. If it had properties it would become recognisable. From this primordial energy we get various forms of energy and electricity is one such form of energy that is recognisable. Electricity can give us shock and when it is passed on to the bulbs through the medium of the wires one can see the light.

People can recognise electricity or the light but they cannot recognise the primordial energy. It is higher and imperishable form of energy.

This is one way to understand the statement:
“The world does not know Me, the higher and imperishable.”

Maya is so strong that it is hard to conquer it.

Let us take the idol of the Lord in the inner sanctum of the temple.
Let us imagine that it has three veils in front of it,
The immediate veil/screen is made up of thin transparent cloth,
The intermediate veil/screen is made up of thick cloth and
The outermost veil/screen is made up of a solid wooden door.

We, the majority of humans in general are standing outside the wooden door and hence we cannot see the idol inside but the idol is still there.

Some of us by spiritual sadhana have opened the wooden door and are in front of the thick veil and hence we still cannot see the idol within.

Very rare few have moved this veil and are in front of the thin veil.

They can see the idol but still with the thin veil in front of the idol. Still they cannot see the finer details of the idol. The fact that they have gone deeper towards the idol, some get the pride of overcoming the wooden door and the thick veil and this pride acts as thick veil and they still cannot see the idol clearly.

This is the scenario for the three gunas described in this sloka.

Tamoguna is like the wooden door,

Rajoguna is like the thick screen and

Satvaguna is the thin veil.

The Atman is the idol behind the thin veil.

One can unite with the Atman by transcending the three gunas.

One in a billion or so, as we understood from sloka 3 of this chapter has overcome this pride and become one with the Parabrahman.

The Atman is “Avyayam”, it is imperishable. It is constant.

In a cinema theatre we see the film projected on the screen and see the variety of actions that are projected on to the screen.

We get so immersed in the picture and do not take notice of the screen.

Without the screen, the picture would not have been possible.

Similarly, the cinema of the world is projected on the screen which is the Atman and we do not take notice of the presence of “Him” in our life.

When we are bound by the gunas, we are immersed in the play of life and are ignorant of the Supreme within.

Sloka 14

**TRIBHIR GUNAMAYAIR BHAVAIREBHIHI SARVAMIDAM JAGAT
DAIVEE HYESHA GUNAMAYEE MAMA MAYA DURATYAYA
MA'MEVA YE PRAPADYANTE MAYAMETAM TARANTI TE'**

This divine illusion of Mine, made up of the three gunas is difficult to cross over. Those who take refuge in Me alone can cross the illusion.

What is maya and how to cross the hurdle called maya is the essence of this sloka.

Maya is cosmic illusion. That which is not is maya. (Advaita concept of the Supreme who is the one and the only one and the rest is an illusion.)

It is made up of the three gunas, “satva, rajas and tamas” which are the inherent nature in all beings.

Lord's saying.

That it is an illusion,

And it is “divine”,

Adds the Jagadguru.

Daivee: Divine

Hyesha: this (illusion)

Gunamayee: made up of the three gunas.

Without this illusion made up of the three gunas/the inherent nature, there would not have been the world and the play of drama in which we are all actors. This maya is “His” and it is under His control.

The Lord is the master over the maya and the world created out of maya. The maya has no control over the Lord.

“He” is playing “Leela” (play) with the three gunas and we are under His control.

The three gunas are the qualities without any physical form to them. They are embedded in our mind as the vasanas.

The cosmic illusion is so powerful that it can drag anyone in the three worlds and make them get caught in its web. Only the divine can help us to cross it.

The ocean called samsara is made up of the three gunas and we have to cross the ocean safely. The divine qualities in us act as our friends and the asuric qualities act as our enemies in crossing the ocean.

We are on the boat of life on this ocean. If we take shelter under Him and develop the divine qualities, He will navigate us through the hurdles we come across in life.

On the other hand, if we do not develop the divine qualities, the boat would be capsized and we will get caught by the so called sharks, crocodiles and other dangerous inhabitants of sea in the form of “desire, anger, greed, delusion, pride and enmity” (the six emotions “kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya”).

Developing the knowledge of surrendering with total Bhakti, faith and conducting actions accordingly is the only means to cross the ocean and overcome the dangerous reptiles in the sea of samsara.

Two words are very important in this sloka:

They are:

Duratyaya: difficult to cross over

It is difficult to cross over, we are told. But the Lord never says it is impossible to cross over. So anybody can try to cross this sea of samsara.

Mameva: in Me alone

Prapadyante: take refuge

Take refuge in “Him” alone is the meaning.

There is no other way to cross the ocean. It must be only by taking refuge in Him and nobody else. No one in this world or the worlds above can grant us salvation. Only the Lord helps us to cross over. Let us be clear:

We are told that we can cross over the illusion by His Grace. It is very important that we put our efforts and develop the divine qualities. Anybody can get salvation provided he/she puts his/her efforts towards it. It does not matter what caste, creed, religion, sex the individual belongs to.

The benefit of taking refuge in Him is:

Mayaam: illusion
Etaam: this
Taranti: cross over
Te: they

Those who take refuge in Him will cross over this cosmic illusion.

Sloka 15

**NA MAAM DUSHKRUTINO MOODAHA PRAPADYANTE NARADHAMAHA
MAYAYA' PAHRUTAJNANA AASURAM BHAVAMASHRITAH**

**Evil doers, the deluded, the lowest of men, deprived of knowledge by maya, having taken to
demonical ways do not take refuge in Me.**

We learnt about the benefit one gets by taking shelter in the Lord and His teaching. Unfortunately by nature human beings do not all have the same disposition. Men take different paths and hold to so many different views. The variety is the spice of life they say.

This sloka is about those who are totally opposite to the type of people mentioned in the last verse.

In the last verse we were told about those who have taken shelter in the Lord and developed divine disposition. It applies to those who follow the path of righteousness as elaborated in the scriptures.

What about those who are opposite and do not take shelter in the Lord?
They are deprived of the knowledge, He says.
What knowledge?
The knowledge of "Dharma" is the answer.

"They are deprived of the knowledge":
Let us be clear to understand this sentence.

All men/women on this earth do possess the divine knowledge which is inherent in each one. But this is clouded and hidden from view.

It is like the clouds hiding the sun.
The sun is there but not seen.
When the clouds disperse, the sun is back in view.

Similarly when the ignorance is dispersed off the knowledge shine forth on its own.
How is it possible? What should the man do to clear this ignorance?
First of all, one should be aware that there is knowledge within and there is need of external help to disperse the ignorance.
The gurus, learned elders and the scriptures do help provided this path of approaching them is pursued with faith and devotion.

Those who are not aware that they are ignorant will act in a different way and their acts are demonical says the Lord.

They take up demonical ways of action that results in harm to others including the beloved and the other members of the society. In the end it harms them too but they are not aware of it. Their actions become evil.

Such people are the lowest of the men, He says.

The important word to note is:

Apahrutajnana: deprived of knowledge.

It means, deprived of having the sense to use the inherent knowledge of the divine within. We have the greatest wealth within but alas, we do not know we have it and we do not know the benefit to us, our family and the society from that wealth.

Instead, there are few who go for worldly pleasures to enhance their ego and fall to lower and lower levels of existence. This sloka is about such people.

Chapter 16 has an elaborate description on this topic. This is just an introduction towards it.

Na maam: not to Me

Dushkrutino: evil doers

Moodaha: deluded

Prapadyante: seek

Naradhamas: lowest of men

Mayaya: by maya

Apahrutajnana: deprived of knowledge

Asuram: demonical

Bhavam: nature

Ashritaha: take shelter in.

This is not a selfish Parabrahman telling people to follow His advice but the most compassionate, caring father/mother who wishes welfare of the society He has created.

Sloka 16

**CHATURVIDA BHAJANTE MAAM JANAHA SUKRUTINO 'RJUNA
AARTHU JIJNASUR ARTHARTHI JNANEE CHA BHARATARSHABHA**

O Best one amongst Bharatas, four kinds of virtuous men worship Me: a distressed, a seeker of knowledge, a seeker of wealth and wise one.

Having described the way of the evil doers (dushkrutino) we are now given description of the virtuous. The Lord uses the word "Sukrutino" to tell us about them. The virtuous have all something common in them: they worship the Lord.

Even among those who worship, we are told that there are four kinds depending upon the purpose of worship.

Artho:

"Arthah" are those that are in distress. Those in distress look for help from some source or other. The virtuous beg for help of the Lord for deliverance from distress. There are some who may be suffering from a serious ailment and are not able to find a solution/cure for it. Some others would want to relieve the suffering of their loved ones. Yet some others may be the victims of accidents or being attacked and cry for help.

Two examples can be quoted from the mythological stories that show how the Lord came to the help of such devotees in distress.

Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas was being grossly insulted in the Royal assembly in front of a number of people by the evil minded Dushasana on the orders of his wicked brother Duryodhana. None in the assembly could come to her rescue and stop Dushasana from his wicked deed. She throws her arms out in desperation and asks the Lord to protect her dignity. Sri Krishna by His Divine spell rescues her from the predicament.

Gajendra was an elephant who was caught by a crocodile while he was in water sports with a group of other elephants. Due to his good past karma, he could remember the name of the Lord and cries out "Narayana" loudly and begs for help. Narayana comes down immediately and beheads the crocodile.

The second group of virtuous who worship the Lord are Jijnasu's.

Jijnasu means he who wants to know all about Brahman. Their thirst to know about the Lord, His Manifestations, His Leela is never ending.

King Parikshit, grandson of Arjuna was cursed to die within a week by a sage's son for committing an unpardonable sinful act. Welcoming the death in 8 days time, he goes to the banks of the river Ganga to be prepared to meet his death. On meeting great saints assembled there on that day he makes the following request to them: "Let my ears drink in the praises of the Lord during the next seven days." His quench to know all about the Lord was so great that he was not worried about his impending death.

Another seeker who belongs to this group of virtuous is "Uddhava", a very dear and close friend of Sri Krishna. His curiosity to know about the eternal reality gets him the fortune of getting the upadesha directly from Lord Krishna. This discourse by Krishna is the "Uddhava Gita."

The third group of virtuous are "Artharathi's".

They are seekers of wealth and follow the path of dharma to achieve it. The wealth they seek could be for money, progeny, food or health.

One of the best examples is that of Sugriva, the master of Hanuman who approaches Rama for regaining his lost kingdom.

The last group are the "Jnanis."

The word Jnani is used in this verse to that seeker who has developed the spiritual wisdom and realised the "Eternal Truth". He has learnt the art of visualising the "Sat, Chit, Ananda" in all and does not give importance to Nama, Roopa. He has no fears and not in distress at any time and at the same time he has no desires to fulfil. He is ever content with the knowledge of the Eternal Truth.

The examples for the seeker in this group are Narada, Bhishma and Prahlada.

Each of these four groups of virtuous who seek the Lord has different way of understanding Him and the Jnani is said to be the best amongst them. This idea is brought about in the next sloka.

Chaturvidha: four types

Bhajante: worship

Sukrutuha: virtuous

Artha: distressed

Jijnasu: seeker of knowledge

Artharathi: seeker of wealth

Jnani: the wise

Sloka 17

**TESHAAM JNANEE NITYAYUKTA EKA BHAKTIR VISHISHYATE
PRIYO HI JNANINO'TYARTHAM AHAM SA CHA MAMA PRIYAH.**

Of these, the wise, constantly harmonised and singularly devoted to Me, is the best. I am extremely dear to him and he is dear to Me.

What is the difference between the group of “Artho, Jijnasu and Artharathi” and the “Jnani”? Why is the Jnani dear to the Lord?

In the first group all the three sections have not got the constant expression of devotion to God. It is true that they are virtuous and have total faith in the Lord. But they approach Him only when they have a need.

Artho:

Droupadi was a great devotee of Sri Krishna. She asked for His help many a times and did get His total help and blessings. When the purpose of the approach was finished, she went back to her normal daily activities.

Artharathi:

Sugriva was another great devotee of Rama and begged Rama's help to get back the kingdom from his brother Vali. In return he promised so much support to Rama. After the killing of Vali by Rama, he got drowned in the pleasures of the royal life and forgot about Rama and his need to support Rama in finding Mother Sita.

Jijnasu:

Uddhava was a close friend and devotee of Krishna. He was in search of knowledge of the Atman and Krishna gave him the beautiful sermon “Uddhava Geeta”. Once, Uddhava was sent by Krishna to Brindavan to see the love of Gopis to Krishna. He found out that the gopis lived by singing the glory of Krishna and recollecting His name constantly. For the gopis Krishna was their very life, their everything.

The Jnani is different from this group. Through this sloka we also get a definition of a true Jnani.

Bhagawan says,

“Of these, the wise, constantly harmonised and singularly devoted to Me, is the best.”

Two attributes of a Jnani are given here, they are:

Nitya yukta: constantly harmonised

Eka bhaktir: singularly devoted.

He who fulfils these two conditions is the perfect Jnani who is very dear to Krishna.

Jnana is not just knowing about the Lord but also showing the devotion to the Lord.

He has no selfish motive in his devotion and the devotion is not a business transaction. His love to the Supreme is “unconditional,” with no strings attached. The desire of a jnani is to unite with the Lord and by that act to remain in eternal peace within himself.

Let us not forget that the true love in the highest form is total identification of oneself with the object of his love. There is no question of separation from the object of love at any time. There is no expectation of any return favours from the object of love.

The jnani does not get any special favours from the lord. The Lord is simply saying that “He is dear to Me.”

Here “Eka Bhakti” means that the devotee has no attachment for anything else. He has no desires and hatreds.

What comes between the Lord and the devotee?

“The world” is the answer.

For a jnani, the world and the attachments that stem from it does not come in his way of devotion.

In Vishnu Sahasra nama, (1008 names of Lord Vishnu), one of the names is “Shishteshtaha”. It means “he who is dear to the good.”

Sri Shanakracharya in his Atma Bodha and Aparoksha Anubhuti, defines “Jnana” as follows: “To replace all thoughts by the singular thought on Brahman is Samadhi. To realise the Brahman within oneself is Jnana.”

Jnanabhyasa (practice of Jnana) is constant remembrance of the Brahman.

He who conducts the practice of jnana constantly associated with pure single pointed devotion is the best among the devotees.

Sloka 18

**UDARA SARVA EVAITE JNANEE TVATMAIVA ME' MATMA
AASITAA SA HI YUKTATMA MAMEVANUTTAMAM GATIM**

Nobel are all these, but I hold the wise as My very Self because he is Self-united, is established in Me alone as the Supreme Goal.

We must clearly understand that when Sri Krishna has used the word “Me” in this sloka, He is referring to the “Parabrahman”. Parabrahman is “Divinity” manifest in actions. “Divinity” is the expression of virtues that are for “Universal Welfare”. Let us not forget the statement from the Lord, “Paritranya sadhonaam, Vinashaya cha dushkrutaam, Dharma samsthapanaya sambhavami yuge yuge.” (sloka 8, chapter 4)

He, who is immersed in the thought of divinity for the sake of establishing and protecting dharma and considers it as the Supreme Goal of his life, is the Lord Himself in human form. Hence even though the artho, artharthi, jijnasu are noble, the jnani is the most dear to Lord, is the correct understanding of this sloka.

This sloka has similarity with the 12th chapter where Bhagawan brings about “Bhakti”. A true Bhakta is most dear to Me, He says so many times in that chapter. It just shows that there is no differentiation between a true Bhakta and a true Jnani.

It is also true that a true jnani is he who conducts all his actions in the spirit of “Nishkama karma and karma phala tyaga”. So, one can say that all the three paths of karma, jnana and Bhakti to unite with the Supreme are all the same. Each one of them is intermingled so closely with the other two.

There is saying “the knower becomes the one to be known”. In the quest for knowing the Parabrahman, the seeker who succeeds in knowing has united with the Parabrahman and is the Parabrahman himself.

Artho, arthartha and jijnasu are dualists whereas the jnani is not a dualist. He has fully established himself with the Supreme. So when one asks the question, “Where is the God to be found?” the answer is simple. “He is found in a Jnani.”

Poet Veda Vyasa, who has compiled the Mahabharata which has the Srimad Bhagawadgita, the summary of all the upanisads, is the supreme jnani and is God Himself personified as Veda Vyasa.

See sloka 37, chapter 3:

Just as the blazing fire reduces the fuel to ashes, the fire of knowledge reduces all actions to ashes. The fuel becomes the fire itself. Similarly, the jnani becomes the Lord himself.

Sloka 19

BAHOONAAM JANMANAM ANTE JNANAVAN MAM PRAPADYATE VASUDEVAHA SARVAM ITI SA MAHATMA SUDURLABHAHA

At the end of several births, the jnani realises Me, knowing that all this is Vasudeva. Such a mahatma is very rare to find.

There is no room for getting disheartened on reading this sloka. If it really is going to take so many births, let me enjoy the worldly life in this birth may be the way of some. We have to come out of this negative outlook.

There is a saying that it takes over 84 million births to get “Moksha.” It is an extremely long period of time. The fact that we are born as humans means that we have already been blessed by Vasudeva, the Lord. He has blessed us with the instrument of reasoning. It is up to us to make use of the blessings and make the best of the powerful instrument, “The Intellect.”

We have discussed the meaning of the word “Jnani” in the last verse. He who realises the presence of “Vasudeva” within and learns to recognise the same “Vasudeva” in all forms of life on this universe is a great soul indeed. Sri Krishna calls such a great soul “Mahatma”. There is no difference between that Mahatma and the Lord Himself.

Bahoonam: several

Janmanaam: births

Ante: end

Jnanavaan: the wise

Sarvam: all

Vasudeva: the Lord

Maam: Me

Prapadyate: realises

Saha mahatma: such a great soul

Sudurlabhaha: vary rare.

The important words in this sloka are:
Sarvam, Vasudeva, Prapadyate.

“Vasudeva” refers to Krishna son of “Vasudeva and Devaki”. Krishna has already said that He is the Lord who has come down to this earth to protect “Dharma”.

The sincere sadhaka who goes in search of “Krishna”, who follows the essence of the sloka 34, chapter 4 (Tadviddhi Pranipatena) will start following the instructions of the learned gurus and sacred texts. The guru and the sastras direct him to make self-analysis and meditate on the teaching. Having got involved in the world so deeply, having developed so many desires and hatreds in the passage of births and deaths, it is not an easy job to develop the power of concentration and conduct “Jnana Abhyasa.” Only he who not only realises the Lord within but also develops the intellectual eye of wisdom and sees the divinity is the real Jnani. Such a jnani is Vasudeva in another form on earth.

“Sarvam Vasudeva”, “all is the Lord” is the “Prapadyate”, realisation that has to dawn. As soon as that realisation dawns the way of reacting to the manifold world changes dramatically. Such a man is “Mahatma”, a great soul.

We get such Mahatmas once in millennium or so. Mahatma Gandhi can be looked upon one such divine soul on earth.

Sloka 20

**KAMAISTAISTAIRHRITAJNANAHA PRAPADYANTE'NYADEVATAHA
TAM TAM NIYAMAM ASTHAYA PRAKRUTYA NIYATAHA SVAYA**

Those whose wisdom has been led astray by desires, go to other gods, following this or that rite, led by their own nature.

This sloka refers to the way of life of majority of people who believe in god but they have not understood the idea of god totally. Ignorance, blind belief etc play a major part in this misunderstanding.

As we have discussed before, the first concept of god as a higher power arose in the minds of our ancestors of long time ago. They observed nature and experienced the wrath of nature every so often. Human nature being what it is; we tend to approach the stronger power to help, beg to be excused so that our lives are smoother and we do not face hardship.

Our ancestors followed the same path and by close analysis attributed the power to the different aspects of nature: ie. fire, wind, water, earth etc. They gave names like Agni, Vayu, Varuna, Bhoomatha and started worshipping the same. In course of time they developed the concept of Indra in heaven. Propitiating a particular god to overcome the difficulties in life or fulfilling a particular desire through religious rites rose in course of time.

There were another group of learned sages who spent their time on deeper analysis of the higher power. They went in quest of who am I, where do I come from, where do I go after death etc. In course of time, through this approach by perfect analysis they came to the conclusion that there has been only one and only entity that has been present even before the concept of time. The creation as we know of came at a later stage. It was the Primordial Energy without any form or qualities. The creation was an outer expression of this “primordial Energy.”

They gave it the designation of “Nirguna, Nirakara Parabrahman” to the Primordial Energy.

Our learned saints of the past have said that the Vedas which are the guidelines for leading the life on this earth and to reach the Parabrahman at the end came from the Parabrahman who had a desire to create and they used the word “Leela.” (sports)

The Vedas were followed by Upanisads which were the end of quest for the knowledge of Parabrahman.

The mythological stories, Puranas, Ithihasas all are considered as the later developments to bring the idea of divinity to the ordinary men/women/children of the society in the form of stories and life of great men/women of the past. Somewhere in the middle, slowly but steadily the ritual aspect of worship made its entry and has taken a strong hold on the individuals and groups in the society. In this aspect of worship, procedures are laid down for the worship with emphasis on benefits from such worship known as “Phala Shruti”. By the conduct of worship of a named deity, the said deity will be pleased and will bless the individual with fulfilment of the desire, they said.

This aspect of the worship of Parabrahman for fulfilment of the desires has taken a strong hold on the society. The variety in the nature around has attracted the man so strongly that he would do anything to fulfil that desire.

In this sloka we are told that devotees wishing fulfilment of worldly desire/desires get side tracked in their path to unite with Parabrahman, they undertake the performance of rituals prescribed in the sastras.

Sri Krishna makes the observation that this is the result of their wisdom going astray. The intellectual capacity of reasoning fails in its duty for perfect analysis because of the desires entertained.

The rituals being vast, each individual follows his instinct and takes up to one or other forms of rites/rituals which he believes strongly for the sole purpose of sense gratification.

Why does this happen?

The answer is that each one of us is carrying the past samskaras with us. The unfulfilled desires/hatreds carried forward divert the mind away from the Parabrahman. The force of vasanas carried forward becomes the nature of the individual and it makes him/her follow the inbred gunas.

So the Lord says that it is the nature of each individual by which he undertakes any task including the worship of divinity.

Taih taih kamaihi: by whatsoever desires
Hrita jnana: of lost discrimination
Prapadyante: worship
Anya devataha: other devas
Tam tam: this and that
Niyamam: prescribed rituals
Asthaya: having followed
Prakrutya: by nature
Niyataha: led
Svaya: by one's own.

Sloka 21

YO YO YAM YAM TANU BHAKTAHA SRADDHAYARCHITUM ICCHATI

TASYA TASYACALAM SRADDHA TAME'VA VIDHADHAMI AHAM.

Whosoever desires to worship whatsoever form of devas with faith, to such and such I make his faith unswerving.

Here we have to be clear on what we mean by the word “other deities”. The highest form of worship is that of Supreme Parabrahman with no name or form. We will understand as we go to chapter 12, Bhakti yoga, that it is not easy to worship that with no name or form. Hence there is a pantheon of gods in Hindu philosophy. Climbing a step higher, there are a number of various forms of worship when we look at the different religions that exist. What we have to understand from this is to assist that individual who worships that form of god with a name and form, the Parabrahman will bless through the form of worship undertaken.

On the face of it the sloka might sound confusing for few. What does the Lord mean when He says “I make his faith unswerving?” they ask.

The answer is simple. First of all let us be clear and have faith that the Lord loves every one of His creation. The process of achieving Mukti is very slow and takes millions of births. Each step taken from the stage of stone man to god-man is to be looked upon as a stepping stone.

This can be understood by taking the example of climbing up a staircase.

The staircase is built to take people from the lower floors to the higher floors. Every step built has to be firm/solid in its frame work so that it takes the weight and does not crumble. If the construction of that step is weak, the person taking the step on it will fall down. Secure footing will take him up the next step on the ladder.

Similarly, the spiritual journey is like a staircase with thousands of steps to reach the Parabrahman. We have to take one step at a time and climb upwards. Each step we take has to be firm and of benefit to climb the next step. Worship of deities other than Parabrahman is like climbing up a step in the spiritual journey.

Worship of the other devas is therefore not wrong or sinful. The Lord helps every individual to evolve from the stage of stone man to god man.

Every step taken on this ladder is like a world of its own with a scenic view. The seeker in his journey should not get side tracked with the beauty of the life at that stage. Those who worship other deities have the chance of falling down in their quest if they get attracted to that set of life and what it has to offer. The weak human mind will get attracted by what the other deities have to offer and fail to climb the next step.

The Hindu philosophy is therefore unique in the way that it assists its followers all the way and allows worship of the divine in any form. Whatever path one may take will eventually lead to the Supreme.

It has to be understood that what the other deity is blessing the devotee is also ordained by the Parabrahman. This is brought about in the next sloka.

Sloka 22

**SA TAYA SRADDHAYA YUKTAS ARADHANAM IHATE
LABHATE CHA TATAHA KAMAN MAYAIVA VIHITAN HI TAAN**

Endowed with that faith, he engages in the worship of his chosen deity and from it he obtains his desire or fulfilments which are being ordained by Me, indeed.

To obtain anything (desires fulfilment) one has to act in one form or other. That action is known as “yajna”. What he is hoping to get is not with him and he has to get it from some other source.

For fulfilment of the desire/desires of his choice he is at a lower plane and the person who fulfils that desire is at a higher plane. Believing in the capacity of that source he would approach him/her with total faith.

Faith is the first step in approaching the higher power. This is entirely up to the choice of every individual.

Next step is conduct of actions to please the higher power. This is “worship” of the higher power. When the higher power is pleased with the dedication, he will bestow the fulfilment of desire.

We are told that even though the higher power granted the wish, it comes only after being ordained by the Parabrahman. The Lord through the system of administration, lets the lower ranking devas fulfil the wish.

We can understand this by taking an example.

To listen to music of one’s choice on the wireless, two basic needs are to be met. There should be a source of power and the channel has to be available in the radio equipment.

I need to switch the radio on and then tune it to the channel I need. I would be happy to receive the station I wanted to listen. This would not have been possible if there was no source of power available. The frequency I got is the lower deva and the power is the Parabrahman, if one understands what I mean. I got blessed by the lower deva (station of choice) but this happened by the blessings of the higher Parabrahman. (electricity)

The devotee who understands this principle will in course of time, developing spiritual maturity, move up to the top of the ladder and worship Parabrahman only and nobody else.

On the other hand, if the devotee does not understand this principle he will remain at the same plane and cannot make any progress.

Sloka 23

**ANTAVANTU PHALAM TESHAAM TAD BHAVATI ALPAMEDHASAAM
DEVAN DEVAYAJO YANTI MAD BHAKTAA YANTI MAAM API**

The fruit that accrues to these men of little wisdom is finite indeed. Those who worship the devas, go to the devas. My devotees come to Me.

The Lord used the word “Alpa medhasas” to point out those who worship the lower devas. “Alpa medhasa” is “little wisdom”.

What is “little wisdom”?

When one does not realise the imperfect, impermanent nature of the happiness he gets trying to worship deva for fulfilment of a desire he is considered as “alpa medhasa.” As we have studied, the joy

we get from fulfilment of any desire is transitory. The joy comes from an object and no object is immune to the principle of “birth, growth, decay, illness, injury and death.” Every object has a birth and death. This results in initial happiness but sorrow as a consequence. It is the attachment to the objects that brings in sorrow.

Those who look for material objects will approach the lower powers and those who look for spiritual fulfilment of the birth as a human, worship the Parabrahman with unswerving faith. They do get the due reward in the form of experiencing the “Eternal Bliss” of union with Him.

Sloka 24

**AVYAKTAM VYAKTIMAPANNAM MANYATE MAAM ABUDDHAYAHA
PARAM BHAVAM AJANANTO MAAM AVYAYAM ANUTTAMAM**

The ignorant think of Me, the un-manifested, as having name and form, not knowing My imperishable, Supreme and transcendental nature.

Herein we have the description of what He is not.

- 1) He is not manifest - avyakta.
- 2) He has no physical form as such.
- 3) He is not perishable.
- 4) He is not conceived by the senses, mind or the intellect.

What does one mean by “manifest”?

“Manifest” is that which is perceived by the senses, analysed by the mind and intellect. This can only relate to the varieties of forms in this world. When the senses do not perceive it is said to be “un-manifest.” “I can see, I can hear, I can smell, I can feel, I can taste” all point out that the object perceived is “manifest.” The mind analyses the impulses from the sense organs and gets an impression of the object. Such an impression of “Parabrahman” is not possible by the organs of perception or the mind. Hence He is “un-manifest.” Parabrahman, which is beyond the comprehension of the mind/intellect equipment is said to be “transcendental.”

“He” is therefore:

Avyayaha: imperishable

Param Anuttamam: Supreme, transcendental.

The mind cannot analyse anything that has no physical form or qualities as such.

The match box and match sticks are used to produce the fire. The material collected at the tip of the matches when rubbed against the rough surface of the match box brings the fire out. The fire that is produced has physical characters one can describe. But the precursor of fire which brings out the fire in manifest form is not perceivable and not manifest.

Similarly, the precursor of all forms on this earth is the “Primordial Energy”. This is un-manifest but on association with the Pancha maha bhootas takes a name and form. It is imperishable. It is also “Supreme” as it is the precursor of all forms of nature.

What confuses the issue is the idea of “Avatars”.

Rama, Krishna, Jesus, Buddha can all be considered as incarnation of the Supreme on this earth.

As it says in chapter 4, slokas 7/8, for the protection of the righteous, destruction of the wicked, establishment of “Dharma”, the Supreme incarnates every so often.

Majority have faith in God and have a picture of that God in their mind. They sincerely follow the sacred texts and develop a mental picture of that God of their choice. Puranas and epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata are to bring out the glory of the Supreme and assist the common man in developing the art to live the life of righteousness. Because of this superimposition of name and form on the formless divine, they tend to take into account the birth and death of that form of God. They find it very hard to conceive the God principle without any names and form.

Sri Krishna, like a loving parent, calls such people as “ignorant.”

He uses the words:

Abuddhayah: devoid of reason;

Ajanantaha: not knowing.

Not knowing the transcendental aspect of the divine, the form of worship undertaken by the average men/women stops at that point.

The purpose of sacred texts is to take the seekers to higher planes of evolution from that of a stone-man to that of God-man on earth. Only in this sense, the Lord is chiding such people as ignorant.

The clever ones proceed from step after step and reach the top. The ignorant, got caught in the transitory pleasures of the world, fail to climb up the ladder and many a times fall down to lower levels.

Because He is not conceived by organs of perception He is said to be “transcendental.” One can only unite with the transcendental and become one with it.

Let us therefore not attribute mortality to the “Divine” by following the Puranic stories. Worship of different manifestations of the Supreme is of course needed for developing the spiritual maturity and the Lord is in no way condemning the image worship.

Let us learn to see the divinity in the idols of worship we undertake.

Sloka 25

**NAHAM PRAKASHAHA SARVASYA YOGAMAYASAMAHRUTAHA
MUDO'YAM NABHIJANATI LOKO MAMAJAM AVYAYAM**

I am not manifest to all. Veiled by My Yogamaya, this world deluded, know Me not, the unborn and imperishable.

We all have the two eyes to see the world around.

In a sense we all have the five sense organs to see the world.

Nay, we have the mind that receives the impulses from the sense organs and see the world.

This is where we come to a halt.

We have forgotten the existence of the true “intellectual eye of wisdom”. This chapter is about “Jnana Vijnana” which is “knowledge and wisdom.” Unfortunately the art of seeing with the “eye of wisdom” is non-existent.

This is because of the power of “Yogamaya”, the Lord declares.

What is “Yogamaya”?

It is “cosmic illusion.”

We have learnt that the illusion is due to the three gunas of “satva, rajas and tamas.” Our mind is a bundle of vasanas made up of a number of combinations of these three gunas. The thought imprints we have been carrying due to our association with the physical world are so strong that they are blocking the eye of wisdom.

Medically we say that when the cataract develops over the eyes, the power of vision gets reduced. Yogamaya is like the cataract on our mind. It acts like a veil over the eye of wisdom. Because of it, the vision of God inside all (of what we perceive) is blocked.

Whatever we perceive with the physical eye has a “birth, existence, modification and ultimately death.” All these are attributes of the physical body made up of the five Pancha maha bhootas.

We have forgotten the presence of the Lord within each of what we perceive as He is not seen in the form we associate with the life around in the world we live. Hence the statement, “Naham prakashaha” which means, “I do not manifest.” The adjective “Sarvashaha” is added which means “to all.”

We should take the word “to all” in the sense of “not belonging to the school of Advaita.” (non-dualism) The ultimate aim of the Upanisads is to bring out the non-dual aspect of the Parabrahman. The spiritual progress is to reach the level of “Advaita” and become one with the Parabrahman.

Also, in a similar logical way we should understand the meaning of the words “Ajam and Avyayam”. The deluded of this world do not know that I am unborn and imperishable says the Lord.

Moodhaha: the deluded

Ayam lokam: this world

Mam: Me

Ajam: unborn

Avyayam: imperishable

Na abhijanati: do not know.

We see birth and death all round because we perceive the physical body only and do not recognise the deathless state of the energy which kept the body alive. The energy which made us alive was not born and does not die. It got associated with the five gross elements and took the shape of the body (birth) and the energy departed (death) leaving no identity behind to the five gross elements that formed the body.

This “Yoga maya” is extremely powerful, is under His control and does not affect Him in any way. It is like the sun and the clouds. The clouds do not in any way affect the sun but they delude the ones under the sky who fail to see the sun above.

In the Hindu spiritual practice the number 108 is given a great importance. The rosary has 108 beads in it. Let us briefly analyse its significance.

The number “1” stands for non dual Parabrahman. (Purusha)

The number “8” stands for the mind, body, intellect with the five gross elements. (Prakriti)

There should not be anything standing between ”1” and the “8”. The world we create due to “ego” should not be present. Instead it should be a total “zero”. The union of the “8” with “1” without the ego “0” is the aim of ultimate spiritual practice.

Sloka 26

VEDAHAM SAMATEETANI VARTAMANANI CHA ARJUNA BHAVISHYANI CHA BHOOTANI MAA TU VEDA NA KASCHANA

O Arjuna, I know the past, present and future of all beings. But Me, no one knows.

The human mind, though a powerful tool has its limitations. It is like a sponge that can absorb fluid. There is a limit to the amount of fluid it can absorb.

Sugar dissolves in water but after saturation, the excess sugar remains only as a deposit at the bottom of the container.

Similarly, our mind has a limited capacity to retain what is perceived by it over its life span. We go through birth, youth, adult and old age stages in our life that can span to about 70-100yrs. Can we remember fully the minute details from minute to minute of our entire life spent in this world so far? Can we know what is in store for us tomorrow?

In chapter 15, sloka 15 we will learn that memory, knowledge and loss of memory is by His grace only. There is an ongoing process of entry of new and clearance of old items from our memory bank. It is therefore true that we do not know our past.

If someone has taken the picture of an individual at birth and compares with the picture of the same individual when he is about 70yrs old, there is no comparison between the two. The individual concerned can only say it is his photo because he was told so by his elders.

Each one of us has a past - samateetani

We are in the present - vartamanani

We have a future - bhavishyani

We have to agree that we do not remember in full our past. Not to talk of past births, but cannot remember the past even in this present birth.

As we grow old, our memory gets shorter and shorter and senility sets in few of us.

Certainly we do not know our future.

The Lord, without a physical form as such is within each one of us as our life's energy. He is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. He is a witness to all our thoughts and actions from birth till death. By His omniscient nature, He knows our future also.

One has to have faith in this statement and no physical proof is available to confirm the same.

The sun, the visible form of energy has been there for thousands of years. He has seen each one of us, our ancestors and great grand ancestors. He will see our future generations also. He is an eternal witness who knows all our past.

We are under the control of time, whereas the Lord is the controller over the time.

Hence the sastras say that the Lord is "Sarvajna" which means "all knowing." On the contrary, we are "alpajnas", which means we are of "little wisdom."

The purpose behind this statement is to make us realise that we have to drop the "ego" if we have to make any progress in spiritual path. The "Mada" (pride) due to our ego makes us forget that what we have now is not permanent but only transitory.

The simple request for all is to remember to show reverence and bow down to the Lord who is "Omnipresent."

Sloka 27

ICHA DWESHA SAMUTTHENA DWANDVA MOHENA BHARATA SARVA BHOOTANI SAMMOHAM SARGE YANTI PARANTAPA

O Bharata, O Parantapa, by the delusion of the pairs of opposites arising from desire and aversion, all beings are subject to illusion at birth in the world.

Iccha: desire
Dweshha: aversion
Samutthena: arising from
Sammoham: to delusion
Sarge: at birth
Yanti: are subject to
Sarva bhootani: all beings

Everyone born on this earth is subject to delusion at birth itself, the Lord declares. How does this happen and why does this happen is answered in this verse.

Why should they be deluded at birth itself is another question the seeker would like to get an answer for. This goes back to the fundamental subject of sense organs, the impulses received by the mind, the reaction of the mind to such impulses.

What is desire?

Desire is the result of impulse received about the objects from the external world which gives a feeling of pleasure on obtaining that object. The individual gets a feeling of happiness and the amount of happiness one experiences varies from individual to individual and also on circumstances at that time.

The desires would also spring from the stored imprints of thoughts from past actions.

We have learnt already that the feeling of happiness is not permanent and has a span of life of its own. We also have learnt that this feeling gradually evaporates and many a times leads to sorrow. The sorrow could be due to a number of factors including the loss of the object received and the root cause of sorrow is due to the attachment to the object of desire.

What is aversion?

Dislike towards an object one does not like is aversion.

These desires and aversions come in plenty in one's life. Many of the desires and aversions do not get fulfilled. These remain as vasanas.

The birth into this world is due to the vasanas filled in the minds. It is the way God gives us an opportunity to learn lessons in our lives and finally realise the need to go for "Liberation" rather than worldly objects.

These vasanas are the basis of the three gunas we exhibit and remain as seeds at birth itself. Therefore we are by our own actions deluded at birth itself.

What is the fate of us if we continue to be born again and again? Is there no end to this cycle? When can one start to get out of this cycle?

It is true that the path for Liberation is very hard and full of thorns.

Even though each one of us is responsible for the way we act in this world, we have a ray of hope for success. The following groups can contribute to assist individuals towards “Salvation”. They are:

- a) The parents and learned elders.
- b) The scriptures.
- c) The Guru.

The first point of contact is the parents and the close family of the child that is born into this world. The child born has a latent period before developing contact with the objective world. The close family could influence the child by the surroundings in the house itself. Apart from the parents and family, the primary schools have a role in guiding the child.

It is like tendering a seed that is going to sprout and become a tree in course of time. We all know that it is possible to direct the plant the way one wants only when the plant is young. It is impossible to change the direction when it has become a tree.

Towards this the scriptures and the guru have a greater role. The families who have a guru have a better chance to get the knowledge of the scriptures, encourage the child to learn them and live the life of truth and righteousness.

All of this comes from Lord’s grace and we can only pray to Him to shower His Grace on us. (Refer to slokas 41-45 chapter 6.)

Finally it is interesting to note that Arjuna is referred to as “Parantapa”. The word means: “scorcher of enemies.” We, the Arjuna’s of the world should develop the spiritual strength to scorch the enemies, “Desires and aversions.”

Sloka 28

**YESHA TVANTAGATAM PAPAM JANANAAM PUNYA KARMANAAM
TE DWANDVA-MOHA-NIRMUUKTA BHAJANTE MAAM DHRUDAVRATAHA**

But those men of good deeds whose sins have come to an end, who are freed from delusion of the pairs of opposites and are steadfast in vows, worship Me.

The ultimate aim (Purusharta), the Hindu considers is “Moksha.”
Towards achieving Moksha, we worship the Lord and pray for “deliverance.”

To achieve something special in life, in a way, one has to take a vow that he will strive hard to achieve the object of his desire. Till he fulfils the objective, he should not break the vow. When a resolution is taken to carry out some task towards achieving something special, there should not be any room for other thoughts that distract from the final goal. To achieve “Liberation” from worldly bondage, there is a need to conduct good deeds.

Punya karmanaam: good deeds.
What are good deeds?

Refer to sloka 13, chapter 3.

Yajna shishtashinaha: the righteous are those who offer food to the Gods in sacrifice and eat the remnants. They are freed from all sins, says Bhagavan.

In that sloka we have discussed about the “Pancha Maha Yajnas”.

Dedicated acts in the spirit of self-sacrifice: Deva yajna (Divinity), Rishi yajna, (the sages who imparted the scriptural knowledge), Pitru yajna, (ancestors who brought us into this world), Nara yajna (fellow human beings including needy sections of the society) and Bhoota yajna (all other forms of life and the nature) constitute “Punya karmas”. Acts of Loka kalyana with the spirit of self-sacrifice are punya karmas.

In the path for Liberation, good deeds are those that fit in with two fundamental Vedic teaching and they are:

satyam vada and dharmam chara - speak the truth and walk in the path of righteousness.

Constantly applying these two in every action, we are told, the vasanas will gradually be washed off.

This can be understood by taking example of sowing the seeds on the land to get good crops.

The final aim is to get good crops. To get good crops the land has to:

Cleared off weeds and irrigated and good seeds have to be sown.

The pure waters should run through the land and wash off dirt accumulated within.

Mother Ganga is the most sacred rivers for the Hindus. The spiritual knowledge, like the mother Ganga will assist to wash off the vasanas accumulated over several births.

The seeds of spirituality should be sown.

Vows should be taken not to deviate from the path till success is achieved.

Some of the examples of vows one can undertake: fasting for certain length of time, vow to adhere to scriptural/puranic reading for some time every day, to be of help to the needy etc.

In Chapters 17 and 18 we get to know all about Sraddha/discipline in celibacy, yajnas and tapas, (sacrificial acts for purification of mind, body and speech); dana etc and the vow should be to conduct Satvic actions in all these fields of activity.

In course of time that would take many births, the vasanas are totally cleared and this is equivalent to washing off all sins.

During this period, there should not be an opportunity for new vasanas/sins to enter the mind.

This can happen only when one is freed from “raga”, (attachment) which is precursor for pairs of opposites like happiness/sorrow; victory/defeat; gains/losses. These dwandvas bring in delusion and block the vision of the Supreme.

A constant application of firm resolve will assure victory.

One can see that the Lord advocates “karma” actions. This applies to the majority. Very few can take up to the path of renunciation/sanyasa.

In the earlier stages of spiritual practice action is essential. This is to wash off bad karmas. In the final stages both bad and good are left behind. (sanyasa).

For the sake of setting an example for others to follow, the men of realisation have to continue to conduct actions. Lord Krishna Himself set an example to this effect.

Sloka 29

**JARA MARANA MOKSHAYA MAM ASHRITYA YATANTI YE
TE BRAHMA TAD VIDUHU KRITSNAM ADHYATMAM KARMA CHAKHILAM**

Those who strive for Liberation from old age and death, taking refuge in Me, realise in full that Brahman, the whole knowledge of the Self and all actions.

Jara: old age
Marana: death
Ashritya: having taken shelter
Yatanti: strive
Tad: that
Viduhu: know
Kritsnam: whole
Adhyatmam: knowledge of the Self
Karma: action
Cha: and
Akhilam: whole

Everyone wants to have a long life and the elders bless them with the words, “Deerghayushman Bhava” which means “may you live long”. The law of nature is that we have to go through the various stages and experiences in life. Birth, growth, illness, injury, decay and old age are inevitable. Finally death takes us out of this world. Death may come at any one of the stages in life.

In the earlier stages of life, when one is enjoying the life, the mind runs towards more and more pleasures and security of those pleasures. But when the old age sets in, the capacity to enjoy is diminished and diseases start setting in. The modern medicines have given solutions for a number of illnesses but still the medical profession can do only so much. It has its limitations and one has to give way to nature taking its course. At that time, one would feel that they want to be liberated from old age and pray God sincerely to grant an end to the suffering. In some other cases, there may not be an illness as such but social life becomes a torment for few when the so called near and dear one distance away from their lives. They pray God to give liberation.

Death of the loved ones or death of oneself is a topic never discussed or thought about when one is in full vigour of life. No one wants to experience decay of his body or the decay of what he possesses with love and affection. But the irony of life or the play of divine leela is that no one can escape from the clutches of these two.

Many pray for an immediate solution to their problems. They pray for liberation from old age and do not want to think of death. This is not true for a jnani. His attitude to these two is brought about in the second half of the sloka.

He has realised that the physical body is not the real Self and the Atman within is the true Self. What he is experiencing with his physical body is not his real Self but only an instrument of the Self. He attributes all his actions to the presence of the Brahman within.

He has taken total shelter in the divinity within and the word “Ashraya” is the special word to note in this sloka to denote this attitude to life. This knowledge is total knowledge and it is “Akhilam.” Partial

knowledge as we know is a hindrance in progress in any field. One should strive for total knowledge to achieve anything in life. To get the highest reward of Moksha one should therefore strive for total knowledge of Brahman. He should understand the Mahavakya “Tat Tvam Asi” clearly. “Aham Brahmasmi” has to dawn on him and then he will use his physical body to do the work for the divine on this earth as long as he is alive. He does not take notice of old age and does not think of death.

Jnani is also aware that every experience in life has a birth, growth, decay and death and is not perturbed at any events in his life. His mind is totally absorbed on the Parabrahman. The shelter at every stage of his life is Brahman.

Sloka 30

**SADHIBHOOTADHIDAIVAM MAAM SADHIYAJNAM CHA YE VIDHUHU
PRAYANA KALEPI CHA MAAM TE VIDURYUKTA CHETASAHA**

Those who realise Me in the Adhibhoota, in the Adhiyajna and in the Adhidaiva, know Me even at the time of death, having self-control.

This, the last sloka in this chapter leads us to the next chapter, Akshara Parabrahma Yoga. The three special words used in this sloka:

Adhibhoota - pertaining to the world of objects,
Adhidaiva - pertaining to the various divinities worshipped,
Adhiyajna - pertaining to the various sacrifices undertaken.

These are the starting statements of the next chapter and we will discuss their meaning at that time.

This chapter is Jnana Vijnana Yoga and is all about acquiring wisdom. (Vijnana)

The first step is to get the jnana, (knowledge),
the next step is to apply the jnana in the practical life while conducting the ordained duties (karma),
finally putting into practice what is ordained in the scriptures and understand fully the meaning of nishkama karma, (desireless actions) karma phala tyaga (surrendering fruits of action) and loka samastha sukhino bhavantu (wishing for welfare of life on earth).

This sloka refers to those who have developed such wisdom and realized the Atman within and all round in every form of life on this planet. This is “adhibhoota” aspect of realization.

The same God is also to be experienced in the Pancha maha bhootas (five great elements) by the seeker. The earth, water, fire, air and space are the devas for the five sense organs that give us the experience of: sound, touch, taste, form and smell. Everything around us including our own selves is a combination of these five great elements. These devas, including the other devas in the pantheon of gods are all but expression of Supreme Divinity who is “Parabrahman.” This refers to “Adhidaiva” mentioned in the sloka.

Having developed the wisdom by understanding adhibhoota and adhidaiva,
Having developed the wisdom the seeker has to conduct all actions in the sense of “dedication” to the Supreme.

We have learnt that the five yajnas are:

Deva yajna
Rishi yajna

Pitru yajna
Nara yajna
Bhoota yajna.

Realization of adhiyajna is dedication of all actions to the Supreme.

At that time,
in the life of the seeker,
in this birth,
when the true import of the meaning of this sloka has dawned,
The seeker will start living the life of “Adhiyajna” for the rest of his life. This is the stage after the annihilation of ego. He is said to have developed “self-control”. There is no more thought or fear of death. Whatever may be his mode of life, his mind is always fixed on Parabrahman. Only such seekers, the Lord says:
“Know Me even at the time of death.”

“Prayana Kale”, the Lord says:
It means, “at the time of departure from this world (death) into the next world”.

One may wonder why the word “prayana” is used. Generally one understands the word “prayana” as referring to travel.

For a spiritual seeker the prayana is:

Journey from the world of ego to enter into and unite with the Parabrahman. Having developed the wisdom, he will remember and be united with the Supreme even at the time of physically departing from this world.

The prefix “api” is used for this word. It means, “even at the time of death.” As such a seeker has already united with the Supreme and continues to discharge his duties, at the time of death also, is united with the Parabrahman. This is possible only by developing strict self-control at all times and not let the senses carry the chariot (the physical body) hither and thither. The word ”yukta chetasaha” denotes this meaning. Individual effort is therefore the rule of thumb to achieve Liberation. For the God to come down to earth and bless the man first of all has learn to express the divinity within.

The important words in this sloka are:

Yukta chetasaha

Prayana kalepi

Thus completes the seventh chapter, "JNANA VIJNANA 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.