

Bagawat Geeta, Class 30

Greetings All,

Continuing his talk, Swamiji reminded us that Arjuna asked Sri Krishna, what is the life style of a Sthitaprgyaha? How does such a person respond to situations?

Sthita pragyaha is one who has attained self-knowledge. A Karma Yogi also has knowledge. A Karma Yogi is, however, not yet a Gyani. One is called a Gyani only after one who has obtained Jivatma Paramatma aikyam. He has the realization “Aham Atma Asmi”.

Shlokas 12-25 details the nature of the Atma as Akarta, Abhoktha, Nithyaha etc. This knowledge, which is an intellectual knowledge, must then be converted into emotional strength. Such a person is a sthithapragyaha. I am Atmana Tushtaha (self sufficient without expectations). This is the **first attribute** of a Sthithapragyaha.

And the **second attribute** is “because I am as I am; I do not require things to complete me.” Missing things in life is desire. Thus, one has desire for marriage or a home or a car. The seeking for the missing is the beginning of desire. The Sthithapragyaha, however approaches this differently. He feels “I am happy as I am”. He does not miss anything, or need anything. Possessing and needing are different, says Swamiji. Possessing does not mean that the object I possess binds me. However, in case of need it is the need that makes me the possessed one. So, never be the possessed. Sarva Kama Tyaga or no more need for things.

The **third attribute** of a Sthithapragyaha is Samatvam. He maintains an emotional balance in both favorable and unfavorable situations.

The **fourth attribute** is Vairagyam. He does not emotionally

depend upon anything. Emotional dependence is our biggest problem.

The **fifth attribute** is a lack of fear. He is ready to lose anything at any time. That preparedness to lose anything at any time is the inner strength. It is also called Abhayam.

The **sixth attribute** is his freedom from anger. Anger is a converted form of desire. When one has expectation, potential for anger exists. I never want to give freedom to others because I need them, to depend on them. If anybody says: I am happy without you, we cannot stand it. We want everybody to say, I am missing you. Raga, bhaya and krodha all go together. The Gyani is free from all of them.

In Shloka # 57 Sri Krishna says, the Sthithaprgyaha is not carried away by favorable or unfavorable situations. His intellect is not clouded by happiness or sorrow. No person can make my life meaningless. Gyani is not carried away by any situation.

Swami Chinmayananda used to say: We all have come alone, travel alone and go alone. Our intimate feelings, we will not be able to share with anyone.

Shloka 58: " When he wholly withdraws his senses from their objects, just as a tortoise does his limbs from all sides, his wisdom is stable."

Upto shloka # 57 Sri Krishna talks of a person who has converted knowledge to emotional strength. Thus, from a pragyaha he becomes a sthitapragyaha. Now, from shloka 58 onwards Sri Krishna changes the subject. He now discusses how can a person converts self-knowledge to emotional strength. This knowledge must be converted to mental strength. Swamiji says there are three disciplines one has to follow for this conversion. They are:

1. **Nidhidhyasanam:** or Vedantic meditation. Dwelling on the

teaching that I do not depend on anything. Aham Atma Asmi. Aham Purnam asmi. Imagine a smoker. He cannot imagine a life without a cigarette. He forgets that he was once happy with out it before he started smoking. He is now used to a particular way of life. Similarly, we think that life is complete only when certain things and people are around and without them life is impossible. Our vasana is very strong here. I have to break that vasana; by repeatedly asserting I do not need the so-called people and situations to be happy.

I may need things for physical survival such food clothing etc. however; I do not need anything for emotional survival.

One must break this emotional dependence on people and things. Just as a child is taught to learn to cycle, where someone holds the back of the bike and then releases the hold as the child starts cycling. The child is not aware that it is now independently cycling. So, also, we need Vedanta to help us realize our emotional independence. This process is called Nidhidhyasanam. This means, after the class, you should spend some time in introspection on the teachings.

“manobuddhyahamkaracittani naham

na ca srotrajivhe na ca ghrananetre

na ca vyomabhumih na tejo na vayuh

cidanandarupah sivoham sivoham.”

Focusing on the essence of this shloka written by Shankaracharya, and internalizing it, is called Nidhidhyasanam.

2. **Indriya Nigraha:** This is the second discipline of regulation of sense organs. Until knowledge becomes steady, we should avoid violent emotions. They are detrimental to Vedanta. Knowledge must be protected. It

is like protecting a sapling from heavy rain, winds etc. Once it becomes a tree it cannot be destroyed. Emotions come through our five sense organs of sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa, and gandha. This five-fold world is gatecrashing into my mind. They enter the mind through the five doors and any of them can disturb the mind. Avoid such things that can disturb us.

Never get into arguments as they disturb our mind. In an argument more heat is generated than light.

What we want is enlightenment; light is knowledge; in an argument nobody learns anything. Everyone only wants to establish his or her own ego. So, whenever you get into an argument, tell them "I am sorry, I am not interested" and still if he or she continues to talk, quit that place; this is called Indriya Nigrahaḥ; never allow violent emotions.

Anything that provokes, raga, krodha, dvesa, kama, lobha and moha must be avoided.

(Raga: emotional attachment, Likes.

Dvesha: dislikes

Kama: lust, craze, desire

krodha :anger, hatred

lobha: greed, miserliness, narrow-minded

moha : delusory emotional attachment)

This is indriya nigrahaḥ.

3) **Mano Nigraha:** This is the third discipline of regulation of thought process.

Someone tells you your comments are nonsense. You get upset. You keep dwelling on his comments and this keeps building up in your mind. Suddenly a molehill of a comment builds itself

into a mountain of anger. No event in itself produces a momentary emotion. Rather, it gradually builds up to a powerful emotion. Thought build up is in my hand. I can control it. This is mental regulation. I can observe the event in my mind to learn from it and then drop it.

With Indriya nigraha and Mano nigraha mind becomes quiet and serene and this will transform my life.

Thus the three sadhanas or disciplines required are: Nidhidhyasanam, Indriya Nigrahaḥ, and Mano Nigraha. This is the process of dwelling upon the teaching, regulating the sense organs and regulating the thought process. Of these three processes, Sri Krishna is highlighting the sensory regulation first from verse No.58 onwards up to 61. These four verses deal with sensory regulation.

Swamiji says a Pragyaha is like a sapling that grows into a tree to Sthitaprgyaha.

Expanding on Shloka # 58 Swamiji says, a turtle can be easily killed, as it does not have a weapon. It only has a thick shell. In danger, it withdraws all limbs and its head until the threat is gone. Similarly a pragyaha when he sees raga, dvesha, kama and krodha, provoked by the ego withdraws. It is difficult to withdraw from an argument. So prevent it. One should also withdraw from programs in TV and content in books that provoke your senses. So, a pragyaha withdraws his senses from sense objects (drugs, liquor etc. come to mind). Do not confront sense objects. Say no, in the beginning itself.

Shloka # 59:

“Objects, but not the taste for them, fall off as regards the man who feeds not on them. When he intuitis the supreme (Reality), even this taste wanes.”

Addictions are of two types:

1) Sensory and

2) Mental.

Mental addiction is deeper. Even after giving up sensory addictions mental addictions remain. During withdrawal period one has to be very careful to ensure the object of addiction is kept away. It may still be there mentally. This is like person trying to be a sanyasi (physically), but mentally his mind still dwells on worldly pleasures. Growing out is better than suppression.

Even this mental craving will go away when spiritual Ananda in the mind replaces it. This pleasure is much greater than all drugs. Sri Krishna compares this state to having a great lake versus a small pond. It does not mean worldly pleasures have to be given up. The wise person now does not depend on worldly pleasures anymore. Rather, it is a bonus for him.

Shloka 60:

“ The impetuous senses, Arjuna, of even a learned man who strives, forcibly drive the mind astray.”

Sri Krishna says sense regulation is not that easy. If one fails initially do not feel guilty. Control requires a lot of alertness. Be alert with respect to sensory organs.

Pramathini Manthanam means powerful churning rod (sense organs). Our five sense organs are constantly churning our mind. They can churn our mind into violence. Words are the biggest problem. They can take away the mind from Vedanta. One word uttered by someone can disturb us so violently from all the teachings of Gita that temporarily I can become a violent animal. We must be alert and balanced at all times.

With best wishes

Bagawat Geeta, Class 29

Greetings All,

Continuing his talk, Swamiji reminded us that Arjuna wanted to know about the Sthitha Pragyaha. How does such a person respond to situations? Is there any practical benefit to the study of the Gita , asks Swamiji?

Shloka # 55: A person comes to Sthitha Pragyaha by:

1. Following the path of Karma Yoga and leading a religious life to prepare his mind for Gyana Yogyatha.
2. Studying scriptures under a qualified Guru by sravanam and mananam. This is a required step to gyanam.

There is a misconception that in Kaliyuga one does not have to study scriptures.

Through this study one becomes a Pragyaha or a Gyani. It results in an intellectual conviction that I need nothing else to be complete. Right now we may feel we need many things in life to feel complete. Physical dependence everybody has got; there is dependence on food, clothing and shelter. We are not talking of physical dependence. Emotionally a Gyani is independent of external factors. He is happy in himself. The reality is that we may need only some things to survive. Many rich people with a lot of material possessions are among the unhappiest people.

By systematic vedantic study, I should be intellectually convinced that I do not require anything to be secure; to be fulfilled; to be happy; to be fearless; to be anxiety free and to be self-sufficient. This is an intellectual transformation. It is what we call intellectual conviction. To become a Gyani

is to go through an intellectual change.

Karma Yoga> Gyana Yogyatha> Pragyaha>Emotional strength and immunity. This process leads me to a place where I do not get upset at anything in life.

This process is called Nidhidhyasanam.

Thus: Karma Yoga> Gyana Yoga> Nidhidhyasanam> Sthitha Prgyaha.

Through sravanam and mananam, he gets pragya; through nidhidhyasanam, he converts pragya into sthitapragya.

Shloka # 55:

“ When one wholly discards desires of the heart and becomes exclusively content with the Self , one is called a sage of stable wisdom.”

Characteristics of a Sthitha Pragyaha:

1. Gyani does not have any expectations meaning he has performed Kama Tyaga. When an expectation is not fulfilled, I get upset. Expectations are a source of sorrow. I, however, will behave, as I want. If I ask someone to do something, without expectation, it is a non-poisonous expectation. Usually this sort of expectation is for the benefit the other person. Expectation becomes poisonous when my expectation is not met and I become upset. This is called Samsara. Gyani has no expectations from anyone. So, expectations have to be dropped.
2. He is full and complete in himself because he feels, I am “I”. If the completeness is dependent, you are not a gyani. This is called Atma Tushti or Self Sufficiency.
3. Samatvam: One with a poised state of mind. How often am I disturbed? What is intensity of disturbance? How long is the recovery time? One should consider maintaining an

emotional log to discover one's state of evolution. A gyani is, for most part, not disturbed at all.

Shloka # 56:

" The silent sage is said to have a stable wisdom when sufferings no longer perturb his mind , when he ceases to cling to pleasures, and he is rid of attachment, fear and wrath."

All these disturbances gradually disappear. He is not carried away by favorable situations either. He realizes it is temporary.

Raga (emotional attachment), Bhaya (fear) and Krodha (Anger) together are known as attributes of Samsara.

Whatever I depend upon (money, people etc.) are insecure. Presently, I am holding on to such things. One should hold on to something secure such as God.

Unintelligent dependence is raga. This dependence causes Bhaya. Anger is directly proportional to Raga. All obstacles make us angry.

Thus: Raga>Bhaya>Krodha.

Gyani has no raga, as such he also does not have fear and anger. Moksha is A-Bhayam. Such a person is a muni or a sage. The internal transformation has made him a sage. Even if he is a family man he is a Muni if he has the right knowledge. The knowledge has become an emotional strength.

Shloka # 57:

" His wisdom is stable who clings to nothing good or evil when these occur to him; he neither seeks nor shuns them."

Sri Krishna describing Sthita Pragyaha Lakshanani says he is one who is free. Gyani is Anabhisnehaha. Sneha means

attachment or stickiness. One who is in Sneha is attached and as such weak. A Gyani is one who loves everyone but does not get stuck on any one. This psychological freedom is called Anabhisnehaha.

Even a Gyani faces situations that are favorable and unfavorable based upon his Prarabdha karmas. Many people criticize Vedanta for India's problems. A teacher of Vedanta is also criticized for India's problems. Gyani faces such situations without being carried away or agitated. He faces everything with Samatvam.

The question is often asked should I meekly surrender to such a situation? Vedanta does not say one has to surrender to improper situations. It does not mean we have to accept Akramam (Wrong done to one). For any situation we can have three types of responses:

1. Impulsive reaction. Reacting without thinking. This has long-term adverse reaction. It shows lack of self-control.
2. Meek surrender to a situation or abuse. This is unintelligent inaction born out of weakness. Here we will suffer from this abuse.
3. Intelligent action, after thinking about it. If it is a choice-less situation, strengthen your mind to reduce its impact. If choice-ful situation, take thoughtful action. Sama, Dana, Bheda and Dandam are the steps to be followed. If we have to punch the nose, do it consciously. Do not miss the nose! What shastra says is, do not do it impulsively. This is similar to a court that gives capital punishment without impulsiveness.

Swamiji says we normally swing between 1 and 2 above. Shastra's say both are bad.

With best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Baghavat Geeta, Class 28

Greetings All,

Shloka # 55:

Sri Krishna answered:

“When one wholly discards desires of the heart and becomes exclusively content with the Self, one is called a sage of stable wisdom. O Arjuna.”

Refreshing our memory, Swamiji says, we have come to the fourth and final topic of Sthita Pragyaha. Arjuna asked Sri Krishna if a person who has gone through all Sadhanas and become a Gyani, how does such a person face life? How does he respond to situations? What are his Lakhsanani's?

Before a person becomes a Sthitha Pragyaha he has to follow the following three steps:

1. Lead a religious life following path of Karma Yoga.
2. Study Vedanta scriptures under a competent teacher following Sravanam and Mananam.

These two steps will make him a Pragyaha or one with conviction in the teachings. At this stage knowledge is still at the intellectual level.

3) But even this prajñā status is not enough, because the knowledge remains at the intellectual level and therefore in the third stage, he has to convert the intellectual knowledge into emotional strength, because throughout the life, it is our emotional personality that is interacting. Emotional personality is the one that stands out in all of us. Any little disturbance bothers us. This personality bears the

brunt of every situation. And if that emotional personality is not transformed, knowledge will be there at one level, but in my day-to-day life, I may continue to go through the turmoils that I went through before. And therefore, if Vedanta should be of any practical use, I have to spend time, converting this knowledge into emotional strength, which is called Sthitha (Sthira) Pragyaha. This status should be great help, especially during a crisis.

And this process of converting prajna into sthita prajna, jnanam into jnana nishta is the third stage and that person who has purified his mind; who has gained the knowledge and who has derived emotional strength from that knowledge, such a person is called sthitaprajnah; such a person is also called jnana nishta, atma nista as well as jivan mukthaḥ. He has insulated himself, like a person who has insulated his hands and legs and can now touch a live wire and it will not shock him.

Arjuna asked Sri Krishna, What kind of a person is this?

The Gyani is not controlled by external emotional factors. He is happy within himself. Citing example of a man with a walking stick, once he gets the strength back in his leg, he drops the stick. So also, a Gyani drops all his Kama. So, his Poornatvam leads him to Kama Tyaga.

Kama here means desired object although it can also mean desires. Desire is in the mind wriggling like worms. Wherever we go, we cannot drop it. It follows us everywhere, disturbing us all the time.

Tyaga or renunciation is of two types.

1) I cannot reach the grapes so I walk away calling it sour grapes. A man goes to Hrishikesh running away from his family's problems. These are examples where my desires are suppressed. This is not true renunciation.

2) Walking away from situations due to my Self Knowledge leads to a desire-less stage or true renunciation.

Swamiji says there are two types of desires:

- 1) Allowed desires and
- 2) Not allowed desires.

Allowed desires: For a desire to be allowed it has to fulfill three conditions.

1. Legitimate: The desire must be legitimate or Dharmic. Desire for one's children's welfare is legitimate. Desire for a home for the family bought through honest earnings is legitimate.
2. Moderate: When worldly desires reach such levels that spiritual pursuit is forgotten, it is not an acceptable state. Human beings have a material aspect as well as a spiritual aspect. Whatever I do, I must remember that material things including this body are all impermanent and incidental. Our real core is spiritual. So, provide time for spirituality first and then pursue material goals.
3. Desires must be non-binding: Convert desires into preferences. Or make it non binding. When a desire is binding it can upset you or uplift you. In pursuing a desire you may or may not obtain it. Any dream can shatter. A binding Kama is a time bomb. Defuse it by proper understanding. I have a desire. I work for it. But, there are chances it may not be fulfilled. When the desire is not fulfilled, one must be mentally prepared for the disappointment as well. Citing an example consider you are watching your favorite TV show when the power goes off. I must be mentally prepared for this disappointment. This is converting the Kama from binding to non-binding or Shuddha Kama (Legitimate, moderate and nonbinding). Shudha Kama is allowed. Even

Shankaracharya had desires that allowed him to write the Bhashyam. As per Vedas, even Bhagawan had desires.

If a Gyani is desire-less, then how come desire is allowed?

Shankaracharya himself raises this question and he answers saying that Bhagavan's and jnani's kamas are Shuddha kama's; if they are fulfilled, wonderful; if not fulfilled also it is fine.

Jnani has got motive coming from within him to work hard; but that motive is without a sting. So, whatever happens, it does not hurt him. And therefore, Jnani renounces all ashuddha kamas; whatever kamas he has, they are shuddha.

So, Ashudha Kama should be renounced.

Shloka # 56:

"The silent sage is said to have stable wisdom when sufferings no longer perturb his mind, when he ceases to cling to pleasures, and he is rid of attachment, fear and wrath."

How does a Gyani respond to unfavorable situations in life? A Gyani too cannot avoid unfavorable situations. We all have prarabhda Karma to work out as does the Gyani. Gyani may not acquire any Agami Karmas, but whatever he has acquired they have to play out.

Gyani's mind is emotionally so strong that disturbances are minimal. As we assimilate the teachings the mind gradually becomes strong. How to measure our selves? Swamiji cautioned us that we should not measure others, only measure our self.

Check for the following:

1. The frequency of mental disturbances, are they becoming less? Consider maintaining a daily diary.
2. Watch the intensity of mental disturbances. When intensity is small, the reaction goes away soon. When

reactions are strong, it can overflow into the organ of speech. Speech can become harsh. If it overflows to physical body, shivering and other symptoms occur and both body and mind are affected.

3. How much time do I take to recover balance? Emotional trauma can take a long time to recover sometimes weeks, years, or even a lifetime. With knowledge recovery should be faster.

All these disturbances can also occur due to positive emotions as well. A man won an election after many attempts at it. The emotion of the win gave him a heart attack.

Gyani is one who is not carried away even in a positive situation. Gyani is free from:

1. Ragaha: emotional attachments
2. Shoka:
3. Moha:

(Note: *Raga*, *Shoka* and *Moha*. *Raga* means dependence, attachment. *Shoka* means grief, sorrow. *Moha* means conflict, confusion caused by *Raga*. It also means depending on external things or people or situations to be happy.)

Attachment comes from dependence or a weak mind. Attachment is always asking what will “I” get out of it. Attachment thinks, since I want to get a benefit, I want to control the other person or it establishes possessiveness.

Love, however, comes from a strong mind. Love comes with the mindset asking: “What does the other person get out of it? What can I give?” To love is not to control, but give freedom to the other person.

Gyani has love in his heart.

Take away from this class:

1. Consider keeping a daily emotional diary.

2. Concepts of love versus attachment taught today try to bring it into your daily life.
3. At the last Kaivalya class, there was a passionate discussion about Karma yoga and if it is teaching us escapism? In this Gita class, Swamiji brings answers that provide greater clarity to this question. So, is desire for material objects acceptable? Can a workingman aspire for a higher position, say, to become a CEO? The answer is, it is absolutely all right to have such desires so long as they fit into the requirements of "Acceptable desires". It is perfectly **legitimate** to seek any advancement including to the position of a CEO. The challenge is, in the process of advancement, one has to bring in **moderation**. Spiritual goals should continue to be primary, materials goals being secondary. In climbing up the ladder one can fail. The failure should not result in creating emotional havoc. One should be able to accept it with minimal shock. This is the **non-binding desire** aspect. One should thank God even for the failure for he may have saved you from something much worse such as a broken family, estranged wife and children etc. I suspect future classes will elaborate on some of these themes.

With best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 27

Shloka # 52:

"When your intellect goes beyond the mist of delusion, you will win detachment from both what is to be heard and what has

been heard.”

Shloka # 53:

“You will win this supreme yoga when your intellect, bewildered by Vedic texts, becomes firm and unwavering in concentration.”

In shlokas 52 and 53 respectively Sri Krishna concludes his summary of the basic teachings of a spiritual life as described by the vedas. All other chapters of Gita are a magnification of these two verses. This is the foundation upon which a 18-story edifice has been raised. Chapter 2, all verses 11-43 are very important, as are Jnana Yoga verses 11-25. One should try to memorize them and try to read them daily. All other chapters are based upon these verses. This will give you a strong foundation. Read these verses off and on. In this chapter, chapter 2, Karma Yoga and Gyana Yoga were described.

Karma yoga: is a religious life, where spiritual progress is important and while material life is not.

Gyana Yoga: The Karma Yogi's mind will mature to study Gyana Yoga or one's own Self. Just as a spectacle has got two goggles; the body and mind are like two media with which I interact. At the time of sleep, both the media, the body and the mind are resolved temporarily; and our transactions with the world stops. But even when the transactions stop, I continue to exist as a conscious being; a non-transacting conscious being. And Sri Krishna's contention is this conscious being is my true nature. Body and mind are just two spectacles that are resolved in this knowledge of the Self.

I will still continue to exist as a Conscious Being. The body mind thought complex is only a temporary medium. “I” the pure consciousness will never die, while body and mind will come and go. This recognition is Self-knowledge. I know the body is not myself. It is a shell. This knowledge will then lead to

Self-discovery.

Practice Karma yoga to know the mind. Practice Gyana Yoga to discover the Self. This is the essence of Gita.

All these are elaborated in future chapters. Here, now, Sri Krishna allows Arjuna to ask his questions.

Shloka 54:

Arjuna asks:

“How can a man of stable wisdom, anchored in concentration, be described, O Krsna? How does a man of steadfast intelligence speak? How does he sit? How walk?”

Arjuna is a practical man. He wants to know the practical value of the teachings. Will there be a benefit for me? Will it transform me, here and now?

Imagine a person who goes through the path of Karma yoga and then withdraws from all activities and then discovers his Self. He is totally satisfied as well. Such a person is a Gyani. Such a person is called a **Stitha Pragyaha**. **Stitha means freedom from all doubts. Pragyaha means Gyana.**

Another expression used to describe the same person is **Sama-dhitaha** or one with conviction or established in his true nature or Atma. Such a person is one who does not forget his true nature even in day-to-day activities. To such a person knowledge is easily accessible, as he does not forget the teaching at all, so much so that he maintains equanimity even in a crisis.

Sthitadhihi is another expression used to describe such a person. Dhihi means Gyanam. In such a person, “I am Atma”, realization is a fact for him.

Thus, we have three definitions of an enlightened person.

Arjuna asks, Sri Krishna, what is description of such a Gyani? I would like to decide if this knowledge is useful to me or not. How will he talk to others, if at all? How will he sit? How will he walk? How does a Gyani conduct himself in the world? How does he think? How does he interact?

Swamiji clarifies that in this shloka the word Bhasha does not mean language but means description of Gyani. Swamiji also says that if there is no Guru, Sanyasa ashramam can be very dangerous, as Sanyasi will not know what to do with his time.

Shloka # 55:

Sri Krishna answered:

“When one wholly discards desires of the heart and becomes exclusively content with the Self, one is called a sage of stable wisdom. O Arjuna.”

This is a very important shloka as it provides a definition of a Sthita Pragyaha.

Once we know characteristics of a Gyani, we have a model for all spiritual seekers. Shankaracharya says, what ever is a natural trait in a Gyani, it is a guideline for all Sadhakas. We can also check ourselves against the model. How am I to know if I have reached the goal?

Swamiji cautions: Use this portion only to judge yourself or change yourself, and not to judge others.

Sthitapragyaha sadhanani:

1. What are his natural traits?
2. What are the disciplines to be practiced, to become an Sthita Pragyaha?

Sri Krishna does not discuss all sadhanas here.

Swamiji says everybody has to go through Karma Yoga and Gyana

Yoga. Gyana Yoga has three stages:

1. **Sravanam:** Receiving spiritual teaching from a competent teacher. This will help in Self Discovery. Scripture and Guru are like a mirror. They allow you to see your own "Inner Self" or Real Nature. Sravanam removes self-ignorance and helps with self-discovery. It is a mirror.
2. **Mananam:** Even as the student receives the teaching, several doubts come in his mind. **The teacher's goal is not to make the student believe. He wants the student to know. Knowing is different from believing.** Where knowing is involved, buddhi is involved; and buddhi will not accept something unless it is convinced. It should be logical. So, student is allowed to reflect and think about teaching. He can ask all questions, he wants. Therefore the second process of jnana yoga is asking my own intellect honestly, am I convinced? Of what? I am not the body, I am not the mind; but I am the eternal consciousness, functioning through the body and mind; Until and unless the student is convinced, the guru is ready for any amount of discussion. And this interaction and clarifying of all doubts is called mananam. This is the second important part of jnana yoga. By mananam, I remove all the intellectual obstacles. With this the knowledge has been converted into conviction; it is no more mere vague hypothesis or idea, but is a fact for me. Mananam removes intellectual obstacles.
3. **Nidhidysanam:** This intellectual knowledge has to be converted into emotional or psychological strength. It is the emotional personality that we use most of the time, not intellectual. We are disturbed by instances such as not getting coffee in time, car does not start, somebody overtakes your car etc. You get angry and disturbed. Day to day life is a series of such disturbances. **One must free themselves from all unhealthy emotional responses.**

A person with a high IQ and a very good job came to Swamiji and cried for fifteen minutes. He had problems with his wife. He has IQ but no EQ. Emotional Quotient is a rock like mind that can withstand all disturbances. This involves a big conversion within. Converting knowledge to mental strength. This is called Nidhidyasana. Ask yourself what complexes do I have? In background of this knowledge how do I get over them? Somebody said, "Negatives are developed in dark room of ignorance." Once he goes through Nidhidysanam he becomes Sthitha Pragyaha.

Thus, Sravanam and Mananam lead to Pragyaha. Nidhidysanam makes him Sthitha pragyaha.

Such a mind is called Jivan Mukti. It is a light and non-burdensome mind. The Gyani is not aware of his own mind. Citing example: Swamiji says if body parts are healthy you do not feel them. Only when they are hurt you feel them. "When the shoe fits you do not feel the shoe" is a Chinese proverb. So also with mind, when it is not burdened you do not feel it.

The mind of a Sthitha Pragyaha is now described:

1. Such a person is self sufficient, self-content and does not require external factors emotionally. He might require external factors to provide for food, clothing, shelter, but as far as his emotional being is concerned, he is not going to go with a begging bowl, asking each and everyone, whether you will take care of me. His life is for giving love and care, but his life is not for begging for love and care. What a wonderful attitude. As long as I beg, there will be sanctions. You know what a sanction is? It is constant blackmail. His life is not for begging, but for giving. He also does not depend on the physical condition of his own body.
2. Once there is fullness in oneself then there is

renunciation of all expectations and desires.

Why do desires come? Why does a man look for a walking stick? One, whose legs are weak, needs a walking stick. So also it is with a family, such as wife, son and grandchildren. At each stage in life I feel “Appornatvam” or incompleteness. Gyani, however, does not see himself as incomplete.

He may use these things but he does not need them. Like going out for a walk with a baton. If he does not have the baton he will not fall. Although, he has people around him, he is not dependent on them. Manogatan, all these cravings of mind, torturing and inflicting pains, are cleaned up, not because desires are pushed away by suppression, rather desire drops with discovery of Poornatvam. It happens naturally. Just like when the fruit comes, all the flower petals fall away. Similarly, all these desires should fall, because of the discovery of poornatvam. Through knowledge these props fall away. So, Poornatvam is the second trait of a sthitapragyaha.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 26

Shloka # 49:

“ Work impelled by the desire for fruit is indeed far inferior, evenness of mind being far above it. O Arjuna, Take refuge in the evenness of intelligence. Pitiful are those impelled by the desire for the fruits of works.”

Shloka # 50:

“With the intelligence of evenness one discards (in this world) both good and evil works (i.e, the merits and demerits of works) Therefore strive to secure this Yoga; Yoga is skill in works.”

Sri Krishna presented Karma yoga in Shlokas 47 and 48 respectively. He will elaborate on them in Chapter 3. Here he only hints at important aspects of karma yoga.

Chapter 3 has two aspects of Karma Yoga.

1. Karma Part: Or proper action, legitimate action, or Sattvic action.
2. Yoga Part: Meaning bringing a proper attitude during action.

As a Karta I should have a healthy attitude. Doing a job I do not like, every day, week after week, one cannot have a healthy attitude. It spoils the mental health, which in turn spoils the physical health as well.

I should love what I do. For every action I do, I will also reap the result. The boss may praise me, promote me or snub me for my action. Even in receiving the feedback I should have a healthy attitude, as a bhoktha. One needs a proper attitude towards Karma as well as Karma Phalam.

Here it is all about proper attitude alone. Samatvam, means an undisturbed mind. A stressed and strained mind is not a Karma Yogi's mind. That is the reason there are so many courses in stress management today.

What is the benefit of Karma Yoga?

Immediate benefit is peace of mind. There is no stress or strain. Even relationship improves. However, Gita is talking about the ultimate benefits. First, mind becomes more refined. Interest in self-knowledge increases, as mind becomes purer and purer. Self-knowledge becomes more appealing. So, wherever

he goes he will see only this topic. Soon, he will come to an appropriate Guru. Under him he graduates from Karma Yoga to Gyana Yoga. He then gets Gyanam and is then ultimately freed or liberated.

Definition of Karma Yoga is:

1. Means balance of mind
2. Kushala Yoga: Means skill in action.

What is skill in action?

It is not the expertise in action. Performing an action repeatedly will make one skilled at it. Shankaracharya gives a beautiful definition; if proper attitude is not there; karma can lead to more and more strain and tension. It can lead to more and more samsara. However, karma yogi is one who uses the very same karma and uses it to attain liberation.

So, the conversion is in attitude, not in action. Thus, cobra's poison used appropriately can even become a medicine. If inappropriately handled Karma can create stress.

Therefore conversion from binding Karma to liberating Karma by a change in attitude towards the action is the essence of Karma Yoga.

Shlok 51:

"Wise men, united with the intelligence of evenness discard, indeed, the fruits of works; they are liberated from the bondage of birth and attain the status which is free from all sufferings."

What are stages leading to liberation?

First stage is Budhiyukthaha: Proper attitude to life and experiences. Here buddhi means proper attitude. Here buddhi also means bhavana. This is born out of right discrimination; without discrimination healthy attitude cannot come about.

What is this right discrimination?

The right discrimination is that “ Inner growth is more important than material growth.” Initially more and more money is important. Later, one considers Dharma and Moksha as more important.

Artha Kama (material well being) must be balanced with Dharma and Moksha or Atma Sukham (Atma's well being).

Describing Navarthari, Swamiji says, we worship Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi.

- Durga- for 3 days; Durga signifies health and strength
- Lakshmi for 3 days; Lakshmi signifies wealth and it should not be ignored.
- Saraswathi for 3 days. Saraswathi signifies material and spiritual knowledge.

Navarathri is a balanced approach to all three aspects of one's life.

Second stages is Nithya Anithya viveka also brings a proper attitude that inner growth is more important than material growth.

Then what is the third stage? The first two stages are not sufficient to attain the ultimate goal; a person has to come to jnana yoga, finding out the true goal of life.

What is the goal of life? Look at nature. A seed grows to become a plant. Plant becomes a tree. The tree bears fruits and contributes to the world. Then, at its highest point of growth, it starts to wither away.

So it is also with animals.

I, as a human, am also an integral part of creation. There is

a difference between animals and humans. Animal's growth is only physical. Human being grows physically, mentally, emotionally, and intellectually. Human grows to show love, compassion and a capacity to share. Vasudaiva Kudumbakam.

Humans also want to discover the answer to the questions such as: who am I? Is there a God? Unless I discover the answers, I cannot attain spiritual growth. A karma yogi has to not only grow physically but also emotionally, spiritually or intellectually, and that is said here by the word, *maniṣiṇaḥbhutva*. So one should attain this knowledge called *jnana yoga*.

The fourth and final stage where they are freed from their shackles of Samsara. Raga, Shoka and Moha; or the cycle of life and death; or mortality signifies samsara.

(Note: Raga means dependence and attachment. Shoka means grief and sorrow. Moha means conflict and confusion. Raga means depending on external things or people or situations to be happy. As long as I depend upon people to be happy, my happiness is always in danger. Any time, that person may go away from me or die causing sorrow.)

These are the shackles of life. Freed of these shackles the Karma Yogi becomes a Muktha as long as he is alive. I continue in this world, the world continues in me, but I am not affected by it all. This is known as *Stitha Pragyaha* or *Jivan Mukthi*. At this stage, the mind becomes light and enjoyable.

What would you do, if your own mind were a burden to you? Wherever you go, the mind also comes with all its problems. Therefore the greatest tragedy is my own mind becoming my enemy. *Jivan mukti* is that state, where the mind is the lightest; a gift of God, which enjoys love, compassion, relaxation and ananda. He enjoys this stage till his *Prarabdha Karma* Lasts. After that he becomes a *Videhi Mukthi* or merges with God or *Ana-mayam*.

Karma yoga> Gyana Yoga> Gyanam> Jiva mukthi>Videhimukthi.

Sri Krishna expands on all these areas in future chapters. In Chapter 18 Sri Krishna summarizes everything.

Shlokas 52 and 53 are elaboration of previous verses on benefits of Karma Yoga.

Shloka # 52:

“When your intellect goes beyond the mist of delusion, you will win detachment from both what is to be heard and what has been heard.”

Intellect will cross over its confusion; there will be clarity of thinking and clarity of life. Generally people think moksha is the goal of some Sanyasis with nothing better to do. Actually Moksha is inner maturity. Value of moksha becomes clear. Importance of spiritual goal becomes clear.

Kalilam: Intellectual impurity, regarding priorities of life.

Aviveka is called mohah, and this mental confusion alone is called kalilam; Kalilam means the dirt or the Intellectual impurity regarding course of life; regarding the priorities of life. This confusion reduces as one becomes a karma yogi and leads a religious life.

The more one leads a religious life and when Atma Anatma knowledge comes, dispassion towards all external dependencies also develops.

Srotavya here means dependencies on rituals prescribed by Vedas such as for job, money etc. As a person becomes wiser, he realizes that any dependence is bad. External world and things are unpredictable, as such risky. Therefore, karma yogi is one who understands external dependence means fear; total fearlessness can come only when I learn to depend upon God or myself.

So therefore, learn to switch your dependence from the world

to God and finally from God to myself. Thus, the one who understands that this psychological dependence is not good does not want to hold on to it anymore. This is called nirvedam or dispassion towards external objects and relationships.

Dispassion does not mean, hatred, we continue to love and help others, only we do not want to seek help from them. It is learning to be independent of all the known and unknown external dependences. This is the benefit of a religious life. This is the first stage.

Shloka # 53:

“You will win this supreme yoga when your intellect, bewildered by Vedic texts, becomes firm and unwavering in concentration.”

As a person becomes interested in self-dependence, scriptures come and tell him “You do not have to depend on anything. You have within you the eternal source you can depend upon”.

Citing an example: Depending for water on the corporation until somebody tells you your own property has an abundance of water underneath.

So also with Atma. You have to tap into this Atma that is a perennial source of everything. Your innermost nature is atma. It is the source of security; source of love; and source of ananda. I can even start distributing from my source. I don't ask if you love me? I can now love you unconditionally, in spite of all your faults.

So, therefore, there is a big switchover, that is the discovery of purṇatvam, abhayatvam, and anandaha, within oneself. And this is called self-discovery. Many people want love and care. This confused mind, which was struggling as to where to turn to, to get some love and care with no one enquiring about us? Now it decides to go to its inner most source. It discovers the Atma.

Samadhi means poorna Atma, ever secure, embodiment of love. Fullness expressed outside is love.

Citing an example say you won something very big or accomplished something outstanding. On that day you are so full that you will forgive everyone. Sharing and tyagam come easily when you are full.

Imagine a state of mind in poornathvam, even temporarily. To such a mind compassion and love comes naturally.

Swamiji cautions, Self-discovery should be free of two obstacles.

1. Doubt regarding my poornathvam or Samsayaha.
2. Habitual notion that I need external factors to make me happy. Example: A smoker cannot imagine a life without it. So, also with coffee. These habits shackle us. This notion does not go away even after self-discovery. These are Vasanas that do not go away. It is called Viparyaha.

First one is called saṁsayah; second one is called viparyah. These two are powerful obstacles to knowledge, therefore, even after gaining knowledge, one should eliminate these two.

Such a person is called Stithprajna or the one who does not depend upon anyone, except himself. By himself, here means the big Self. Then alone can one attain Moksha or freedom. Freedom from what? Freedom from begging and internal bankruptcy.

This concludes Sri Krishna's teaching on Karma yoga. Now Arjuna is allowed to ask some questions in the tradition of Vedanta.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 25

Shloka # 47:

“to work alone you have the right and never to the fruits (of works). Don’t be impelled by the fruits of works; (at the same time) don’t be tempted to withdraw from works.”

Swamiji continuing with his teaching says Sri Krishna now presents the principles of Karma Yoga in Shloka # 47.

We have free will and the will as to what action to take. We also have capacity to act as we have Karma Indriyani. We are not omnipotent to accomplish anything and everything but within the limited power, we can accomplish many things. The word Adhikara means we have a choice. So Arjuna, make use of the free will unique to humans. Free will is not available to animals that act out of instinct. It is this free will that allows us to accomplish our Purusarthas.

Puruṣārtha literally means an “object of human pursuit”. It is a key concept in Hinduism, and refers to the four proper goals or aims of a human life. The four **puruṣārthas** are:

- Dharma (righteousness, moral values)
- Artha (prosperity, economic values)
- Kama (pleasure, love, psychological values)
- Mokṣa (liberation, spiritual values).

Swamiji says Purushartha has two meanings. One is free will and another is a human goal. They are, however, interconnected. Thus, while dharma-arta-kama-mokṣa are all called purushartha, the effort that we put forth to accomplish them; that freewill, is also called puruṣartha.

You do not have a choice over results of your actions. This

concept is often misinterpreted, says Swamiji. Thus, comes the interpretation that results are predestined, as such my effort is not meaningful. God has determined everything beforehand. God also determines results. So, we are totally helpless. This is the fatalistic or deterministic approach and Swamiji says this interpretation is wrong.

Citing an example: Some companies advertise for job vacancies while they have already chosen somebody. This is used as eyewash. Similarly the fatalistic people think that even before we do the action or in spite of our action, the Lord already determined the result or destiny and therefore we are totally helpless. Swamiji says you cannot accept this fatalistic approach, as you cannot choose your result.

Sri Krishna does not mean our effort is in vain. All Karmas result in appropriate result (s). Sri Krishna says the result is , however, not determined by your effort alone. There are many other factors that contribute as well. Yours is only one of the contributing factors.

Another example cited was of a washer man who opened his business in a village. After some time he realized the village was a Digambara village.

Citing another example: We all attend this Vedanta class. I and other shishyas come because of the Guru. Guru comes because of the Shishyas. If there are no Shishyas then there is no Guru. Thus, our class has Students and Teacher as contributing factors. I am contributing to the class; however, I am not the only one contributing. Others are contributing factors as well. All these other factors together are known as fate or God's will.

Thus: My Free will + Fate (other contributing factors)=Result.

If you can predict all other contributing factors you can predict the result. Meteorologists try to predict weather where there are many variables. Thus, there are many factors.

Some are known, some are unknown, some are controllable and some are uncontrollable. Hence, I can never predict the result.

Swamiji says, “ Don’t make your happiness depend upon unpredictable factors. If you do so, your happiness will also be unpredictable. **Rather, you should focus on enjoying the performance of action itself.**”

This will be much more meaningful. If you play tennis, you enjoy the game. Result of the game is insignificant. In this process your health will also improve. **Make every action a great experience.**

Citing another example, Swamiji says, he took a group on tour to Amaranth. The lingam there is an ice lingam as such dependent on weather. Will we see the lingam or not, it was not sure. Our whole journey was wonderful, as we decided upfront whether we saw the lord or not was not important. There were complaints. In some instances there were no toilets to use. Nevertheless, it was a great journey because of the attitude we took to the journey.

Enjoy every action and internal growth will occur. Do not worry about the results or external accomplishments. “Inner growth” is in your hands. Outer result is not in your hands. Let not motive be focused on material gain, which is unpredictable. If material gain is the focus, life will be full of ups and downs. Focus should be on the very action that you are performing.

When I face a few failures one tends to become fatalistic. I want to avoid failure. So, you don’t attempt anything anymore. In this line of thinking, keep in mind, that this **Inaction** means you lose opportunity for inner growth. Sri Krishna describes this further in the 6th chapter.

Withdrawal also contributes to growth. However, keep in mind that, what “Activity” can contribute “Withdrawal” cannot

contribute. In its initial stages of spiritual growth, action alone helps, as in Grihastha-ashrama. Later in life, Vanaprastha, or withdrawal, helps. Action is most important. Withdrawal is only of secondary importance.

Shloka 48:

“Giving up attachment and established in Yoga, with evenness of mind in success and failure, perform works, O Arjuna. This evenness is Yoga. “

Have a proper attitude towards material gain. It should be subservient to inner growth. Material gain or loss will not then result in turmoil of mind. Samsara loses its capacity to disturb you.

Adopt a different attitude to life. Learn lessons from failures.

That is why even though ten people failed in a particular field, all the people were not uniformly agitated. One person thought of committing suicide. Second person was disturbed and could not sleep; however a third person said failure is a part of life and I have learnt a good lesson. The third person's approach indicates inner maturity.

Citing example of the executive who was very successful.

They interviewed him and asked; what is the secret of your success. And he said, Right Decision. And then they asked the question; what is the secret of your Right Decision? He said experience in life. What is the secret of your experience in life; He said, wrong decisions. Therefore, even though you may consider it as a wrong decision, it is just an experience.

This mental balance is called Samatvam. One who values inner growth has Samatvam. In prosperity and adversity great people enjoy mental balance. Example of the rising sun was cited.

When the Sun is rising, it is bloody in color and when the sun

is about to set, it is also bloody. Often, when you get a picture of the Sun, you will not know whether it is a rising Sun or setting Sun. Be like the Sun, ups and downs will come.

Main indicator of a Karma Yogi is his mental balance. Do your duty or work with mental balance. There is no risk- less action. There is also no risk- less life. Yet maintain mental balance. Shift your attachment from “material growth” to “Inner or spiritual growth”. It is an attachment that is permitted by the Shastras. Be equanimous, in both success and failure.

Definition of Karma Yoga: It is a particular state of mind.

Shloka # 49:

“ Work impelled by the desire for fruit is indeed far inferior, evenness of mind being far above it. O Arjuna, Take refuge in the evenness of intelligence. Pitiful are those impelled by the desire for the fruits of works.”

Here Sri Krishna is contrasting two types of people, a Karmi and a Karma Yogi.

Karmi is a materialistic person who does not value inner growth. People die of failure as well as success.

The materialist gets kicked both in success and failure, at both extremes, and therefore he suffers; whereas a Karma Yōgi is one who is balanced both in success and failure;

Karma of a materialist is far inferior to the Karma yoga (Budhi yoga) of a Karma Yogi. Main focus of Karma Yoga is on the value or attitude towards action and not on the action itself; hence it also called Budhi Yoga.

Therefore, Arjuna, resort to Karma Yoga. Cultivate proper attitude. Those who do not have this attitude (Karmi's), they are unfortunate. They go through a lot of stress, strain and anxiety in life.

Shloka # 50:

“With the intelligence of evenness one discards (in this world) both good and evil works (i.e the merits and demerits of works). Therefore strive to secure this Yoga; Yoga is skill in works.”

Here Sri Krishna points out results of Karma Yoga. One who has a proper attitude, a clear visioned person, a Karma Yogi; he will ultimately become a Gyana Yogi. He alone analyses life experiences and will realize that he wants permanent happiness.

I am seeking happiness and fulfillment from material or finite things, a path which is useless. He will realize this and come to gyana yoga. Then, he will transcend all Karma Phalas by discovering his Atma Swaroopa. He then gives up happiness and sorrow.

Thus: Karma Yoga>Gyana Yoga> Gyanam> Moksha.

Living as a Karmi you will just keep going round and round in the chain of life and death.

May you take to Karma Yoga. It is the efficient performance of action or “Skill in action”.

With Best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta Class 24

Shloka # 45:

“The scope of vedas embraces the three-fold force of nature, O Arjuna! Go beyond these three forces. He who has mastered the self rises beyond all dualities.”

Continuing his teaching swamiji reminded us about shloka # 45.

Prarabhda Karma will still impact us. Strengthen your mind to withstand the ups and downs of life or the dvandas. Dvandas are dualities of opposites such as joy and sorrow or heat and cold. When we have problems we resort to Karmas by going to an astrologer or Vastu Shastri etc.

Swamiji says we need to reduce our Kanya Karmas or Prayaschitta Karmas. May you maintain your Satva Guna or Viveka shakthi. Dharma and Moksha are more important than Artha and Kama. Nithya Anithya Viveka is important as also Sathya Guna. This spiritual growth is accomplished by associating with Mahatmas, attending Satsang and reading of sacred books.

Swamiji reminded us that we get addicted to things such as coffee or watching TV. When all over the house, they have television; children will think that life is impossible without television. We start off with using something, then it becomes a need, and soon after we need it so much we cannot survive without it. This is a habit or even can become an addiction. This then also becomes a shackle, which I myself have put on. We need to get out of such shackles.

Discussing Yoga and Kshema, Swamiji says, we need certain things for survival and they are called yoga or Apraptya Prapthihi. Kshema means, now I have to protect all my acquisitions. Acquisition and their preservation are the concern of Yoga Kshema and they take up a lot of our time.

Thus, we are concerned; will our children take care of us? Nevertheless, our sense of insecurity does not leave us. Swamiji says, this feeling is an internal mental issue only. What we call security, is it really security? Keep in mind her own security staff killed even a Prime Minister. True security lies in our inner strength or wisdom or devotion. Transcend your worries and become a Karma Yogi. Drop concerns about Yoga Kshema. Invoke your Ishta Devata (Outer God) and pray to him or invoke your inner strength (inner God) and face the situation.

Describing Atmavan, swamiji says: Be alert, don't lead a mechanical life. Don't lead a sheepish life. Let it be a deliberate life. While we work, earn, grow a family etc., they are all just steps of a process. Keep the end goal in mind. Don't be carried away by all these in-process steps at any stage of life. Keep end goal in mind.

Shloka # 46:

“For a knower of Brahman who has realized the ultimate truth, there is much profit from all the Vedas as there is profit from reservoirs when all around there is an inundation.”

Here Sri Krishna talks about rewards of a Karma Yogi. Karma Yoga is an “Alert Life”. The reward of this life is Moksha. In the Moksha Ananda experienced by a Yogi, you do not lose worldly pleasures. They are included in moksha ananda. Karma Kanda talks of a variety of rituals for various pleasures. Gyana Kanda talks of moksha or infinite pleasures. In the Infinite the finite is included. Example: There is a small pond of water. Nearby, there is a large lake. The large lake brings all benefits of small pond and more while small pond cannot provide all benefits of the large lake.

Thus, all benefits of Karma Kanda are gained in the moksha of a wise man. Therefore Arjuna choose moksha, become a Karma Yogi.

Shloka # 47:

“to work alone you have the right and never to the fruits (of works). Don’t be impelled by the fruits of works; (at the same time) don’t be tempted to withdraw from works.”

This is an important verse and provides the principle of karma yoga.

Swamiji, defining a Karma Yogi says:

We act in the world. This is called Karma.

Karma Phalam is the result of our action.

We must have a healthy attitude towards our actions.

Attitude depends on understanding.

When we respect a person it is based upon knowledge of the person. Without cognitive changes attitudinal changes are not possible. Cognitive change means understanding a situation. As per Sri Krishna, as human beings, we have the “free will” or choice. Animals live by instinct. They do not have a goal or learn from experience. So, in our actions, our free will or choice should be used wisely. With respect to Phala or result of one’s actions, you do not have a choice. Thus, one should know which is choice-ful or which is choice-less action.

Given a choice-ful situation, act on your choice intelligently.

Given a choice-less situation, accept it intelligently, as well.

When Sri Krishna says you don’t have a choice with respect to the results of your actions, what he means is, you do not have a “total” choice. Very often, you are just one of the contributing factors. Thus, in farming, you may till the land, sow the seed, water it etc., but you have no control on the cyclone that comes through damaging the crop. So Sri Krishna is suggesting that we do not become optimistic or pessimistic but be more a realist or a rational person. In group decisions the individual has limited responsibility. Thus, in an

election, I may vote for a candidate, however that person may not win. Many others also influence an election. However, this does not mean you should not vote. Your vote is very important, although the result may not be to your choosing. Therefore, our efforts do help determine the result, but keep in mind that there are other factors impacting the situation as well.

Don't stop action. However, be prepared for any type of result. Not just you, but other factors also determine the result. So, hope for the best and prepare for the worst. Do not think your actions are a waste; they are very important. Be prepared, however, that the result may not be to your expectation. Just pray " O God, give me the strength to accept the consequences gracefully."

With Best wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 23

Greetings All,

Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Refreshing our memory, Swamiji says, after talking about Gyana Yoga now Sri Krishna wants to talk about Karma Yoga. Before starting his talk he has some general observations about Karma Yoga.

Shloka # 40:

"Here in the sphere of Karma Yoga there is no loss of good beginnings ; nor is there any sin involved. Even a little of this righteous law delivers one from great peril."

In Shloka # 40, Sri Krishna glorifies Karma Yoga. In Karma Yoga, the focus is on inner growth. In Karma Yoga there is no failure, rather the focus is on building capacity to learn from success and failure. Since he learns from experiences there is no failure involved.

Shloka # 41:

“This conviction as regards this (two fold yoga), marked by resolution, is single; the convictions of the irresolute are indeed many-branched and endless, O Arjuna!”

In this shloka Sri Krishna glorifies a Karma Yogi. A Karma Yogi has a clear picture of the immediate, long term and ultimate goals. This he gets from life's experiences as well as from Scriptures. This clear thinking is the "inner freedom". Inner freedom means psychological freedom. Just as a child drops holding his mother's hand as he or she gains strength in the legs, so also the Yogi develops inner strength. The discovery of inner strength is Atma Gyanam. This Gyanam comes only to a prepared mind. The process is:

Obtain Gyana Yogyatha>Obtain Gyanam> Obtain Moksha.

The question is how to obtain Gyana Yogyatha? It can be obtained by leading a religious, ethical, moral and Karma yogic life. This is the clarity of vision. Many people, although of religious inclination, are not aware of these goals. So they end up following or performing different sadhanas at different times and are utterly confused. These confused people have different views or opinions as well. Swamiji says: " Fact is one, however, confusions are many".

Shlokas 42, 43 and 44 were combined.

Shloka # 42:

“They are the unwise who utter flowery speeches, O Arjuna! They revel in the letter of the Vedas and declare “there is

nothing else”.

Shloka # 43:

“Desire ridden, heaven bent, they utter words which lead to births and actions replete with specific rites that yield enjoyments and power”.

Shloka # 44:

“ In the case of those who have given themselves up to pleasures and power and whose minds have been enslaved by the words of the Vedas that command rites, there is no chance of the resolute mind addressing itself in concentration.”

In these three verses Sri Krishna criticizes people who are confused about the ultimate goal of life. Non-Karma Yogi's or Karmi's are the confused people.

Swamiji says, in Chapter 17 of the Gita, Sri Krishna has divided human activities in three types: Sathvic, Rajasic and Tamasic Karmani.

Satvic actions benefit many people and are self-less actions.

Rajasic actions are individual oriented and are self-centered. “I” is the focus and actions are selfish.

Tamasic actions are not only selfish but in the process may also harm others. These actions often are cruel and harmful.

Thus, the three actions can be classified as: Selfless, Selfish and Harmful.

For inner growth what is the contribution of each one of them?

Satvic contributes to inner growth or purity and gives Gyana Yogyatha. It may produce material benefits as a by-product as well.

Rajasic contributes to growth of person only in outer and

material sphere. Spiritual growth is slow or none at all.

Tamasic actions can be harmful and may result in some material growth. Scams, cheating etc., come to mind. Inner growth does not occur. It actually pulls one down spiritually. It retards inner growth.

The real peace and happiness of a person depends on inner growth alone not on material growth.

A person who has no inner growth but is materially well off cannot have peace of mind and joy. Peace and Joy are a given for a person of inner growth.

Suppose there is a person who does not have inner growth; even if he has got all the material wealth, he cannot enjoy life, because he will have conflicts because he would have gone against the conscience. So, when the inner growth is stunted the external things cannot give peace and joy, whereas when the inner growth is there, whether the external things are there or not, a person can enjoy peace and joy. This is the basic concept to be kept in mind about karma Yoga.

Sri Krishna criticizes those who are committed to rajasic actions, which means people are interested in their own personal benefit and that too material benefits alone. And they do not care about any other thing. And such selfish people are criticized strongly. Krishna does not criticize here tamasa karmaṇi. That is to be understood.

That material accomplishment alone can make the life successful; this notion is called here avivekaḥ. Whereas the conclusion of the Gita is, material accomplishment alone cannot give that. As they say, money can buy bed, but money cannot buy sleep; Money can buy food, but money cannot buy hunger; Money can buy people, but it cannot buy love. There are many important things in life, which money cannot buy. If I do not understand that, I am an aviveki.

In Vedas, under Karma Kanda's, many rituals are prescribed for material gains. One example is the Aavahanthi Homa. The purpose of this ritual is to obtain wealth. Since Vedas prescribe it, it means it accepts material accomplishments. However, one's life cannot be dedicated to material growth alone. It should include spiritual growth as well. Learning Gita is a fundamental necessity for spiritual growth including one's Emotional Quotient, EQ. EQ is the capacity to maintain mental balance.

Shloka 43:

Such people consider life is all about eating, drinking and merry making. They are the embodiment of material and sensory pleasures. Sri Krishna does not criticize sensory pleasures but criticizes giving undue importance to them at cost of inner growth. Their list does not include Dharmic activities. Their goal is Swargam. However, to reach Swarga you have to die first.

Such people cannot be Karma Yogi's. They also spread their philosophy to every one. Their philosophy is an attractive one. It is "Maya" that is more attractive than Brahman. Shankara says choose your friends carefully.

Their speeches are flowery and seducing. They speak of varieties of projects, full of actions or rituals or varieties of ambitious projects. Such a person does not have time for the spiritual side. They do not know that one action leads to more actions until it becomes a whirlpool of actions, from which it is difficult to get out of. It is like a Chakravyuham. Thus, such a person goes through the cycle of life and death.

Gita says, know how to get out of actions. It does not mean Sanyasa. Gita does not say action is bad, but at some point we need to grow out of actions.

Actions lead to more actions and thus from birth to birth.

These activities are not for purifying the mind. Even religious actions are performed for materialistic gains. Also called Bhoga Aishwarya, its goal is only more and more money.

Shloka 44:

They are totally attached to materialistic things. They find they cannot fulfill all desires of the mind. Increase in desires is fast but fulfillment is slow. Now, when increasing desires cannot be fulfilled by Dharmic means, one takes to Adharmic ways. Concepts of justice, honesty etc., are all lost. There is nothing pricking the conscience. If everybody is doing it, what is wrong with it, is the approach?

Swamiji says: Yatha Raja tatha Praja or Yatha Praja tatha Raja in a democracy. Conscience is stifled and viveka shakthi goes away.

Sri Krishna says such selfish and materialistic people cannot become Karma Yogi's.

Shloka # 45:

This is an important shloka describing who can be a Karma Yogi, what is their personality and what is their thinking etc.

Trigunya here means material accomplishments. Vedas do not condemn material accomplishments. However, a Karma Yogi should not be overwhelmed by material pleasures. While pleasures are allowed they should not be given too much importance, rather they should be subservient to a higher goal. Because ultimately, the peace of mind does not depend upon what we have; but peace of mind depends upon what we are. So if a healthy inner growth is there; he can enjoy both the presence and the absence of wealth; but if the inner growth is not there; then the wealth cannot offer much to that human being.

Shankaracharya says, reduce those activities, which are meant

only for artha-kama, or reduce kama karmas; reduce rajasa, tamasa karmas and let there be an increase in satvika karmas. Sri Krishna does not say drop money oriented action; but he says the time and energy should not be spent for this alone.

Swamiji citing example of curd rice and pickle, for some, which is the main dish becomes a question. So also with Artha and Kama. Even as Dharmic entertainments are acceptable, one should constantly remember the ultimate goal.

Even if you reduce your kama karmas, you are going to face many ups and down in life; brought out by the prarabdha karma. Because of the past karmas that we have done, we are going to go through ups and downs in life; we are going to go through the pairs of opposites known as dvandvas. Examples of Dvandvas are mana-apamanah, labha-naṣṭa, jaya-apajaya, all these are called pairs. To resolve such problems we go to an astrologer who prescribes Parihar karma. For the many Akramas (wrong deeds) that we commit we have to perform a lot of parihara's, says Swamiji. Rather, we should accept minor difficulties of life and transcend the pair of opposites by strengthening our inner growth.

Karma Yoga's goal is to reduce Parihar Karmani or Prayaschitha Karmani.

With Best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 22

Greetings All,

Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Refreshing our memory, Swamiji reminded us that Arjuna was suffering from problems of attachment and his internal conflict of whether to fight or not on the battlefield. He had delusions about what is dharma and what is not. Nevertheless he surrenders to Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna has a two-fold job before him. He has to remove Arjuna's sorrow as well as convince him that it is a dharma yudha and it is proper to fight the battle.

Sri Krishna takes three approaches to convince Arjuna. The first one is Philosophical, where he discusses the true nature of the individual and how it is free from all actions. The Atma does not perform any action. Thus, there is no question of proper or improper action. Discussing the Ethical or Dharmic Drishthi here also Arjuna has to fight. Even if a person does not believe in the Philosophical and Dharmic approach, from a Laukika approach too Arjuna has to fight. If not, you will lose your name and fame. From any of the three angles you still have to fight.

Shloka # 38:

“Looking with an equal eye on pleasure and pain, gain and loss,

victory and defeat, strive to fight; thus will you incur no sin.”

Sri Krishna tells Arjuna the attitude he needs to take in the fight. It is an attitude that needs to be taken by all of us. It is called Samatvam or balance of mind. Not being carried away by any situation. Samatvam is very important as it allows our thinking power to work. In a disturbed mind the mind does not think clearly. Also, the person does not learn from the experience. Tragedy teaches us more than any other experience. One must have a relatively calm mind and maintain balance.

Previously IQ was thought to be the cause of success. Now it is felt that EQ helps one succeed. Student who does not know

the first question of the examination loses his balance and is thrown off in an examination, although he knows the rest of the questions. EQ is more important than IQ for human success. So, prepare to build your EQ.

No human being can always be successful. Success in life is nothing but the capacity to face success and failure without disturbance. So, Arjuna, keep your mind in balance.

Whether in gain or loss, victory or defeat, face the situation with equanimity. Swamiji says, Sri Krishna does not teach how to succeed all the time; rather he teaches how to face success and failure.

Arjuna having prepared the mind, get ready to do your duty. Ups and downs will be there, face them with proper attitude. Even from worst of situations, learn from it. I can find fault with another person or find fault with one self for lack of preparation. Adversity introduces a person to himself, says Swamiji.

Shloka # 39:

“This knowledge of Samkhya has so far been imparted to you. Now, listen to (a statement of) the knowledge of Yoga by acquiring which , O Arjuna! You will discard the bondage of works.”

Here Sri Krishna is changing from one topic to another. Until now I spoke about Gyana Yoga (Atma Anatma Viveka) or Self Knowledge. It is also the discovery of freedom from external situations. The chapter is called Sankhya and here Sankhyam means Atman.

Sankhya Upanishad , the Truth about oneself or Atma Gyanam, is what I have given to you. From now on I am going to deal with Karma Yoga.

Why does Sri Krishna introduce Karma Yoga, asks Swamiji? Gyana

Yoga alone frees one from sorrow. Why then teach Karma Yoga? Even though Gyana Yoga is only way for liberation, everyone is not fit for Gyana Yoga. Thus, Karma Yoga is a stepping-stone towards Gyana Yoga. So, prepare your mind, and then go to Gyana Yoga. Karma Yoga is incomplete without Gyana Yoga. In Kali Yuga, Gyana Yoga is difficult. If Gyana Yoga is difficult then we need to find ways to make it easier. Preparation of mind through Karma Yoga will make it easier. Like mathematics, for some it is easy and others it is difficult. For a prepared mind the math is easy. So also it is with Karma Yoga.

So listen to this teaching. Once you learn this, you will attain liberation. Liberation means freedom from all emotional problems, enjoying a wonderful mind.

Shloka # 40:

“Here in the sphere of Karma Yoga there is no loss of good beginnings ; nor is there any sin involved. Even a little of this righteous law delivers one from great peril.”

Sri Krishna glorifies Karma Yoga in this shloka although he has not yet described what Karma Yoga is. Karma Yoga is the way of life where we grow internally, more. Here we give importance to internal growth rather than external growth. **Swamiji Says: “Peace of mind depends upon what you are, not what you have.** “The more we have the more we feel secure. Gita, however, says, it is otherwise. This is biggest myth, says Sri Krishna.

Saints and Sages did not possess anything, yet they enjoyed the greatest life. Outer accomplishments are less important than inner growth. Such a life is called Karma Yoga.

In Karma Yoga there is no such thing as failure. Even if one fails in worldly affairs, the Karma Yogi will only look at it as lessons learned. This is inner growth. A Karma Yogi knows no failure.

Adverse results (business, family etc.) only bring positive results to a Karma Yogi. He learns from the adverse experiences.

“ Building castles from stones thrown by others” is an analogy used by Swamiji to describe the Karma Yogi.

Even practicing Karma Yoga to a limited extent will bring results. In outer world unless a job is completed the result is not there. In Karma Yoga, however, even if an action is not completed, inner growth occurs.

Swamiji cited an example. Suppose a person wants to chant Vishnu Sahasranamam because the astrologer tells him to. The astrologer will tell him how many times to chant, at what time, what naivedyam to offer after chanting etc. This called Sakama Karma.

Another person also chants Vishnu Sahasranamam, however, he does it just for his inner growth. This is Nishkama Karma.

The first person will get result only when everything is performed the way it is prescribed. The second person's inner growth will occur irrespective of the number of times he chants.

In Karma Yoga, even alpa, will produce result.

Therefore, Arjuna, be a Karma Yogi, Says Sri Krishna.

Shloka # 41:

“This conviction as regards this (two fold yoga), marked by resolution , is single; the convictions of the irresolute are indeed many-branched and endless, O Arjuna!”

One of the problems while reading scriptures is that there are countless sadhanas prescribed. Other religions with fewer sadhanas appear to be much easier.

In some places Puja, Japa, Meditation, Bhajan, Pilgrimage, etc are prescribed. We often do not know what to do? Many ways are prescribed and I am confused. To successfully practice spirituality we must know the role of each sadhana. A Karma Yogi has a clear understanding of Sadhana he has to practice. Clarity of means is essential. Clarity of what I want in life is essential. Our ultimate goal is freedom. All of us are working towards this goal. Even a child that holds its mothers hands drops it later on. It is inner freedom that we seek. I should be happy in myself without depending on any other human being. Dependence is sorrow. Independence is happiness. Then, how to obtain this independence? A Karma Yogi understands that Gyanam is the means to gain this freedom. For Gyanam, I require a prepared mind. Gyan Yogyata or Self Knowledge requires tremendous preparation. Karma Yoga is the path that gives us this Yogyata. This will take you to Gyanam, which will lead to liberation. Karma Yogi knows that this is the ultimate goal. This understanding is one and is unchanging. However, a person who is not a Karma Yogi will be confused and his sadhana will be a waste of time. When religion is not properly understood, he will blame religion. He will end up a Nasthika. It is not a problem of religion. All fields require learning such as computers, playing tennis etc. In olden times, in a Gurukula, Brahmacharya was taught. In present time this does not happen.

With Best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 21

Greetings All,
Gita, Chapter # 2, Samkhya Yoga:

Shloka # 30:

“This embodied self (dwelling) in the bodies of all, O Bharatha Prince ! is eternally indestructible. Therefore, you ought not to grieve for any being at all.”

Shloka # 31:

“Having regard to the law of your own life, you ought not to be perturbed. A Kshatriya cannot have a greater good than a righteous battle.”

Refreshing our memory of last class, including shlokas 30 and 31, Swamiji reminded us Sri Krishna wants to remove Arjuna's sorrow caused by attachment. He also wants Arjuna to fight the Dharma Yudha. He has tried convincing him using a philosophical approach, a dharmic approach and finally a Laukika approach as well. In philosophical approach he clarifies the Atma Anatma Viveka. Atma does not kill nor is it killed. Anatma means mortality of this body has to be accepted. Atma is immortal and Anatma is mortal. One who understands this is wise. So, Arjuna, accept this fact and there will be no sorrow.

Shloka # 32:

“An open gateway to heaven has, by a happy chance, offered itself to you, O Arjuna! For, fortunate Ksatriyas alone gain an occasion to wage a war like this.”

Sri Krishna says from a Dharmic point of view as well, Arjuna should fight. While scriptures do say Ahimsa is param dharma, it is a Samanya Dharma. There are, however, exceptions to this. In Aapaat Dharma, Asatyam (non truth) and Ahmisa are allowed. This happens with government rules also where there are exceptions. It happens with traffic rules where some

important people are exempted from normal traffic rules. Samanya Dharma or Upasarga has an opposite called Apa-Vada. In Apa- Vada, killing is allowed. Only after trying Sama, Dana and Bheda that Danda or violence is resorted to.

Ksahtriya means, one who protects against Adharma. If there is adharma one can try to convert adharmic people. If that does not work then their elimination is the only way. A Doctor tries to heal a limb, however, if it does not heal, he may have to amputate it to protect the rest of the body.

Arjuna, You are a Kshatriya, so you have to fight. Maintenance of law and order is not everybody's responsibility. Only some have this right. A Brahmin cannot punish. Punishment is the Sva-Dharma of a segment of society. A Kshatriya alone has the right to punish.

Consider your own Varna-dharma , Arjuna, you should not act like a Brahmin. A Kshatriya should take to violence in particular cases. Drona is a brahmana. He is not supposed to take to war. He has a right to teach but no right to fight.

So, Arjuna, if you do not fight it is wrong. Don't look at this war as a curse, but as a way to sacrifice your life for Dharma. Thus, the freedom fighters that went to jail were considered Tyagis. There is nothing greater than a Dharma Yudha for a Kshatriya, says Sri Krishna. You should look upon this as a great opportunity. Some communities have suicide squads that sacrifice their life for their country. Here also a Kshatriya should be ready to commit suicide; that is to sacrifice his life, he does not consider it a tragedy. Among the Rajput families, when their women sent off the Rajput princes for war, they did so without any tears. They did not want you to be alive when there is a cause. Rajput princes were sent off to war with blessings by their women.

This kind of opportunity for a great sacrifice for dharma has

come in your life. If you are going to sacrifice life for Dharma you will get the heaven called Vira swarga. This is the gate to this Svarga. It is an open door. Who gets such an opportunity? Only a fortunate and blessed Kshatriya gets called for such a noble cause.

Shloka # 33:

“on the other hand, if you refuse to fight this righteous war, sacrificing both the law of your life and renown, you will incur sin.”

Sri Krishna says you have to fight this war. Suppose Arjuna says I am not interested in the war for sake of Bhishma or Drona? If you do not fight the war you will get only hell. If a person renounces his duty, it is considered Papam.

Swamiji says there are two kinds of Papam.

1) Doing what should not be done, Nishidhakarana papam. Example is one should not drink liquor.

2) Not doing what should be done, called Vihitha akarana Papam. An example is not paying taxes that are owed by you.

If Arjuna does not fight, it is an act of omission, or Vihitha akarana or pratyavaya sin. Vihitha akarana is called pratyavaya papam. Arjuna, if you do not fight this dharmic war then you will be shirking your Sva-Dharma and you will get Papam. Papam means suffering in this life or next. So to avoid Naraka you should fight. If not, you will lose your name and fame.

With this the dharmic view is completed.

Shloka # 34:

“ All will recount your ever lasting infamy! For one honored, infamy is worse than death.”

Having given his philosophical and dharmic views now Sri Krishna addresses the Laukika drishti. Some people do not believe in punyam or papam, as they are adrishtam (invisible).

Punyam and papam is only known through Shashtra Pramanam. If so, can I run away from this war?

Arjuna, you still have to fight, says Sri Krishna. You will lose your name, fame, and status in society, if you do not fight.

Swamiji says, in society everybody is worried about how other people perceive him or her. People are worried about social status, family's name, fame etc. So, Arjuna, your name and fame as the greatest warrior will be lost.

You decided to fight, and then, at the last minute you had weakness. People will talk of the Arjuna who ran away from battlefield. Maanam and Apamaanam are more important than life for many. Thus, there are students who commit suicide when they do not get a good rank in examination. So, Arjuna your Apamaanam should be considered. Human beings will spread the bad name. Having enjoyed fame, this ill fame will be worse than death.

Shloka # 35:

"Great heroes will deem that out of fear you withdrew from battle. You will fall in the esteem of those very heroes who have honored you (so far)."

How Apamaana will afflict Arjuna is now explained. Arjuna's reason for withdrawal is not clear. Society will not know his true intentions. This can only lead to spread of rumors. Citing example of journalists, Swamiji says, for sensationalism they contact people to get information and publish information, rumors, with a question mark. Public will not remember the question mark. Once a name is bad it is difficult to get it back. Then, one comes to know, that fame is hell.

Great warriors will say Arjuna withdrew out of fear. Even Karna will say this. Karna has been insulted very often as a Suta Putra and he is waiting for this opportunity. He will use

this opportunity to say Arjuna ran away because of Karna.

Shloka # 36:

“Your foes will hurl many unmentionable insults at you-foes bent on down grading your competence. What can be more painful than that?”

Sri Krishna continues with his description of Apamaana.

Arjuna, your enemies, Kauravas, will spread rumors against you that are difficult for me even to mention. They have the advantage, as they are the rulers of the state. They will belittle your skill in archery. What is more painful than Apamaana?

Giving example of the dialogue between Kaikeyi and Dasartha, in Ramayana, when Dasaratha refuses to give boon to Kaikeyi because he does not want to sacrifice Rama. Kaikeyi uses an argument that all your forefathers have kept their words. By not keeping your word you will sacrifice the name that you enjoy. You will bring a blot in the blotless family of Raghu vamsa. Fearing Apamaana, Dasaratha caved in. Example of Kamsa and Devaki was also cited. Similarly when Kamsa decides to kill Devaki when the asariri comes and tells that Devaki's 8th son will be his killer, Vasudeva uses many arguments but ultimately says your family has got wonderful name. Your name will go down as the killer of your own sister, out of a fear of a son to be born. Do you want such an apamaana. The moment the word apamaana is mentioned, Kamsa says: OK. I will try some other method. Manam, pride, is very important. Apamaanam, insult, is not bearable.

Shloka # 37:

“Getting slain, you will gain heaven; victorious, you will enjoy this world. Therefore, O son of Kunti! Stand up, determined to fight.”

If you do not want ill fame or naraka, then fight. If killed

you will get Vir-svarga. If you win, you will get back your kingdom you have wanted for the last 13 years. Either way you gain. So, Arjuna, get up. Having decided to fight this war, Arjuna, please get up. With this the third line of argument or Laukika Drsihthi is also concluded.

Adhyathmike. Dharmica and Laukika approaches have all been addressed. So, Arjuna, fight this war.

Now, Sri Krishna gives advise on how to fight. Swamji says duties are of two types.

- 1) Pleasant duty
- 2) Unpleasant duty.

That is why whenever there is a function; they will say that it is my pleasant duty to introduce the speaker, etc. The word pleasant duty makes it clear that there is another called unpleasant duty waiting. How to do the pleasant duty, everybody knows. The problem is with unpleasant duty. Therefore, how one should perform the unpleasant duty is subject of 38th verse:

Shloka # 38:

“Looking with an equal eye on pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, strive to fight; thus will you incur no sin.”

Sri Krishna concluded his first phase of teaching and is introducing his next phase of teaching. This is an introduction to Karma Yoga. Veda is divided into two portions, religion and philosophy. Religion is a way of life; Philosophy is the right view of life. The philosophy part is over, now the religion part is coming. Veda-antha is over; Veda-poorva is coming; jnana-kandam is over; karma-kandam is coming; Brahma sastra is over; dharma sastra is going to come.

If a person has to efficiently act in the world, most important characteristic is learning to be balanced in mind;

therefore, samatvaṃ as karma yoga is being introduced in this sloka. It will be elaborated in the later verses.

With Best wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy