

Concise Geetä

For Students

108 Selected Verses from the Bhagvad Geetä
The Celestial Song of the Supreme Lord



The Essence of Yoga and Vedānta

Spiritual Wisdom of Eastern Traditions

Dr. Ved Prakash Chaudhary
Educators' Society for Heritage of India (ESHA)

Concise Geetä

Explaining the Four Spiritual Paths

❖ **Dhyāna Yoga: Meditation for Inner Peace**



❖ **Karma Yoga: Selfless Service to Humanity**



❖ **Gyāna Yoga: Spiritual Wisdom (Vedānta)**



❖ **Bhakti Yoga: Loving Devotion to Lord**



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Dedication

त्वदीयम् वस्तु गोविंद - तुभ्यमेव समर्पये

Dedicated to the Supreme Lord Sṛī Krishna
who bestows blessings and bounties
on all beings.



with Profound Gratitude to my Gurus:
Pujya Swāmi Dayānanda Saraswatī
Pujya (Dr.) Swāmi Shāshvatānanda

Prayers to Lord Sri Krishna

श्री कृष्ण वंदना

श्रीकृष्ण गोविंद हरे मुरारे
हे नाथ नारायण वासुदेव ।
जिह्वे पिबस्वामृतम् एतदैव
गोविंद दामोदर माधवेति ।।

Let us meditate on all names, forms and attributes of Srī Krishna as Lord Vishnu, Govind, Hari, Murāri, Vāsudeva, and Dāmodar.

As you meditate on His attributes as Mādhava,
experience the sweetness of nectar on thy tongue.

मूकम् करोति वाचालम्
पंगुम् लंघयते गिरिम् ।
यत् कृपा तमहम् वंदे
परमानंद माधवम् ।।

Whose compassion enables one with a speech disorder
to become an eloquent speaker,
or a physically disabled person to climb a mountain,

I pray to Lord Srī Krishna who is Paramānand (Greatest bliss)
and Mādhava (Lord of the universe).

Contents

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----|
| Prayers to Lord Sṛi Krishna | - | - | - | - | 5 |
| Preface | - | - | - | - | 7 |
| Transliteration and Pronunciation Guide | - | - | - | - | 9 |
| Essential Vocabulary | - | - | - | - | 12 |
| Historical Perspective | - | - | - | - | 14 |
| Background - Setting the Stage- | - | - | - | - | 16 |
| 1. Self-discipline: Controlling Body & Mind through Intellect | . | . | . | . | 23 |
| <u>Introducing Four Pāths of Yoga</u> | - | - | - | - | 36 |
| 2. Dhyāna Yoga: The Path of Meditation for Inner Peace | - | - | - | - | 39 |
| 3. Karma Yoga: The Path of Selfless Service | - | - | - | - | 49 |
| 4. Gyāna Yoga: Spiritual Knowledge & Wisdom: Vedānta | | | | | 63 |
| 4-A. Knowledge of the Self (ātmā or Spirit) | - | - | - | - | 66 |
| 4-B. Knowledge of Paramātmā (Supreme Spirit) | - | - | - | - | 72 |
| 5. Bhakti Yoga: Path of Loving Devotion, Surrendering to God | | | | | 84 |
| Concluding Remarks | - | - | - | - | 90 |
| References | - | - | - | - | 93 |
| <hr/> | | | | | |
| Appendices: | | | | | |
| Appendix 1. Three Inherent Human Attributes (Guṇās) | - | - | - | - | 94 |
| Appendix 2. Yama and Niyama of Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras | . | . | . | . | 97 |
| Appendix 3. Essential karma (Meritorious Deeds) | . | . | . | . | 98 |
| Appendix 4. Choosing a Vocation following Natural Aptitude | | | | | 101 |
| Appendix 5. Cosmology and Creation Theory in Geetā | | | | | 104 |
| Astronomer Carl Sagan on Hindu Cosmology | | | | | 106 |
| Appendix 6. Index of Sanskrit Verses | - | - | - | - | 107 |

Preface

Yoga and meditation are widely practiced; their benefits towards physical and mental health are well researched and understood by seekers of balanced and holistic wellness in the western world. However, the spiritual dimension of yoga in its fullness and richness, is not as well established because authentic yet accessible sources that present the spiritual dimension of yoga in a simple, contemporary, western context are not widely available.

This small booklet aims to provide a simple but comprehensive overview of the spiritual dimensions of yoga as recited by Lord Sri Krishna in the Geetā. It is written for the students of Sanskrit, philosophy, culture and yoga, and TM practitioners who have interest in learning about the Eastern wisdom traditions and want to learn more about the spiritual dimensions of yoga and vedānta.

The Bhagvad Geetā is the most revered sacred scripture of Hindus. Ever since its first translation by Charles Wilkins¹ it has been greatly admired by American spiritual seekers, like Ralph Waldo Emerson² (1803-1882), Henry David Thoreau³ (1818-1862), and Walt Whitman (1819-1892). Since then, numerous translations and commentaries on Geetā have been written, yet Geetā remains difficult to understand for many seekers because it requires sadhana to derive understanding.

Bhagvad Geetā, a poetic dialogue between Lord Sri Krishna and Prince Arjuna, presents a well reasoned and compelling appeal to fight evil, injustice, and corruption at both levels: in the physical world to uphold Dharma (righteousness) and create a just society where people can live in peace and harmony, as well as from within, to ennoble oneself to achieve lasting peace and happiness, and ultimately to free oneself from the cycle of life and death (attain Moksha) through union with the Supreme.

The dialog between Lord Krishna and prince Arjuna took place thousands of years ago and makes references to the society of that ancient period. The lessons in this

¹ The Bhagvat Geeta, or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjūn (1785)

² Emerson wrote of Geeta in his journal in 1831 "It was the first of books; it was as if an empire spake to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us". Emerson founded the Transcendental Club in 1836.

³ Author of Walden, wrote: "In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvad Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seems puny and trivial." He also wrote: "Whenever I have read any part of the Vedas, I have felt that some un-earthly and unknown light illuminated me. In the great teaching of the Vedas, there is no touch of the sectarianism. It is of all ages, climes, and nationalities, and is the royal road for the attainment of the Great Knowledge."

booklet do not provide a literal translation but try to relate the sense of the selected verses to the modern world through modern vernacular as used in the English medium in the West.

Geetā is composed of seven hundred (700) verses organized in 18 chapters. In order to present the important themes and messages of Geetā in only 108 verses, I have selected what I considered the most profound verses from all the chapters and compiled them in five short, coherent lessons: one each for the four spiritual paths (Dhyāna, Gyāna, Karma and Bhakti) and one chapter on Self-discipline which is essential for anyone trying to tread on the path of spirituality. Obviously, verses in this booklet are not presented in the same order in which they appear in Geetā, but in the order in which they are relevant to the five lessons organized in this booklet.

The inspiration for this booklet came from H.H. Mahāmandaleshwar (Dr.) Swāmi Shāswatānanda of Akhand Geetā Peeth, Kurukshetra, India, in his lectures at Ved Mandir in East Brunswick, NJ. Its content is highly influenced by his lectures and by the writings and lectures of H.H. Swami Chinmayānanda and H.H. Swami Dayānanda Saraswati of Ārsha Vidyā Gurukulam, PA.

The outline and structure of this monograph came to me in a flash of insight with a divine impulse to write it. But the selection of verses, while limiting the total number to 108, and finding words, equivalent English expressions and examples to express my thoughts as I intuitively understood each selected verse, has been a daunting challenge which took, on and off, several years.

I offer loving gratitude to my wife, Rajni, and to family and friends for their interest and encouragement for writing this booklet. Special, heart-felt gratitude is due to two young people: Amit Chaturvedi (Ph.D. candidate at University of Hawaii) and Sona Chaudhary (High school over achiever in English; published author by the 6th grade) and a colleague Piyush Desai, without whose critical reviews and editing skills this booklet would have never completed.

Critical reviews and suggestions from Dr. Ari Jain, Dr. Ram Misra, Dr Ramesh Paliwal, Jai Chaudhary, Sharon McGreevy, and Ashu Sharma have helped bring this book into its present form and are deeply appreciated. Special gratitude to Swami Tattvavidānanda of Ārsha Vidyā Gurukulam, PA and Swami Jyotirmayananda of Anand Ashram, Kerala for their guidance and encouragement.

Ved Prakāsh Chaudhary

Transliteration and Pronunciation Guide for Sanskrit words

Bhagvad Geetā is composed in beautiful Sanskrit verses that are easy to recite and remember. Also, the sound of Sanskrit language gives the feeling of a deeper spiritual connection which is not possible with any translation. Therefore, this book attempts to make it possible for the reader to learn the teachings of Geetā from the original source.

Sanskrit is an elegant language with phonetic alphabet, Devanāgarī (Divine script), containing 14 vowels and 36 consonants, with a separate character for each distinct speech sound. Unfortunately, even those with the knowledge of Devanāgarī script can not easily read Geetā.

What makes reading Geetā difficult is the practice of joining words together in Sanskrit. For example: Param + ātmā becomes Paramātmā, a common word for God. But when multiple words are spliced, e.g., Karmaṇi + eva + adhikāraḥ + te = Karmanyevādhikāraṣte, it becomes difficult to read the verse, un-splice the constituent words, and understand the meaning.

In order to make it easy to read and understand, I have written the verses without splicing words together. Reading the verses with separate, distinct words is very effective in remembering them. And by dwelling on the meaning of words, it is possible to appreciate the deeper message as it was meant in Sanskrit; No translation can communicate the elegance, beauty and shades of meaning that the original Sanskrit verse carries.

The text in this booklet contains verses in Sanskrit for readers who know (or want to learn) Devanāgarī. For others, a simple transliteration scheme has been used to write Sanskrit words using English alphabet (with 5 vowels and 21 consonants) in a manner that is intuitive to English readers⁴. It would facilitate in pronouncing the words correctly.

⁴ The International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) is commonly used for writing Sanskrit words in English alphabet. However, IAST employs diacritical marks that are inconsistent with the pronunciation guides in American English dictionaries and, therefore, unfamiliar to English readers. In order to avoid the use of unfamiliar diacritical marks, we have used only a subset of IAST.

Vowels:**pronounced as:**

a as in above, acute, alone
 ā as in fāther, jār, fār, cār
 ai as a in fat, hat, cat
 au as in author, Paul, haul
 e as in San Jose, crochet

pronounced as:

i as in it, fit, kitchen
 ī or ee as in meet, keep, sleep
 o as in go, slow, boat, pole
 u as in put, pull, push, full
 ū or oo as in cool, fool, tool

General (intuitive) rule: a line above the vowel indicates a long vowel sound.

Consonants: The reader should become familiar with the following notations to differentiate between soft and hard sounds and aspirated sounds used in Sanskrit.

General rule: A dot under the letter indicates hard sound;
 Aspirated sounds have an 'h' added.

Normal soft/hard sounds

b as in but, boy, basic
 c as in epic, dharmic

 d (soft sound) as in this, that
 ḍ (hard sound) as in done
 g as in going, great
 j as in just, judge, jewel
 k same as c in cat, car...

 n as in nut, not, note
 t (soft sound) as in pasta
 ṭ (hard sound) as in total, art

Aspirated sounds pronounced as:

bh as in abhor
 ch as in chalk
ch as in catchhim, birch-hill
 dh as in adhere, breathe-hard
 ḍh as in hardhat, redhead, madhouse
 gh as in doghouse, loghouse
 jh as in leisure, hedgehog (hejhog)
 kh as in chutzpah, inkhorn
 ksh sounds like kch
 ṇ hard sound, not found in English
 th as in thunder, thatch
 ṭh as in anthill, warthog

Other consonants have roughly the same sounds as in English.

Frequently used simple Sanskrit words:

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|------------|-------|--------|--------------|--------|--------|------------------|
| न | (na) | not | मा | (māā) | not | च | cha | and |
| अहम् | aham | I | मम् | (mam) | my, mine | माम् | māām | to me |
| त्वम् | tvam | you | त्वा | tvā | to you | त्वाम् | tvāām | to you |
| तत् | tat | that | तम् | tam | to him | ते | te | they, to you |
| सः | saḥ | he | यः | yaḥ | whoever | सा | sā | she |
| इदम् | idam | this | एतद् | etad | this | अदस् | adas | that |
| यदा | yadā | when | कदा | kadā | when | तदा | tadā | then (time) |
| यथा | yathā | as, like | तथा | tathā | same wa | इव | iva | as, like |
| अस्मि | asmi | am | अस्ति | asti | is | इति | iti | like this |
| आदि | ādi | begining | अंत | ant | end | अनंत | anant | endless,infinite |
| कः | kaḥ | who, what | कथम् | katham | how | किम् | kim | who, what |
| ततः | tataḥ | from there | तत्र | tatra | there | | | |
| यतः | yataḥ | from where | यत्र | yatra | where ever | यत् | yat | since |
| कुतः | kutah | from where | कुत्र | kutra | where | | | |
| चेत् | chet | if so | तर्हि | tarhi | then (logic) | किंतु | kintu | but |
| इह | ih | here | हि | hi | indeed | भूयः | bhūyah | again |

Frequently used Compound words

that have not been broken out in the text:

| | | |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| चाहम् (च + अहम्) | chāham (cha + aham) | = and I |
| चापि (च + अपि) | chāpi (cha + api) | = and also |
| चैव (च + एव) | chaiva (cha + eva) | = and only |
| चैनं (च + एनम्) | chainam (cha + enam) | = and ... to this |
| नैनं (न + एनम्) | nainam (na + enam) | = not ... to this |

Epithets used in Geetā for Sri Krishna:

Achyuta, Govinda, Keshava, Hari, Mādhava, Madhusūdan, Vāsudeva

Epithets used in Geetā for Arjuna:

Pārtha, Pāṇḍava, Bhārata, Kaunteya, Dhananjaya , Mahābāho

Essential Vocabulary

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Aham | pronoun I; also self-centered ego |
| Ahamkāra | Ego, false pride |
| Ahinsā | Non-violence, not harming any living being |
| ānanda | Bliss, pure joy |
| Ananta | Limitless, infinite, God |
| ātmā | Soul, spirit, self, or the essence of life |
| Bhagavāna | Divine (God) |
| Bhārata | India in Sanskrit and other Indian languages |
| Bhārata | Prince Arjuna, a descendent of an ancient Indian dynasty started with King Bharat |
| Bhakti | Surrendering to Divine with love, devotion and service |
| Bhāvam | Emotion, Spiritual Energy Field |
| Bhoga | Enjoyment, indulgence in sensory gratification |
| Bhūta | Physical entity (living body) |
| Brahmā | The creator aspect of Supreme Godhead |
| Brahman | Absolute Supreme Divinity (Godhead) |
| Brahmin | A highly educated person, belonging to the priestly class |
| Chit | Consciousness |
| Chitta | Deep thought, collection of all memories of life |
| Chintana | Thinking of something |
| Dāna | Donation, offering something of value, service to humanity |
| Dharma | Principles of virtuous human conduct in harmony with the universal laws of nature. Includes notions of moral duty and social justice for harmony and well being of society. |
| Deha | Physical body |
| Dehī | Metaphysical Soul or Spirit dwelling in the physical body |
| Devā | Divine Angel, also written as Devatā** |
| Devī | Feminine form of Devā |
| Divya | Divine, enlightened |
| Dhyāna | Meditation |
| Dukha | Pain, sadness, misery (antonym: Sukha) |
| Gyāna | Spiritual Knowledge, wisdom |
| Guṇa | Three inherent qualities in nature (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas) |
| Indriyān | Sensory organs (eyes, ears, nose...) |
| Īshvara | Lord (God) |
| Jiva | Living being |
| Kāma | Desire, sensory gratification, enjoyment |
| Karma | Deeds, metaphysical law of human actions and reactions (i.e., effects on one's own life), the sum total of one's actions in the current and past lives that determines the possibilities and circumstances of future lives |

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Krodha | Anger |
| Kshetra | Field, field of action, domain of activity |
| Kuru | Dynasty in Northwest India |
| Mana, Mānas | Mind, Mental |
| Mandir | Hindu temple |
| Mantra | Sanskrit verse for prayer or chant |
| Māyā | Creative aspect of Brāhman with three Guṇa, attachment to material objects |
| Moksha | Objective of human life: Liberation from the cycle of life and death by uniting the soul with the spirit of Brahman |
| Pāṇḍava | Prince Arjuna (plural: all five noble Sons of King Pāndu) |
| Paramātmā | Supreme Soul (Godhead) |
| Prakriti | Mother nature, physical body, inborn personality traits |
| Pūjā | Hindu prayer ritual |
| Purusha | ātmā (the life of physical body), man (in common usage) |
| Rajas | Guṇa (tendency to indulge in sensory gratification) |
| Sansāra | World; the cycle of life and death (Reincarnation) |
| Sat | Truth; original, changeless essence |
| Sattva | Guṇa (tendency to pure, virtuous thoughts and deeds) |
| Sevā | Volunteer service to elders, others, as an offering to God |
| Sukha | Pleasure, happiness (antonym: Dukha) |
| Srī, Shri | A word of respect |
| Tamas | Tendency to indulge in impure, bad thoughts and deeds |
| Tapas | Virtuous austerity, self-discipline, self-control |
| Upanishad | 108 Hindu scriptures (also called Vedānta): Ishā, Kena, ... |
| Veda | Oldest (4) Hindu scriptures: Rig, Yajur, Atharva, Sām |
| Vedānta | Spiritual wisdom as contained in Geetā and Upanishads |
| Yagya, Yajna | An undertaking sacrificing self-interest for the good of society |
| Yoga | (yoke) Integrating body, mind, intellect with ātmā. |

** English language has no words equivalent to Devī and Devatā. These words have been incorrectly translated as 'gods' and convey the sense that Hinduism is polytheistic. It is important to understand that Devīs and Devatās are different names, forms, and aspects of the same One God, called Brahman in Vedas.

Historical Perspective

Many thousands of years ago, perhaps during the Indus Valley Civilization⁵ (approximately five thousand years ago⁶) a mighty Kuru dynasty of Kshatriyas (protectors of the weak) ruled large parts of North India with their capital in Hastināpur (northwest India). When the ruling king Pāṇḍu died, his eldest son, Yudhisṭhira, was too young to occupy the throne, so Pāṇḍu's only brother Dhritarāshṭra, who was blind from birth, became the care taker king.

King Pāṇḍu had five sons (collectively called Pāṇḍavas). They were noble, pious and righteous. Dhritarāshṭra had one hundred sons (collectively known as Kauravas), but most of them were embodiment of evil. When he became too old, his eldest son, Duryodhana, wanted to occupy the throne even though Yudhisṭhira was the eldest and wisest among all Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas and therefore, had right to succession. Dhritarāshṭra, forgetting his moral duty to confer the throne on the eldest and ablest successor, supported Duryodhan's unjust desire for the throne. Meanwhile, the subjects of the kingdom had become miserable and the moral character of the royal family had become despicable.

In this epoch, Śrī Krishna, who was an Avatār (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu, had appeared on earth to guide kings and rulers in virtuous ways to serve their people and uphold justice. He had established a mighty kingdom in Dwarika (present day Gujarāta) and was the wisest and most respected statesman of his time. He was related to the Kuru royal family as a maternal cousin of Pāṇḍavas, so he took upon himself to counsel Duryodhana and mediate the dispute of succession peacefully. However, despite his best efforts, Duryodhana would not concede even five inches of land to Pāṇḍavas, let alone giving them half the kingdom.

Duryodhana proclaimed that if Pāṇḍavas wanted even an inch of land, they would have to wage a war with his formidable army. Reluctantly, Pāṇḍavas, in the interest of upholding Dharma (moral duty) for the welfare of the masses in their kingdom, agreed to fight as the last resort. Śrī Krishna declared that he will not fight on either side, but Duryodhana insisted on his help so Śrī Krishna gave his army to him. On the other hand, Arjuna requested only for his presence on his side, so he agreed to serve not as a warrior (not fighting with weapons) but as the charioteer and adviser to Arjuna who was a true friend of Śrī Krishna and a noble warrior and ardent

⁵ The Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) or Sindhu-Sarasvati Civilization (SSC) was a Bronze Age civilization that existed from 3300–1300 BCE. Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilization

⁶ A seminar was held on January 5-6, 2003 in Bangalore, India on “The Date of Mahabharata War: based on Astronomical Data Using Planetarium Software” where several eminent researchers submitted papers. Based on the scientific research and evidence based on archeology, astronomy and linguistics by Dr. Narahari Achar (a professor of physics at University of Memphis, TN) and others, the seminar officially accepted that the Mahabharata War began on 22nd November, 3067 BCE. Ref: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/drishtikone/2009/08/krishna-and-mahabharat-historical-reality/>

Kshatriya (defender of the weak) of his time ready to uphold justice and Dharma (righteousness) in society.

Before the start of the war, Śrī Krishna counseled Arjuna not only in his immediate Dharma but, more deeply, in the basic questions asked by every intelligent human being at critical times in their life: Who am I? What is the purpose of life? What will happen to me after I die? What is right or what is wrong in a given situation? Is there God? Who (or what) is God, the Ultimate Reality? How can I know the Ultimate Truth, the Ultimate Reality?

While this story is set in a physical place and time: a royal dynasty, with a looming war, and a mighty leader, Arjuna, engulfed in self doubt, not knowing what to do, this is also an unmistakable metaphor for the inner struggle of what is the right thing to do when we find ourselves in a moral quandary, which happens to each one of us from time to time.

Unmistakable metaphor? You ask, how so? Well, think of Arjuna as any human being and Śrī Krishna as the Supreme (God) who, as the charioteer, guides one's life. Further, the blind king Dhritā-rāshṭra is the metaphor for human beings blinded with greed and passion; the battle is the metaphor for the inner struggle between a few good thoughts (like the five Pandavas) against a large army of bad habits, or evil thoughts (like one hundred Kauravas) that might delude us when thinking about questions of what is right or wrong in many stressful situations that we go through in our work life and home life.

Through this metaphor, Bhagvad Geetā blends the two inter-related aspects of reality:

1. the physical (ādhi-bhautik) aspect: as a physical war between two armies.
2. the metaphysical, (ādhyātmik) aspect: for example, an inner struggle between right and wrong, evil and virtue, in human psyche.

In other words, whatever phenomenon exists in the physical universe also exists within our selves. Our bodies with souls are microcosms; the physical universe is the macrocosm; and the Divine pervades both the microcosm and the macrocosm. Accordingly, this physical war between Pāṇḍava and Kaurava armies is perceived by spiritually intuitive thinkers as the universal phenomenon of man's inner struggle.

Perhaps, this is the aspect of Geetā that Mahatma Gandhi took to heart when he wrote: *"When doubts haunt me, disappointments stare me in the face, and I see not one ray of hope on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagvad-Geetā and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow."*

Concise Geetā

Background: Setting the Stage

The blind king Dhritarāshṭra spoke:

Verse B.1 धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः

मामकाः पाण्डवाः चैव किम् अकुर्वत सञ्जय (BG1.1)7

Dharma-kshetre kuru-kshetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ
māmakāḥ Pāṇḍavāḥ chaiva kim akurvata Sanjaya?

Dhrita-rāshṭra, the blind king, sitting in his palace, asked his wise counsel, Sanjaya, who had 'divya-drishti' (divine vision) that enabled him to see things happening in far off places:

Assembled in the field of righteousness (Dharm-Kshetra),
on the holy lands of Kuru dynasty (Kuru-kshetra),
intent on waging a war,
what did the Pāṇḍavas and my sons do?
Tell me Sanjaya!

Geetā starts with the two words Dharm-Kshetra and Kuru-kshetra. The first word, Dharm-kshetra, declares the subject matter of Bhagvad Geetā: the domain of spiritual wisdom and moral deeds. The second word Kuru-kshetra suggests a physical field of war, conflict, or struggle between the forces of good and evil. Thus, Bhagvad Geetā synthesizes the field of human thought and action at two levels: the physical and the spiritual.

The discourse of Śrī Krishna addresses the constant struggle in the human psyche between right and wrong.

The metaphor continues to the next level, as illustrated in the picture here: Sri Krishna serves as the charioteer of Arjuna's chariot that is drawn with four horses, as well as his mentor and spiritual guide. Metaphorically, the chariot is the physical body and the horses driving the chariot are the sense organs. The reins of the horses are the nervous system including the brain and the mind. Prince Arjuna, owner of the chariot, symbolizes the ātmā (spirit) dwelling in the body, whereas the charioteer is the intellect; in this case, it is Srī Krishna himself, as Paramātmā, the highest principle guiding a pure ātmā.

Thus, while the physical background presented in the first verse (1.1) was a battle field with two rival armies (representing vice and virtue), the discourse Srī Krishna offered involved the entire field of human actions, reactions, emotions, and experiences involving our physical self (body, senses, mind and intellect, ...) and our metaphysical self (ātmā), which is the source of vitality and intelligence (consciousness) permeating every cell in the body.



Srī Krishna and Arjuna in the Chariot driven by four horses

“Horses which cannot be brought under control (running without reins), a car without brakes, and a person without sense control, are all extremely dangerous and heading for disaster.” Source: The Teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Srī Krishna's discourse in Geetā reveals the mystery that is life and extends to the conduct of human life, to the philosophy of life, by addressing relevant questions: What is the purpose of life? and How to live a life of meaning and purpose? ...

Thus the eternal, internal struggle of human beings is the backdrop of the comprehensive divine lecture of Srī Krishna. His words were not only addressed to prince Arjuna but to all humanity. His message contains the over-arching theology of Sanātan Dharma (eternal order or universal principles) i.e., Hinduism.

This verse has a highly significant practical application for daily life. At the end of the day, take time to do some introspection and ask yourself this question: in your thoughts and deeds today, who won: Kauravas or Pāṇḍavas? If greed prevailed, Kauravas won. If you did some justice, prevented injustice from happening, or if you helped some one in need, then Pāṇḍavas won. Such daily introspection along with some reading of Geetā and meditation will lead you to a righteous life, on the path of spirituality.

Thus, the physical, adhyātmik and divine aspects are all beautifully integrated and interwoven throughout the discourse in Geetā.

From here on, all the verses are spoken by Srī Krishna and Arjuna in a dialog and communicated by the wise minister Sanjaya, with Divya-drishṭi (divine vision), to the blind king Dhritā-rāshṭra.

A Deeper Understanding of Kshetra

In his dialog with prince Arjuna, Sṛī Krishna expanded the notion of Kshetra (field) to the most fundamental level – the field of all existence, including all human experiences – through the human body and the soul (ātmā) in this way:

Verse B.2 and B.3

**इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रम् इति अभिधीयते
एतत् यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद् विदः (BG 13.2)
महा-भूतानि अहंकारः बुद्धिः अव्यक्तम् एव च
इन्द्रियाणि दशैकं च पञ्च चेन्द्रिय-गोचराः (BG 13.6)**

Idam sharīram kaunteya kshetram iti abhidheeyate
etat yo vetti tam prāhuḥ kshetra-gya iti tad-vidah.
Mahā-bhūtāni ahankārah buddhiḥ avyaktam eva cha
indriyāṇi dashaikam cha pancha chendriya-gocharāh.

Sṛī Krishna: This human body, O Prince, is known as the Kshetra, the Field of all human actions, or deeds in this life. It consists of the five macro-elements (Table 1).

Table 1
Five Macro-Elements (Mahā-bhūtā) in the Physical Universe

| Five Macro-Elements | Common Translation | Real (Expanded) Meaning |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Kshiti or Bhūmi | Earth | Solids |
| Jal or Āpaḥ | Water | Liquids |
| Agni or Pāvak | Fire | Heat, Light, Energy |
| Samīr or Vāyu | Air | Gases |
| Gagan or Ākāsh | Sky | Space |

The physical body made of five macro-elements is called '**Sthoola Sharira**' or **Gross Body**. Note that the entire physical universe is also made of the same five macro-elements.

Further Śrī Krishna explained:

The body is supported by ten sense organs: five senses of cognition and five senses of action (Table 2). Additionally, it is equipped with the mind that controls the senses, the intellect that guides the mind, the subconscious that exerts unseen, hidden influences over the mind, and the ego which controls the human psyche.

Further more, the Kshetra (Field) also includes the sense objects embedded in the five macro-elements of the physical universe⁸. The five senses of cognition constantly interact with their objects as shown in Table 2 and give us the sensory perception of the physical world around us.

Table 2
Five Senses of Cognition (Gyāna Indriyān)
and their Objects (Fields of Operation)

| Sense Organs | Function | Sense Objects |
|--------------|----------|--|
| Eyes | Vision | Field of vision: every thing visible in the physical universe |
| Ears | Hearing | Field of sound: every sound audible to human ear |
| Nose | Smell | Field of all good and bad smells: scents, aromas, fumes and perfumes, ... |
| Tongue | Taste | All good and bad tastes: sweet, sour, pungent, bitter, creamy, ... |
| Skin | Touch | Feel of any thing touching the skin over any part of the body: soft, hard, harsh, abrasive, rough, smooth, hot, cold, warm, gentle, loving, caress ... |

⁸ The concept of Kshetra signifies unity of all energy fields in the universe.

This idea of unity of all energy fields in the physical universe (gravitational field, electromagnetic field, ...) was followed by Albert Einstein as he tried to mathematically prove the Unified Field theory. This field of research is still continuing in modern physics.

The five senses of cognition: Eyes always seeing, ears hearing, nose smelling, tongue tasting, and skin feeling through touch (including the functions of nerves and brain) constantly provide us physical perception of the world around us.

Additionally, the five Action Organs (Karma Indriyān) also controlled by the mind are: Hands, feet, and organs of speech, procreation, and elimination.

'Sookshma Sharira' or **'Subtle body'** is defined as an aspect of body consisting of eighteen elements: the mind, intellect, and ego, along with the five senses of cognition, five objects of sense cognition, and the five senses of action.

Lord Srī Krishna further added:

The ātmā governs this multi-dimensional Kshetra of ten senses, together with the mind, the intellect, the sub-conscious, and the ego; therefore, it is called the Kshetrageya (the Knower of the Field).

That word Kshetrageya, the Knower, refers to the base of intelligence, or consciousness that pervades the Kshetra in every cell of the body, and is called the **ātmā**. When ātmā departs (at death), the senses, the mind, and the intellect stop functioning, and know nothing, because the **'Knower of the field', the consciousness**, has left the body. Read more about it in Lesson 4-A. Knowledge of the Self (ātmā or Spirit).

Thus, at the Adhyātmic level, Kshetrageya is ātmā; but at the universal (Daivik, divine) level, Kshetrageya is Paramātmā (Infinite Consciousness, Godhead, Brahman).

Hierarchy of Intelligence within the body (Kshetra)

B.4 इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुर् इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः
 मनसः तु परा बुद्धिः यो बुद्धेः परतः तु सः (BG 3.42)
 Indriyāṇi parāṇi āhur indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ
 manasaḥ tu parā buddhiḥ yo buddheḥ parataḥ tu saḥ.

Srī Krishna further explained the heirarchy of intelligence pervading the Kshetra:

1. The five senses of perception continuously survey and collect information about the world around us and inform the mind.
2. The mind constantly monitors and controls the senses, develops cognition, and feelings of pleasure and pain.
3. The mind is guided and counseled by the intellect, thus intellect is superior to the mind.
4. Finally, superior to the intellect is He (who is the Kshetrageya, the divine guide, the conscience, in the form of the soul, ātmā, in the body).

Let Your Conscience be Your Guide

**B.5 एवं बुद्धेः परं बुद्ध्वा संस्तभ्य आत्मानम् आत्मना
जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो कामरूपं दुरासदम् (BG 3.43)**

Evam buddheh param buddhvā sanstabhya ātmānam ātmanā
jahi shatrum mahā-bāho kāma-rūpam durā.sadam.

Knowing that ātmā is superior to intellect,
and restraining your lower self (ego, pride, anger, desires)
by your higher Self (noble instinct, conscience, and intellect
fortified with wisdom),
O mighty-armed Prince, conquer the enemy that is
ever present in the form of greed, filled with multitude
of desires.

But, be forewarned, this enemy (the greed) is the hardest of
all enemies to conquer.

This verse illustrates the overarching metaphor in Geetā: the war in “Dharma-kshetra Kuru-kshetra” is metaphorically the war within one’s own self, that which is hardest to conquer, and that which Sri Krisna asks Arjuna, the mighty-armed Prince, to engage in and try to win. Only after discovering our divine existence (higher self, ātmā) can we restrain the lower self (ego, pride, anger, desires) by the guidance of the Divine Self.

Lesson 1
Self-discipline
Controlling the Body and Mind
through the Intellect

Before treading on the path of spirituality, it is an essential prerequisite that one builds a strong foundation with moral values and principles that elevate human consciousness above the narrow bounds of greed, selfishness, and sectarianism. The first lesson contains verses from Geetā that encourage and guide us in developing a disciplined character that leads to success and inner happiness in life.

The Strong Pull of Senses

1.1 इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन् -- मनो अनुविधीयते
 तद् अस्य हरति प्रज्ञां -- वायुः नावम् इवाम्भसि (BG 2.67)
 Indriyāṇām hi caratām yaṁ mano anuvīdheeyate
 tad asya harati prajāṁ vāyuḥ nāvaṁ ivāmbhasi.

Lord Śrī Krishna spoke to Prince Arjuna:

Senses of cognition are constantly interacting with their objects. Any one of the senses, at any given time, tends to pull the mind in its direction - in the same way as a powerful gust of wind pulls a sailboat across the water.

At times, driven by the sheer intensity of sense perceptions, one gets carried away – and loses one's intellect.



A sail boat pulled by wind across a body of water

1.2 यततो हि अपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः (BG 2.60)

Yatato hi api kaunteya purushasya vipaschitah
indriyāṇi pramātheeni haranti prasabham manaḥ.

Even when a wise person of decent character strives for self-discipline, his mind can get carried away by his senses ... because they (senses) are very powerful and dynamic; constantly churning the stream of thoughts in one's mind. Be constantly on guard, dont get carried away!

The Sequence of Moral Destruction

1.3 ध्यायतो विषयान् पुंसः संगः तेषु उपजायते संगात् सञ्जायते कामः कामात् क्रोधः अभिजायते (BG 2.62)

Dhyāyato vishayān punsaḥ sangāḥ teshu upajāyate
sangāt Sanjāyate kāmāḥ kāmāt krodhaḥ abhijāyate.

When a person dwells on an object of sensory gratification (food, music, any attractive object) a sort of attachment starts to build towards that object. From such attachment arises "desire", and when that desire is not fulfilled, it gives rise to anger and frustration.

1.4 क्रोधात् भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात् स्मृति विभ्रमः स्मृति भ्रंशात् बुद्धि नाशः बुद्धि नाशात् प्रणश्यति (BG 2.63)

Krodhāt bhavati sammohāḥ sammohāt smṛiti vibhramāḥ
Smṛiti bhranshāt buddhi-nāshaḥ buddhi-nāshāt praṇashyati.

Anger is a powerful emotion. It deludes the mind and destabilizes one's mental balance. Even his/her memory is disturbed with thoughts that further fuel the anger.

Due to the loss of rational thinking, episodes of anger can destroy the sanity of a person.

Lift Yourself with your Boot straps

1.5 उद्धरेत् आत्मना आत्मानम् न आत्मानम् अवसादयेत् आत्मैव हि आत्मनः बन्धुः आत्मैव रिपुः आत्मनः (BG 6.5)

Uddharet ātmānā ātmānam na ātmānam avasādayet
ātmaiva hi ātmanah bandhuḥ ātmaiva ripuḥ ātmanah.

One must constantly strive to lift oneself by own higher Self (moral will power and determination), and be always on guard not to let oneself down (morally, spiritually).

Know that one's own higher Self (will power) is a friend that enables one to grow to one's fullest potential in all dimensions of human development. On the other hand, one's lower Self (degraded with bad habits) can become the enemy of oneself and totally ruin one's life!

1.6 बन्धुःआत्मा आत्मनः तस्य येन आत्मैव आत्मना जितः अनात्मनः तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेत आत्मैव शत्रुवत् (BG 6.6)

Bandhuḥ ātmā ātmanah tasya yena ātmaiva ātmānā jitah
anātmānā tu shatrutve varteta ātmaiva shatru-vat.

The Self is a friend of that virtuous one who has conquered his lower self (bad habits) with strong will power for positive development.

But, the Self acts as an enemy to the one who has not conquered his lower self, who can not shake off his Tamas based (bad) habits, anger and greed ...

The direction that one's life takes, and all major successes and failures in life are determined by which nature (lower self or higher self) is developed, and thus becomes predominant in life. Those who succeed in leading a happy, fulfilling life are the ones who have acquired good habits through self-control, supported by parents and family who provided good examples, and the company of friends who lift one up morally. Conversely, those who have not acquired good habits and self-control end up with unhappy lives.

Simple examples: By eating tamas/rajas foods one can become obese and prone to heart disease or stroke at an early age; indulging in promiscuity one may suffer abortions, divorce, never developing happy, harmonious, deeply satisfying relationships with spouse and children, or friends and extended family.

Students with self-control are able to study, do homework, play, and engage in appropriate extra-curricular activities. Those who do not exercise self-control, do not get good education, do not get professionally satisfying careers, nor do they succeed in personal or family life.⁹

The extreme examples of not cultivating self-control show up in the nightly news: frequent episodes of gun violence in schools, malls and public places in American society, binge drinking on college campuses, high incidence of fatal accidents and car crashes by American youth, and high incidence of date rapes. In 2010, the US Department of Justice estimated that 25 percent of college women "will be victims of rape or attempted rape before they graduate." Similarly, according to a US Commission on Civil Rights' Report in 2013, 23 percent of women in military reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact since their enlistment.

⁹

"High Self-Control Predicts Good Adjustment, Less Pathology, Better Grades, and Interpersonal Success", June Tangney, Roy F. Baumeister, Angie Luzio Boone. *Journal of Personality*, Volume 72, Issue 2, pages 271–324, April 2004. Published online: 9 OCT 2008

Anger & Greed – Enemies of the Self

1.7 काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुण समुद्भवः

महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्धि एनम् इह वैरिणम् (BG 3.37)

Kāma esha krodha esha rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ
mahāshano mahā-pāpmā viddhi enam iha vairiṇam.

Greed in the form of insatiable desires and anger (when desires are not fulfilled) are the products of the Rajas Guṇa*.

Desires have a huge appetite – they are never satisfied.
They always demand more.

Greed and anger lead men to the greatest of sins.
Know that uncontrolled desires and anger are the greatest
enemies of the spiritual Self.

Kāma = profusion of desires not controlled or guided by intellect that is refined through wisdom and practice of Dharma.

- * There are three inherent qualities (Guṇa) that one is born with, but they can also be cultivated through self-discipline and will power.

Table 3
Three Qualities (Guṇa)

| Guṇa | Characteristics |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Sattva (Purity, goodness) | Pure, virtuous, knowledge seeker, living a simple, moral life of service to others |
| Rajas (Passion) | Selfish, egoistic, seeking fame and fortune by hook or crook, lacking morals, only serving personal interests. |
| Tamas (ignorance) | Ignorant, evil, immoral, self destructive, not caring for others, ignoring his own and other's welfare. |

See Appendix 1 for more details on these three Guṇa.

The Unending Mirage of Greed

1.8 आशापाश-शतैः बद्धाः काम-क्रोध-परायणाः

ईहन्ते काम भोगार्थम् अन्यायेन अर्थ-सञ्चयान् (BG 16.12)

āshā-pāsha-shatai baddhāḥ kāmā-krodha-parāyaṇāḥ
īhante kāmā-bhogārtham anyāyena artha-sanchayān.

Bound by infinite aspirations of acquiring more and more wealth, fame, and power... given to multitudes of desires (and anger when desires are not fulfilled) ... the worldly (materialistic, hedonistic) person strives, even by unlawful means, to amass wealth and objects of desire for the enjoyment of the senses: more parties, more liquor, more loud (deafening) entertainment, more and bigger houses, more and fancier cars, bigger boats, fancier yachts, ...

Their lives become an unending mirage of acquisitions for gratification. Yet they never find peace - or happiness.

Lesson: Do not strive to collect wealth by unlawful or unfair means.

1.9 अहंकारं बलं दर्पम् कामं क्रोधं च संश्रिताः

माम् आत्म-पर-देहेषु प्रद्विषन्तो अभ्यसूयकाः (BG 16.18)

Ahankāram balam darpam kāmam krodham cha samshritāḥ
mām ātma-para-deheshu pradvishanto abhyasūyakāḥ.

With their minds full of ego, they crave for more power, pride, and fulfillment of sensual desires and fall into fits of anger when desires are not fulfilled.

Such conceited people look down upon and curse every one thus despising the divine who is present in every human soul (ātmā).

The sense of this verse is that God is present in every soul, therefore, everyone is deserving of respect (thats why we greet every one with Namaste). But, arrogant people, ignorant of the presence of God in their own soul and in others', despise others, thus despising God.

Controlling Bhoga – Conspicuous Consumption

- 1.10 भोगैश्वर्य प्रसक्तानां तया अपहृत चेतसाम्
व्यवसाय आत्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते (BG 2.44)
Bhoga aishvarya prasaktānām tayā apahrita-chetasām
Vyavasāya ātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidheeyate.

Those who are constantly engaged in the unfettered enjoyment of senses (Bhoga) and in acquiring more and more wealth, fame and glory (Aishwarya), whose minds are deluded by the fallacy (that they can fulfill their desires by doing yagnās or worshipping deities) they can not focus their minds on what is truly important in life: attaining peace in a state of Samādhī: the state of tranquil mind in union with God.

- 1.11 राग-द्वेष-वियुक्तैस्तु विषयान् इन्द्रियैः चरन्
आत्मवश्यैः विधेयात्मा प्रसादम् अधिगच्छति (BG 2.64)
Raag-dvesha-viyuktaiḥ tu vishayani indriyaiḥ charan
ātma-vashyaiḥ vidheyātmā prasādam adhigachchatī.

A person exercising self-control avoids strong attractions and repulsions even as his/her senses freely roam through the objects of senses (sights, sounds, smells, ...).

By keeping their senses in a balanced state under the guidance of their intellect, they experience the eternal peace (Moksha).

Read the following verse for more specific instructions from Sri Krisna.

1.12 यस्तु इन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्य आरभते अर्जुन कर्मैन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगम् असक्तः स विशिष्यते (BG 3.7)

Yas tu indriyāṇi manasā niyamya ārabhate Arjuna
karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam asaktaḥ sa vishishyate.

The one who controls his mind and senses by his intellect and engages his organs of action (hand, feet, speech, etc.) in Karma Yoga, i.e., Selfless Service, without attachment to personal gain, O Prince, he indeed is distinguished and excels in life.

In a well disciplined individual, ego functions under the control of the Divine instinct in him. When that happens, then impure impulses arising from sense objects do not disturb his mental balance or his inner peace.

Thus Geeta teaches a constructive disciplining of body, senses, mind, and intellect to enable a person to attain the highest potential from one's life, and not the denial, destruction, or rejection of life's possibilities.

Read more about

- controlling senses through Meditation in Lesson 2, Dhyāna Yoga and
- about Karma Yoga, selfless service without attachment, in Lesson 3.

Consequences of uncontrolled Greed and Sensory Gratification:

If we carefully analyze the cause of human misery and social strife, we will find that the root cause is the lack of restraint and discipline over Tamas and Rajas tendencies: indulgence in unbridled greed and sensory gratification. For example:

- Americans make up only 5% of the global population, yet they consume 25% of the Earth's resources. Obviously, this is not sustainable in the long run. As the rest of the world copies this model of development and (over) consumption as the hallmark of progress, the planet Earth can not sustain the population.
- Global warming has the potential to destroy human civilization on Earth. What is the root cause? The greed of industrialized nations who are constantly striving to acquire more and more wealth to improve their standard of living (which is already the highest in the world). They seldom pause to think: what is the purpose of my life? Is chasing after more and more material goods the ultimate objective of life? Or, what kind of planet are we leaving behind for our children? They follow the notion that the objective of life is to get bigger houses, bigger cars, more meat in the family diet, even though it is well established that (1) this mentality produces stress which is the root cause of many diseases, and (2) eating meat is bad for health. The meat industry, along with the fossil fuels, are the biggest enemies of the environment.
- U.S., the richest country in the world, has an epidemic of obesity and the incidence of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease is increasing in all developed (rich) and developing societies of the world. If we examine the root causes, we'll find a vicious circle: (1) Food processing industry producing junk food - items that are nutritionally deficient, even disease inducing, but appealing to taste buds, so people buy and consume their products in ever greater quantities. (2) Over-consumption of foods that are tasteful but loaded with chemically processed meats, harmful fats, salt and sugar, and food intake that is in excess of the needs of the body. Driven by taste buds, people indulge in junk foods rather than natural foods like vegetables, fruits, grains and beans. At the same time, over consumption produces scarcity of food, raises food prices and deprives poor people in other parts of the world. (3) Stress due to constant striving to earn more, to consume more tasteful processed food, resulting in obesity, diabetes and heart disease. (4) The food industry and the medical, pharmaceutical, and health insurance industries are growing, but there is no cure to the epidemic of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

- Binge drinking on elite college campuses, date rapes, sexual assault in military service, wide spread dissemination of pornographic material on the web, promiscuity in sexual relations, have risen (or have come to light) during the second half of the twentieth century in all progressive societies. Why? The so-called 'advanced societies' have promoted the idea of freedom without cultivating the idea of self- responsibility, self-control, self-discipline, or training in moral values. They are developing über-liberal societies where the philosophy is instant gratification and unbridled enjoyment of the senses.
- Moral corruption in business and political leaders is increasing all over the world. Why? Because, the leaders who have the power to accumulate egregious amounts of wealth do not care how their corrupt behavior affects the millions of people in their market or jurisdiction. They have not learned to exercise self-control. The most powerful among men are overpowered by greed. Examples abound: In the twenty first century, we have witnessed greed of the highest paid CEOs on Wall Street, who implemented devious schemes to sell mortgages to poor families who can not afford mortgage payments. They consequently lost their homes and hard earned life's savings while CEOs and high paid executives made millions of dollars in bonuses. The entire US economy, and world economy, went into a tailspin. This illustrates the need for character education in K-12 schools, colleges and professional institutions.
- The divide between rich and poor, have and have-nots, is increasing in the world. The reason? Again, those who have the means, but not the moral discipline to control their greed, indulge in hoarding desirable objects and comforts of life for themselves, not caring for others who go without the daily necessities of life. Executives are paid astronomical sums of money while hard working men and women on the assembly lines are not paid enough to pay the rent and buy food for the family.

These examples bring home the need for self-discipline, control of greed, and tempered sense gratification for people who want to lead happy spiritual life, who aspire to preserve the planet for future generations, and who would like to take responsibility to build and lead just and humane societies. The free world must develop such leaders so that the planet Earth can sustain the future generations.

Some people misunderstand that exercising restraint over one's senses means denying themselves all the enjoyments of life. That is not true. On the contrary, a self-disciplined person truly enjoys life as it was meant to be, and fulfills the purpose of life while allowing others in the society to enjoy too.

According to Swami Chinmayananda, self-discipline means that the sense-objects (desirable items: food, sex, money, etc.) and greed should not overpower faculties of rational thinking, neglecting consideration of one's own health and well being, along with that of others in their families and societies. A self disciplined person is not overwhelmed by greed or desire for sense gratification and does not lose objectivity or power of discrimination between right or wrong in a given situation, or sense of personal responsibility.

Geetā's essential message is this: One should not fall pray to greed or unbridled sense gratification. Self discipline leads to a balanced human life leading to peace and personal development, peaceful co-existence of all human beings in a civilized society, and preservation of planet Earth for future generations.

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by Vamsee Juluri, Professor of Media Studies, University of San Francisco.



Introducing Four Paths of Yoga

What is Yoga?

Yoga is a Sanskrit word, in the same sense of the English word 'yoke'. It means Union of ātmā (Self) with Paramātmā (Supreme Self, Brahman, Godhead); That is the final objective of yoga.

Sri Krishna expounded four spiritual paths (yoga traditions) to attain liberation (Moksha) by uniting Self (ātmā) with the Supreme Self (Paramātmā):

1. **Dhyāna Yoga** – By meditating, one attains a tranquil mind, experiences peace, contentment and bliss, and ultimately union (yoga) with Paramātmā, which is the end objective of human life.
2. **Karma Yoga** – By doing selfless service to society: neighborhood, city, state, nation, or the whole world- according to one's ability- one can attain Moksha. Such work is worship.
3. **Gyāna Yoga** - By acquiring the true knowledge of Self (ātmā) and Paramātmā, and Samsāra, i.e., reincarnation of ātmā in the cycle of birth and death, one can become enlightened and attain liberation (Moksha) from the cycle of life and death, and union (yoga) with Paramātmā.
4. **Bhakti Yoga** – By steadfast devotion and loving surrender to God (Paramātmā) in any name and form, or aspect of God (Deva or Devī), one can attain liberation (Moksha).

Bhakti (devotion), by various names, is the common tradition in world religions; Dharmic (Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Buddhist) as well as Western, Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam).

The fundamental set of beliefs in ātmā, Paramātmā, reincarnation and, ultimately, Moksha, comprise the core tenets of Hindu religion. Starting from the Vedas, the most ancient Hindu scriptures, these concepts have been sustained through many thousands of years. They permeate all Hindu scriptures and teachings of swamis, saints and gurus. Many Western New Age 'Spiritual Gurus', writers, speakers, and yoga teachers also have learnt from this body of knowledge and it informs the core ideas of their messages (although many of them do not credit the Hindu origins of 'their' ideas).

The essence of these Hindu concepts is known as Vedānta (final knowledge of the Vedas). These concepts are expounded in 108 Upanishads and distilled in Geetā. Their variations are also found in other Dharmic traditions of India (Jain, Sikh and Buddhist tradition).

Why Four Paths? Why not just One Path for Every One?

I.1 ध्यानेन आत्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिद् आत्मानम् आत्मना
अन्ये सांख्येन योगेन कर्म योगेन चापरे (BG 13.25)

Dhyānena ātmani pashyanti kechid ātmānam ātmanā
anye sāṅkhyena yogena karma-yogena chāpare.

According to their own in-born inclinations, temperaments, tendencies and aptitudes, ...

Some behold the Supreme Self in their own soul through meditation; others know the Self through the path of Knowledge (Gyāna Yoga); still others by the path of Selfless Service (Karma Yoga)

And yet others through devotion (Bhakti Yoga)

Of the four yogas:

- ❖ **Karma Yoga** is suited to those who are motivated to offer their service to God through selfless service to humanity through their body, mind, and intellect.
- ❖ **Bhakti Yoga** is suited to those who are inclined to offer service, love and devotion to God with their heart.
- ❖ **Gyāna Yoga** is suited to those who have a keen desire to know why they were born and what is the purpose of their life, and
- ❖ **Dhyāna Yoga** is suited to those who want to find the Divine within their own Self (Atma) awakening their higher self through the stages of meditation.

By practicing any one of these yogas, one can attain the Supreme bliss. However, Karma and Gyāna Yoga may be more suitable for the left-brained, and Bhakti Yoga for the right-brained people. Dhyāna Yoga helps balance the right and left brains.

While one can start spiritual practices (Sādhanā) with any one yoga based on their aptitude or personality type, with the passage of time one develops a coherent view and integrates all four yogas in their Sādhanā.

But, what if I can not devote so much time to spirituality?

I.2 नेह अभिक्रम नाशोस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते

स्वल्पम् अपि अस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् (BG 2.40)

Neh abhikrama nāshosti pratyavāyo na vidyate
svalpam api asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.

Srī Krishna Says:

Any effort on the path of spirituality never goes to waste,
and there is no failure, nor is there any harm.

Even a little knowledge and practice of Dharma (spiritual path), will protect you from the greatest fears and worries (what the future holds for me?)

People suffer from many fears even when they have attained material prosperity. Anxiety and depression are the most common ailments in advanced societies. Material prosperity, without spirituality, does not render lasting security. That comes only through spiritual practice!

I.3 प्राप्य पुण्यकृतां लोकान् उषित्वा शाश्वतीः समाः

शुचीनां श्रीमतां गेहे योगभ्रष्टो अभिजायते (BG6.41)

Prāpya puṇya-kritām lokān ushitvā shāsvateeh samāḥ
shucheenām shreematām gehe yoga-bhrasṭo 'bhijāyate.

Even if your spiritual practice (yoga sādhanā) in this life has not reached the height of perfection and you do not achieve liberation (Moksha - union with the Divine), you would have earned merit (punya) that would enable you to go to heaven and experience the divine bliss for a long period of time.

After your merits (punyas) are exhausted, you would be born in to a pure (sāttvic) family so that you could continue your spiritual journey onward.

Lesson 2

Dhyāna Yoga: The Path of Meditation For Inner Peace

What is Dhyāna Yoga?

Stilling and purifying the mind through introspection, developing transcendental connection and finally union with the Universal Consciousness, the Supreme, Brahman, in the last stages of meditation, i.e. Samādhi, is called Dhyāna Yoga.

In Lesson 1, we learned in the last verse (BG 3.7) Śrī Krishna's advice to Prince Arjuna to control his mind and senses by his intellect through the practice of meditation. However, meditation can not be learnt by reading a book. It has to be learnt through a teacher, a master, a Guru, and it has to be practiced regularly to gain the experience of peace and tranquility, and ultimately a glimpse of the Universal Consciousness, the Supreme. Therefore, I have selected twelve verses from Geetā that provide the background and reveal the ultimate experience of yoga in the final stage, Samādhi. This would provide a strong motivation to practice meditation regularly.



Patanjali's Yoga Sūtras Ashtāṅga (eight limbs) of Yoga

Before reading the selected verses from Geetā, it is advisable for a student of *Dhyāna* Yoga to fully understand its context from Rishi (sage) Patanjali's Yoga Sūtras where he has described the **eight limbs (Ashtāṅga) of Yoga Sādhana (practice)**, as follows:

1. **Yama (five principles of ethical conduct; Hindu moral code)**: Ahimsā (non-violence), Satya (Truthfulness), Asteya (honesty), Brahmacharya (divine conduct) and Aparigraha (Not greed).
More fully described in Appendix 2.

2. **Niyama (five virtues)**: Kshamā (forgiveness), Dayā (compassion), Dhriti (steadfastness), Shaucha (cleanliness), and Ishvar Pranidhān (surrender to God). More fully described in Appendix 2.

Yama and Niyama are the ethical precepts set forth as the first two limbs of yoga. It is essential to practice them before one can progress on the path of yoga, or any spiritual advancement.

3. **Āsana (physical exercises)** required to improve flexibility before one can sit motionless for a long period of time (30 minutes or more) to practice meditation. This is the only practice popularly (but mistakenly) called Yogā in the West.

4. **Prāṇāyama (breathing exercises)** to improve physical and mental health, a prerequisite to Meditation. Breath regulation helps control mental agitation.

5. **Pratyāhāra (drawing one's mental activity inward)** withdrawing the senses from their objects (as in closing the eyes), introspection.

6. **Dhāraṇā (concentration)** stilling the chatter of the mind, focusing the mind on breath, or a word (Soham or Hansa or Hongsa), sound (Oum) or a mantra (e.g., Shivoam, normally provided by a Guru)

7. **Dhyāna (meditation)**; concentration on the inner Self (ātmā).

8. **Samādhi**, the ultimate goal of yoga: experiencing bliss in the realm of Universal Consciousness that is Sat Chit Anand (pure, consciousness, bliss).

Scientific experiments conducted during the twentieth century have proven that regular practice of yoga āsanās, Prāṇāyām and Dhyāna (meditation) provides numerous benefits for physical and mental health, including prevention and control of stress, and stress-related diseases like anxiety and depression, without using any chemicals (drugs) for treatment.

Therefore these techniques have been widely adopted in Eastern and Western culture¹⁰. However, the benefits of Yama, Niyama, and advanced stages of meditation (Samādhi) are not well understood, appreciated, nor practiced.



The Great Buddha (Daibutsu) seated in a state of meditation
a 44 feet high bronze statue of Amitābha Buddha in Kamakura, Japan.
Buddha's teachings of spiritual way of life with yoga and meditation
have spread throughout China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia.

¹⁰

'Zen and the art of management', by John Paul Rathbone, published in Financial Times
September 16, 2013 at this link:
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/32e0b9b4-1c5f-11e3-8894-00144feab7de.html#axzz2fmMlvGAc>

Introduction to Yoga

- 2.1 नास्ति बुद्धिःअयुक्तस्य न च अयुक्तस्य भावना
न च अभावयतः शान्तिः अशान्तस्य कुतः सुखम् (BG 2.66)
Nāsti buddhiḥ ayuktasya na chāyuktasya bhāvanā
na chā bhāvayataḥ shāntiḥ ashāntasya kutaḥ sukham.

One who is not disciplined, who exercises no control over his mind and senses, can not reach his full potential of intellectual development, or emotional maturity. Such a person can not hope to rise to full spiritual development.

One who is constantly buffeted by the roller coaster of emotions, pursuing sensory gratifications, can not find peace of mind. Without peace of mind, how can one find lasting happiness?

- 2.2 युक्त-आहार-विहारस्य युक्त-चेष्टस्य कर्मसु
युक्त-स्वप्न-अवबोधस्य योगः भवति दुःख-हा (BG 6.17)
Yukta-āhāra-vihārasya yukta-cheshtasya karmasu
yukta-svapna- avabodhasya yogaḥ bhavati dukha-hā.

Following a disciplined life with moderate* effort (not too much, not too little) ¹¹ into appropriate, Sāttvic productive work, appropriate and Sāttvic food, Sāttvic recreation, and adequate sleep, the practice of yoga gradually removes all physical, mental and emotional distress and discomfort.

A disciplined life with moderation in food, work, sleep, recreation, etc, is a pre-requisite to advancing further on the path of yoga.

* Elizabeth Gilbert (author of “Eat Pray Love”) after traveling to India:

“The race to always be the fastest, richest, most productive and best can become a killing addiction. I push against that force with all my might.”

¹¹ This is what Buddha called the “Middle Path”: not too much, not too little. Avoid extremes.

Preparation for meditation

2.3 प्रशान्त-आत्मा विगतभीः ब्रह्मचारि व्रते स्थितः

मनः संयम्य मत् चित्तः युक्तः आसीत् मत् परः (BG 6.14)

Prashānta-ātmā vigata-bheeh brahmachāri-vrate sthitaḥ
manaḥ sanyamya mat-chittaḥ yuktaḥ āseeta mat-parah.

With a deep feeling of peace in his heart, a calm, fearless disposition, well established in pure (divine) conduct, concentrating his/her mind on Me as the Supreme Goal in life, the disciplined yogi sits down for meditation.

2.4 तत्र एकाग्रम् मनः कृत्वा यत-चित्त- इन्द्रिय-क्रियः

उपविश्य आसने युञ्ज्यात् योगम् आत्म-विशुद्धये (BG 6.12)

Tatra ekāgram manaḥ kritvā yata-chittendriya-kriyaḥ
upavishya āsane yunjyāt yogam ātma-vishuddhaye.

Seated in a comfortable position on a suitable āsana (a padded seat or folded blanket) calming the mind and senses to a fully relaxed state, focusing the mind on Me alone, one enters the meditative state (Dhyāna Yoga) for self purification.

How to Control the Wandering Mind?

As Lord Krishna explained the need to control the mind and senses for Dhyāna Yoga, Prince Arjuna expressed doubt and hesitation.

Prince Arjuna raised a concern:

2.5 चञ्चलं हि मनःकृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद्दृढम्
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोः इव सुदुष्करम् (BG 6.34)
Chanchalam hi manaḥ krishna pramāthi balavad dṛiḍham
tasyāham nigraham manye vāyoḥ iva su-dushkaram.

O' Lord Krishna, the mind is very fickle; its always moving from one thought, or object to another, it is by nature quite restless, dynamic, and also very powerful and tenacious.

Controlling the thought streams of the mind is as difficult as controlling a powerful gust or wind storm.

2.6 असंशयं महाबाहो मनः दुर्निग्रहं चलम्
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते (BG 6.35)
Asanshayam mahā-bāho manaḥ durnigraham chalam
abhyāseṇa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa cha grihyate

To this, Srī Krishna replied:

O mighty-armed Prince, the mind is undoubtedly very difficult to control and it is very restless, indeed.

But, it can be restrained with continuous diligent practice, and by developing a rational and objective view of the ultimate futility of all worldly pleasures in providing a lasting source of happiness¹².

12

When the Beatles came to the realization that they were not really happy in spite of all the sources of enjoyment for worldly pleasures that they had acquired and experienced in their young life through their phenomenal success in the field of entertainment, they came to the rational conclusion of the ultimate futility of worldly pleasures and followed Maharshi Mahesh Yogi to his ashram in Rishikesh (India) to learn transcendental meditation.

Lord Krishna further instructed:

2.7 यतो यतो निश्चरति मनः चञ्चलम् अस्थिरम्
ततः ततो नियम्य एतत् आत्मनि एव वशं नयेत् (BG 6.26)
Yato yato nischarati manah chanchalam asthiram
tatah tato niyamy etat ātmani eva vasham nayet.

O Prince, remember, whenever the mind wanders away, or becomes unsteady, the practicing yogi gently brings it back, and again concentrates his mind into the consciousness of the Higher Self, the Brahman.



Reaching the Final Stages of Yoga (Samadhi)

**2.8 यथा दीपो निवातस्थो न इंगते सोपमा स्मृता
योगिनो यत-चित्तस्य युञ्जतो योगम् आत्मनः (BG 6.19)**

Yathā deepo nivāta-stho na ingate sopamā smritā
yogino yata-chittasya yunjato yogam ātmanah.

Here is a simile describing the state of *chitta* (deepest levels of thoughts in the mind) of a yogi:

The *chitta* of a yogi absorbed in yoga (union with the Self) remains as steady as the lamp that is placed in a quiet place where there is no movement, no wind gust. The jyoti of the lamp in such place does not flicker, it is completely steady; so is the *chitta* of the yogi. It is completely steady; it does not deviate from its one-pointed focus on the Self, not at all.



2.9 यत्र उपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योग-सेवया

यत्र चैव आत्मना आत्मानं पश्यन् आत्मनि तुष्यति (BG 6.20)

Yatra uparamate chittam niruddham yoga-sevayā
yatra chaiva ātmanā ātmānam pashyan ātmani tushyati.

When in *samādhi*, the *chitta* (steady mind), restrained by the practice of yoga, attains quietude, then the yogi sees, or finds, or gets in touch with his inner Self by his own Self (through deep introspection).

At that point, he finds a source of great contentment within his own inner Self.

Ordinarily, the mind of a human being is constantly in flux as Arjuna stated in his question (verse 2.5). In this constantly agitated, perturbed state, one can not see his inner self as one can not see his face in a lake with rippling waves. But when the wind is not blowing and the waves are completely calm, one can see his face clearly in the still waters of the lake.

The same analogy holds here. When the mind is perfectly calm, only then can one see, or get in touch with one's inner self.

The Essential Unity and Equality of All Souls

2.10 प्रशान्त-मनसं ह्येनं योगिनं सुखम् उत्तमम्

उपैति शान्त रजसं ब्रह्म भूतम् अकल्मषम् (BG 6.27)

Prashānta-manasam hi enam yoginam sukham uttamam
upaiti shānta-rajasaṁ brahma-bhūtam akalmasham

Yogi whose mind is completely at peace, who is free from sin, whose passions (Rajas Guṇa) are subdued, whose Tamas is vanquished, such a yogi attains one-ness with the Brahman and experiences Supreme Bliss.

2.11 सर्व-भूत-स्थम् आत्मानं सर्व-भूतानि चात्मनि

ईक्षते योग-युक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः (BG 6.29)

Sarva-bhūta-stham ātmānam sarva-bhūtāni chātmani
eekshate yoga-yuktātmā sarvatra sama-darshanah

A yogi established in deep meditation sees the same Self abiding in all beings, and all beings abiding in one's own Self. Thus, he sees an essential unity and one-ness among all beings everywhere in the world.

To take the first step in the journey to understand and appreciate the equality of all beings at the yogic level, just contemplate on the web of life starting with the simple observation that the air you breath is the same air other human beings (and other living beings) breath; that you breath-in (inhale) the air that was exhaled by other beings. Even trees inhale CO2 and exhale oxygen which supports the life of all humans and other beings on planet Earth.

Ideas derived from the verse:

“Our individual liberty is inexplicably tied to the liberty of every soul on earth.” - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Lesson 3

Karma Yoga: Work is Worship when it is done in the Spirit of Selfless Service

What is Karma Yoga?

In the west, there is a false notion of Karma as fate. That is totally incorrect. Indeed, Karma is the theory of ‘Action (deeds) and Reaction’ (consequences of the actions one performs). Understanding that good and bad deeds have definite consequences later in this life (or the next life) guides one on the path of right action¹³ and selfless service (as opposed to selfish conduct).

In the new generation, the ‘Me generation’, people ask — what is in it for me? In Geetā, Srī Krishna exhorts Prince Arjuna to devote life to selfless service, rejecting selfish conduct prevalent in the society.

“ life is short, the vanities of the world are transient, but they alone live who live for others; the rest are more dead than alive.” - Swami Vivekananda

¹³

Buddha expanded the concept of Karm Yoga to the “eight fold path” of Right belief, Right thought, speech, action, etc.

Introducing Karm Yoga

- 3.1 यतः प्रवृत्तिः भूतानां येन सर्वम् इदम् ततम्
 स्वकर्मणा तम् अभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः (BG 18.46)
 Yataḥ pravṛttiḥ bhūtānām yena sarvam idam tatam
 sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarchya siddhim vindati mānavaḥ.

**Worshipping through one's deeds the Supreme
 from whom all beings evolve,
 and by whom all this (universe) is pervaded,
 man attains the ultimate success.**



**Mahatma Gandhi, a true karma yogi, on protest march
 against the British colonial occupation of India.**

Gandhi drew inspiration from Geetā for all his sacrifice and selfless service fighting evil and violence with peaceful means, without resorting to violence.

Karma Yoga is Selfless Service (Nishkāma Karma)

3.2 अनाश्रितः कर्म-फलं कार्यं कर्म करोति यः
स संन्यासी च योगी च न निरग्नः न च अक्रियः (BG 6.1)

Anāshritaḥ karma-phalam kāryam karma karoti yaḥ
Sa sannyāsi cha yogi cha na niragniḥ na cha akriyaḥ

One who works diligently and discharges all their responsibilities as selfless service to others, in a responsible manner, without constantly worrying about the results, is a Karma yogi and a true sanyāsee.

Srī Krishna emphasized that true sanyāsee is not the one who renounces work and family, but the one who performs his responsibilities as above.

3.3 तस्मात् असक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर
असक्तो हि आचरन् कर्म परम् आप्नोति पूरुषः (BG 3.19)

Tasmāt asaktaḥ satatam kāryam karma samāchara
Asakto hi ācharan karma param āpnoti pūrushaḥ

Therefore, always perform selfless actions for others, actions that you are capable of, that are appropriate at your stage of life. Perform them as a matter of duty, without attachment to the results.

By performing selfless actions without attachment to results (selfish motives), man attains the Supreme bliss.

Characteristics of an Enlightened Leader

3.4 कर्मणा एव हि संसिद्धिम् आस्थिता जनकादयः
 लोक-संग्रहम् एव अपि सम्पश्यन् कर्तुम् अर्हसि (BG 3.20)
 Karmaṇā eva hi samsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ
 loka-sangraham eva api sampashyan kartum arhasi.

Srī Krishna advised Prince Arjuna on how to be a true leader:

O Prince, King Janaka¹⁴ and other great leaders of men have attained Perfection (liberation) by constantly performing actions without selfish interest.

As a leader of society, you must always perform actions with a view to the welfare and protection of the masses, Loka-sangraham.

“Loka-sangraham stands for the unity of the world, the interconnectedness of society. If the world is not to sink into a condition of physical misery and moral degradation, if the common life is to be decent and dignified, religious ethics must control social action. The aim of religion is to spiritualize society, to establish a brotherhood on earth.” Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, author, philosopher, Professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics at the University of Oxford (1936-1952), President of India (1962-1967).

¹⁴

King Janak, the father of Sītā, ruled a state in present day Nepal. He is known as a sage and a king, as he lived the life of an enlightened saint and worked selflessly for the good of his subjects. (Sita was wife of Rāma, the incarnation of Vishnu many thousands of years ago in Tretā yug). Sri Rāma also demonstrated through his personal example the leadership qualities of an enlightened ruler. He ruled the great state of Avadh with its capital in Ayodhya in such an exemplary manner that, to this day, Rāma Rājya is considered an ideal standard for kings, rulers, and heads of governments. Rāma is called ‘Maryāda Purushottam’ (a man of perfection, with highest ideals, a standard bearer). More than a Billion people in South Asia, South-east Asia, and other parts of the world follow the ideals established by Rāma as their Dharma.

3.5 यत् यत् आचरति श्रेष्ठः तत् तत् एव इतरो जनः

सः यत् प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकः तत् अनुवर्तते (BG 3.21)

Yat yat ācharati shresthaḥ tat tat eva itaro janah
sah yat pramāṇam kurute lokah tat anuvartate.

Whatever a great man, a true leader, does,
others follow him, emulate his character;
whatever standard of conduct he sets up,
others try to live up to that.

Ideals of Enlightened Leadership

- In the fifth century BCE, Buddha, born Siddhartha Gautama, a prince in North India, left home and practiced and preached Dhyāna Yoga (meditation, The Essential Unity and Equality of All Beings) and Karma Yoga (selfless service to humanity). The four noble truths Buddha propounded are:
 - Life is a struggle, filled with end-less suffering.
 - Attachment to objects is the cause of suffering.
 - Suffering can be ended by attaining dispassion – performing selfless service to humanity.
 - Dispassion can be achieved with the noble eight-fold path based on principles of Dharma: right belief, thought, speech, action, occupation, effort, mindfulness and meditation.

Today, seven hundred million people all over the world follow Buddha as their spiritual master.

- In the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi literally followed Srī Krishna's advice in Geetā verse 3.20 and 3.21 and launched a Satyāgrah (a true revolution) to free India from the clutches of the cruel and unjust British colonial rule. Masses emulated his behavior and followed his courageous, non-violent example of disobeying the laws of a foreign ruler, laws that were aimed at robbing India in order to enrich England. India was freed due to mass uprisings following Gandhi's peaceful leadership, which was based on universal principles of justice and equality of all human beings. Gandhi worked selflessly, with a duty to remove the unjust occupation of India by a mighty foreign power, while never fretting over whether he would win or lose, succeed or fail, just as advised by Srī Krishna in Karma Yoga in Bhagvad Geetā.

Following his success in removing the unjust colonial rule from India, many world leaders, including Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. in USA and Nelson Mandela in South Africa, followed his example to liberate their people from slavery and colonial rule in a non-violent manner.

Today billions of people all over the world – in Europe, Africa and the Americas – follow the spiritual ideals of fighting injustice, ending slavery, and bringing equality to humanity through non-violent action, just as practiced by Mahatma Gandhi.

On the other hand, in times when selfless service to society was not an ideal of leadership, the selfish side of men has gone to such great extents as to create so many glorified heroes and conquerors who have tried to dominate the entire world for their personal (or national) aggrandizement. Examples abound: Alexander (the Great), Genghis Khan, Hitler, Stalin, World war I, World war II, the Japanese Empire, the Spanish Empire, the British Empire: "the empires on which the sun never sets"!

**Ethical leaders create an ethical society
An ethical society creates ethical leaders.**

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2. Happiness is You – by Dr. Siddharth B. Gautam, CreateSpace, North Charleston, SC

DO's and DON'T's of Karma

3.6 कर्मणि एव अधिकारः ते मा फलेषु कदाचन मा कर्मफल हेतुः भूः मा ते संगोस्तु अकर्मणि (BG 2.47)

Karmaṇi eva adhikāraḥ te mā phaleshu kadāchana
mā karma-phala hetuḥ bhūḥ mā te sangostu akarmaṇi.

You have certain obligations and responsibilities at every stage in life (Table 4), and freedom of action to choose how you discharge your duties.

However, you must remember that all actions (Karmas) have consequences. (Karma-phala = fruits of your karmas.) The overarching message here is that you shall reap (eventually) what you sow. But, you do not have control over those consequences, because they are compounded, or affected by previous karmas in this life (or a previous life).

Further more, do not perform actions merely for selfish reasons (for the fruits of your actions), nor withdraw into inaction (for fear of failure).

But, also, do not shirk from your responsibilities.

Again, the message is: simply carry out your responsibilities to the best of your abilities, without worrying about the results.

This is called Nishkām Karma Yoga (discharging ones responsibilities in life without selfish motives, e.g., desire for personal credit, or personal gain). This is best illustrated by the sportsman spirit or the ethos of sportsman-ship widely appreciated all over the world:

“Play the best game, to the best of your skills and abilities, in the fairest manner; never mind whether you win, or lose!”

Geetā teaches us to conduct whole life (not just sports) according to this noble spirit

What is wrong with the selfish motive and attachment to the results?

Again this can be explained more simply with the sports analogy. Now a days, many players have taken to winning the game by any means, at any cost. This includes: taking drugs to build muscle, and psychologically or even physically harming the opponent. Because they are attached to achieving a win for themselves, they do not consider ill-effects of their actions on themselves or others. Sportsmanship teaches otherwise.

The first line of the verse goes against the prevailing norm. In modern societies, every one wants to claim and defend their rights – but not their responsibilities. The last time a western leader courageously spoke out about responsibilities over rights was President John F. Kennedy who, in his inaugural speech, uttered these famous words that energized a whole generation of Americans:

Ask not what the country can do for you. Ask what you can do for the country! His words echo the message of Geetā in verse BG2.47.

**3.7 युक्तः कर्मफलं त्यक्त्वा शान्तिम् आप्नोति नैष्ठिकीम्
अयुक्तः काम-कारेण फले सक्तो निबध्यते (BG 5.12)**
Yuktaḥ karma-phalam tyaktvā shāntim āpnoti naiṣṭhikīm
ayuktaḥ kāma-kāreṇa phale sakto nibadhyate.

The Karma yogi, practicing selfless service, relinquishing the desire for personal gain (fruit of action), attains deep and lasting sense of internal Peace and satisfaction.

On the other hand, those who constantly strive for personal benefit (even at the cost of others) are bound to experience the Kārmic consequences: stress, worry, dissatisfaction with whatever wealth they may have accumulated, anxiety and depression, yet never achieving the illusive happiness.

These two verses (3.6 and 3.7) very concisely convey the essence of Karma Yoga, and the secret of happiness.

Table 4
Some examples of duties and obligations
(Purushārtha) at every stage of life

| Age group | Stage of Life | Examples of Responsibilities | Examples of Freedoms | Purushārth |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Birth through age 25 | Child Student | To parents, grand-parents, siblings, friends, neighbors teachers, gurus | To select schools and fields of study | Learn Dharma* and a field of Karma (vocation) for life based on aptitude |
| Age 25 to 50 years | Householder Parent Wage earner Employer Employee Professional Businessman | To Husband / wife To raise children To work for the good of society through your work, vocation or profession ** | To choose a spouse, and a profession based on your natural aptitude(s) | Arth: earn a living according to Dharma* Kama: enjoy family life according to Dharma* |
| Age 50 to 75 years | Retired Vānprastha Guru, Mentor Social leader | Selfless service to society through your talents and life experiences | Where you serve, how you serve, whom you serve | Seek Moksha (liberation through Karma Yoga (selfless service)) |
| After 75 years of age | Sanyāsi Swāmi Yogi Mahātmā | Devote your life to service of God in company of spiritual minded souls (satsang) | Choose any yoga(s): Dhyāna, Gyāna, Karma, Bhakti | Seek Moksha (liberation through Dhyan, Gyan and Bhakti) |

* Dharma: Your duties and obligations at each stage of life, with discrimination between right and wrong. Learning Dharma leads to the right knowledge of one's responsibilities. Having right knowledge of responsibilities results in right actions. By utilizing Arth and Kāma following the principles of Dharma, one paves the way for Moksha (liberation).

** In this stage of life where earning a living is required to support family obligations, one accepts fair compensation as an employee, professional or worker, but its important to keep in mind that the work must be done in the spirit of service. For example, a medical doctor must always act with compassion (not greed) to treat all patients equally as his moral duty and accept compensation according to the patient's ability (or whatever the insurance pays).

See Appendix 3 C: professional responsibilities according to Varna āshram Dharma.

Actions of an Enlightened Karma Yogī

Perform Actions most skillfully

3.8 बुद्धि-युक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृत-दुष्कृते
 तस्माद् योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् (BG 2.50)
 Buddhi- yukto jahāteeha ubhe sukrita-duskrite
 tasmād Yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kaushalam.

Intelligent individuals with powers of discrimination between right and wrong, discharge their responsibilities without any selfish motive as Nishkāma Karma Yoga.

Thus, they do not suffer karmic consequences of their good or bad deeds. Therefore, devote yourself to Nishkāma Karma.

Performing work most skillfully to the best of one's abilities, and in the spirit of Nishkāma (selfless service to humanity) is Karma Yoga.

Maintain Equipoise in Success and Failure

- 3.9 योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि संगं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय
 सिद्धि-असिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते (BG 2.48)
 Yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi sangam tyaktvā dhananjaya
 siddhi-asiddhyoh samo bhūtvā samatvam yoga uchyate.

O Prince, perform action while fully established in the spirit of Nishkama Karma-Yoga, abandoning the sense of attachment (with the fruits of your actions), and maintaining equipoise (sense of sameness) in success and failure. Evenness of mind is yoga.

- 3.10 सुख-दुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ
 ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापम् अवाप्स्यसि (BG 2.38)

Sukha duhkhe same kritvā lābhālābhau jayājayau
 tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpam avāpsyasi.

Maintaining equipoise in pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, you shall not incur sin as you engage in any struggle in life while carrying out the responsibilities of Dharma (as illustrated in Table 4) and for Loka-sangraha (welfare of society) as explained in verse 3.4

Surrender your Work to Brahman.
Then, your Work is Worship!

3.11 ब्रह्मणि आधाय कर्माणि संगम् त्यक्त्वा करोति यः
लिप्यते न स पापेन पद्म पत्रम् इवाम्भसा (BG 5.10)
Brahmany ādhāya karmāṇi sangam tyaktvā karoti yaḥ
lipyate na sa pāpena padma-patram ivāmbhasā.

One who surrenders all his actions to BRAHMAN (Supreme Soul), abandoning attachment to the fruits (selfish interest) of his deeds, is not tainted by sin, just as the lotus leaf remains untouched by the water drops floating on its surface.



The lotus leaf remains untouched by
the water drops surrounding it.

3.12 तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु माम् अनुस्मर युध्य च
मयि-अर्पित-मनोबुद्धिः मामेव एष्यसि असंशयः (BG 8.7)

Tasmāt sarveshu kaleshu mām anusmara yudhya ca
mayi arpita-mano-buddhiḥ māmeva aishyasi asanshayaḥ.

Therefore, remember Me, at all times, as you fight
the evils (of the external or internal world).
Thus, your work becomes Worship !
Concentrate your mind and intellect on Me;
you shall come to Me, have no doubt!

For Further Study:

- Essential Karma (Meritorious Deeds) – Yagna, Dāna, Tapa (Appendix 3)
- Choosing Vocation According to one's Natural Aptitude (Appendix 4)

Karma Yoga – Summary

To practice Karma Yoga, it is important to fully understand, reflect upon, assimilate, and imbibe the lessons from all the verses in this chapter:

- ❖ Discharge your obligations, what needs to be done as your natural responsibilities based on your station in life (as a son or daughter, a parent, a student or teacher, an employer or manager or employee, an engineer, doctor, scientist, leader or volunteer, etc.)
- ❖ Perform your responsibilities in the best possible manner that you are capable of, through your aptitude, skill, and training, with perfection and mastery.
- ❖ Take up a profession or vocation that is suited to your inborn talent, tendencies, and aptitudes and grow them to their full potential.
- ❖ Do not discriminate against anyone based on their vocation. Treat every one with respect without regard to gender, caste, vocation, etc.
- ❖ Work cooperatively (saha-yagna) with other stakeholders so that all succeed (win-win).
- ❖ Do selfless service (not attached to personal benefit or self-gain).
- ❖ Work in the interest of Loka-sangraha, the good of the community .
- ❖ Work with a sense of equipoise, equanimity, i.e., sense of sameness in success and failure, pleasure or pain.
- ❖ Offer your work as a sacrifice to the Supreme Lord. Always keep in touch with the presence of the Divine in your heart and offer your work as worship to Lord.

Geetā's overarching message is that you must perform your duty – not with selfish motives, and not to indulge in sensory gratification – but with the right thought and attitude of saha-yagya (cooperation with others and sacrifice for others) and Loka-sangraha (welfare of society).

Additionally, surrendering to Brahman: you must perform your duty as selfless service while maintaining constant awareness of divine presence; i.e., be aware of God's presence with reverence and joy.

There is joy in doing God's work, selfless service, as one's duty each day and at each station in life. That joy supersedes all other kind of worldly joy from selfish gain. In our day-to-day business of life we often lose awareness of God's presence. That's why Hindu traditions have developed many rituals, prayers to many deities (with different names and forms), mantras, kirtans, meditation practices, and other spiritual disciplines. They are all valid means of spiritual growth as they help individuals develop and maintain divine consciousness in their life according to their own Guṇas (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas) and aptitudes.

Lesson 4

Gyāna Yoga: The Path of Spiritual Knowledge & Wisdom

What is Gyāna Yoga?

Gyāna Yoga, also known as Samkhya Yoga, is the path of spiritual knowledge and wisdom. Essentially, Gyāna Yoga is about the knowledge of of ātmā (self) and Paramātmā (God) which also explains the theory of reincarnation and gives us an opportunity to reflect upon why we take birth and what is the purpose of life.



4.1 न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रम् इह विद्यते ।

तत् स्वयं योग-संसिद्धः कालेन आत्मनि विन्दति (BG 4.38)

Na hi gyānena sadrisham pavitram iha vidyate
tat svayam yoga-samsiddhaḥ kālena ātmani vindati.

There is nothing in this world as sacred and as purifying as (spiritual) knowledge and wisdom.

Perfected by yoga, one finds by himself/herself this spiritual wisdom in his/her own Self (ātmā) in the due course of time.

Spiritual wisdom is not obtained through the five senses of cognition or intellectual pursuits.

One finds it oneself, in one's own heart.

Ethical Values for Wisdom Seekers

Treating Every One Equally with Respect and Kindness

4.2 विद्या-विनय-सम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि

शुनि चैव श्व-पाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः (BG 5.18)

Vidyā-vinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
shuni chaiva shva-pāke cha paṇḍitāḥ sama-darshinaḥ.

One with spiritual wisdom (called Pundit) respects every one, treating every one equally, whether one is a Brāhmin endowed with great learning and humility, or a dog eater (i.e., any one eating animal flesh).

Such a wise one would be kind even to animals whether a cow, an elephant, or a dog (Sri Krishna affirmed that animals also have souls).

4.3 अहिंसा सत्यम् अक्रोधः त्यागः शान्तिः अपैशुनम्
दया भूतेषु अलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीः अचापलम् (BG 16.2)

Ahimsā satyam akrodhaḥ tyāgaḥ shāntiḥ apaishunam
dayā bhūteshu aloluptvam mārḍavam hreeh achāpalam.

One with spiritual wisdom is non-violent in deeds, speech, and thought, truthful in speech and thought, of peaceful temperament without undue anger, frustration or aggravation, not harassing, intimidating, criticizing, or back-biting others, not indulging in sensory gratification.

One with compassion towards all, willing to sacrifice self-interest for the sake of others, with modesty (shame for doing anything immodest) and absence of fickleness.

Mahatma Gandhi was greatly influenced and inspired by these moral and ethical values. All his actions reflected these values.

4.4 अमानित्वम् अदम्भित्वम् अहिंसा क्षान्तिः आर्जवम्
आचार्य उपासनं शौचं स्थैर्यम् आत्म-विनिग्रहः (BG 13.8)

Amānitvam adambhitvam ahimsā kshāntiḥ ārjavam
āchārya upāsanam shaucham sthairyam ātma-vinigrahaḥ.

These are the values of a Gyānī: Humility, unpretentiousness, non-violence, forgiveness, uprightness. Additionally, respectfully serving the teacher, inner and outer purity, steadfastness, and self-discipline . . .

For a comprehensive discourse on the values in these verses (and also four more verses on this subject: BG 13.9, 13.10, 13.11), please read: “*The Value of Values*” - by Swāmi Dayānanda Saraswati, ārsha Vidyā Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA and Chennai, India.

Lesson 4-A

Ātmā Gyāna: Knowledge of the Self

Theory of Reincarnation

Fundamental Questions: Who am I?

Am I this body?

If not, then who or what am I?

Answers: I am not this body; I am the soul;

Soul is the inner essence of our existence.

— We are not our bodies; we are souls – clothed in body suits.

— The body is the temple wherein God lives as our soul.

4.5 देहिनो अस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा

तथा देहान्तर प्राप्तिः धीरस् तत्र न मुह्यति (BG 2.13)

Dehino asmin yathā dehe kaumāram yauvanam jarā
tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ dheeras tatra na muhyati.

Srī Krishna spoke to Prince Arjuna:

As our bodies experience childhood, youth, and old age;
Similarly, after death of this body, the soul passes on to
another body. Wise ones firmly believe in this , they have
no illusions about it.

Our bodies are temporary shelter for the Soul that is
everlasting. We are not our bodies, we are our souls.

4.6 न तु एवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः

न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयम् अतः परम् (BG 2.12)

Na tu evāham jātu nāsam na tvam neme janādhipāḥ
na chaiva na bhaviṣhyāmaḥ sarve vayam ataḥ param.

O Prince, There was never a time in the past, when
I did not exist, or when you (your soul) did not exist,
or when (the souls of) any of these kings assembled here
did not exist.

Nor will there be any time in the future, when all of us,
our souls, shall cease to exist.

We (as souls) have all existed before and shall continue to
exist in the future! All souls are truly immortal.

4.7 न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्

नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः

अजो नित्यः शाश्वतः अयं पुराणो

न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे (BG 2.20)

Na jāyate mriyate vā kadāchin
nāyam bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ
ajo nityāḥ shāshvato 'yam purāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne shareere.

Neither the soul takes birth, nor it ever dies.
Having come into existence once, it does not come into
existence again and again;
The soul is unborn, eternal, changeless and ancient;
it does not perish when the body perishes.

Trans-migration of Soul

4.8 वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय

नवानि गृह्णाति नरोपराणि

तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णानि

अन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही (BG 2.22)

Vāsānsi jeerṇāni yathā vihāya navāni grhṇāti naroparāṇi
tathā shareerāṇi vihāya jeerṇāni anyāni sanyāti navāni dehee.

As a man casts off his worn out clothes, and puts on new ones; Similarly, the embodied-Soul casts off its worn out (old or damaged) body at death and acquires a new body in the next life.

4.9 नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः

न चैनं क्लेदयन्ति आपो न शोषयति मारुतः (BG 2.23)

Nainam chindanti shastrāṇi nainam dahati pāvakaḥ
na chainam kledayanti āpo na shoshayati mārutaḥ.

Weapons can not cut It (the soul), fire can not burn It,
water can not dissolve It, and wind can not dry It.
It is indestructible! It is immortal!

4.10 ममैव अंशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः

मनःषष्ठानि इन्द्रियाणि प्रकृति-स्थानि कर्षति (BG 15.7)

mama aiva aṁsho jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manah-shashṭhāni indriyāṇi prakṛti-sthāni karshati

Sri Krishna:

In this body, the eternal soul is a minuscule fraction of myself. And it (the soul) binds with the mind and the five senses situated in the material nature.

4.11 शरीरं यत् अवाप्नोति यत् चापि उत्क्रामति ईश्वरः

गृहीत्वा एतानि संयाति वायुःगन्धान् इव आशयात् (BG 15.8)

Sharīraṁ yat avāpnoti yat chāpi utkrāmati Ishvaraḥ
gr̥hitva etāni saṁyāti vāyur gandhān iva āshayāt

As the air carries fragrance from place to place,
so does the embodied soul carries the mind and senses
with it, when it leaves an old body
and enters a new one.

Other Hindu scriptures provide more details about the transmigration of soul at the end of life. As explained in the Background Chapter verse B.2 and B.3, there are three aspects of our bodies:

1. **Sthoola Sharīra** or **Gross Body**: the physical body made of five mahabhootas, macro-elements (solids, liquids, heat/energy, gases and space)
2. **Sookshma Sharīra** or **Subtle body**: consists of eighteen elements: the mind, intellect, and ego, along with the five senses of cognition, five objects of sense cognition, and the five senses of action.
3. **Kāran Sharīra** or **Causal body**: consists of the accumulated karma (fruits of your deeds) from past lives, including the sanskārs (tendencies) carried forward from previous lives.

At the time of death, the (old or damaged) gross body is left here and becomes one with the five mahabhootas, but the soul leaves taking with it the subtle and causal aspects of body to the new incarnation.

The Body is the Kshetra, the Soul infuses it
with the light of Consciousness

4.12 यथा प्रकाशयति एकः कृत्स्नं लोकम् इमं रविः
क्षेत्रम् क्षेत्री तथा कृत्स्नम् प्रकाशयति भारत (BG 13.34)

Yathā prakāshayati ekaḥ kṛitsnam lokam imam raviḥ
kshetram kshetrī tathā kṛitsnam prakāshayati bhārata.

Just as the Sun illuminates the entire solar system,
so also the Lord-of-the-Field (Atma) illuminates the
whole "Field " that is our physical body, O Prince.

Here the word illuminates means that ātmā infuses the (inert) body with
consciousness¹⁵ and intelligence in every cell of the body so it can perform
its organ specific functions.

4.13 ज्ञानेन तु तद् अज्ञानं येषां नाशितम् आत्मनः
तेषाम् आदित्यवत् ज्ञानम् प्रकाशयति तत् परम् (BG 5.16)

Gyānena tu tad agyānam yeshām nāshitam ātmanah
teshām āditya-vat gyānam prakāshayati tat param.

Those whose ignorance has been removed by the
Knowledge of the Self, to them that Knowledge of the Self
reveals the Supreme (*BRAHMAN*) as the bright sun
repelling darkness, revealing everything clearly.

15

"Proof of Heaven - A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife" by Eben Alexander, MD, Harvard Medical School, Boston; Simon & Schuster publisher. "Consciousness is the most profound mystery in the universe." "in fact, consciousness is at the root of all existence".

Relationship between ātmā and Paramātmā is very deep

4.14 उपद्रष्टा अनुमन्ता च भर्ता भोक्ता महेश्वरः

परमात्मा इति च अपि उक्तो देहेस्मिन् पुरुषः परः (BG 13.23)

Upadrashṭā anumantā cha bhartā bhoktā maheshvaraḥ
Paramātmā iti cha api ukto dehī 'smin puruṣaḥ paraḥ.

Paramātmā, the Supreme Divinity,
is dwelling in this body as ātmā.

It is the witness, overseer of our actions.

It acts as our conscience.

It supports life and enjoys (or suffers from)
its experiences.

The soul is the indwelling Lord, the Supreme Self.

ātmā is at the microscopic level;

Paramātmā at the macroscopic level.

Lesson 4-B Paramātmā Gyāna (Brahm Vidyā) Knowledge of the Supreme Self (Brahman)

4.15 समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम्
विनश्यत्सु अविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति (BG 13.28)
Samam sarveshu bhūteshu tiṣṭhantam parameshvaram
vinash.yatsu avinash.yantam yaḥ pashyati sa pashyati.

Param ātmā , the Supreme Lord, is established equally
in all beings (as ātmā).

He who sees the imperishable (ātmā)
within the perishable (body) of all living beings,
he truly comprehends the Supreme Reality.

4.16 ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशे अर्जुन तिष्ठति
भ्रामयन् सर्वभूतानि यन्त्र-आरूढानि मायया (BG 18.61)
Ishvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām hrid.deshe Arjuna tiṣṭhati
bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantra-ārūḍhāni māyayā.

The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Prince,
causing all beings, by His Māyā (illusive power), to move
and act, as if mounted on an instrument, or device.

Just think how each one of us goes through the human life cycle: birth, growth, maturity, old age and death (referred to in verse 4.11 as Kaumāram, Yauvanam, Jarā (BG 2.13), experiencing the feelings and emotions associated with each stage of life, as if going through a Disney World ride in slow motion!

In this verse as in all ancient scriptural writings, as well as in poetry, heart does not refer to the physical organ, but to the faculty of human beings that is the repository of all positive qualities of love, compassion, charity, generosity, and the like.

The words: The Lord 'dwells in the heart' means, though He is present everywhere, the Lord is most conspicuously self-evident in the Heart as defined above. This is realized specially during meditation. See more about Meditation in Lesson 2.

When & Why God Comes to Earth - as an Avatāra?

**4.17 यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिः भवति भारत
अभ्युत्थानम् अधर्मस्य तदा आत्मानं सृजामि अहम् (BG 4.7)**
 Yadā yadā hi dharmasya – glāniḥ bhavati bhārata
 abhyut.thānam adharmasya – tadā ātmānam srijāmi aham.

Srī Krishna said: Whenever there is a decline of Dharma¹⁶ (righteousness), and rise of Adharma (unrighteousness) in the world, O Prince, then I manifest Myself as an Avatāra.

**4.18 परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्
धर्मं संस्थापन अर्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे (BG 4.8)**
 Paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināshāya cha dushkritām
 dharma-sansthāpan arthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge.

For the protection of all good people
 and destruction of the wicked ones,
 and to re-establish Dharma (righteousness) in the world,
 I come in a human form (as an Avatār) in each epoch.

¹⁶

Buddhist view of Dharma: “Because we all share this planet Earth, we have to learn to live in harmony and peace with each other and with nature. This is not just a dream, but a necessity.” H.H. Dalai Lama

* Western notion of Dharma from Plato’s Republic: “the ideal community is “a city which would be established in accordance with nature.”

* American notion of Dharma in the Declaration of Independence:

“When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people, ... to assume among the powers of the Earth, the separate and equal station to which the Lāws of Nāture and of Nature’s God entitle them... We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The following verses explain the aspects of Paramātmā as omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent.

4.19 सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टो
 मत्तः स्मृति-ज्ञानम् अपोहनं च
 वेदैश्च सर्वैर् अहमेव वेद्यो
 वेदान्त-कृत वेदविद् एव चाहम् (BG 15.15)

Sarvasya chāham hridi sannivishṭo
 mattaḥ smritir-gyānam apohanam cha
 vedaish.cha sarvair aham.eva vedyo
 vedānta-krit veda-vid eva chāham.

I am seated in the hearts of all beings.
 I am the source of their memory, intelligence
 and knowledge (as well as it's absence).

Vedas and Vedānta are full of knowledge about me
 because I am the author of Vedanta;
 I am omniscient!

4.20 यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति
 तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति (BG 6.30)
 Yo mām pashyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pashyati
 tasyāham na praṇashyāmi sa cha me na praṇashyati.

He who sees Me everywhere,
 and sees every thing in Me,
 I am not lost to him (not away from his thoughts)-
 nor is he ever lost to Me.

This verse reveals the profound unity of all things:
 When we are one with the Divine, we become one with the whole universe.

Prince Arjuna Requests for a Rare Glimpse
of Sṛī Krishna's Divine Splendor

4.21 एवम् एतद् यथा आत्थ त्वम् आत्मानम् परमेश्वर
द्रष्टुम् इच्छामि ते रूपम् ऐश्वरं पुरुषोत्तम (BG 11.3)
Ivām etad yathā āttha tvam ātmānam parameshvara
drashṭum ichchāmi te rūpam aishvaram purushottama.

Prince Arjuna:

O Supreme Lord! I can barely imagine your greatness as you have described Yourself. Therefore, I wish to see you in your transcendental (Divine) Form, O Purushottam (greatest among men).

To enable Arjuna to see his transcendental form, unviewable to human eyes, Sri Krishna gave Arjuna Divya Drishti (divine vision) and said:

4.22 इहैकस्थं जगत् कृत्स्नं पश्याद्य सचराचरम्
मम देहे गुडाकेश यत् चान्यत् द्रष्टुम् इच्छसि (BG 11.7)
Ihaika-stham jagat kritsnam pashyādya sacharā.charam
mama dehe guḍākesha yat chānyat drashṭum ichchasi.

Sri Krishna:

Now behold, O Prince, the whole universe established in my infinite Body, the entire universe, including everything that is the movable and everything that is immovable - and anything else that you may desire to see in the universe.



For those readers who relate to the physical better than the abstract, here are some verses that illustrate the concept of Paramātmā through metaphors from the physical universe.

Sanjaya also had the divine vision. He saw the universal form of Lord Krishna and narrated his visual experience to the blind King Dhritā-rāshṭra in this way:

4.23 दिवि सूर्य सहस्रस्य भवेत् युगपत् उत्थिता

यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्यात् भासः तस्य महात्मनः (BG 11.12)

Divi sūrya-sahasrasya bhavet yugapat utthitā

yadi bhāḥ sadrishee sā syāt bhāsaḥ tasya mahātmanah.

If the light of a thousand suns were to blaze forth all at once in the sky¹⁷, that brilliance might scarcely resemble the splendor of that exalted Supreme Being!

17

Pre-eminent nuclear scientist, Robert Oppenheimer, director of the Manhattan Project that developed the first nuclear device, was a student of Sanskrit at UC Berkeley and became a Geetā admirer. He said that he uttered this verse of the 'Thousand Suns' when he witnessed the first nuclear explosion!

Lord Srī Krishna had also described himself like this in another context:

4.24 मत्तः परतरं नान्यत् किञ्चिद् अस्ति धनञ्जय
मयि सर्वम् इदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव (BG 7.7)
Mataḥ parataram nānyat kinchid asti dhanam.jaya
mayi sarvam idam protam sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva.

There is absolutely nothing beyond My transcendental existence, O Prince.

This whole universe is structured around Me,
as a profusion of gems arranged by a skilled jeweler
with an unseen string going through them,
holding them together in their respective places (orbits).

This verse clearly explains that the universe is structured in an orderly manner according to a skillful plan by the infinite wisdom and intelligence of the Supreme Controller of the Universe, the Lord, Brahman.

4.25 यत् आदित्य-गतं तेजो जगद् भासयते अखिलम्
यत् चन्द्रमसि यत् चाग्नौ तत् तेजो विद्धि मामकम् (BG 15.12)
Yat āditya-gatam tejo jagad bhāsayate akhilam
yat chandramasi yat chāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakam.

I am the source of that light that illuminates the Sun
which, in turn, illuminates the entire solar system.

I am the source of the light that is in the moon
and in the fire -

know that - that Light originates from Me;
I am the original source!

How are all Souls established in Paramātmā?

4.26 यथा आकाश-स्थितो नित्यं वायुः सर्वत्र-गो महान् ।
तथा सर्वाणि भूतानि मत्-स्थानि इति उपधारय (BG 9.6)
Yathā ākāsha-sthito nityam vāyuḥ sarvatra-go mahān
tathā sarvāṇi bhūtāni mat-sthani iti upa.dhāraya.

As the mighty wind, though always moving everywhere,
is permanently established in the space (ākāsha).
In the same way, you must understand, O Prince
that all beings (souls) are permanently established in Me!

4.27 अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तम् इव च स्थितम्
भूतभर्तृ च तत् ज्ञेयं ग्रसिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च (BG 13.16)
Avibhaktam cha bhūteshu vibhaktam iva cha sthitam
bhūta-bhartri cha tat geyam grasishṇu prabhavishṇu cha.

Although Paramātmā is Undivided, Infinite, Whole,
Paramātmā appears to exist as if divided in beings (as
separate ātmās) in the same way as space appears divided
in rooms separated by walls!

Also, the same Paramātmā appears in multiple forms as:
- Vishnu, the perpetual sustainer of the universe;
- Shiva, continuously transforming the universe¹⁸
- Brahmā, continuously generating all that exists.

The oldest Hindu scriptures, called Vedas, proclaimed:

एकम् सत् विप्र बहुधा वदन्ति ekam Sat Vipra Bahudhā Vadanti
Truth is One. Sages speak of it by various names!
Sri Krishna reiterated the same revelation in the above verse.

¹⁸“Every Act of creation is first of all an act of destruction” - Pablo Picasso,
one of the world’s foremost, pre-eminent, creative artists.

4.28 यदा भूत-पृथक् भावम् एक-स्थम् अनुपश्यति
 ततः एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते तदा (BG 13.30)
 Yadā bhūta-prithak-bhāvam eka-stham anupashyati
 tataḥ eva cha vistāram brahma sampadyate tadā.

The instant one fully comprehends the fact that the
 diversity of all existence is rooted in One Supreme Spirit*
 and that this Universe is the expansion of that One**.
 In that instant one realizes the Supreme!

Comprehending the Unity - underlying the diversity
 in the Universe - is Self-Realization.

* Similar concept behind the “E-Pluribus Unum” (stated in the reverse order
 “One from many”) the de-facto motto of the United States that adorns the great
 seal of the United States of America!

** According to the Big Bang Theory, scientists now believe that this Universe is
 an expansion of an incredibly high energy density field that is homogeneous and
 isotropic (uniform in all directions).

Arjuna after seeing the Divine Splendor

4.29 त्वम् आदि-देवः पुरुषः पुराणः

त्वम् अस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम्

वेत्ता असि वेद्यं च परं च धाम

त्वया ततं विश्वम् अनन्त-रूप (BG 11.38)

Tvam ādi-devaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ

tvam asya vishvasya param nidhānam

vettā asi vedyam cha param cha dhāma

tvayā tatam vishvam ananta-rūpa.

Bhagvān, You are the Original Divine existence.

You are the most ancient being.

You are the transcendent upholder of the universe.

You are Omniscient.

Humanity needs to understand that the universe is
pervaded by you in Infinite Forms.

You, the One Original Divinity, take Infinite forms!

Concluding Verses:

The following four verses summarize the essential knowledge about Paramātmā.

4.30 गतिः भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत्

प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं निधानं बीजम् अव्ययम् (BG 9.18)

Gatiḥ bhartā prabhuḥ sākshee - nivāsaḥ sharaṇam suhrit
prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānam nidhānam beejam avyayam.

Srī Krishna told Arjuna:

O Prince, I am the goal of human life (i.e., Moksha – liberation from the cycle of life and death, and ultimately, union with Paramātmā);

I am the lord who sustains the universe;

I am the inner witness and the only true friend;

I am the shelter that provides refuge to all who come;

I am the beginning, the end, and the space in between;

I am the resting place (womb) and the medium of creation;

I am the eternal, indestructible seed (source)

of the universe.

One who has obtained wisdom, knows Brahman is everything!

4.31 ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविः ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम्

ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्म-कर्म समाधिना (BG 4.24)

Brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnaū brahmaṇā hutam
brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma-karma-samādhinā.

Srī Krishna:

In performing any havan or yagya,
the oblation is offered to Brahman - by the Brahman;
the oblation itself is Brahman;

Brahman is also the clarified butter that is poured in the fire; and also the fire itself is Brahman! Thus, the wise one who always sees Brahman every where in all forms, and is totally immersed in the consciousness of Brahman in all his actions, verily attains Brahman (moksha).

The above verse (BG 4.24) is a traditional prayer before meals. In that context it is interpreted to mean that the food being offered is the five essential elements aspect of Brahman; the individuals eating the food are also Brahman (affirming Aham Brahmāsmi, I am Brahman) performing this act (lunch, dinner) while remembering, being grateful to, and fully conscious of the omni-present Brahman. We surrender all our actions of cooking, serving, and eating to Brahman. May our Sādhana lead us to Brahman, the highest goal of human life.
Om, Peace! Peace! Peace!

4.32 ब्रह्मणो हि प्रतिष्ठा अहम् अमृतस्य अव्ययस्य च
शाश्वतस्य च धर्मस्य सुखस्य एकान्तिकस्य च (BG 14.27)
Brahmaṇo hi pratisthā aham amṛtasya avyayasya cha
śāśvatasya cha dharmasya sukhasya ekānti.kasya cha.

Srī Krishna:

I am the BRAHMAN, the Infinite Consciousness, the macrocosm, that which is never ending, upholder of the everlasting, universal DHARMA (laws governing the universe) Immortal, Imperishable, the One who is the source of Absolute Bliss.

4.33 बहूनां जन्मनाम् अन्ते ज्ञानवान् मां प्रपद्यते
वासुदेवः सर्वम् इति स महात्मा सु-दुर्लभः (BG 7.19)

Bahūnām janmanām ante gyānavān mām prapadyate
vāsudevah sarvam iti sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ.

Srī Krishna:

Hard to find is that great soul (Mahātmā) who has realized that ALL THIS - every thing that exists - is VāSUDEVA.

Matured after many births and many lives, such rare souls, perfected in this wisdom, achieve Moksha; i.e., liberation from the cycle of life and death, and merge in My Supreme existence.

Gyāna Yoga Summary

Lessons of Gyāna Yoga are beautifully summarized in a Hindi/Sanskrit prayer which is presented below with English translation:

Q. Who am I ? And Who (or What) is God?

Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham
Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham
Amar ātmā Satchidānanda mai hoon,
Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham

I am Shiva, I am Shiva, I am Shiva
I am the immortal Soul that is Sat (pure)
Chit (Consciousness) and ānand (bliss)
I am Shiva, I am Shiva, I am Shiva

Akhil Vishwa kā jo Paramātmā hai,
Sabhī Prāṇiyo kā wahī ātmā hai,
Wahī ātmā Satchidānanda mai hoon,
Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham

Paramātmā who pervades the universe
Is also the ātmā in all living beings.
I am also that ātmā that is Sat, Chit, ānand
I am Shiva ...

Jisé shastra kātē na agnī jalāyē,
Galāyē na pāni na mrityu mitāyē,
Wahī ātmā Satchidānanda mai hoon,
Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham

Weapons can not cut it, fire can not burn it
Water can not dissolve it,
death can not destroy it
I am that ātmā that is Sat, Chit, ānand
I am Shiva ...

Amar ātmā hai maraṇsheel kāyā,
Sabhī prāṇiyo kē jo bhītar samāyā,
Wahī ātmā Satchidānanda mai hoon,
Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham

ātmā is immortal; the body is perishable
ātmā pervades every living cell
I am that ātmā that is Sat Chit ānand
I am Shiva ...

Hai tāro(n) sitaro(n) mai ābhās jiskā,
Hai chandā aur Sūraj mai prakāsh jiskā,
Wahī ātmā Satchidānanda mai hoon,
Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham

Paramātmā shines through the stars
He is the source of light in Sun and Moon
I am that ātmā that is Sat Chit ānand
I am Shiva

Jo vyāpak hai kan kan mai āvās jiskā,
Nahī teen kalo mai ho nāsh jiskā,
Wahī ātmā Satchidānanda mai hoon,
Shivoham Shivoham Shivoham
Shivoham

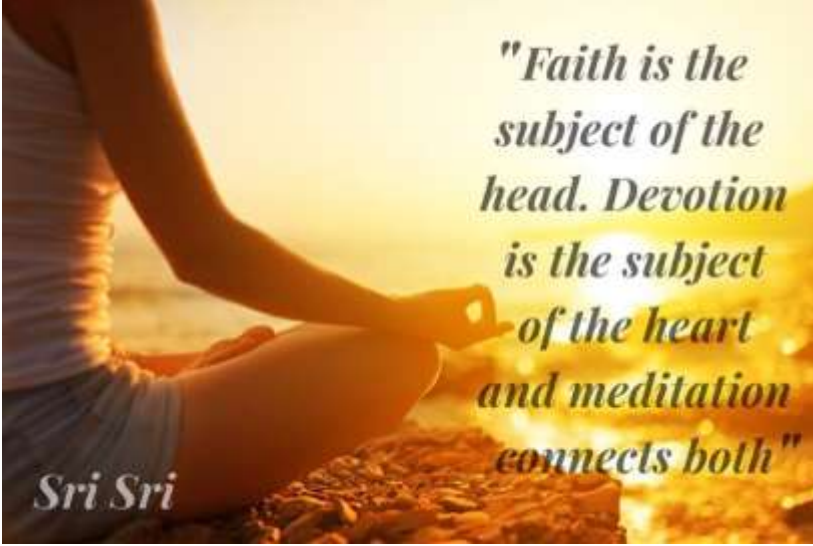
ātmā that is immersed in every atom
That is indestructible, immortal forever
I am that ātmā that is Sat Chit ānand
I am Shiva ...

Sivoham, as well as Aham Brahmasmi, and Tatvam Asi are Mahā-vākya (Truth of the highest order)

Aham Brahmāsmi = I am Brahman.

Tatvam Asi = Thou art That (Brahman)

Lesson 5
Bhakti Yoga: The Path of
Loving Devotion - Surrendering to God



5.1 अहं सर्वस्य प्रभवो मत्तः सर्वं प्रवर्तते
इति मत्वा भजन्ते मां बुधा भाव-समन्विताः (BG 10.8)

Aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvam pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ.

I am the Source of every thing;
everything evolves, and emanates from Me;
Understanding this, the wise ones worship Me
with deep feelings of devotion and love.

Srī Krishna spoke to Prince Arjuna:

5.2 सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य माम् एकं शरणं ब्रज

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः (BG 18.66)

Sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekam sharaṇam vraja
aham tvā sarva-pāpebhyo mokshayishyāmi mā shuchah.

Abandoning attachment to the fruits of your actions,
take refuge in Me.

I will liberate you from all sins. Do not grieve.

This is the same advice as in verse 3.9

Brahmaṇi ādhāya karmāni sangam tyaktvā karoti yaḥ
Lipyate na sa pāpen padma-patram ivāmbhasā (BG 5.10)

But here it is given from the Bhakti perspective.

Here in Bhakti bhāva, Srī Krishna speaks in the first person:

“Take refuge in me. I will liberate you from all sins.”

5.3 मन्मना भव मद्भक्तः मद्-याजी मां नमस्कुरु

मामेव एष्यसि युक्तवैवम् आत्मानं मत्परायणः (BG 9.34)

Manmanā bhava mad-bhaktaḥ mad-yājī mām namaskuru
māmeva eshyasi yuktvaivam ātmānam mat-parāyaṇah.

Focus your mind on Me alone; be devoted to Me,
bow down to Me;

Uniting your Self with Me, as the Supreme Goal,
you shall come to Me.

5.4 मत-कर्म-कृन् मत् परमो मद-भक्तः संग वर्जितः
निर्वैरः सर्व-भूतेषु यः स माम् एति पाण्डव (BG 11.55)

Mat-karma-krin mat-paramo mad-bhaktaḥ sanga-varjitaḥ
nirvairāḥ sarva-bhuteshu yaḥ sa mām eti Pāṇḍava.

One who performs all actions for Me,
completely free from attachment to selfish interests,
who is ever devoted to Me, knowing Me as the Supreme;

And who bears enmity towards none,
O Prince, such a one finally comes to Me.

5.5 भक्त्या माम् अभिजानाति यावान् यः चास्मि तत्त्वतः
ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तद्-अनन्तरम् (BG 18.55)

Bhaktiā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaḥ chāsmi tattvataḥ
tato mām tattvato gyātvā vishate tad-anantaram.

Through Bhakti (devotion) one can know Me exactly as
I am, and having known Me thus in my true essence,
one unites with my Supreme existence.

5.6 अनन्याः चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते
तेषां नित्य-अभियुक्तानां योग-क्षेमं वहाम्यहम् (BG 9.22)

Ananyāḥ cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate
teshām nitya-abhiyuktānām yoga-kshemam vahāmyaham.

Those who meditate on Me and worship Me with full
faith and unwavering devotion, their necessities of life
and safety/security are easily obtained through divine
intervention, Providence.

5.7 अन्त-काले च माम एव स्मरन् मुक्त्वा कलेवरम्

यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्ति अत्र संशयः (BG 8.5)

Anta-kāle cha mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram
yaḥ prayāti sa mad-bhāvam yāti nāsti atra sanshayaḥ.

And at the end (time of death) one who leaves his body
and departs from this world while remembering Me,
attains My Supreme Spirit; there is no doubt about this.

5.8 यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धया अर्चितुम् इच्छति

तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां ताम एव विदधामि अहम् (BG 7.21)

Yo yo yām yām tanum bhaktaḥ shraddhayā architum ichchati
tasya tasyāchalām shraddhām tām eva vidadhāmi aham.

Whichever Devā (m) or Devī (f) a devotee desires to
worship with faith, I make his faith stronger in that
particular form (Devā or Devī) that he is drawn to.



5.9 ये अपि अन्य-देवताः भक्ताः यजन्ते श्रद्धया अन्विताः

ते अपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्ति अविधि-पूर्वकम् (BG 9.23)

Ye api anya devataḥ bhaktāḥ yajante sraddhayā anvitāḥ
te api mām eva kaunteya yajanti avidhi-pūrvakam.

Even those who worship with great devotion and faith,
other names and forms of God as Devīs and Devatās,
they indeed worship Me alone.

O Prince, they may not fully understand or appreciate
this fact and, therefore, follow non-traditional forms of
devotional practices.



5.10 पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति
तत् अहं भक्ति-उपहृतम् अश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः (BG 9.26)
Patram pushpam phalam toyam yo me bhaktyā prayachchatī
tad aham bhakti-upahritam ashnāmi prayatātmanah.

Whoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a
fruit, or water, I accept that offering of the pure-
minded, filled with devotion.

5.11 यत् करोषि यत् अश्नासि यत् जुहोषि ददासि यत्
यत् तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत् कुरुष्व मद् अर्पणम् (BG 9.27)
Yat karoshi yat ashnāsi yat juhoshi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kurushva mad-arpaṇam.

Whatever work you do, whatever food you eat,
whatever Yagna you perform,
whatever charity (Dāna) you give,
whatever purifying austerities you practice,
O Prince, do it always as an offering to Me !

Remember this prayer before starting the days work!
And not only at dinner time, but before all meals.

Concluding Remārks

C.1 इति ते ज्ञानम् आख्यातं गुह्यात् गुह्यतरं मया
विमृश्या एतद् अशेषेण यथा इच्छसि तथा कुरु (BG 18.63)
Iti te gyānam ākhyātam guhyāt guhyataram mayā
vimrashya etad ashesheṇa yathā ichchasi tathā kuru.

Srī Krishna: Thus, I have revealed to you all the wisdom
that explains the greatest of secrets to mankind.
Now, reflect on it thoroughly;
then, act as you wish.

Metaphorically, this verse conveys the idea that the Supreme Lord has given every one full freedom to choose their actions, and thus their own destiny in this life (and future lives). Geetā does not dictate, does not prescribe, does not spoon feed, but gives you the tools and the wisdom to think for yourself and act with your own discretion.

C.2 यः इदं परमं गुह्यं मद्वक्तेषु अभिधास्यति
भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा माम् एव एष्यति असंशयः (BG 18.68)
Yah idam paramam guhyam mad-bhakteshu abhidhāsyati
bhaktim mayi parām kritva mām eva eshyati asanshayaḥ.

He who, acting with love and devotion to me,
will teach or disseminate this deepest secret knowledge
(that is unknowable by human cognitive senses and
intellect) to those who seek the truth, shall doubtless
come to Me in the end.

C.3 यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः
तत्र श्रीः विजयो भूतिः ध्रुवा नीतिः मतर्मम (BG 18>78)
Yatra yogeshvaraḥ Kṛṣṇo, yatra Pārtho dhanurdharaḥ
Tatra shrī vijayo bhūtiḥ dhruvā neetiḥ matirmama.

This is the concluding verse of Geetā where Sri Sanjaya opined to King Dhritrāshṭra:

Wherever Sṛī Krishna, the Lord of Yoga (Unity principle of body, mind, intellect, and spirit, i.e., moral integrity) and Prince Arjuna, a man of right action and conviction (the archer) come together, there surely will come prosperity, victory, and ever lasting happiness because their actions will be guided by right principles; this is my firm conviction.

The symbolism of Lord Krishna (Yogeshvar) and Arjuna (the *archer*) represents the philosophy of Geetā that whenever a person, guided by a pure spiritual understanding undertakes principled action in selfless service, according to his/her Dharma, success and happiness are assured with the divine blessing.

Synopsis of Geeta's Wisdom:

Geetā's subject is the conflict within oneself, the struggle for self identity (who am I and what is the purpose of my life?), steps to self- purification (moving from Tamas and Rajas to Sattva) and ultimately Self-realization or Moksha, liberation, merging in the Supreme Universal Consciousness.

Q. Who am I?

A. I am the Soul, not this body; the body is only a vehicle for the soul.

Q. Why was I born?

A. I was born as a result of my karma (deeds) in my previous life.

Q. What is the purpose of life?

A. To purify your character by following Yama, Niyama, introspection and meditation. Leading a Sāttvic life, discharge your moral duties towards your family and society according to Dharma, without ego, pride, or expectation of anything in return, treating success or failure with equipoise. Offer all your deeds to Brahman, surrendering with devotion, ultimately liberating your soul (Moksha) by uniting with the universal spirit, Brahman.

Q. What happens after death?

A. If you follow the above path as explained in the purpose of life, you will merge with Brahman, the ultimate consciousness (sat, chit, ānand). If you did not achieve that ultimate state, you will go to heaven, experience sat-chit-ānand for a very long time, then born again on Earth as a human in a sāttvic family so you can progress on the path of sādhanā to achieve that ultimate state: merging with Brahman, experiencing sat-chit-ānand, not subject to rebirth ever again.

Thus, the wisdom of Geetā enables one to harness Spiritual Knowledge to strengthen their values and character, and develop appreciation for the Universal Love that is reflected through one's [Service to Mankind](#).

Hari Om Tat Sat

Hari Om Tat Sat

Hari Om Tat Sat

Om Shantiḥ Shantiḥ Shantiḥ
Let there be peace in our hearts!
Peace all around us!!
Peace in the World!!!

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Appendix 1

Three Inherent Human Attributes (Guṇa)

Personalities of all human beings are derived from combinations of three fundamental Guṇa: Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. The following four verses expound on these natural attributes and how they affect everything in one's life:

- A1.1 सत्त्वं रजस् तम इति गुणाः प्रकृति-सम्भवाः
निबध्नन्ति महा-बाहो देहे देहिनम् अव्ययम् (BG 14.5)**
Sattvam rajas tama iti guṇaḥ prakriti-sambhavāḥ
nibadhnanti mahā-bāho dehī dehinam avyayam.

O Prince; Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas are three guṇā (or attributes) born of Prakriti (nature); inherent in every thing in nature. Even though the Self is immortal, it is bonded to the body by these guṇa.

- A1.2 सत्त्वात् सञ्जायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च
प्रमाद मोहौ तमसो भवतो अज्ञानमेव च (BG 14.17)**
Sattvāt Sanjāyate gyānam rajaso lobha eva cha
pramāda-mohau tamaso bhavato agyānam eva cha

Sattva gives rise to knowledge and wisdom;
Rajas to greed, selfish interests, and
Tamas to ego, false pride, attachment, and ignorance.

A1.3 पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान्-गुणान्
कारणं गुण-सङ्गोस्य सत्-असत्-योनि-जन्मसु (BG 13.22)

Purushaḥ prakṛti-stho hi bhunkte prakṛti-jān guṇān
kāraṇam guṇa-sango'sya sat-asat-yoni-janmasu.

The Purusha (ātmā) seated in Prakriti (body)
experiences these attributes of Prakriti.
The attachment of the Self to these Gunas
is the cause of one's birth in good or bad
places and situations.

A1.4 ऊर्ध्वं गच्छन्ति सत्त्व-स्था मध्ये तिष्ठन्ति राजसाः
जघन्य-गुण-वृत्तिस्था अधो गच्छन्ति तामसाः (BG 14.18)

Urdhvam gachch^hanti sattva-sthā madhye tisthanti rājasāḥ
jaghanya-guṇa-vṛitti-sthā adho gachch^hanti tāmasāḥ

Those who practice Sattva rise up to a noble and happy
life and ascend to heaven at the end of life.

Those who are ruled by Rajas remain engaged in
fulfillment of desires –yet not finding fulfillment.
They return to a similar life after death.

Those enmeshed in Tamas suffer chasing after harmful
activities in this life and the next.

Summary of Guṇa:

As human beings evolve during their lifetime through habits, associations, education, profession, influences of family, friends and associates, and vicissitudes of life, they acquire or accentuate some and diminish other Guṇa, thus continuously evolving the combination of the three attributes:

1. **Sattvā (pure):** pious, clean, gentle, holding high moral standards, thinking and working for the welfare of all. This is also called the “higher self” with the spiritually inspired thoughts, deeds and conduct.
2. **Rajas (royal):** egotistical, materialistic, selfish, devoting life to greed, sensory gratification, wanting/hoarding everything for themselves.
3. **Tamas (dark):** negative, ignorant, destructive, indulging in work or habits that are neither good for the self nor the society. This attribute is also called the “lower self” or base instinct.

For example:

- **Sāttvic** person eats nutritious vegetarian food, just enough to live a healthy life and not indulge in food, or waste or hoard food items (so that others, less fortunate do not go hungry).

- **Rājasic** eats too much of rich and tasteful foods (loaded with fat and sugar), resulting in obesity and heart disease, and waste or hoard food for themselves while oblivious of the scarcity of food for many in their own communities in the world.

- **Tāmasic** indulge in drugs, alcohol, tobacco, other narcotics, meat eating, etc., not caring for their own health, nor the effect of their lifestyle on others.

The truth expounded in Geetā is that NO ONE is pure Satva, Rajas or Tamas. Every person has a combination of all three Guṇa and the mix continues to change during one's life time, and even during the course of the day.

Eliminating Tamas, reducing Rajas, and acquiring more Sattva should be the objective of an enlightened soul.

Appendix - 2

Yama and Niyama (from Yoga Sūtras) Ethical Conduct for Hindus

Hinduism's ethical restraints are contained in ten simple precepts called Yama and Niyama. They define the codes of conduct by which we harness our instinctive forces and cultivate the innate, pristine qualities of our soul. They are scriptural injunctions for all aspects of thought, deeds and behavior.

Yama, the Five Principles of Ethical Conduct, Hindu Moral Code:

- 1) **Ahimsā**, non-violence or non-injury: not harming any living being through thoughts, words or deeds;
- 2) **Satya**, truthfulness: keeping thoughts, speech, and actions true to words;
- 3) **Asteya**, honesty: to neither steal nor covet others property;
- 4) **Brahma-charya**, divine conduct: Sāttvic conduct (see Appendix 1 for Guna); especially, remaining celibate when single, and faithful in marriage; 5) **Aparigraha**, non-hoarding: not collecting more than one needs – thus not depriving others of what they need to sustain life.

Niyama, the Five Virtues:

- 1) **Kshamā**, forgiveness: pardon, tolerance with people, and patience with circumstances;
- 2) **Dayā**, compassion towards all humans and animals;
- 3) **Dhriti**, steadfastness: perseverance, firm in resolution/decision;
- 4) **Shaucha**, purity of body, mind and speech;
- 5) **Ishvara Pranidhāna**, devotion, surrendering to God.

Observing Yamas and Niyamas is a pre-requisite, before one can progress on the path of yoga.

Appendix - 3

Essential Karma (Meritorious deeds)

Yagya, Dāna, Tapa

Srī Krishna affirmed three meritorious deeds: Yagya, Dāna and Tapa that every one must perform to the best of their abilities in life.

**A3.1 यज्ञ-दान-तपः-कर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यम् एव तत्
यज्ञो दानं तपः चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् (BG 18.5)**
Yagya-dāna-tapaḥ-karma na tyājyam kāryam eva tat
yagyo dānam tapah chaiva pāvanāni maneeshiṇām.

One should never cease to perform these three sacred and obligatory actions:

1. Yagya: Selfless service for the welfare of society,
2. Dāna: Charity for the welfare of those in need, and
3. Tapa: Austerities for the purification of character.

These activities are helpful in purification of the self, even for those who have attained great knowledge and wisdom.

Yagya = A project of Selfless Service to Humanity,
performed as a religious duty, as service to God.

**A3.2 सह-यज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वम् एष वोस्तु इष्ट-कामधुक् (BG 3.10)**
Saha-yagyāḥ prajāḥ sriṣṭvā purovācha prajāpatiḥ
anena prasavishyadhvam esha vo'stu iṣṭa-kāmadhuk.

In the beginning of creation, Prajāpati (the Creator), created mankind with the spirit of cooperation, selfless service, and sacrifice and said, "By this spirit you shall always prosper. This will fulfill all your needs".

This verse conveys the notion that every achievement is possible for men and women in society if they act in the spirit of cooperation and sacrifice, without selfish interest.

Implicit in this verse is also the notion that Prajāpati created the cosmic powers to function in the service of all beings to maintain the harmonious growth of existence. The sun lights and heats the Earth. The moon shines and cools. The lakes, rivers and oceans store water for the planet. The Earth's gravity holds everything in place. And all this ... purely in the spirit of self-sacrifice and divine love (with no attachment or selfish motive). This is Saha-Yagya.

The veracity and purport of this utterance is exemplified by the Creator everyday: when a mother gives birth to a baby (performing the function of Prajāpati) she is endowed mentally by the spirit of sacrifice for the protection and nourishment of the new born, and physically with milk in her breasts to offer to the baby who has no other means to live and grow! This is true not only of humans, but animals and birds as well!

“The entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon, and the stars function as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees, and the Earth. When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise — then we can build a noble environment. If our lives are not based on this truth, then we shall perish.” –Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

A3.3 इष्टान् भोगान् हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञ-भाविताः

तैः दत्तान् अप्रदाय एभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः (BG 3.12)

Iṣṭāṇ bhogāṇ hi vo devā dāsyante yagya-bhāvitāḥ
taiḥ dattān apradāya ebhyo yo bhunkte stena eva saḥ.

Pleased by the selfless services (yagna) offered by humans, Devas fulfill all their needs. But anyone who enjoys the bounties given by Devas without sharing it with others, less fortunate ones, and without offering selfless service to fellow humans, is indeed a thief!

Mahatma Gandhi's view on this verse:

Gandhi ji considered the earth a living organism. His ideas were expressed in terms of two fundamental laws: a Cosmic law, and the Law of Species.

- Cosmic Law views the entire universe as a single entity. Nothing could malfunction outside the threshold limits built into the grand system that includes both living and non-living phenomena. He believed that "the

universe was structured and informed by the cosmic spirit, that all men, all life and indeed all creation were one.”

- Regarding the Law of Species, Gandhi believed that without the cooperation and sacrifice of both human and non-human beings evolution is not possible. Being rational human beings, we are the custodians of the rest of creation and should respect their rights and cherish the diversity. It is for this reason that taking more than the required resources is seen as theft.

Dāna (Donation, Charity)

**A3.4 दातव्यम् इति यत् दानम् दीयते अनुपकारिणे
देशे काले च पात्रे च तत् दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् (17.20)**
Dātavyam iti yat dānam deeyate anupakāriṇe
deshe kāle cha pātre cha tad dānam sātṭvikam smritam.

A donation that is given with the feeling that it is our sacred duty to give to the needy, to a worthy person (or organization), at an appropriate time and place, and without expectation of any personal gain in return, is a pure (Sattvic) gift.

An example of Tapa:

**A3.5 अनुद्वेग-करं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रिय-हितं च यत्
स्वाध्याय-अभ्यासनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते (BG 17.15)**
Anudvega-karam vākyam satyam priya-hitam cha yat
svādhyaṁ abhyāsanam chaiva vāṅ-mayam tapa uchyate.

Speech that causes no harmful effect (anger, anxiety) to any one, that is truthful, pleasant (lovingly communicated) and helpful or beneficial to the listener, and speech that is used in reciting and practicing of scriptures is called the "austerity of speech".

Here is homework for students of vedānta desiring to take the first step of spiritual wisdom: Practice such speech at least once a month, especially on occasions when you hold a vrata (fast). Or let this tapa be your vrata.

Appendix - 4

Choosing a Vocation According to One's Natural Aptitude

A4.1 ब्राह्मण-क्षत्रिय-विशं शूद्राणां च परन्तप
कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभाव-प्रभवैः गुणैः (BG 18.41)
Brāhmaṇa-kshatriya-vishāṁ shūdrāṇām cha parantapa
karmāṇi pravi.bhaktāni svabhāva-prabha.vaiḥ guṇaiḥ.

O Prince, the division of labor in the society consisting of priests and teachers (Brahmin), administrators and soldiers (Kshatriya), traders (Vaishya) and service workers (Shudra) is based on the qualities of character and natural aptitudes that one is born with.

A4.2 शमो दमः तपः शौचं क्षान्तिः आर्जवम् एव च
ज्ञानं विज्ञानम् आस्तिक्यं ब्रह्म-कर्म स्वभाव-जम् (BG 18.42)
Shamo damaḥ tapaḥ shaucham kshāntiḥ ārjavam eva cha
gyānam vīgyānam āstikyam brahma-karma svabhāva-jam.

Those born with the qualities of serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity (inner and outer), forgiveness and uprightness are suited for the vocation of Brahmin; that is, acquiring knowledge, learning as well as teaching about science and spirituality, and helping others to attain God-realization.

A4.3 शौर्यं तेजो धृतिःदाक्ष्यं युद्धे चापि अपलायनम्

दानम् ईश्वर-भावश्च क्षात्रं कर्म स्वभाव-जम् (BG 18.43)

Shauryam tejo dhrtiḥ dākshyam yuddhe chāpi apalāyanam
dānam Ishvara-bhāvaḥ cha kshātram karma svabhāva-jam.

Those born with physical prowess, splendor, firmness, dexterity, not fleeing from any challenge, who are generous by nature and attract respectful followers, are born leaders suited for the vocation of the Kshatriya, for protection of the weak in the society.

A4.4 कृषि-गौरक्ष्य-वाणिज्यं वैश्य-कर्म स्वभाव-जम्

परिचर्या आत्मकं कर्म शूद्रस्य अपि स्वभाव-जम् (BG 18.44)

Krishi-gau.rakshya-vāṇijyam vaishya-karma svabhāva-jam
paricharyā ātmakam karma shūdrasya api svabhāva-jam.

Those born with the aptitude in farming, dairy, or interest in trade, commerce, or business are aptly suited for the vocation of the Vaishyas.

Those who are born with the aptitude and desire to serve fellow men and women are suited for the vocation of Shudra. This would include all vocations in service industries, government service, public service, community service, and vocations like nursing, etc.

As seen from these verses, the concept of four Varnas was created to encourage the development of natural aptitude; not merely following the vocation of the family one is born into. Over many thousands of years, the Varna system became corrupted into the birth based Jaati prathā (or in English vernacular, caste system).

God does not discriminate on the basis of one's vocation, or gender, ...

A4.5 मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य ये अपि स्युः पाप योनयः
स्त्रियो वैश्याः तथा शूद्राः ते अपि यान्ति परां गतिम् (BG 9.32)
Māam hi pārtha vyapāshritya ye api syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ
striyo vaiśhyāḥ tathā shūdraḥ te api yānti parāām gatim.

Any one who takes refuge in Me attains the Supreme Bliss no matter what vocation, gender, creed, community, or status (or lack there of) in society they belong to, and even if one has committed a sin in this life or previous lives, they can attain the Supreme abode by surrendering to Me with loving devotion.

Society may discriminate against some, but everyone who takes shelter in the Supreme Abode is equal in the eyes of God.

Obviously, this is the precursor to the modern-day concept of Civil Rights in America and other developed nations that declare equal rights to all human beings in the society without regard to race, religion, skin color, gender, vocation, etc.

Appendix 5

Cosmology and Creation Theory in Geetā

Hindu Theory of Creation: Hindus believe in a cyclic nature of the universe embracing time spans of trillions of years. Hindu scriptures describe time units from the infinitesimal truti, lasting 1/1,000,000 of a second to a mahā-manvantara of 311 trillion years.

Srī Krishna described creation as an endless cyclic procession of creation, preservation and dissolution over incomprehensibly large cycles of time spans of trillions of years.

**A5.1 सहस्र-युग-पर्यन्तम् अहः यत् ब्रह्मणो विदुः
रात्रिं युग-सहस्रान्तां ते अहो रात्रि विदो जनाः (BG 8.17)**
Sahasra-yuga-paryantam ahaḥ yat brahmaṇo viduḥ
rātrim yuga-sahasrāntām te aho-rātra-vido janāḥ.

Those who understand the cyclic process of cosmic evolution and dissolution know that ONE "Day of Brahmā" extends for one thousand maha-yugas (one maha-yuga is 4.32 million calendar years) and the "Night of Brahmā" also extends for the same duration. Thus a 'Day and Night of Brahma= 8.64 billion years.

**A5.2 अव्यक्ताद् व्यक्तयः सर्वाः प्रभवन्ति अहर-आगमे
रात्रि-आगमे प्रलीयन्ते तत्रैव अव्यक्त-संज्ञके (BG 8.18)**
Avyaktād vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavanti ahar-āgame
rātri-āgame praleeyante tatraiva avyakta-sangyake.

At the dawn of the "Day of Brahma", the physical universe with multitudes of forms evolves from the Un-manifested Source (Brahman). And when the "Night of Brahma" begins, all the forms of the universe dissolve and merge back into the Un-manifested formless Source.

**A5.3 मया अध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते स-चराचरम्
हेतुना अनेन कौन्तेय जगत् विपरिवर्तते** (BG 9.10)
Mayā adhyaksena prakṛtiḥ sūyate sa-charā.çharam
hetunā anena kaunteya jagat vipari.vartate.

I preside over the creation of this manifest universe.
Under My direction, the Nature (Prakriti) gives birth
(manifests) to all the moving (beings) and the
unmoving (things like mountains and rivers).
And this is how, O Prince, the world goes around
and around.

**A5.4 यावत् सञ्जायते किञ्चित् सत्त्वं स्थावर-जङ्गमम्
क्षेत्र-क्षेत्रज्ञ-संयोगात् तत् विद्धि भरतर्षभ** (BG 13.27)
Yāvat Sanjāyate kinchit sattvam sthāvara-janga.mam
kshetra-kshetragya-sanyogāt tat viddhi bharatarshabha.

In this world, whatever exists, animate (that moves)
or inanimate, O Prince, it is born from the union of
the "Field" (physical matter) or the Prakriti, and the
Purusha, the Soul, that is the source of life
and consciousness in all beings.
The entire creation is a play of Purusha and Prakriti,
or kshetra and kshetragya:

Kshetra = body, mind, senses, brain cells and chemicals (neurotrans-mitters)
that generate thoughts, emotions, feelings of Rāga (likes), Dvesha (dislikes), as
well as notions of intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, etc.

Kshetragya = the spirit that manifests as consciousness that gives life to the
body, mind, intellect complex.

Hindu Cosmology - Theory of Creation



Scientist Carl Sagan, the distinguished Cornell University professor, astronomer and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, expressed the following views while filming the 10th episode of his famous Television series 'COSMOS' in India:

“ The main reason that we oriented this episode of COSMOS towards India is because of that wonderful aspect of Hindu cosmology which first of all gives a time-scale for the Earth and the universe -- a time-scale which is consonant with that of modern scientific cosmology. We know that the Earth is about 4.6 billion years old, and the cosmos, or at least its present incarnation, is something like 10 or 20 billion years old. The Hindu tradition has a day and night of Brahma in this range, somewhere in the region of 8.4 billion years.”

“As far as I know. It is the only ancient religious tradition on the Earth which talks about the right timescale. We want to get across the concept of the right time-scale, and to show that it is not unnatural. In the West, people have the sense that what is natural is for the universe to be a few thousand years old, and that billions is indwelling, and no one can understand it. The Hindu concept is very clear. Here is a great world culture which has always talked about billions of years.”

“Finally, the many billion year time scale of Hindu cosmology is not the entire history of the universe, but just one day and night of Brahmā, and there is the idea of an infinite cycle of births and deaths and an infinite number of universes, ...”

Appendix 6. Index of Sanskrit Verses

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|
| Aham sarvasya prabhavo | 5.1 | Nasti buddhih ayuktasya | 2.1 |
| Ahankaram balam darpam | 1.9 | Na tu evaham jātu nāsam | 4.7 |
| Ahimsa satyam akrodhaū | 4.3 | Neh abhikrama nāshosti | 1.2 |
| Amanitvam adambhitvam | 4.4 | Paritranya sādhanam | 4.18 |
| Ananyaū cintayanto mam | 5.5 | Patram pushpam phalam | 5.9 |
| Anashritah karma-phalam | 3.2 | Prāpya punya-kṛitām lokān | 1.3 |
| Anta-kale cha mam eva | 5.6 | Prashanta-atma vigata-bheeh | 2.3 |
| Anudvega-karam vakyam | A3.5 | Prashanta-manasam hi enam | 2.10 |
| Asanshayam maha-baho | 2.6 | Purushah prakṛti-stho hi | A1.3 |
| Asha-pasha-shatai baddhah | 1.8 | Sahasra-yuga-paryantam | A5.1 |
| Avibhaktam cha bhūteshu | 4.27 | Saha-yagyah prajah srishṭva | A3.2 |
| Avyaktad vyaktayah sarvah | A5.2 | Samam sarveshu bhuteshu | 4.15 |
| Bahūnam janmanam ante | 4.33 | Sarva-bhūta-stham atmanam | 2.11 |
| Bandhuh ātmā ātmanas tasya | 1.6 | Sarva-dharmam parityajya | 5.1 |
| Bhaktya mam abhijanati | 5.4 | Sarvasya chāham hridi sannī | 4.19 |
| Bhoga aishvarya prasaktanam | 1.10 | Sattvam rajas tama iti guna | A1.1 |
| Brahmana-kshatriya-visham | A4.1 | Sattvat Sanjayate gyanam | A1.2 |
| Brahmano hi pratisthaham | 4.32 | Shamo damah tapah shaucham | A4.2 |
| Brahmany adhaya karmani | 3.11 | Shariram yat avapnoti | 4.11 |
| Brahmarpanam brahma havir | 4.31 | Shauryam tejo dhṛtiḥ dakshyam | A4.3 |
| Buddhi- yukto jahateeha | 3.8 | Sukha duhkhe same kritva | 3.10 |
| Chanchalam hi manah krishṇa | 2.5 | Tasmat asaktah satatam | 3.3 |
| Datavyam iti yat danam | A3.4 | Tasmat sarveshu kaleshu | 3.12 |
| Dehino asmin yatha dehe | 4.5 | Tatra ekagram manah kritva | 2.4 |
| Dharma-kshetre kuru-kshetre | B.1 | Tvam adi-devah | 4.29 |
| Dhyāyato vishayān punsah | 1.3 | Uddharet ātmanā ātmānam | 1.5 |
| Dhyānen atmani pashyanti | 1.1 | Upadrashṭa anumanta cha | 4.14 |
| Divi surya-sahasrasya | 4.23 | Urdhvam gachchanti sattvastha | A1.4 |
| Évam etad yatha attha | 4.21 | Vasānsi jeemani yatha vihaya | 4.6 |
| Gatih bharta prabhuh sakshee | 4.30 | Vidya-vinaya-sampanne | 4.2 |
| Gyanena tu tad agyanam | 4.13 | Yadā bhūta-prithak-bhavam | 4.28 |
| Idam sharéram kaunteya | B.2 | Yadā yadā hi dharmasya | 4.17 |
| Ihaika-stham jagat kritsnam | 4.22 | Yagya-dana-tapah-karma | A3.1 |
| Indriyācām hi caratām yan | 1.1 | Yah idam paramam guhyam | C.2 |
| Indriyācā parācā āhur | B.4 | Yastu indriyani manasa | 1.12 |
| Ishtān bhogān hi vo devā | A3.3 | Yat aditya-gatam tejo | 4.25 |
| Ishvarah sarva-bhutanam | 4.16 | Yatah pravṛtṭiḥ bhūtanam | 3.1 |
| Iti te gyanam akhyatam | C.1 | Yatato hi api kaunteya | 1.2 |
| kama esha krodha esha | 1.7 | Yatha akasha-sthito nityam | 4.26 |
| Karmana eva hi samsiddhim | 3.4 | Yatha deepo nivata-stho | 2.8 |
| Karmani eva adhikarah te | 3.6 | Yatha prakāshayati ekah | 4.12 |
| Krishi-gau-rakshya-vanijyam | A4.4 | Yat karoshi yat ashnasi | 5.10 |
| Krodhāt bhavati sammohah | 1.4 | Yato yato nischarati manah | 2.7 |
| Maam hi partha vyapashṛity | A4.5 | Yatra uparamate chittam | 2.9 |
| Mahā-bhūtāni ahankāro | B.3 | Yatra yogeshvarah Krishno | C.3 |
| Mam eva ansho jivloke | 4.10 | Yat yat acharati shresthah | 3.5 |
| Manmana bhava mad-bhaktah | 5.2 | Yavat Sanjayate kinchit | A5.4 |
| Mat-karma-krin mat-paramo | 5.3 | Ye api anya devatah bhaktah | 5.8 |
| Mattah parataram nanyat | 4.24 | Yoga-sthah kuru karmani | 3.9 |
| Maya adhyaksena prakṛtiḥ | A5.3 | Yo mām pashyati sarvatra | 4.20 |
| Na hi jnanena sadrisham | 4.1 | Yo yo yam yam tanum bhaktah | 5.7 |
| Nainam chindanti shastrani | 4.9 | Yukta-ahara-viharasya | 2.2 |
| Na jayate mriyate va kadachin | 4.8 | | |
| | | Yuktah karma-phalam tyaktva | 3.7 |