

# Sadhana Panchakam – All Classes

Sadhana Panchakam was written by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. Sometimes this is also called Sopana Panchakam or Upadesa Panchakam or Advaita Panchakam. The word Panchakam means a text consisting of five verses. It is called advaita panchakam because these verses deal with advaidic teaching contained in vedas. The word upadesa means teachings or instructions; Upadesa Panchakam means five verses dealing with the instructions. The teaching in these verses are given in a graded manner. Sopānam means a flight of steps. Like a flight of steps, instructions are given to reach the goal. These five verses deal with a series of sādhanā-s or disciplines to be followed by every human being and that is why it is also called sadhana panchakam. Sādhanam means and sādhyam is end. The person who accomplishes the sādhanā-s is called sādḥaka.

A series of sādhanā-s are given for two goals:

1. Discovering what is the goal of human life.
2. Accomplishment of the goal

Keeping these goals in mind, a scheme for life is presented. This scheme of life is given by vedas and scriptures. This is presented by Shankaracharya in five verses.

What is the scheme given by the Vedas? This scheme is known as varṇa āśrama vyavasthā; scheme of varnas and scheme of āśramas; varṇa vyavasthā means dividing the whole society into four groups: brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra-s. This classification is based on the contribution towards society. This classification was given by scriptures for social harmony and social growth.

The second scheme is āśrama vyavesthas or scheme of four

stages of life. This scheme is presented for individual harmony and growth. In this work, Shankaracharya is primarily concerned about the āśrama vyavesthas. The four āśramas are:

1. Brahmacharya: Student stage of life
2. Gṛhastha: Householder stage of life
3. Vānaprastha: Hermit stage of life
4. Sannyāsa āśrama: Stage of life as a monk

This scheme is almost gone and has only a skeletal existence. But internally and mentally everyone must go through this scheme.

For all human beings, irrespective of varna or āśrama, the scriptures describe some common disciplines; universal disciplines; These disciplines are called sāmānya dharma; general disciplines and duties. These can be broadly classified into two: Avoidances (don't) and the second consisting of pursuits (dos). Each one consists of five; five don't disciplines are called Yama or nivṛti and five do disciplines are called niyama or pravṛtti bodha.

Yamas: Five avoidances

1. Ahimsā: Nonviolence; avoidance of harm to others by thought, word and deed.
2. Satyam: Do not speak untruth; do not lie; It does not mean you always tell truth; do not speak untruth; so, this is avoidance of lie. Either speak truth or observe silence, but do not speak untruth.
3. Asteya: Don't possess illegitimate wealth.
4. Brahmacharyam: Avoidance of illegitimate sexual relationships.
5. Aparigraha: Avoidance of possession of too much wealth, even though it is legal.

Five Niyama: Disciplines to be pursued.

1. Śauca: Purity; positively working for physical purity and mental purity.
2. Santoṣa: Positively developing a sense of contentment.
3. Tapas: Willful self-denial; to avoid slavery to our organs.
4. Svādhyāya: The study of scriptures; with or without knowing meaning.
5. Īśvara Praṇidhāna: Worship of the lord.

Viśeṣa Dharmas (specific disciplines) are not universal but should be followed by segments of society. These vishesha dharmas are based on varna and āśrama designation of a person. They are known as varnāśrama dharma or vishesha dharma or svadharma. Shankaracharya does not discuss sāmānya dharmas and prescribes vishesha dharmas at four stages of life.

The first stage is Brahmacharya āśrama – a student's life where a person is supposed to study vedic scheme of life. There was 12 years of study. First, he learns what should and should not do in each āśrama. Only after this study, can a student be called brahmachary. Brahma means veda and chary means the one who follows the discipline of studies. This is the first stage: being aware of the vedic grand design.

The second stage is gragasthasrama in which one takes the life of activity as prescribed for his particular varna. This is predominantly discussed in the first portion of vedas or karma kāṇḍa; When a person follows this discipline, a person gets mental purity. Freedom from raga dwesha; likes and dislikes, because of which a person is generally disturbed. This indicates equanimity of mind or samatvam or chithasudhhi.

Third stage is vanaprastha āśrama; here extrovert physical activities are reduced, and mental disciplines are increased

in the form of upāsanās. This is discussed in the second portion of vedas or called upāsanā kanda. A person may leave his house at this stage or may chose to stay in the house, withdrawing from life and daily activities. This gives a focusing faculty or converging faculty.

The fourth and final stage is sanyasa āśrama in which a person is free from all psychological dependences and attachments. If this is done physically then, he is an external sanyasi. If it is done mentally, then he is internal sanyasi. This is the final discipline or Jñāna yoga or pursuit of spiritual knowledge, which corresponds to Jñāna kanda portion of vedas. By following this, a person becomes Jñāni. He becomes jīvanmukta, the one who has discovered inner freedom or liberation.

In the first sloka, we get first two stages. In the second and third slokas we get third and fourth stages. In the fourth and fifth Shankaracharya gives general instructions to be followed.

### Śloka 1

The scriptures should be regularly studied by you. This is done in the first stage of Brahmacharyam and continued in the other āśramas. First, vedas are chanted then the meaning is studied and understood. Adhyayanam is chanting and mīmāṃsā means understanding the meaning. To understand the meaning of the vedas, one must know certain auxiliary sciences known as veda angaṇi. If you want to understand physics, you must know mathematics. In brahmacharya āśrama the student learns veda anga also. It is not mere technical expertise; he should know what to do when he comes out of this āśrama. He must have clear cut understanding of his goal and also how to conduct himself in society. When life presents challenges, how to deal with them? In Brahmacharya Ashram, he studies the art of living and conducting in society, in addition to learning their profession.

## Class 2

Sankarachariyar is discussing the grand scheme of āśrama avastha – the four stages of life. The first stage is called Brahmacharyam where a student learns chanting of vedas, learns auxiliary sciences veda anga vichara and veda artha or mīmāṃsā. If he is shathriya he learns dhanu sasthanam, if he is Vaishnava he learns vedic studies.

Having understood the scheme in Brahmacharyam, one has to go to the next stage gragasthanam where he implements the scheme.

The first stage is karma anushtanam, following the karmas prescribed in the vedas. The ten sāmānya dharmas should be implemented by all – the five do's and don'ts – Yama: Five values ahimsa, Satyam, astheyam (not owning any illegitimate property), brahmacharyam and aparigraha (not possessing too much) and Niyama: Soucham (Cleanliness), santosha (Contentment), tapa (moderation in everything), swadhyaya and Īśvara pranidhanam. yama. In addition to these universal values, one has to follow vishesha dharma or specific duties which is called svadharma which will vary from brāhmaṇa to shathriya, shathriya to vaishya etc. This karma or the vedic duties can be classified into three:

1. Nişkāma karma: Those compulsory actions which do not depend on your like and dislikes. These are based on vedic commandments and are meant for spiritual growth and refinement of mind.
2. Sakama Karma: These are based on our desires; they are not compulsory and are optional. These are meant for material well-being.
3. Nişiddha karma: These are prohibited karmas and must be renounced; like harming, telling lies etc. These are obstacles to spiritual growth.

Do the nişkāma karma properly without fail. Lord Krishna uses

the word svadharma throughout Bhagavad Gītā. In the scriptures, the svadharma is determined by varna and āśrama. However, the varna and āśramas are not alive today. So, we need to interpret svadharma with present day need. This should be practicable by all. This is panca mahā yagya, which is svadharma of all people.

1. Deva Yajña: Worship of the lord. Just offering flowers, chanting slokas, going to pujas etc. It does not matter what way you worship, but it must be done. If this is done for material benefit, then it will not be nişkāma karma, but it will be sakama karma.
2. Pitṛ Yajña: Worship of forefathers; Vedas have prescribed certain rites; it doesn't matter how we express our gratitude towards forefather, but it must be expressed.
3. Brahma Yajña: Worship of vedas and rishis, in the form of ritual. We do our best to preserve and propagate the scriptures.
4. Manuṣya yagya: We are indebted to every other human being. All we use and consume is because somebody has worked and is working; therefore, I am indebted to entire humanity. One of the best manuṣya yagya is anna dhānam. All social services will come under manuṣya yagya.
5. Bhūta Yajña: Worship of so-called inferior living beings; animals and plants. Feeding the animals, insects and birds is bhudha yagya. Offering of worship includes worshipping forefathers, rishis, animals, plants etc. Only when this is included, puja is puja.

What are sakama karma? Sakama karma are actions for material wealth. May you gradually give up actions meant for material wealth – artha kama. In those days, everyone did their duty (svadharma), whatever the other person voluntarily gives, they lived on that. When everybody does their svadharma, it

works. However, now svadharma based society is gone and payment-based society is evolving. Everybody's svadharma became automatic payment of other's svadharma. Lord Krishna says gradually reduce kama karma. How do you reduce kama karma?

Kama karma increases because of the increase of raga dwesha. As the kama increases, kama karma increases. As we reduce raga dwesha, kama karma will also be reduced. Svadharma anushtanam will reduce kama raga dwesha. Raga dwesha is called pāpam because whatever obstructs spirituality is pāpam. Raga dwesha obstructs spirituality, therefore raga dwesha is pāpam. Raga dwesha makes mind extroverted. This bundle of raga dwesha should be neutralized. May you repeatedly see the following three defects of worldly accomplishments, worldly pleasures:

1. It is mixed with pain, pain in acquisition, maintenance and departure.
2. It will never give satisfaction, the more I have, the more I want.
3. They make a person a slave to them, we will get addicted to them.

Through the refined mind, one can discern the defects and become viveka or mature. Eventually kama karma will become less and less. It is not enough that we just understand this, we should also remember this all the time.

If all material benefits are defective, is there a defect free ānanda? The answer is atma; Atmānanda, is free from all the three defects. Turn the direction from material pleasures to spiritual fulfilment.

Class 3

Sankarachariyar is dealing with the second stage of life; the

first stage of life is learning about the way of life I should be leading. Having learnt that in the first stage of brahmachariya āśrama, one has to go to the next stage of gragasthasrama, one should implement the svadharma learnt from sashtra. In the case of brahma jñānam, jñānam itself gives moksha. In this case knowledge itself is an end itself. In the case of dharma jñānam, knowledge itself is not an end itself, but it must be followed by implementation and application. The key in gragasthasrama is svadharma anustashanam. Svadharma in modern times is panca mahā yagya. Vedas do not clearly tell what the benefit of svadharma is. Svadharma is presented for material benefits by the Vedas; however, Veda's intended benefit is we should develop spirituality and our crave for materialism should subside. Vedanta is not against using material benefits but does not want us to lean on material benefits. Turning away from anithyam and turning towards nithyam is the aim of Vedas. Turning away from anatma and turning towards atma is the aim of the Vedas. A person is not mature enough to know the value of moksha and therefore Vedas presented svadharma as a way to prosper. Even though the explicit benefit is material prosperity, the intended benefit is spiritual inclination. The svadharma will make the mind see the limitation of material accomplishment; we do not hate material benefits, but we refuse to lean up on them. There is only one secure thing in the world; all others are insecure and not worth leaning on.

Viveka, vairāgyam and mumukṣutvaṃ are all implied in the first verse. Once these three qualifications are acquired, one has successfully gone through the second stage of gragasthasrama. After this, one should get out gragasthasrama and get to vanaprastha ashram. This means, karma should be reduced and replaced by more time devoted to upāsanā or meditation. In gragasthasrama, because of too many duties, mind has become highly extroverted. In gragasthasrama, karma is more and upāsanā is less. In vanaprastha āśrama, upāsanā is more and

karma is less. For current times, one can stay in home but increase the time spent on upāsana and reduce time spent on worldly activities.

## Verse 2

In vanaprastha āśrama, one must be obsessed with spiritual pursuit; one must have satsanga or association with spiritual seekers or wisemen as much as possible. Materialistic arguments are so powerful, one can easily fall prey to them. Until you are firmly established, be selective with your friends, books etc. The primary function in vanaprastha is bhakti or upāsana or meditation of the lord or the Virāṭ svarūpa. Upasana and yoga shastra go together. Patanjali's aṣṭāṅga yoga is good for integrating personality in life:

- Yama and niyama; these two will help in integration our way life.
- Asana will integrate my annamya kosa and discipline my physical body.
- Pranayama will integrate with pranayama kosa or breathing discipline.
- Prathyagra integration of sense organs.
- Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi: these three will help integration of mind.

In the vedanta sasthanam, instead of focusing on various chakras of body, we focus on brahman. By the practice of upāsana and yoga one should develop one more faculty that is samadhi shadka sampatti or six-fold inner wealth:

1. Samaha or thought discipline; reducing thoughts occurring without my knowledge; not stopping the thought but the capacity to channelize the thought in the direction we want. All the alues will come under this concept. Daivi sampat and asuri sampat will come under this.

2. Dhamaha or sense discipline; Sense organs functioning as I want and not as it wants. Real mastery is not over other people, but mastery over sense organs.
3. Upamaḥ or withdrawn mind; mind withdrawn from unwanted field should not run again towards to the unwanted field. Withdrawing mind is samaha and restraining the mind is upamaḥ.
4. Titikṣā or inner strength to face difficult times; forbearance; there are certain inevitable opposite like heat and cold, arrival and departure; jenma and marana; sukam and duḥkam; capacity to withstand these is titikṣā.
5. Shradha or faith in the scriptures and the teacher. It is not blind faith; if there is doubt, then I inquire until I am satisfied.
6. Samādhānam or concentration; non wavering mind; in yoga sasthra it is called samadhi.

May all karma and upāsanā be totally given up because they have served their purpose. Karma and upāsanās are like womb; they are relevant only until Sadhana Catuṣṭaya Saṃpatti ripening. Once Sadhana Catuṣṭaya Saṃpatti is completely assimilated karmas and upāsanās should be renounced. This is also the formal process of entering into sanyasa āśrama. If the person does not have inner attachment, even the house can be sanyasa āśrama. The sign of detachment is that I am prepared to lose anything around me. If karma and upāsanās can't be performed then take to Jñāna yoga, corresponding to Jñāna kanda. Take up Sravanam, Mananam and nidhithyasanam.

#### Class 4

Sankarachariyar talked about the first three stages, karma yoga and upāsanā which are to be practiced in the first three āśramas. Once the person has successfully gone through the first three stages, then he is ready for Jñāna yoga which is generally pursued in sanyasa āśrama. Whether a person

physically renounces or not is not the question. A mind with a renunciation is ready for final sadhana which is Jñāna yoga.

First Sankarachariyar wants to emphasize that Jñānam must be pursued under the guidance of a guru alone. Knowledge without a guru will give information but not transformation. To learn anything, we go to a teacher. We do accept exceptions to any rule and if there is anyone who becomes a Jñāni without a guru, that is an exception and not the rule. Even if one gets knowledge without a teacher, we can accomplish the same thing faster with a teacher. Two meanings of this verse:

1. May you approach a brahma Jñāni.
2. May you approach a competent Jñāni. We should approach a Jñāni who has been a disciple of a guru, who has not studied independently. This guru knows the traditional methods of teaching and communication.

If we are approaching a vidwan and gain knowledge, that person must be alive. Other mahatmas can be kept for inspiration and worship; for learning we require a live teacher.

Why should we worship a teacher, a human being? First, it helps weaken our ego. Secondly, the scriptures are not going to speak to us directly. Upanishads themselves do not speak to us and we get the upaniṣad teachings from the guru. For the students, the guru is sasthram. We must develop as much faith in the guru as much faith he has with the sasthram. Physical actions like puja, namaskara etc. create an inner attitude of divinity.

Once the rapport has been created and the channels have been opened, we may ask for brahma knowledge. In this context, Brahman should be understood as brahma jñānam. Jñāna yoga consists of a threefold process of sravanam, mananam and nidhithyasanam.

Systematic, consistent study for a length of time is sravanam. Systematic Study consists of:

1. Analysis of jivatma; anvaya vrithireka method, to find out the essential nature. Whatever feature is there all the time that is my essential nature and permanent nature. Whatever feature is incidental feature is temporary. Example is hot water; heat is not the essential nature of water; but fire has heat as the essential nature. So, heat is the incidental nature of water and essential nature of fire. Based on this, chit or awareness is the only essential nature of jivatma.
2. Analysis of paramatma; macrocosm by the method of adhyaropa apavara; through this analysis we come to the essential nature of totality, which is sat or pure existence. The permanent and changeless nature of creation. Everything else is subject to change.
3. Then come to the mahā vakya tat tvam asi; pure existence and pure consciousness are one and same.

### Verse 3

Here Sankarachariyar briefly mentions sravanam, mananam and nidhithyasanam. The upaniṣad vakyam does not convey the teaching explicitly or directly. Mimamsa sasthanam is the key to fully unlocking the meaning of vedanta. Without mīmāṃsā, vedas will appear abstract and contradictory.

In Kaivalya Upanishad, in one verse the Upanishad says from Brahman the panca buddha, jnaendrya, karmendria are all born. (Around 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> verse). Since all these are born from Brahman, Brahman is nirgunam and therefore, they are not there. These two statements are contradictory.

In Taittiriya Upanishad, the mantra says Satyaṁ, jñānam and ānandam. In the beginning it said Brahman is all pervading but now it says it entered everything. These two are

contradictory. In mīmāṃsā method, when a sentence is not clear, you do not go deep into the statement. You arrive at the proper meaning by considering all other statements made by the Upanishads. Then we will find the beautiful meaning conveyed by the statement. Six factors of mīmāṃsā (shad lingam) are used to tie together all the Upanishad statements and arrive at the true meaning. This is sravanam and by this you arrive at the conclusion that essence of jivatma is chit, essence of paramatma is sat. And paramatma and jivatma are one and the same. Aham Brahma Asmi.

Note regarding mīmāṃsā:

Swamiji referred to six factors or Shadanga are:

1. Shabda (Word): Shabda refers to the words of the Vedic text, which are considered to be the ultimate authority. Mimamsa emphasizes the importance of analyzing and understanding the precise meaning of each word in the text.
2. Artha (Meaning): Artha refers to the meaning of the words in the Vedic text. Mimamsa believes that the true meaning of the text can only be understood by analyzing the words and their meanings in great detail.
3. Prayojana (Purpose): Prayojana refers to the purpose or goal of the Vedic text. Mimamsa emphasizes the importance of understanding the context and purpose of each text in order to properly interpret it.
4. Dosha (Fault): Dosha refers to any faults or contradictions in the Vedic text. Mimamsa believes that these faults must be identified and resolved in order to properly understand the text.
5. Samkhya (Inference): Samkhya refers to the process of inference or logical deduction. Mimamsa uses inference to draw conclusions and establish the meaning of the text.
6. Upapatti (Example): Upapatti refers to the use of

examples to clarify the meaning of the text. Mimamsa believes that examples can help to illustrate complex ideas and make them easier to understand.

## Class 5

Shankaracharya is discussing final stages of Jñāna yoga – sravanam, mananam, and nidhithyasanam. Sravanam is nothing but systematic analysis of upaniṣadic statement. It is called vedanta vichara, vedanta mīmāṃsā etc. Through systematic analysis we discover consciousness is the essence of individuals, and existence is the essence of the world; consciousness and existence are one and the same. This we call sat chit atma. Consciousness is called sat and existence is called chit. This alone we call jivatma paramatma aikyam. This is sravanam.

Mananam is logically refuting all other systems which are contrary to vedantic teaching. Any knowledge involves two parts; one is seeing the rightness of the right part; second is seeing the wrongness of the wrong part. It is not enough to see the right alone; we also need to see the wrongness of wrong idea; if we don't, one day the wrong idea may appear right. Knowledge is knowledge only when it can't be shaken by anybody. I should know truth as truth and non-truth as non-truth. For opinions we can have variety, but for knowledge we can't have variety. Rope is rope and it is not a snake.

Vedanta makes statement regarding three fundamental things: Jiva, jagat and Īśvara. First it says jiva is infinite and ānanda swaroopam. This we are not able to accept. Then it makes the statement about the world that the world is unreal. I am solidly facing the world all the time. How can I dismiss this wonderful solid universe? The third statement says that you are not different than the lord. This, I can't accept at all. When we are in such despair, other systems will be easily acceptable. Other systems say jivatma is different

than paramatma. Paramatma created the universe and jivatma. All other systems are very appealing to intellect. They all claim that they are rational systems based on logic and reasoning. Advaitam is based on sruthi, the vedas and use tarka or logic as a subservient tool. That is why we say shraddha in sruthi is important and required. A rational person will not accept faith. Their order is reason and scripture. Our order is scripture and reason. Mananam is where every other system is clearly negated. That can be done only with logic. Acharyas of advaitam have logically pointed out the logical contradictions in other systems.

Shankaracharya establishes that logic can't be used in the discovery of reality because logic has intrinsic limitations. Logic and modern science etc. are deficient in discovering reality. Sruthi itself has said this limitation. This logical repudiation of other systems and seeing innate deficiency of logic alone increase our faith in vedanta.

If logic is deficient and can't reveal the truth, does it mean logic should be totally given up? Sankarachariyar says logic does not need to be given up totally but used as a tool to extract the meaning of sashtra. Don't use logic to invent a philosophy but use it to bring out the teaching of sashtra. This is called sruthi madha tarkakas. For all our questions and doubts, vedas does not give explicit answer. But at the same time, answers are hidden in vedas. We have to bring out the answer to remove my particular doubt. The method used for this is logic. Logic will be helpful in bringing out implicit answers. Many systems of philosophies were not there at Sankarachariyar time, so he did not repudiate those systems. Later acharyas repudiate those systems based on vedas, using Shankaracharya's method. Answering all my doubts is mananam. The benefit of mananam is conviction in vedantic teachings. I can say "Aham Brahma Asmi" without any doubt. That is a knowledge with conviction.

The final stage of sadhana is nidhithyasanam. Nidhithyasanam

is a process by which the knowledge has to be converted into emotional, mental and psychological strength. Our original disease is ignorance, which is at the intellect, but the symptoms are expressed at mental level in the form of kama, raga, dvesha, lōbha etc. All the samsara is at emotional level, but the root cause is at the intellect level. Initially, the solution is at the intellectual level. But it is not enough. I am convinced I am brahma asmi, but the symptoms of raga dwesha etc. must be totally rooted out. If not, the knowledge is as good as no knowledge and being ignorant. A vedanta does not help me in gaining calm, compassionate, considerate, generous, charitable mind – for that vedanta is utterly useless. This requires assimilation of teaching. The knowledge coming at the emotional level as emotional strength, duty and refinement. This is called jivan mukthi. Knowledge is at the intellectual level, but the benefit is at emotional level. Assimilating vedanta requires effort and requires removing each weakness. Assimilating food is a natural process but assimilating vedanta is a lifelong painful process. It is a lifelong process of consciously addressing and removing every emotional weakness. The weakness is different for each person. For one it may be a superiority complex and another it may be inferiority complex. Each of them should be removed. This is nidhithyasanam and it requires time and constant alertness to discover the weakness. For this introspect is required to gain auto suggestions when the weakness appear on day to day life.

We should look at what I am (Brahman) and what I am not (śarīra thrayâṃ). I should be able to see my own body as one of the objects of the world. We should have the same objective attitude towards our body as well as the bodies of the ones we love. Then the knowledge will be steady and firm. Cultivate I am brahman notion and negate I am body notion. This is nidhithyasanam and it requires lifelong commitment.

Sankarachariyar gives general instructions on how to live and they are conducive to nidhithyasanam. These instructions assume a person is at the stage of sanyasi. We will modify it to fit everyone:

1. Make sure you don't become arrogant because of this knowledge. Constantly remove the arrogance. Always be humble.
2. Never argue with wise people.

## Class 6

Having discussed sravanam and mananam part of Jñāna yoga, Sankarachariyar is discussing nidhithyasanam which is meant to convert the knowledge into emotional strength. This is meant for Jñāna nishta. Nidhithyasanam is of two types:

1. Withdrawing from all vyākara and dwelling up on vedic teaching. This is sitting nidhithyasanam, withdrawing from all transactions.
2. Always being alert in my day-to-day transactions. Being alert in my response to various situations, in the language I use in my transactions. Making sure that all my transactions are in keeping with vedantic teaching and not contrary to vedantic teaching. This alert life itself is a nidhithyasanam and is as important as the sitting nidhithyasanam. This is not confined to a particular time; it is through all my waking time.

When a person takes to nidhithyasanam, Sankarachariyar wants that person to note certain points. These are all values to be followed even before coming to Jñānam and values to be followed for before gaining Jñānam. First, I follow them for jñānam and thereafter I follow them for nishta.

1. Be humble; amanithyam; make sure you don't become

arrogant because of this knowledge. Constantly remove the arrogance.

2. Never argue with anyone, especially wise people. Because arguments can boost the ego. Also, we lose the opportunity to learn from wise people. Here we should make the distinction between vadhaha and samvadhaha (student clarifying doubts with a teacher). How do we distinguish between the two? There are many differences between vadha (arguing) and samvadha (questioning):

1. When I argue with someone I look up on that person as equal or inferior to me. Whereas in samvadha, aspects't look up on my teacher as superior to me, in knowledge, in maturity and in all aspect. There is a basic difference in attitude. This attitude is expressed by the very language and tone I use.

1. Often when I enter into an argument, I have made a conclusion on the topic. Through argument I want to either establish my conclusion or refute the other person's conclusion. Whereas in a student's approach, the student has never made a conclusion. His aim is not to establish his conclusion or refute teacher's conclusion; he just wants to learn. In one the mind is closed because the conclusion is already made, in the other the mind is open because conclusion is not made.

1. In argument, I try to talk more and more, and I don't allow the other person to talk at all. Even if the other person talks, I don't listen, and I interfere before he has concluded. Whereas the student talks the minimum; he wants to put his idea to minimum and he wants the teacher to talk more and more; when the teacher talks, he listens attentively and does not interfere.

1. In argument, since I have not listened to the other person, I have nothing to reflect upon. Whereas I am listening to the teacher, I work on

what I listened to.

1. There is a possibility that even after elaborate explanation, I am not convinced of teacher's conclusion. Politely I ask once more, and teacher explains once more and I am still not convinced. I put off further questioning and think over the answers given. After giving enough time, I can raise the question. Whereas in argument, repeatedly arguing the same thing.
1. After samvadha, there is no disturbance or bitterness in the mind, whereas after argument there is always bitterness and disturbance in the mind.

## Verse 6

Food is required for all states. Sankarachariyar discusses food for sanyasi, because grihastha gets food at home. He discusses food as though it is a disease. Hunger is also some kind of disease because you are not at ease:

1. For disease there is a remedy in the form of medicine; for hunger there is a remedy in the form of food.
2. When you take medicine, the aim is only to cure the disease. It is taken only when there is disease and only as much is required to remove the disease. In the same way, you must take food, only when there is hunger.
3. Since I am taking the medicine only to remove the disease, I am not particular about the taste of the medicine. Likewise, the likes and dislikes of food should not be important.

So, you should treat the disease of hunger regularly. But you should not ask for delicious food, because it identifies with

your tongue and results in you identifying with the sthūla śarīram. Put up with the opposite experiences like heat and cold which are dependent up on desa, kala and prarabtha. These are the instructions for eating tongue. Now he gives instructions for talking tongue:

1. Do not utter single word when it is not necessary to talk. Every word is spoken only after a well processed, well thought out and well monitored. All spiritual sādhana-s begin with tongue – both the eating and the talking tongue.
2. Even if you want to say something, make sure the other person has respect for your words and whether he wants your advice. Ensure that the other person values your advice. Example: Krishna advised Arjuna only after Arjuna requires it, Krishna starts Bhagavat Gita only in second chapter.
3. Don't join any group and have only good words for everyone. Everyone has good and bad parts, and I only talk about the good words for everyone, otherwise I observe silence.
4. Some people may be good to you and another set of people may be cruel to you. But don't develop raga because they are nice to and don't develop dwesha because they are not nice to you. Don't let their behavior generate raga or dwesha. Let their behavior be forgotten right then there. If they ill treat you, forgive them and forget. If they praise you, thank them, thank the lord and forget.

## Verse 5

In previous verses Shankaracharya give supportive sādhana-s for nidhithyasanam. The primary sadhana is dwelling up on the teaching. If we follow these supportive sādhana-s, mind will remain tranquil and ready for primary sadhana. Sit in a quiet

place, fix your mind up on the supreme Brahman. See that Brahman none other than poorna atma, the primary illuminator.

## Class 7

Shankaracharya is discussing the last stage of Jñāna yoga namely, Nidhithyasanam. Nidhithyasanam is of two types:

- One is withdrawing all transactions and dwelling up on the teachings of Upanishads, especially those aspects which are very relevant to me.
- The second type of nidhithyasanam is constantly alert through all my transactions so that my responses and reactions are not contrary to vedantic teaching.

The Fourth mantra gives instructions for nidhithyasanam; these instructions promote nidhithyasanam. In the fifth mantra, Sankarachariyar is talking about nidhithyasanam itself. Seated in a secular place, mind fixed up on brahman or atma, very clearly see the fact that atma is ever poorna; I don't lack anything in life; I am self-sufficient. However, as long as the anatma world is there, atma can't be poorna. As long as I see anatma as different from me, I the atma will be limited. Sankarachariyar says that may you negate anatma (the world) in the vision of atma. How is it possible? By seeing atma as karanam, sathyam and seeing anatma as karyam mithya. Anatma is taken as solid reality until I discover atma; in the discovery of atma, anatma is reduced to nama roopa. This world is negated with the vision of atma. Once a person has pursued nidhithyasanam for sufficient amount of time, jñāna nishta comes. Once jñāna nishta has come, this vision is spontaneous. No effort or will is required. This is called jivan mukthi. Once this spontaneous has come, even nidhithyasanam is not required. Until this spontaneous is achieved, nidhithyasanam is required.

Lead a life of jīvanmukta and at the time of death become

videha muktha. But to understand jivan mutha and videha muktha, Sankarachariyar introduces the threefold karma: Sanjitha karma, agami karma and prarabtha karma.

Principles constitute the laws of karma:

1. Every action has two types of results known as dhrishtam (visible result) and adhristham (invisible result).
2. The invisible result is of two types: punyam and pāpam.
3. Which action produces punyam and which action produces pāpam is determined by sasthram. Whatever actions commanded by sasthram produce punyam and whatever action prohibited by sasthram produce pāpam.
4. The invisible punyam and pāpam will later give pleasurable and painful experiences.
5. The gap or the duration required for punyam to produce pleasure is unpredictable by us. The punyam's incubation period is inherent in punyam itself. Similarly, the incubation period of pāpam is also not predictable by us. This is like different seeds sprouting after different duration times.
6. Since the time taken can't be predicted by us, some of the punya pāpam may not fructify in this jenma because of which an individual dies with punya pava balance.
7. To experience the balance punya pvam one requires punar jenma. In the next jenma, even though we exhaust some of the pava punya, we accumulate more punya pāpam. In next jenma more punya pāpam. Thus, every jiva has huge stock of pava paunya accumulated in the past countless jenma.

All the accumulated punya pāpam are called sanjitha karma. Out of this sanjitha karma, only a portion is ready for fruitification. That portion is called prarbtha punya pāpam, which alone is responsible for present birth, condition of present body, duration of life etc. When we are exhausting the

prarbthamm in the current jenma, whatever fresh punya pāpam we acquire is called agami. In the agami also, some portions may fructify in this jenma itself. Some of the agami karma do not fructify in this jenma and they will join the sanjitha karma at the time of death. This sanjitha karma will result in the next jenma. This the cycle of an ignorant man.

This law of karma is not proven by science. Laws of karma are accepted by us based on sashtra alone. The benefit of accepting this law of karma is:

1. The law of karma alone explains the disparity in the world, disparity among human beings. The law of karma explains the difference in human beings, animals etc.
2. The law of karma helps in accepting some of the painful experiences for which we don't see any immediate reason. The effect is visible, but the cause is not visible; but it is in the form of prarabtha pāpam; therefore, we don't see the injustice in my suffering. I accept that I am suffering because of my past pāpam. The law of karma is a great shock absorber.
3. If I accept the law of karma, I can take charge of my future. Because I know I am responsible for my current condition because of my past action. I alone is responsible for future conditions because of my current action. My future is not determined by fate, chance, or God, but it is determined by me. The present me is the product of the past me and future me is the product of current me. Therefore, I can take charge of the future. If the law of karma is not accepted, then everything is determined by chance, then the future is also determined by chance. Then why should I work for a better future?
4. We can introduce moral order in society only with the help of the law of karma. Because one of the questions is why are many corrupt people thriving, while moral, conscientious and righteous people suffer. The

conclusion may be that if you have to thrive, you will have to be corrupt. If you are good, then you will suffer. We can break this disparity of equation only with the law of karma. The corrupt person is thriving not because of corruption, but corruption will result in pāpam; we don't know when it will fructify. If a noble person suffers, it is not because of nobility, but because of prarabtha papam.

In the case of jñāni, by the strength of the knowledge, he dissolves sanjitha karma like a dreamer resolving all the karma by waking up. May you not be affected by the agami karma because of your lack of ego. Just like the lotus leaf is not affected by the water. Sanjitha is burnt and insulated from agami. Karma will produce pāpam at vyāvahārika level. The prarabtha is exhausted in this jenma itself. There will be suga dhukka experiences, but he will not claim them to be his. In front of the atma awareness, all this will appear insignificant. Ahamkara suffering is huge when you see it as yours, but when you see it from atma, it will appear insignificant. Jñāni goes through the same problem as everyone else, but because of his higher level, they appear insignificant.

After the prarabtha has been exhausted, may you remain eternally as pram brahman. What has gone is ahamkara, but jñāni or atma is the primary illuminator, Brahman. After the death of jñāni, the primary illuminator, the atma continues. The difference is when the pot was around, the space was given the name pot space. When the pot is broken, only the name pot space is gone, but the space is still there. Similarly, when the body is alive, there is a name; when the body is gone, the name is gone but the atma continues. He remains as brahman; and this is videha mukthi.

Four stages of āśramas are:

- brahmacaryāśrama- vedādhyānam,
- gṛhasthāśrama – karmayoga,
- vānaprasthāśrama – upāsanā,
- saṁnyāsāśrama- śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsanam.

Once the person goes through all the four stages, he attains jīvanmukti and videhamukti. Whether a person physically goes through these stages or not, everyone has to mentally go through. If I don't become vānaprastha, I have to go through upāsanā. Even if I don't take to saṁnyāsa I have to go through śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsanam. Everyone has to go through the four stages, physically or mentally and attain jīvanmuktiḥ and videhamuktiḥ. This is sādhanapañcakam.

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# Bhaja Govindam

## Class 1 Introduction

The faculty of choice, or free will, is one of the defining features of human beings. Animals do not have any goals in life. They eat, reproduce, live for a few years, and die. However, many human beings question free will and argue that we do not truly have free will, and that we are governed by destiny alone. Even if that is one's view, we can still divide human beings into those who accept free will and exercise it, and those who do not accept it. According to the scriptures, those who do not accept free will are not very different from animals. The scriptures primarily address human beings who accept free will.

Once we accept free will, we recognize that we have many goals to achieve and we work toward fulfilling those goals. In the Katha Upaniṣad, two mantras address this topic. The entire

Bhaja Govindam text is based on these two mantras. All human goals can be classified into two varieties:

- The limitless, eternal, immortal, and complete goal. This can only be one, because only one infinite is possible. One name for this infinite goal is Bhagavān/Īśvara/Brahman/Mokṣa. In the Katha Upaniṣad, this is called śreyas. All these terms are used synonymously.

- Finite goals. All other goals are finite: money, status, name, fame, political victory, relationships, position, possessions, etc. All of these are limited by time and space. They are called dharma, artha, and kāma. In the Katha Upaniṣad, these are called preyas.

For convenience, I will call the finite “the world,” and the infinite “God.” The scriptures point out that those who choose mokṣa as the ultimate goal are intelligent, and they are called vivekī. Those who do not choose mokṣa as the goal are called avivekī. The scriptures seek to educate people and transform avivekīs into vivekīs. Whoever chooses mokṣa as the ultimate goal is called a mumukṣu.

Three sets of people: religious, spiritual, and atheistic

We should differentiate spiritual people from religious people. Both accept God. A spiritual person accepts God and chooses Him as the destination. A religious person accepts God, but does not accept God as the destination; instead, God becomes a means to an end. A third set of people does not accept God either as a means or as a goal; that is the atheistic group. The scriptures say that non-spiritual people remain in saṃsāra. This is described by Śaṅkarācārya in Bhaja Govindam.

This work consists of 30 verses, discussing various problems faced by human beings and how we make wrong choices. The aim is to change the direction of our life—converting an atheist and a merely religious person into a mumukṣu. Vedantic

scriptures are relevant only for a mumukṣu.

The original name of Bhaja Govindam is Moha Mudgara. Moha means delusion. The majority of human beings are governed by moha-like moths attracted to the brightness of fire, and fish attracted to bait at the end of a hook. Human beings, despite intelligence, do not realize that a finite and perishable thing cannot give lasting security. Our intelligence is covered by delusion. The simple message of Bhaja Govindam is: choose the infinite and discover lasting happiness.

## Class 2

Bhaja Govindam is a work called Moha Mudgara, meant to remove our delusion with regard to the means and ends of life. A deluded person makes the mistake of treating the finite objects of the world as goals, which creates problems because finite objects cannot give lasting peace, happiness, and security. Only the infinite can give that. The first correction is with regard to the goal: instead of treating the world as the goal, treat the infinite as the goal. The infinite is referred to by different names: śreyas, mokṣa, Brahman, and Īśvara. Choose mokṣa or Bhagavān as your goal. Whoever has done so is a mumukṣu, a spiritual seeker.

Are we to reject the world totally? No. Instead of seeing finite things as the destination, use the world as a means to attain the end. Use every object to support your spiritual journey. Use the finite world as a means and the infinite God as the end. Currently, we often use the infinite God to obtain finite worldly ends. This is a reversal. Correcting this reversal is the conversion of a materialistic person into a spiritual person. This is the project of Bhaja Govindam.

Even after becoming a mumukṣu, we should further refine ourselves; then the Vedantic message becomes clearer. A mumukṣu can be of three types: manda mumukṣu, madhyama mumukṣu, and tīvra mumukṣu. How do we differentiate these

three?

- A manda mumukṣu accepts God as the goal, but it is the last item on the list of desires. Such a person has not discerned the full value of mokṣa. Perhaps after several years, decades, or even janmas, mokṣa becomes the top priority.
- When mokṣa becomes the top priority, one becomes a madhyama mumukṣu. At this stage, mokṣa “eats up” other desires. The mokṣa-icchā becomes stronger and can become an obsession. Eventually, there is only one priority: mokṣa.
- When a person has very high intensity, that person becomes a tīvra mumukṣu.

All three will benefit from Vedanta, but the benefit depends on the level of intensity.

Śaṅkarācārya got the inspiration to write this work after meeting a very old person in Kāśī. This person was studying Sanskrit grammar, including original verbal roots. Instead of working for spirituality, he was absorbed only in grammar. When Śaṅkarācārya met him, the man was repeating the rules from his book. “Kṛ” is the verbal root (dhātu) from which many forms are derived. There are nine forms—one each for singular, dual, and plural, and first person, second person, and third person. Each of these forms also changes based on tense: past, present, and future.

Using that person as a starting point, Śaṅkarācārya addressed all humanity and composed this text.

Śaṅkarācārya addresses the Kāśī paṇḍit as mūḍha-mateḥ—one who is confused about the purpose of life. Mūḍha-mati means a deluded person. Choose Lord Govinda as the ultimate goal of life, because He can be a permanent support, like an anchor. There is nothing in this world that is stationary; everything is affected by time. If you want to live meaningfully in this world, you must hold on to something that does not move. That

stable anchor is Govinda, the Lord.

One meaning of the word go is cow. Go also means earth, and go also means the sense organs. In short, Govinda indicates Paramātmā. First seek and understand your relationship with Paramātmā. All other relationships will come and go, but the relationship with the Lord–Govinda–alone is permanent. Establish that relationship first.

Every object in creation is constantly attacked by kāla (time), personified as Yama Dharma Rāja. When Yama draws near, only the Lord can give security. The conqueror of time is the Lord alone. If you want to hold on to the Lord at that time, you must start practicing now. “O Lord, come into my mind along with Pārvatī and occupy my mind.” At the time of death, other than the Lord, nothing else can rescue us.

### Class 3

Any study of material disciplines—like grammar, language, and logic—is called aparā vidyā. Knowledge that speaks about mokṣa, or liberating wisdom, is called parā vidyā. Aparā vidyā is relevant as a stepping-stone to parā vidyā. Material knowledge is the means, and spiritual knowledge is the end. One can never come to parā vidyā without the help of aparā vidyā; without language, a guru cannot teach a śiṣya. At the same time, aparā vidyā remains incomplete without leading us to parā vidyā. Both are complementary—as means and end. When I do not understand this relationship, I am mūḍha-mati.

### Verse 2

Another field in which there is widespread delusion is money or wealth. There are two extremes:

1. Some people claim money is everything, giving excessive importance to money.
2. Some people say money is dangerous and one should not touch

money at all.

One is overestimation; the other is underestimation. Śāstra says we should avoid both extremes and have clarity regarding the role of wealth.

Everything in creation is a manifestation of the Lord. The entire creation may be seen as involving three factors, and all three are important for human life:

1. Knowledge, revered as Sarasvatī. We respect all knowledge, both parā and aparā.
2. Power or physical health, revered as Durgā Devī. We need strength to function and move.
3. Wealth. Money alone gets converted into food, shelter, and infrastructure.

All three are important and complementary. All three must be revered and respected.

Money has a significant role to play, but we must know its role—and also what money cannot give.

The first misconception is that money is the source of human happiness. Money can provide physical comfort, which is external and connected to the body. Happiness has nothing to do with physicality; happiness is an inner condition of the mind. There is no necessary cause–effect relationship between money and happiness. If there were, all rich people would be happy and all poor people would be unhappy. But we see many rich people who are not happy, and some even take their own lives. We also see many people with little money living happy lives.

The second misconception is that money is the source of security. This can be negated with similar reasoning. Money itself often becomes a cause of fear and insecurity, because we add the “security of money” to our list of worries.

Security is an inner sense and has nothing to do with money by itself.

Money and happiness have no guaranteed link. Money and security have no guaranteed link. Money and contentment have no guaranteed link. You cannot obtain happiness, security, and contentment merely through money.

According to śāstra, the primary purpose of money is to do noble work and to maintain family infrastructure. Dhārmic karma is possible only with money. Dharma alone will lead to security, happiness, and contentment. Therefore, give up greed for accumulating more and more money in the hope of gaining greater security, happiness, and contentment. Develop an attitude of contentment. Learn to be happy with whatever you can legitimately earn. The amount is not important; learn to be content with that. Happiness is not what I possess; it is a habit I cultivate.

#### Class 4

Grammar represents aparā vidyā, or worldly education. We often treat it as an end in itself, but it should lead to spiritual education. The same principle applies to money as well. Money should lead to noble actions and purification of the mind. Money cannot directly lead to peace and happiness.

### Verse 3

Now the topic is kāma, or desire. Desires are of two types:

1. Acquired desire (āgantuka kāma): This varies from individual to individual; it is not universal. It depends on time, space, and personality. One may like coffee and another tea. These desires can be acquired over time and also dropped over time.

2. Natural desire (svābhāvika kāma), or instinctive desire: desire for security, health, comfort, etc. These are

universal. Mutual attraction between male and female in any species falls under this.

In Verse 3, Śaṅkarācārya deals with mutual male/female attraction. To handle this, we should have clarity and avoid delusion. Because this is a natural desire, we do not have a choice regarding its existence, and we are not responsible for its existence; therefore we should not feel guilty about its presence. At the same time, we do have a choice regarding activating and nourishing this attraction.

It is perfectly acceptable to choose not to activate or promote this desire; that is called a brahmacarya vrata. It is not compulsory for everyone to take this vow. Otherwise, the desire should be activated and expressed deliberately and properly. Śāstra prescribes the gṛhasthāśrama for this purpose. If handled improperly, it becomes moha, an obstruction to spiritual progress.

The second method of handling this desire is to recognize that the physical body is made of flesh, bones, etc.—a gross personality subject to aging and destruction. Any pleasure derived through the physical body is limited. Human beings have the capacity to discover a superior, more lasting joy—spiritual joy. Through the discovery of this nitya (lasting) ānanda, kāma becomes irrelevant or effectively nonexistent—like stars that are present but not visible during daytime. This possibility belongs uniquely to human beings; animals do not have it. Humans alone can transcend this svābhāvika desire by discovering the higher ānanda. Choose the ānanda that comes from spirituality as nitya ānanda.

Therefore, use the discrimination method first and supplement it with the second method.

## **Verse 5**

We have a limited time period to accomplish the ultimate goal; therefore, do not postpone this pursuit.

- About 50% of life is spent in sleep or a sleepy condition. In a 100-year life, this is 50 years.
- Of the remaining 50 years, about 25 years are lost because one is either too young or too old.
- That leaves 25 years. Even during that time, we may be sick, we may lose someone or something, or we may be compelled to work and earn—so we do not find time for spirituality.

Therefore, do not postpone spiritual pursuit; the best time is the present.

Vyādhi refers to a physical ailment affecting the sthūla śarīra, and mental hurt also obstructs the pursuit. When conditions are reasonably supportive, pursue spirituality.

## Class 5

The main teaching so far is that whatever we have in our lives is only a temporary gift. The Lord has the right to take it away from us. Since it is a temporary gift, the Lord does not expect us to claim ownership as “mine.” We should use these gifts for spiritual growth. If we do so successfully, whenever the Lord comes to take them away, we will be comfortable returning them. If this is not clear, it is delusion. Viveka, or wisdom, is remembering this constantly. We should use this wisdom to gain mokṣa. This is the essence of Bhaja Govindam.

## Verse 5

In this verse, Śaṅkarācārya refers to the love we receive from people. Any love we receive in the world is conditional love. Unconditional love is not available in the world, except from Bhagavān and a jñānī. In a family, if a person contributes to the well-being of the family, that person enjoys a certain status. Suppose that person ceases to be a contributor; then the quality of love undergoes subtle change. If the person becomes a burden, the quality of love can change further. Love

varies from contributor to non-contributor to liability. There is no absolute love coming from anybody. If I expect unconditional love, or if I mistake conditional love for unconditional love, that is moha. I am expecting something from the world that it is not capable of giving.

## **Verse 6**

These are bitter truths, and many people get disturbed by reading Bhaja Govindam. People, money, and anything I hold on to are temporary.

The next delusion is with regard to our own physical body. My body is valuable, but do not overestimate it or become overly attached to it. Use the body to obtain knowledge and wisdom. Convert the body into a disposable śarīra. When prāṇa departs, the body is reduced to a corpse; even the closest person is afraid to keep the body at home for long.

## **Verse 7 (not in all books)**

This verse deals with delusion regarding money. We think money is the cause of happiness. If money and happiness always occur together, then one might infer a cause-effect relationship. But money is not only a potential source of comfort; it is also a source of distress and pain. In a rich family, discussions begin about assets, wills, inheritance, and so on. Money can create havoc. Do not overestimate its value. Money should be used for noble work—for citta-śuddhi, jñānam, etc.

## **Verse 7**

When we were babies, we were not interested in bhakti, Bhagavān, temples, etc. We did not know the value of prayer. When a person becomes a youth, there is a natural attraction to the other sex. Then there is little time to pursue what is truly worthwhile.

One of the biggest delusions is that spiritual pursuits can be postponed to the later part of life. There are two problems with this attitude:

1. We do not know how long we will live. Therefore, postponement is a delusion and a mistake.

2. If a person is immersed in materialism, a sudden shift to spiritual pursuit is not easy. Therefore, interest and training in spirituality should begin early. The proportion of time may differ at different stages, but we should gradually transition toward greater spiritual pursuit.

## **Verse 8**

Śaṅkarācārya deals with delusion regarding family in this verse. The jīva already existed as a jīva in pūrva-janma; the mother does not “create” the jīva. The mother is responsible for the present body, which is only a temporary residence for a few years. If you separate yourself from the body, you do not have parents at all. If you consider all your janmas, you may have had millions of parents. You cannot take any one set as “the” parents absolutely.

Verses 9 and 10 are skipped for now.

## **Verse 11**

Delusion is caused by youth, wealth, and the people around us. In youth, we become arrogant. We are proud of wealth and health. Many people admire us, and that makes youth even more arrogant. Work for something that Yama cannot touch.

## **Verse 12**

Human beings tend to keep postponing spiritual study. For beginning spirituality, now is the auspicious time. Time and seasons come and go.

## Verse 9

Suppose Śaṅkarācārya's effort succeeds and you are awakened. You cannot know by yourself how the spiritual journey should be undertaken; a guru is required. Slowly you will find that you have all the qualifications required for mokṣa. When ignorance is removed, you discover the Lord within yourself; previously, ignorance covered this fact.

## Verse 10

This points out how knowledge leads to liberation or independence. Dependence on the external world is purely because of ignorance. When ignorance is removed, kāraṇa and kārya go away; saṃsāra is gone. Three examples illustrate that when the cause goes away, the effect goes away:

1. Desire forces a person to work for the fulfillment of desire. This is possible only when there is youth and strength. When youth is gone, strength is gone.
2. The reason for a reservoir is water. When the water is gone, the reservoir is meaningless; when water is gone, where is the question of a reservoir?
3. What keeps people around me? Money keeps people around me. When money is gone, I may not have people around me.

Therefore, destroy delusion, seek the Lord, approach a guru, and gain jñānam. Jñānam destroys ignorance; then you become a free person.

The first 12 verses are compared to 12 flowers. These 12 verses were composed by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, the master of all śāstras and the embodiment of compassion. The remaining verses were composed by his disciples.

## Class 7

The second portion of Bhaja Govindam consists of verses

composed by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's disciples.

Another title for Bhaja Govindam is Moha Mudgara—like a hammer destroying our delusions by repeated striking.

Human beings often become deluded by taking the means as the end. For example, money and the physical body are only means, but often we take them as the ultimate end. The physical body is a means to accomplish enlightenment, but we treat it as an end and spend our life beautifying it.

Throughout the first portion, one point emphasized is that we can discern the following truths:

1. Nothing is fully predictable; the future is unpredictable.
2. Even if some factors are predictable, because of limited power we cannot control all factors.
3. Even if we manage to keep factors favorable, we can never sustain them permanently.

Instability is the intrinsic nature of everything. Therefore, when we are surrounded by unstable things, we cannot feel stable. As long as a human being depends on an unstable setup, that person will have constant insecurity. Emotional security is not possible when we depend on an unstable setup.

What is “emotional insurance”? We think that by relying on the world, relatives, and friends we gain emotional insurance. But we do not gain lasting emotional security, because friends may die, relationships may change, and conditions may shift. Only one thing can give permanent emotional security, and that is Govinda. Even if everything—money, friends, relatives, job, etc.—goes away, I have something to fall back on, and that is Govinda. Use God for permanent security.

Each disciple of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya offers a verse to the guru. This forms the second part of Bhaja Govindam. Before each śloka, the name of the disciple appears. Some ślokas highlight

virtues to nourish; others highlight human weaknesses.

## Verse 13

In this verse, Padmapāda emphasizes the virtue of sat-saṅga (satsaṅga), association with mahatmas, and gradual disassociation from those who pursue only artha and kāma. It is not wrong to pursue artha and kāma, but they are uncontrollable, unsustainable, and unpredictable. Therefore, we should gradually shift emphasis from artha–kāma to dharma–mokṣa.

Sense objects and sense pleasures are viṣaya. Attachment to sense pleasures binds us. Padmapāda questions those who are attached to sense pleasures: “What is this inexhaustible passion? Why can we not pursue something superior?” If we hold on to sense pleasures, we will not have lasting security. We must approach sādhu-puruṣas and learn.

## Class 8

Our scriptures speak of four goals of human life: artha (wealth), kāma (sense pleasures), dharma (moral values), and mokṣa. Dharma serves two purposes: first, it provides mental peace and health; second, it prepares the mind for spiritual enlightenment. Mokṣa is spiritual liberation.

In the early stages of life, our mind is not mature enough to understand the significance of dharma and mokṣa. Therefore, we are often obsessed with artha and kāma. The Veda allows this, but expects us to understand the limitations of artha and kāma and to mature into dharma and mokṣa. Artha and kāma need not be totally eliminated, but their importance should reduce, and the importance of dharma and mokṣa should increase. This gradual change is indicated by the four āśramas. The easiest and most effective way is to maintain regular contact with a jñānī.

Saṃsāra is shifting from one perishable to another and getting

“burnt” in the process. We should cross over from the perishable to the imperishable to avoid saṃsāra. Satsaṅga constantly reminds us not to depend on perishables and teaches us independence.

## Verse 14

Sotakācārya (Toṭakācārya), a great disciple of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, composed this śloka.

Shifting priority from artha–kāma to dharma–mokṣa is not easy. We develop a strong addiction to money; the world constantly tells us money is important. Our obsession with money and sense pleasures is built up over years. Therefore, external transformation may be easier, but bringing a corresponding change in the mind is difficult. Internal transformation is difficult, but it is more important.

Renounce obsession with artha and kāma; if one has not renounced this obsession, one is not mature enough for enlightenment. External appearance can be a show for society. Toṭakācārya warns: one may cheat society, but one cannot cheat the Lord. Give importance to internal transformation.

A sannyāsī has only three supports: guru, śāstra, and Īśvara.

Jainism accepts tapas as the most important sādhanā for liberation.

## Verse 15

This verse is attributed to Hastāmalaka Ācārya. He wrote Hastāmalakīyam—twelve verses that present the essence of Vedanta. He is called Hastāmalaka because he could “see” the Ātman clearly, like one can clearly see a gooseberry (āmalaka) in the palm of the hand.

People may not always have an opportunity for satsaṅga and learning from mahatmas to understand the limitations of the world, because much of the world is obsessed with money and

pleasure. Another opportunity is life itself—especially experiences of loss, including losing objects and people we hold dear. An intelligent person learns from these losses. Every loss indirectly teaches that nothing in creation is stable. The ultimate source of love and care is the Lord, and that Lord is within ourselves.

## Class 9

Gradually change priority from an artha-kāma-pradhāna life to a dharma-pradhāna life. To accomplish this, there are many methods. Many scriptures guide us, and Bhagavān teaches us through life experiences. Despite all these methods, if we refuse to learn, we make the omnipotent Bhagavān “impotent,” as it were—because we refuse His teaching.

## Verse 16

Our śāstras speak of four āśramas, and each āśrama involves transformation of human life:

1. External: the dress code itself changes. The dress for a brahmacārī is different from that of a gṛhastha.
2. Internal: equally important.

Of these two, internal transformation is primary. External transformation is for convenience and is secondary. A sannyāsī is supposed to dedicate life to spiritual pursuit. A sannyāsī who changes clothes but not inner attitude gives the wrong message to society. This also creates tremendous strain for the sannyāsī.

The purpose of sannyāsa āśrama is to provide time for reflection and freedom from preoccupation. A sannyāsī limits preoccupations by limiting four factors:

1. Possessions (we must plan to protect and maintain them)
2. Obligations (every duty causes mental preoccupation)

3. Relations (every relationship causes mental preoccupation)

4. Transactions (every transaction causes preoccupation)

Sannyāsa āśrama reduces all four and is meant for total spiritual pursuit.

## **Verse 17**

Five basic principles of Vedantic teaching:

1. Lasting peace, security, and happiness are possible only through mokṣa.

2. Mokṣa is possible only through spiritual knowledge.

3. Spiritual knowledge is possible only through systematic education with the help of guru and śāstra.

4. Systematic spiritual education is possible only if one has a prepared mind.

5. A prepared mind is accomplished through various spiritual exercises like japa, rituals, dānam, etc.

For lasting peace and security, there is only one path—mokṣa. Many paths exist only for preparing the mind.

Prepare, learn, know, and be free.

## **Verse 18**

Spiritual pursuit requires reduction of possessions, obligations, relations, and transactions. Among these, possessions often create the most preoccupation because possessions lead to more possessions, and then they must be cleaned, repaired, maintained, etc. Try to simplify life. External clutter leads to cluttered thinking. You do not require “more and more” to be happy.

Class 10

## Verse 18

External possessions have no direct connection to mental peace and happiness. Peace is connected with what we are, not what we have. External possessions can provide physical comfort, but physical comfort does not guarantee mental peace.

## Verse 19

This verse was written by Ānandagiri, who also wrote sub-commentaries to many of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's commentaries.

Inner transformation is the primary goal of life because:

1. Inner transformation itself can give peace, security, and happiness even without external transformation.
2. External transformation cannot be fully achieved by a human being because world-forces are too many. We cannot change most of them; the external world cannot be totally changed.

For inner transformation, the śāstras prescribe the four stages of life. Initially one takes to active life; through karma one purifies the mind—this is pravṛtti mārga. After purification, one withdraws from excessive involvement; through enlightenment one gains mokṣa—this is nivṛtti mārga. A change in lifestyle is not compulsory. One need not withdraw physically to a forest; one can withdraw mentally and dedicate oneself to spirituality.

Do not give excessive importance to external circumstances. If the mind is no longer dependent on an unpredictable, uncontrollable, and unsustainable creation, and instead depends on stable Brahman, that person is secure and safe. Mental stability is possible only by holding on to something stable. Without mental stability, peace is not possible. The only stable “thing” is Brahman. You need not renounce the world, but do not depend on the world.

## Verse 20

Three basic disciplines for mokṣa:

1. Scriptural study, because you must know the teaching. You need not study all scriptures; the essence is available in the Bhagavad Gītā.
2. At least sip Gaṅgā water. This is symbolic; pilgrimage requires tapas. A pilgrimage represents forgoing comfort. Tapas is deliberate self-denial to establish mastery over the sense organs. Mokṣa is emotional freedom from all addictions.
3. At least once a day, worship the Lord. A house can be made into a temple through regular pūjā. (The spirit of the teaching is that a dhārmic home becomes protected through devotion and discipline.)

## Verse 21

Nityanātha wrote this verse.

Every human being has one common problem: saṃsāra. Saṃsāra means moving from one setup to another, from one condition to another, from one situation to another. We have been doing this since birth. Even death is not the end, because everyone is reborn. Being repeatedly born and repeatedly dying is the human condition. It is extremely difficult to get out of this cycle of time. Only one “reality” is outside this cycle: Brahman.

## Class 11

In this section, the author mentions the importance of Īśvara kṛpā. Spiritual pursuit is not easy because obstacles arise from oneself, from known external factors, and from unknown external factors. Therefore, human effort must be reinforced with Īśvara kṛpā. Effort and grace are like the two wings of a bird; a bird can fly high only when both wings function. Similarly, spiritual pursuit succeeds when there is both

effort and grace. That is why we pray: to protect ourselves from obstacles.

## **Verse 22**

Here the disciple speaks about the glory of a yogi or an enlightened sannyāsī. He is on a spiritual path leading to truth beyond puṇya and pāpa. A sannyāsī gives up possessions, obligations, relations, and transactions (PORT). We may pity such a person, but he is full of inner riches, even though he is “poor” from the standpoint of worldly possessions and transactions. Society pities him, but he pities society. His mind is ever fixed upon self-knowledge. Voluntary poverty is simplicity. The world measures richness and poverty in terms of possessions.

## **Verse 23**

“Who are you? Who am I? Who is my mother? Who is my father? From where do all these people come, and what is their nature?” A body is simply a name given to a bundle of flesh and bone. By inquiring into the nature of the world, reflect that the world is name and form, and that name and form are changing and unstable. If I hold on to this unstable nāma-rūpa, how will I get stability in my life? This world is like a dream. The world is like a decorated cardboard chair—use it for decoration, but do not sit on it.

## **Verse 24**

On inquiry, the whole world is reduced to name and form. The differences we experience are differences only in name and form. There is only one ultimate substance, which is Ātman or Brahman. Here the author refers to this ultimate reality as Viṣṇu. When you focus on superficial differences, it leads to rāga, dveṣa, etc. When you focus on advaitam, there is no conflict. Focus on non-difference rather than superficial differences.

## Verse 25

We look at the world through “private eyes,” colored by our likes and dislikes. We divide the world into favorable and unfavorable. People become friends and foes. Constantly, every moment, we generate friends and foes around us. This becomes an endless dilemma. Therefore, do not waste your energy and life fighting with people and patching things up. If you want to attain mokṣa, spend more time in spiritual sādhanā.

## Verse 26

Obstacles may come from outside, but you cannot run away from internal obstacles. The internal obstacles are:

1. Kāma: obsession or passion for the external world, making the mind extrovert.
2. Krodha: disturbs the mind; the mind is not available for spiritual pursuit.
3. Lobha: greed to possess more and more.
4. Moha: delusion—expecting security from insecure objects; expecting permanence from impermanent things.

Inquire into your real nature and discover the secure Ātman within yourself.

Class 12

## Verse 27

The entire spiritual sādhanā is described in the first two verses: remove kāma, krodha, lobha, and moha by following karma yoga, and know the Ātman through jñāna yoga. Those who do not know this are tormented in the world of mortality. Even higher lokas involve mortality. Wherever there is mortality, there is insecurity and pain.

## Verse 28

This verse talks about four fundamental sādhanās:

1. Pārāyaṇam of scriptures. Scriptural knowledge is not compulsory for everyone. The Vedas should be chanted with utmost care; therefore, it may be preferable not to do Veda-pārāyaṇam casually. Instead, do pārāyaṇam of non-Vedic scriptures and stotras.
2. Dhyānam or upāsanam: meditate upon the Lord.
3. Sat-saṅga (satsaṅga): develop interest in satsaṅga; remain in touch with informed guides.
4. Dānam: charity; a percentage of income should be allocated to charity.

According to our facility, capacity, and capability, we can follow any of these, in any order.

## Verse 29

Many people dedicate their whole life to earning wealth and then using it exclusively for sense pleasure. When we draw joy from Rāma, it is real and elevating. When we indulge in sense pleasures, addictions arise, leading to overindulgence and various diseases.

Such a person keeps accumulating things and takes ownership of as many things as possible. But we cannot own anything; everything is a temporary gift from Bhagavān. Whatever we have is a temporary gift—use it, and return it with gratitude when it is taken back. Using is our aim; owning is not our aim. Even though death will end all ownership and everything we “own” will be snapped away, we often fail to understand this.

## Verse 30 & 31

What is the goal of life? Many people think sense pleasure is the ultimate goal. But the goal of life is not indulgence in

sense pleasure or increasing the number of things we own. Constantly discriminate between what is nityam and what is anityam. Use discretion and fix your goal properly.

Practice prāṇāyāma, which improves both physical and mental health. Choose any name of the Lord you like for japa. This can lead to samādhi, absorption in that mantra. Complete absorption is samādhi. Be alert and committed to these disciplines: breathing control, sense control, inquiry, practice of samādhi, and constant alertness.

## Verse 32

Two important general disciplines:

1. Necessity of a spiritual guide: be humble and accept the guidance of someone who knows. Surrender to that teacher. Real bhakti is seeking guidance and following it. Establish a systematic educational program to receive the teaching and follow it.

2. Making oneself fit to receive the teaching: mastery of indriyas and mind. Before beginning the journey, ensure that the indriyas are disciplined. This leads to the discovery of one's higher nature, Ātman. Whatever one seeks in life—immortality, purity, fulfillment—Ātman alone can provide. This is freedom from saṃsāra.

Self-management and the guidance of a guru together lead to fulfillment and independence.

Concluding verses

When Śaṅkarācārya was in Kāśī, an old man was repeating a grammar rule of Pāṇini. Language is a means, not an end. Śaṅkarācārya and his disciples point out that life is not meant for grammar alone, but for enlightenment. After this teaching, the man recognized his folly, became free of his delusion, and decided to change the direction of his life.

Spiritual sādhanā can be started at any age, as long as one starts at some point.

Follow nāma-smaraṇam until you find a guide. Liberation will not come directly from nāma-smaraṇam alone, but it creates the ideal condition for further sādhanā.

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## **Bhagwat Geeta, Class 184 – Chapter 14 Verses 10 to 13**

Our body mind complex is made up of three gunas, and ahaMkAra is part of body mind complex. As a result, we can't escape the three gunas and we are forced to live with the three gunas and saguna ahaMkAra. To handle the ahaMkAra, we must understand ahaMkAra and which guna is dominant in us and how the three gunas behave. We must understand how the three gunas impact our material life and spiritual life.

Definition:

- Satvic guna is a personality inclined to learn more and more; predisposed to acquire more knowledge.
- Rajo guna is a personality that tends to act more; tends to do more; and wants to use karmēndriya more than JñAnendriya;
- Tamo guna is a personality always in doubt, not sure what to do; in eternal conflict, delusion and procrastination.

How each guna bind:

- Satvic mind has a knowing tendency and naturally

- addicted to introspect, which is conducive to learning.
- Rajasic mind always wants to do something or other. And for that it needs infrastructure and karmēndriya. Rajasic mind is addicted to karma
  - Tāmo guna mind is not sure about what infrastructure it needs. It is attached to negligence and carelessness.

## Verse 10

*Sattva manifests by overpowering rajas and tamas. Rajas (manifests by overpowering) sattva and tamas. Tamas (manifests by overpowering) sattva and rajas, Oh Arjuna!*

Everything in creation is a product of prakriti and therefore everything has all three gunas, but the proportion is not uniform. Before creation, the three gunas were in equal proportion. After the creation, the distribution of the three gunas is disturbed and they are not in the equal proportion. Tāmo guna will be dominant in an inert object. Plant has a little bit more of sattva and rājo guna, but it doesn't have the capacity to learn and has a limited capacity of action like growing. Animals have more dominant rājo and sattva guna than plants. Humans have more rājo guna and sattva gunan than animals. All human beings do not have the same proportion of gunas; some of them have more sattva guna, some of them have more rājo guna and some have more tāmo guna.

For satvic person, satvic guna is dominant overpowering, rājo guna and tāmo guna. For a rajasic person, rājo guna is dominant overpowering sattva guna and tāmo guna. For a tamasic person tāmo guna is dominant, overpowering sattva guna and rājo guna.

However, a person's dominant guna (personality) can be transformed, but the rate of transformation may be different from person to person. All sadhanas in scriptures are meant for transforming gunas. Most people are born as tāmo guna predominant person (e.g. babies sleep more). Life has to

start with karma and that is why scriptures prescribe karma yoga before jñāna yoga.

Rājo guna is of two types:

1. RTS: Rājo guna backed by Tāmo guna and followed by sattva guna. Such a person will be selfish for the fulfilment of his own desires. Scriptures say start with selfish activities.
2. RST: Once selfishly active, convert this order to Rājo guna, followed by sattva guna and then followed by Tāmo guna. For this person, actions are selfless actions. The activities are beneficial to more people, not just for himself.

When the mind has become a mature mind, then convert the rajasic tendencies to satvic tendencies. Convert to a sattva guna dominant mind, followed by rājo guna and then followed by Tamo guna. RTS to RST to SRT. Inactivity to selfish activity to selfless activities to inquiry is our journey. When a person comes to the stage of inquiry, that person has already contributed to society through karma yoga and he should not have any feeling of guilt.

Progress from Guna Sudhra (less active) to guna vaishya (Selfishly active) to guna kShatriya (Selflessly active) to Guna brAhmaNa (Pursuit of knowledge.

Verse 11:

*When the light of knowledge grows in all the sense organs in this body, then, one should know that sattva is predominant.*

Lord Krishna is now entering the third topic, that is lingam: Indication or characteristics of gunas. How do we know which guna is dominant in us?

The five sense organs provide knowledge of external world. In

a sattva guna dominant person, these five sense organs are bright, alert and have a great absorbing capacity.

Verse 12

*Greed, activity, commencement of works, restlessness, and craving – these appear when rajas is predominant, Oh Arjuna!*

When rājo guna is dominant, that person will always be active and not have time for inquiry. They will initiate many activities and projects. Their mind is ever restless and impatient. They also expect the same amount of speed from the people around them. Rajasic activities are very important for materialistic growth of a country.

Verse 13

*Dullness, inaction, negligence and delusion – these appear when tamas is predominant, Oh Arjuna!*

In a tamasic person, all the sense organs are dull. He is neither contemplative nor active. Both sattva guna and rājo guna are dominated by tāmo guna. He is negligent and careless. Does not know what he wants to do. Neither he can decide, nor will he take others advice.

Based on these lingam or indicators, we should infer the predominant guna in ourselves. Use this inference to gradually improve our character and gunas.

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**Bhagwat Geeta, Class 182 –**

# Chapter 14 Verses 5

The first four verses are introductory verses, dealing with self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is liberating wisdom. The third and fourth verses discuss creation; every product in creation is a mixture of two parts – purusha and prakriti; or called brahma and maya; or father and mother; Whenever we talk of Eeswara, that Eeswara is a mixture of the two. Since the cause of creation is a mixture of two principles, the effect is also a mixture of two. Therefore, we all are also a mixture of consciousness principle and matter principle; This analysis will be the subject matter of Chapter 14.

Verse 5

*Sattva, Rajas and tamas – these are the three gunas born out of prakriti. They fasten the changeless Self in the body, Oh Arjuna!*

Bhagavan is a mixture of consciousness and matter principles therefore we are also a mixture of the two. The physical body is the material principle, and it is prakriti tatvam. The mind also comes under prakriti tatvam. Purusha tatvam is consciousness principle. The five features of consciousness:

- Is not a part, product or property of the body or any object.
- Is an independent entity which pervades the body and makes it existent
- extends beyond the body or object.
- survives the fall of the body or object
- surviving consciousness is not recognizable because of the absence of reflecting medium

This consciousness principle is me. Pure consciousness principle which is nirguna (attribute-less) and nirvikāra (changeless) and witness principle called sakshi tatvam or my

higher nature. It is witness to all the changes that is happening. Body/mind principle by itself is inert in nature; but because it is pervaded by consciousness, it has borrowed consciousness. This is similar to hot water – water is not inherently hot, but it is hot because it borrows the heat from the fire or agni principle.

Sakshi is the original consciousness. Body mind complex is endowed with borrowed consciousness. This body mind complex (prakriti) with borrowed consciousness (chithAbAsha) is called ahamkArA. Whenever we use the word I, it includes the body with borrowed consciousness and sakshi with original consciousness. Sakshi part of mind is nirguna, nirvikāra and Sathya chaithanyam. The AhamkArA aspect of the mind is saguna, savikāra and mithya. You should be able to differentiate nirguna sakshi and saguna ahamkArA. AhamkArA is our lower nature and sakshi is our higher nature. As long as you claim your AhamkArA, samsara can't be avoided. The only way of getting out of samsara is by transcending from lower AhamkArA nature and owning up to your higher sakshi nature.

AhamkArA is a mixture of prakriti and purusha. Prakriti has three gunas, and hence ahamkArA also has three gunas – satvic, rajasic and tamasic. Each of these gunas binds a person with consequences. That is why this chapter is called gunathrayâ vibhāga yogaha.

Guna has two meaning – property or rope. or shackle. So guna is a rope that binds you to samsara. One has to break the shackles of each guna and seek moksham.

At the time of creation, the three gunas were in equilibrium or in equal proportion. At the equilibrium stage there is no creation. At the time of creation, this equilibrium is disturbed. After creation, everyone and everything are a mixture of three gunas, but in different proportions. Even the most inert object has the three gunas, but in different proportions.

In Satvic character is jñāna pradhāna personality and intellectually motivated. This person will be internally oriented, introverted; loves silence; when this silence is disturbed, a satvic mind is upset and that creates samsara. A satvic mind travels from finitude to finitude

In a rajasic character karma pradhāna will be activity oriented; highly turned outward; likes noisy activities; a rajasic mind is upset when there is no person is around or face silence, creating duḥkam and samsara. A rajasic mind ravel from finitude to finitude.

In Tamasic guna creates inertia or suppression of both jñāna and karma; suppresses both sattva and rājo gunas. For a tamasic character, there is no scope of progress at all. Remains in finitude and does not travel.

All three gunas creates bondage and mixed with pain and sorrow. All three gunas create dependence. All three gunas also create athripathi karathvam. A satvic person wants to get more and more knowledge. He goes on acquiring knowledge, but any amount of knowledge he gathers, his knowledge limitation does not go away. This creates intellectual samsara. A rajasic person suffers samsara in terms of activities, as he wants to accomplish more and more. For liberation, we will have to use the three gunas as stepping stone and then transcend them.

This is similar to a pole vaulter. A high jumper uses the pole to reach the top and lets the pole go when he reaches the top of his jump; if he doesn't, he will not finish the jump; but if he does not use the pole, then he will not be able to do the jump at all. So an intelligent person needs to use the pole to reach the top and then let go of the pole. Similarly, we need to embrace AhamkArA (all three gunas) to reach moksham but let go the three gunas and AhamkArA once we get jñānam.

We also need all three gunas to live our life. We need to use

tāmo guna for rest and relaxation. Rajasic guna is required for karma yoga. Satvic guna is required for jñāna yoga. But we should remember our real nature is sakshi which is free from all three gunas. A one who is free from all three gunas is a liberated person.

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## **Bhagwat Geeta, Class 181 – Chapter 14 Verses 1 to 4**

In the last śatkam of Bhagavat Gita, the first three chapters – chapters 14, 15 and 16 – mainly focus on jñāna yoga.

Nethi Nethi method: Whatever I experience, I am not; by negating everything I experience, then I left out with is the experiencer, who can never be the object. Arrive at the subject by negating every object. By negating everything saguna, what is left will be nirguna atma. This chapter is saguna, nirguna inquiry. Everything that has gunas or attributes, they all are anatma or object. In this chapter, the subject Brahman is presented as attribute less. The subject matter of this chapter is I am gunathethaha and not gunathrayâṃ.

Verse 1

*The Lord said – Once again I shall impart that supreme knowledge which is the greatest among all forms of knowledge and gaining which all sages have reached the supreme goal from here.*

When the subject matter is subtle and deep, it must be repeated. That is the reason Krishna repeats the topic of atma jñānam from another angle.

In this verse, first greatest indicates first greatest subject matter, which is atma or brahman; the second greatest indicates the benefits. Because this is the only knowledge that gives the greatest benefit moksha. Mundaka Upanishads calls this para vidhya; In the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter this is called raja vidhya. By gaining this greatest wisdom, all the seekers attain moksha.

## Verse 2

*Resorting to this knowledge, they have attained the same nature as Mine. They are not born even during creation; nor do they suffer (death) during dissolution.*

By acquiring this knowledge, the seekers have attained oneness with me, dropping their jivatvam and attaining eeswaratvam. Eeswara is Poornatvam, always complete and free from insecurity. A jñāni also attains this poornatvam, always complete and free from insecurity, no regret regarding the past and no anxiety towards the future. This is jivan mukthi. After death, they attain videha mukthi, that is freedom from puranapi janam and puranabi maranam. They are not afflicted by the pain caused by mortality.

## Verse 3

*The great prakriti is My womb. I place the seed in that. There upon takes place the origination of all beings, Oh, Arjuna!*

Having introduced the subject matter in the first two verses, Krishna is summarizing the process of creation in verses 3 and 4. In the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter, Krishna described creation. He said that before creation, there were two principles: Purusha and Prakriti, both are anādi. The four difference between purusha and prakriti are:

- Purusha chethanam prakriti is achethanam.

- Purusha is nirguna tatvam; prakriti is saguna tatvam.
- Purusha is nirvikāra, no modification, prakriti is savikaraha.
- Purusha is Sathya tatvam, prakriti is mithya, does not have independent existence.

The mixture of purusha and prakriti is eeswara and eeswara is cause of creation. Purusha is compared to a male principle and prakriti is symbolized to female principle. This comparison shows that the two principles put together alone can be the cause of creation. If this mixture is the cause of creation, therefore, all the products will have the features of the mixture, that is the features of purusha and prakriti. Every individual is a mixture of purusha and prakriti tatvam. If we do not recognize this nature, then we will not know how to handle ourselves.

Once the conception is complete, the purusha and prakriti principles need not do anything, and the conceived baby grows appropriately. Similarly, evolution happens. Everything originates thereafter naturally.

Verse 4

*Oh Arjuna! Whatever forms are born in all the wombs – for all of them the great prakriti is the womb. I am the father who provides the seed.*

Krishna says I am the universal father and Maya is the universal mother. What is the difference between the universal couples and the human couples. Human couples can produce only human children. Whereas the universal couple give birth to all species. Whatever species of living being is born, the original cause is prakriti, the Maya. We are all children of purusha and maya. Therefore, we will also have the features of the mixture.

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# Bhagwat Geeta, Class 180 – Chapter 13 Summary

The thirteenth chapter is the beginning of the third ṣatkam of Bhagavad Gita.

In the first ṣatkam, Lord Krishna highlighted karma yoga, in the second ṣatkam, Krishna highlighted Upasana yoga and in the third ṣatkam Krishna is going to highlight jñāna yoga. The first three chapters, that is chapter 13, 14 and 15, are very important from the philosophical angle, as the entire upanishad sara is given in these chapters. These chapters highlight drk drsya viveka, the knowledge that clearly distinguishes the difference between Purusha and Prakriti.

In the first verse Arjuna asks for clarification regarding six technical terms appearing in the scriptures. These topics are:

1. kṣetram
2. kṣetrajña
3. jñeyam
4. jñānam
5. Prakriti
6. Purusha

Kṣetrajña, purusha and jñeyam all refer to atma. The words kṣetram and prakriti refer to anatma. jñānam remains separate. Thus, the six topics are reduced to three topics: Atma, Anatma and jñānam.

**Anatma**

In verses 2 to 24, Lord Krishna describes Anatma. Anatma is Chethanam plus Prakrithi. Whatever I experience is anatma. The entire universe will fall under anatma. Anything objectifiable is anatma. The body comes under anatma, because we experience the condition of the body. The mind also comes under anatma, because we experience the condition of the mind. The world, body, and mind along with all their different conditions is anatma. Nature of anatma:

- Made up of matter and is inert in nature. The sentiency of the body is not intrinsic to the body but borrowed from the atma. The mind is also material.
- Full of attributes; sagunam, endowed with varieties of properties.
- Subject to constant fluctuations and modifications.

Because of the changing nature, it undergoes the condition and becomes visible and manifest. Maya is unmanifest universe.

## **Atma**

Atma is kṣetrajña, purusha and jñeyam. If the whole universe falls under object of experience, then experienced universe pre-supposes the presence of an experience or subject. Every object presupposes a subject. Atma is Chethanam and Purusha. This unobjectifiable experiencer principle is atma. Features of I, the atma the consciousness principle:

- Not a part, product, or property of the body
- Independent entity pervading and enlivening the inert body
- Not limited by the boundaries of body
- Will continue to exist even after the fall of the body. Mortality is the feature of the body, not of the atma. Atma is immortal.
- Atma continues after the fall of the body, but not available for transactions because a medium is not

available.

Atma/Consciousness can be compared to space and sunlight:

- They are all one (ekam)
- They can't move
- They are indivisible
- Can't be contaminated or polluted
- Support of everything
- Illuminates everything.

### ***Jñānam***

Dharmic values and study of scriptures is required for jñānam. Dharmic values must be assimilated in mind and a mind with dharmic values is needed for jñānam. The dharmic values are moral values and are fourfold qualifications. These fourfold qualifications or sādhanā catuṣṭaya saṃpatti are:

- Discrimination: Understanding that the world can't give security; that can come only from nithya vasthu the ever-present Brahman.
- Dispassion: Changing the priorities of life from world to Brahman.
- Discipline: Integration of the entire personality with Atma jñānam.
- Desire: For moksha or jñānam

These four are expanded into 20 terms in verses 8 to 12 of this chapter.

Verses 25 to 35: jñāna sadhanam and jñāna phalāḥṃ; Stages to obtain this knowledge and benefits of this knowledge.

- Karma yoga to remove impurities

- Upasana to remove restless mind; extrovertedness of mind, so mind will become tranquil and focused.
- Sravanam: consistent and systematic study of Vedantic scriptures under the guidance of a competent guru.
- Mananam: Raising doubts and clarifying doubts
- Nidhithyasanam: Dwelling on the vedantic scriptural teachings.

Benefits of the knowledge:

- Freedom from raga and dwesha; freedom from attachments and aversion
- Immortality of atma; not afraid of mortality
- I come to know I am neither the kartha and boktha
- Brahmatvam: I am limitless.

In simple language, jivan mukthi is the benefit. This knowledge takes from bondage to liberation.

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## **Bhagwat Geeta, Class 179 – Chapter 13 Verses 32 to 35**

Up to the 24th verse of this chapter, Lord Krishna discussed the six topics Arjuna requested. From 25, 26 and 27, the sadhanas were discussed. From the 28<sup>th</sup> verse onwards, jnana phalāḥṃ is being discussed.

The first benefit discussed was complete understanding of the universe. The eye of wisdom sees inherent superficial duality and this vision saves him from raga dwesha, which alone is the cause of samsara.

The second benefit mentioned was when a person sees plurality and division, finitude and mortality is inevitable. When you see the wave, you will see the birth death of wave. But when you see the water, from the stand point of water, there is no birth or death.

The third benefit mentioned is recognition of the fact that all the action belongs to prakriti and I the purusha, is the witness behind prakriti, and do not do any action. In my presence actions take place, but I am akartha.

Fourth benefit is brahamatva parapthi: I recognize I am Brahman. To assimilate this knowledge, self-knowledge is compared to waking up from a dream. When I am in dream, I feel like I am located in dream time and dream space. Within the dream, I see a variety of things that give me raga dwesha. But when I wake up, I realize the whole dream world exists within me, the waker. In the dream, I am a creature within the dream; when I wake up, I am the creator of the dream. I am not within the dream time, dream space or dream product, but they are all products of mine. This conversion requires only waking up and no additional effort. Self-knowledge is similarly waking up and realizing that I am the creator of the universe. From me alone the world emerges and from me alone the world rests – similar to the dream that emerges from me. I am the conscious principle from which this time, this space and this body are born. Just like I created a dream body, I also created this physical body. A waker is able to make this statement with regard to dream body, and Jñāni is able to make this statement with regard to his physical body. The day I am able to accept this glory, that I am the cause (karanam) and not the effect (kariyam) is the day I can claim aham brahma asmi. Just as the dream world emerges, rests and resolves from me, the real world also emerges, rests and resolves from me, the original consciousness.

*Being birth less and attribute less, the supreme Self is changeless. Though dwelling in the body, it neither acts nor is affected, Oh Arjuna!*

Even though there are many similarities between dream and waking up, there is one major difference. When you wake up from dream, the dream world disappears, but even after you get Jñāni, the physical world continues to appear. When you wake up from dream, the dream does not continue, but when you get self-knowledge, the world continues to exist. But the Jñāni has the knowledge, that the world is like dream and anything happening in the world, does not affect the Jñāni, similar to what is happening in the dream does not affect the waker.

Birth is one of the six modifications and atma is anādi and does not have a birth. Atma does not have any modification or form change because it is not re-born; atma does not change attribute, because it is nirguna or attribute-less. A gold ornament goes through the change in form and attribute when it is converted into a bangle, but gold, the substance does not change. Even after waking up and knowing I am atma, I continue to be in the body, but atma remains akārtha and aboktha. The body and sense organs have actions and results, but atma does not have karma or phalāḥṃ. This is the next benefit of self-knowledge, that I am aboktha.

Verse 33

*Just as the all-pervading space is not affected due to its subtlety, so also, the self, which is present in everybody, is not affected.*

Atma is involved in all activities, but not affected by any. To illustrate this idea, Lord Krishna gives two examples – space and sunlight. Common features between space and atma:

1. Both are only one
2. Both are all pervading

3. Both can't move from one place to another place
4. Both remain same and does not decay or change
5. Both do not have parts
6. Both can't be tainted or polluted, either by good or bad qualities.
7. Both can't be easily comprehended.
8. Both support everything.

#### Verse 34

*Just as one sun illumines this entire world, so also does the kṣetrajña illumine the entire kṣetram, Oh Arjuna.*

The second example is sunlight. Sunlight pervades the entire earth during the daytime. Common features between sunlight and atma are similar to the space example:

1. Both are only one
2. Both are all pervading
3. Both can't move from one place to another place
4. Both remain same and does not decay or change
5. Both do not have parts
6. Both can't be tainted or polluted, either by good or bad qualities.
7. Both can't be easily comprehended.
8. Both support everything.

Because of consciousness atma alone everything is known; similarly, without light nothing will be visible. Light itself is not comprehensible without a reflective medium. Similarly, atma can be comprehended only through a reflective medium. I am like akasa; I am like Prakasa.

#### Verse 35

*With the eye of knowledge those who know thus the distinction between kṣetrajña and kṣetram, as well as the absence of*

*prakriti which is the cause of beings attain the supreme*

Wise people recognize the difference between kṣetrajña and kṣetram which are:

- Cētanam – acētanam; sentient; and insentient.
- Nirgunam – sagunam; one is attribute less; the other is with attributes.
- Nirvikāram-Savikāram, Consciousness is changeless; matter is ever changing.
- Sathyam – Mithyam.

Krishna emphasizes the fourth difference: consciousness, the atma alone exists independently, matter can't exist independently. Consciousness has intrinsic existence, matter has only borrowed existence.

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## **Bhagwat Geeta, Class 178 – Chapter 13 Verses 28 to 31**

Up to the 24th verse, Lord Krishna dealt with all the six topics Arjuna wanted to know. From verse 25 to 27, Lord Krishna talked about the sadhanas required to gain this knowledge, the culmination of this knowledge should be knowledge. Problem of samsara is because of the error with regard to the perception of ourself or self-error. Through the knowledge, self-delusion goes away, with that samsara also goes away. From 28 onwards, Lord Krishna talks about benefits of this knowledge.

First benefit is complete understanding of the world or sāma darshanam: Universe is a mixture of purusha and prakriti;

every human being is also a mixture of purusha and prakriti; our vision will be right vision only if our vision is balanced with purusha and prakriti. The prakriti part is physically visible whereas the purusha part being nirguna nirvikāra sathya chethana tatvam, will not be visible for physical eyes and it has to be appreciated with our jñāna chakshu. Prakriti is useful in all our daily transactions but will not give poornatvam. Purusha alone can give poornatvam. Therefore, we need a balanced vision of purusha and prakriti. The first benefit of jñānam is sāma darshanam – proper vision – understanding that universe is a mixture of purusha and prakriti. Raga Dwesha weakens sāma darshanam

Verse 29

*For, uniformly seeing the Lord who dwells everywhere alike, he does not ruin himself by himself. Thereby he attains the supreme goal.*

Purusha is the supporter of prakriti. Just as without the support of screen, movie can't exist, prakriti can't exist without purusha. A wise person sees purusha all the time, but this jñāni does not destroy himself. This is the second benefit – immortality.

How does a person destroy himself? A person kills both lower nature and higher nature.

First, a person destroys himself by identifying himself with the body; once you identify yourself with body, you become a kartha or doer as a kartha I perform variety of actions earning pavam and punyam. These punyam and pavam are the reasons for creating a body. Both the arrival and departure of body is the result of my karma. I alone am responsible for repeated birth and death. I destroy my own lower nature again and again.

Secondly, by identifying with the body, one also kills one's own higher nature – figuratively killing atma, by not being

aware of higher nature, one disowns one's own higher nature. The benefits available by higher nature are lost and since I am not enjoying the benefits of higher nature, it is as though higher nature is absent. Since it is as though higher nature is absent, we have killed or destroyed the higher nature.

Every ajñāni destroys himself from the standpoint of body as well as Jñāni. A Jñāni does not destroy himself from either perspective.

Verse 30

*He who sees all actions as being done by prakriti alone by all means, and likewise sees the self to be action less alone really sees.*

The third benefit is akartatvam or understanding that I am not the doer. A kartha will be eternally associated with karma. Karma will get converted into favorable and unfavorable conditions. If I am a kartha, then I can't escape being a boktha and that is a choiceless, helpless situation.

All actions are done by prakriti – body/mind complex or śarīram. It is impossible to escape the cycle of arrival and departure of karma, the only way is to stay away from the cycle. Prakriti can't be stopped; the only way is to transcend from prakriti is by identifying with higher nature.

Vedanta should not be used for promoting adharmā; a person should not use this verse to do adharmic activities, claiming all the activities are not done by "me" only by my lower nature, the body/mind complex.

Verse 31

*When one sees the diversity of beings to be based on the oneself and their origination to be from that Self alone, then one becomes Brahman*

Understanding atma must be done in many steps. We take the example of space and a hall.

- In a hall, there is hall and space inside the hall. So, there is space and a hall.
- Then, we see that there are many halls, and there is space in all those halls.
- Then we see that the space within them is not many but one and the same. Halls are different, but the space is not different.
- Then we see that the space is not only within the hall, but there is also space outside the hall.
- But really speaking, space is not inside or outside the hall, but there is only one space, and all halls are resting in it.
- Finally, we realize, space is not only supporter of all halls, but all the things are born out of space.

This example should be extended to atma. Space should be equated to consciousness and the hall should be equated to body:

1. There is a body and consciousness. The consciousness is within the body
2. Then we see there are many bodies and consciousness is within all other bodies also.
3. But the consciousness within our body as well as everyone else's body is the same.
4. Consciousness is outside all the bodies also.
5. But really speaking, consciousness is not inside or outside, but consciousness is everywhere, and all the bodies are residing in consciousness.
6. Really speaking everything arises out of consciousness.
7. That consciousness is I am.

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# Bhagwat Geeta, Class 177 – Chapter 13 Verses 25 to 27

Krishna points out that this knowledge is a liberating knowledge. A person who knows that body mind complex is prakriti and that I am purusha. Body is prakriti and mind is prakriti; the association of mind and body is birth and dis-association of mind and body is death; they are all happening at the level of prakriti. There is no question of one birth, then where is the question of rebirth. A Jñāni who realizes this and knows that he is anādi purusha, does not have rebirth and gets moksha.

## Verse 25

*Some seekers see the Self in the mind with the mind through meditation. Some others see through Gyana yoga. Still others see Karma Yoga.*

In verse 25 to 35 Krishna discusses the preparations needed for self-knowledge and what are the benefits of self-knowledge.

The ultimate goal of all spiritual sadhanas is self-knowledge only. There should not be any doubt regarding this goal. We should discover atma within ourselves, using our own buddhi. Buddhi is the only instrument to get knowledge. But this buddhi should be a refined buddhi supported by guru sastra upadesa.

Preparatory stages for reaching self-recognition through the mind within oneself, five stage preparation helping in removing one obstacle in each stage:

1. Karma yoga stage, where mental impurities are removed. Impurities like raga, dwesha, kama, moha etc. Karma yoga removes impurities and refines the mind.
2. Upasana or meditation upon saguna Eeswara; Removing the obstacle of restlessness of mind and extrovertedness; helping mind to focus.
3. Vedanta Sravanam: Systematic and consistent study of Vedantic scriptures under the guidance of a competent guru, removing ajñānam or ignorance.
4. Mananam: Asking myself if I am convinced of the teaching of the scriptures and guru. Converting knowledge into conviction; removing intellectual obstacles.
5. Nidhithyasanam: Deliberate invocation of Vedanta to get rid of disturbing reactions of life.

These five stages are compulsory for all. If one does not complete all five stages in one life, the remaining stages are completed in the next life. The one who passes through the four stages and in the next life goes through nidhithyasanam, resulting in spiritual prodigy.

Verse 26

*Not knowing thus, some others pursue self-knowledge by hearing from others. Being committed to listening, they also definitely cross over mortality.*

Vedanta does not require any particular scripture but insists upon the vedantic teachings. Vedanta does not refer to language, but only the teachings and the contents. If a person who doesn't know the Upanishad but has assimilated the teachings, he is liberated. However, if one goes through all the upanishad, but does not assimilate the teachings, he is not liberated.

Verse 27

*Whatever being, moving or stationary, is born – know that to be out of the union of shethragya and kṣetram – oh Arjuna!*

For preparation and purification of mind, there are many sadhanas, but for mokṣa there is only Jñānam. Samsara is caused by ignorance and error. We are ignorant of the fact that we are purusha or atma. Identifying ourselves with the body or prakriti or anatma is error. Self-ignorance leads to body identification. I, the consciousness take ourselves to be the body. I, the immortal purusha mistake myself to mortal body. Apūrṇathvam leads to kāma; Kāma leads to karma, karma leads to punya pāpam, punya pāpa leads to sukha duḥkam, and later to punar janma. In fact, entire cycle of birth and death is dēha abhimāna. All beings go through re-birth because of this error and the cause of the error ignorance. To remove the error, we need to remove the cause, and the cause is ignorance.

Verse 28

*He who sees the supreme Lord who dwells alike in all being and who is imperishable among perishables (alone really) sees.*

From this verse onwards, Lord Krishna enumerates Jñāna phalāḥṃ. The first one mentioned is to be aware of changeless atma which is in and through all anatma. Just as there are numerous waves, there are innumerable anatma, which are different from each other. Among these innumerable bodies, there is one imperishable sat chit atma or paramatma. Wise person is the one who does not lose sight of this fact during day-to-day transactions. If I am aware of the permanent one, I will handle the impermanent one but will not depend on the impermanent one.

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# Bhagwat Geeta, Class 176 – Chapter 13 Verses 23 and 24

Lord Krishna has come to the last pair of topics, purusha and prakriti. Purusha and prakriti are two basic principles that existed even before the creation of the world, and this mixture of purusha and prakriti is called God. The common features of purusha and prakriti are both are anādi and both of them can't be the cause of creation alone.

Uncommon features or difference between Purusha and Prakriti are:

1. Purusha is chethanam and Prakriti is achethanam.
2. Purusha is nirvikāram. Prakriti is savikāram.
3. Purusha nirgunam; Maya is sagunam.
4. Purusha sathyam; Prakriti is mithyam.

Everything is prakriti and purusha is available behind the body mind complex and available as the witness. Whatever is experienced or witnessed is prakriti or the object of experience. The body mind complex falls under prakriti or the object of experience. The body mind complex is used as a medium to experience and witness and as a result often mistaken for Purusha or I. The body mind complex used as an instrument, appears as subject. World is prakriti, mind is prakriti. I am different than the world, mind and prakriti. Illuminating the body mind is not the activity of Purusha, but the body mind illumined by the very presence of purusha.

This is similar to sun. Sun does not illumine the objects, the objects get illumined by the very presence of the sun. Even the blank condition of the mind is also witnessed by the consciousness. Transference of body mind complex attributes to I, the consciousness and witness, causes samsara. This is similar to transferring the problems of a character in a movie

to me, the audience.

### Verse 23

*The supreme purusha in this body is said to be the proximate witness, the supporter, the sustainer, the experiencer, the great Lord and the supreme Self.*

Krishna says purusha is in the form of witness everywhere. The nature of this purusha is different than the prakriti. Lord Krishna gives more features of purusha:

1. Paraha: Free from all limitations; The consciousness not only within the body, it is also extends beyond the body. Eventually we must realize that we are inside the consciousness. This is similar to space. Space is inside the room, outside the room; but really the room is in space.
2. Upadhrishta: The intimate witness of everything happening inside you. Purusha pervades every cell of our bodies.
3. Anumandhacha: Purusha blesses inert body and mind and because of its blessing alone body is what it is.
4. Bartha: Purusha lends existence to everything in creation.
5. Boktha: Purusha is experiencer from the standpoint of an ignorant person. Seeming boktha, as though suffering from attributes.
6. Maheswaraha: Purusha is ever free. For a wise person, consciousness is a free entity. Body and mind are bound by prakriti, but purusha is not.

I am called jivatma when I take the attributes of prakriti, but when I take the attributes and understand that they don't belong to me but to prakriti, then I am paramatma.

### Verse 24

He who thus knows purusha and prakriti along with the gunas, is not born again, in whatever manner he lives. This clear knowledge about prakriti and purusha will give a person great relief from samsara. The initial knowledge is I am a mixture of purusha and prakriti. I also know there are many physical attributes and subtle, internal attributes. But these attributes belong to prakriti. For all day-to-day activities, we have to identify with prakriti. But understand that the whole life is a series of role playing. But when role playing is taken seriously, it results in samsara. A Jñāni who understands this, he will not have a punar jenma or re-birth.