

Bagawat Geeta, Class 33

Greetings All,

Continuing his talks, Swamiji reminded us that we are in the final portion of Chapter 2 discussing the topic of Sthita Pragyaha. He is one who has acquired self-knowledge and converted it to emotional strength. Talking about the Sthita Pragyaha, Sri Krishna presents the following two topics:

1. Sthita Pragyaha Sadhanani that tells us how to become a Sthita Pragyaha and
2. Sthita Pragyaha Lakshanani that describes the traits of a Gyani.

Shlokas 55-57 describes Lakshanani while Shlokas 58-68 describes Sadhanani. Now in Shloka # 69, Sri Krishna is back again talking about Lakshanani. A Sadhaka is one who is in process of transformation while a Sidha is one who has been transformed. Shlokas 69-72 are about Lakshanani.

Shloka # 69:

The restrained ascetic (the sage) is awake in what is night for all living beings, while, when these latter are awake, it is night for the silent sage who perceives.

All these shlokas are important ones. Shlokas 69 and 70 are especially important ones that glorify the Sthita Pragyaha. In this shloka the Gyani is compared to an Agyani. The idea being conveyed is that both Gyani and Agyani face the same world. World cannot be changed. Vedanta does not attempt at changing the people or the world. It is very difficult to bring about such a change. What Vedanta does try is to change one's response to the world. Vedanta tries seeing this corrupt world in a somewhat different light.

Even a Gyani has Prarabdha karma, although he avoids Sanchita and Agami Karmas. So, if both live in such a world, what is the difference in their respective responses to the world?

Giving an example, Swamiji says, it is like two people sitting on the seashore and watching the waves. They both see the same waves. However, one person knows the truth of the wave, that it is water. The wave itself is just a name and a form. He focuses on the immortal water (Advaita) and not the perishable Wave. The other person, in the meanwhile, does not know this truth and is caught up in the name and form of the wave. He is, thus, immersed in the mortal wave.

Thus:

One person sees the Dvaita Anitya Tarangani

While the other person sees the Advaita Nitya Jalam.

Because of this perspective the ignorant person feels happy when the wave rises and feels unhappy when the wave subsides.

The Gyani sees birth and death belong to name and form only. There is neither elation nor depression over the rise and fall of a wave.

Another example cited was that of a movie. At the start of the movie it is just a white screen. Once movie starts I am absorbed in the superficial characters on the screen. I lose sight of the truth, which is the white screen. I feel the shadows on the screen are real. We get absorbed in the movie. The reality is that there is no hero or villain, it is all make believe. One who knows the truth understands that the white screen is the truth. Such a person is not carried away by the images projected on the screen.

Therefore:

Advaita Drishthi belongs to a Gyani. Dvaita Drishthi belongs to an Agyani. One who has the advaita knowledge is free from joys and sorrows of this samsara.

In shloka # 69 Sri Krishna now provides another example. An ignorant person is compared to an owl that keeps awake in the night and the nightlife while the Gyani is compared to a human

being.

Daytime is compared to Advaita while nighttime is compared to Dvaita. The human being, the Gyani, is awake to the day or to Advaitam and asleep to the night that is Dvaitam. An owl, considered an Agyani, is asleep to the day, that is Advaitam, while he is awake to the night that is Dvaitam. In the shloka: Ya means Advaita, Nisha means asleep to and Samyami means Gyani.

Swamiji also gave example of a wooden elephant that was wrongly identified by a person as a real elephant. Once he was taken close to it, by a wise man, he realized it was only a wooden elephant. He lost his fear for that elephant. The world is a frightening place to an Agyani, full of troubles. For a wise man, it is a harmless place or Sarvam Shivamayam.

Shloka # 70:

“He wins peace into whose mind objects of desires enter as waters flow into a full and stable sea that is being filled; and not he who yearns after objects of desire.”

In this shloka Sri Krishna provides another example. Swamiji says, Vyasa muni when he dictated the Mahabharata to Lord Ganesha, Ganesha's condition to him was that, Vyasa had to tell the story without stopping. Vyasa's request, in turn to Lord Ganesha was that, even as he wrote them, he understood the shloka's as well. This way, Vyasa was trying to get some time to think. To gain time, Vyasa would once in a while compose a shloka that was difficult to understand. They were known as Granthi shlokas or knotty shlokas. Shloka # 70 is one such knotty shloka.

In this shloka a Gyani is compared to an ocean. What is the glory of the ocean? It is ever full and independently full. It does not depend on any external factor. The ocean knows the rivers depend upon it for water. The ocean is also not easily polluted. Similarly the Gyani's mind is ever full (and not of

samsara). Agyani's mind is never full and it is dependent on external factors. A Gyani is Samaha (equanimous) in all conditions. The Gyani's mind is like an ocean. Even though pollution enters the mind it is always calm and poised.

Shloka 71:

"The man who, giving up all objects of desires, moves about seeking nothing, and rid of all sense of "mine" and "I", wins peace."

Sri Krishna continues his description of the Gyani's state of mind. He is one who enjoys a poised mind. Swamiji says we have a poised mind when it comes to our neighbors as we can look at them dispassionately. He suggests we should also look at ourselves in the same dispassionate manner. This poised state of mind comes and goes in us. In a Gyani, however, his poise is always maintained.

Gyani does not depend on any external factors. Swamiji says divorce is big issue in India as relationship depends on the other person. If another person does not like me, I am affected. Gyani, however, has love for others without seeking their love in return. He does not have body identification. I may love my body, however the reality is that one day, nature will take it away from me. Gyani remembers that: I am not the body and nothing belongs to me. He thus enjoys life thoroughly.

Shloka 72:

"This status of Brahman, Arjuna!; attaining it, none gets deluded (any more). Abiding in it, at least at the hour of death, one gains super-consciousness in Brahman."

Sri Krishna says this state of mind, of a Sthita Pragyaha, is born out of Vedanta Gyanam. Shlokas 12 through 25 are important ones. We need to read them again and again. Based on this state of mind one obtains the Brahmi state. Once he

reaches this state of mind he cannot fall back into the state of mental conflicts. He is in this state until his Prarabhdham. Then he will attain Videhi Mukti meaning freedom from the cycle of birth and death. At that time all three bodies (Karana, Sthula and Sukshma sharira) of his merge into totality.

This knowledge, once it is obtained at any time in life, will get you moksha.

This is the conclusion of chapter 2.

With best wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 32

Greetings All,

Continuing his talk, Swamiji reminded us that Arjuna wanted to know about Sthita Pragyaha. Sthita Pragyaha is one who has acquired Self Knowledge. Sri Krishna deals with the topic in two parts.

1. Traits of Sthita Pragyaha or lakshanani and
2. How to become Sthita Pragyaha or the Sadhanani.

Natural traits of sthitha pragyaha were pointed out in previous class as:

1. One who is happy with himself.
2. He does not depend upon any external condition for happiness.
3. He maintains equanimity in all situations
4. He is free from attachment, fear and anger.

Now, discussing how to become a Sthitha Pragyaha, the first step is to become a pragyaha. A Pragyaha is one who has received self-knowledge. This is obtained by listening to Vedanta Sravanam. Then he has to eliminate all doubts about the knowledge. Swamiji says doubtful knowledge is as good as ignorance. Elimination of doubts is obtained by self-reflection or asking the Acharya. This sravanam and mananam will make me a Pragyaha.

It is the emotional mind that faces the situation and I am not always able to handle it. A transformation in the emotional personality has to occur. A cognitive change (also called intellectual change) to emotional strength to remain balanced at all times has to occur. Attachment, depression, jealousy anxiety are all emotional problems. This emotional transformation takes me from Pragyaha to Sthitha Pragyaha.

Sri Krishna has been describing this process from shloka # 58 onwards. Here he now prescribes three exercises:

1. Sensory control: Sense objects enter the mind through the five sensory controls. Sri Krishna says we need to close the doors to sense objects. If not, all types of rubbish will enter our mind. A word, a picture, they all can excite our senses. This process of sense control is called Damaha. Damaha is very important in our path to knowledge.
2. Even with senses under control, sense objects can slip in and enter our mind. Then, what should I do? Once thought has entered, we need to control them. Do not allow continuation of the thought. This is in my control. Use will power to nip the thought in the bud. Thought discipline is called Kshama. Kshama is also very important in our path to knowledge.
3. Dwelling upon the teaching of the Acharya through reading, writing (notes) or finding some one to share with (or talk to) and relive the shravanam is called Nidhidhyasanam.

So in one form or the other, relive the sravaṇam. Reliving the sravaṇam, reliving the class, is called Nidhidhyasanam. This is an extremely important exercise. Therefore we have to spend time either on the same day or before coming to the class to review your notes.

Relived Sravaṇam helps in assimilating. It gradually transforms the mind.

While I may not be able to claim that I am a Gyani, I can say that, as compared to the past, I do not worry too much about incidents anymore.

Of all the three exercises Sri Krishna emphasizes Sense control or Damaha as most important.

Shloka # 64:

“Approaching objects with senses free from attachment and aversion, and controlled by the mind, the man who has mastered his mind wins serenity.”

Refreshing our mind about this shloka,

Swamiji says, our body is like a vehicle, the sense organs are like the wheels of the vehicle and the mind is like it's steering. This is the example given in the Kathopaniṣad. We should never lose control of this body vehicle. We need to use the steering to control the wheels and drive cautiously.

A person who is able to live such a disciplined life he obtains Prasadam or tranquility of mind. Such a person is free from violent emotions and the frequency

of his violent reactions are also reduced significantly. As the intensity of his reactions reduces, so does his recovery period as well.

For me, as a student, while they (emotional turmoil) will not be totally eliminated I am now able to better manage them.

Therefore, Arjuna practice these three disciplines.

Shloka #65:

“Serenity won, sufferings come to an end; the reason of that man, whose mind is serene, soon becomes steadfast.”

What is the advantage of an equanimous mind?

Prasada here means Shanthi or balanced or Samatvam. Prasada Budhi provides two benefits. They are:

1. Removal or destruction of all sorrow. Happiness need not come from the outside world. Outside world cannot give us happiness. “I” am the source of my happiness. Just like for a dog when chewing the bone, the bone hurts his mouth and the mouth bleeds. The dog enjoys its own blood even as it chews the dry bone, thinking the bone is bleeding. So too for a human being, the sense object is like a bone. We bring our own happiness to the dry sense object and enjoy it. By removing mental disturbances we can bring out our own happiness. Once the disturbance is gone joy comes from within.
2. When the mind is calm, Self Knowledge becomes well rooted. When mind is calm Self Knowledge is well assimilated.

Shloka #66:

“The un-integrated mind has no wisdom; nor can such a person have yearning (for Self Knowledge). Without such yearning, no peace (is possible). For one lacking peace, how can there be happiness?”

Here Sri Krishna highlights Kshama and Dama. These two disciplines are very important.

Who is a student? One who has the concentration of a crow and the eye of a crane looking for fish on shore of a river. His food should be less; sleep should be less and dress simple.

We need the qualities of a student for Vedanta studies. For listening, reflecting and Nidhidhyasanam, all three stages, you require Kshamaḥ and Damaḥ. Therefore Arjuna, build up these two values first and foremost.

Yuktaha is one with control of Kshama and Dama. Without this Pragyaha is not possible. Without this control Nidhidhyasanam is also not possible.

Without sravanam, mananam and Nidhidhaysanam peace of mind is not possible. Swamiji reiterated that Gita study is done in a class. Hence he does not use the word 'Discourse' or 'Pravachanam' 'Upanyasam' etc. Here teaching is involved, concentration is involved and there is connection between each class. While purpose is not academic, the purpose is total transformation of the way I look at life and that transformation brings peace of mind.

Therefore, Gita study brings the practical benefit of Shantih. Therefore Arjuna, if you want peace of mind, study and assimilate the Gita.

Shloka # 67:

"The mind that conforms to the roving senses robs (one) of perceptions, just as the wind sweeps the boat off its course."

Next two shlokas are on sense control. Without sense control Atma Gyanam cannot occur. Even if knowledge does take place, somehow at crucial moments the sense organs will take away the knowledge. Suppose sense organs wander everywhere without my permission and with it the mind also wanders, they will not allow knowledge to take place.

Sri Krishna provides an example. If a man travels on a boat he needs to direct the boat. If not, the blowing wind will take it anywhere it wants. It does not require my permission and the boat may capsize. Similarly, the sense organs can be carried away and can destroy our Budhi.

Here Gyanam is an analogy for the boat. Gyanam takes one across ocean of Samsara. If boat is destroyed, I am also destroyed, due to lack of sense control.

Shloka # 68:

“Therefore, O hero, his wisdom is stable whose senses have been withdrawn on all sides from their (respective) objects.”

With this shloka, Sri Krishna concludes Sthitha Pragyaha Sadhanani topic. Since sense control plays an important role, the seeker's sense organs must be controlled. Suppression of sense organs is however not prescribed. Western Psychologists consider Eastern religions as suppressing. Eastern systems say both suppression and expression are dangerous. Gita prescribes intelligent regulation. Stopping the river is also dangerous; because if you stop a river, there will be flood; and if you let the river flow in its own direction, then also it becomes waste of water; because it will go into the ocean. If you will not stop the river, nor allow the river to flow into the ocean, what do you do? Dam the river and channelize the water in the direction that you want. Gita prescribes channeling the energies of the sense organs and mind. A lot of our mental energy is wasted any way. We need to use our intelligence and mental energy wisely. We need to get back our capacity for concentration. We had this capacity as children. We still have that capacity. In the name of growth, we have lost that concentration. We have also lost the photographic mind that we had as a child. It is not that we do not have it; we just have not used that faculty. Therefore, a seeker should master the sense organs. Then he can receive the knowledge and the knowledge will be well assimilated as well.

With best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 31

Greetings All,

Continuing his talk, Swamiji reminded us that Sri Krishna deals with two topics, Sthita Pragya Lakshanani and Sthita Pragyaha Sadhanani, in the final portion of chapter 2.

Sthitha means assimilation of teaching. This is conversion of intellectual knowledge into emotional strength. Kama, krodha, raga and dvesha do not affect him.

How does he come to this knowledge?

He does so by listening to scriptural knowledge from a competent teacher. It is not enough to listen; the student also has to his own homework as well. The Guru can motivate, however, it is for the student to make the conversion.

How to convert?

Sri Krishna teaches three disciplines:

1. Sense restraint: The world through the five sense organs of sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa, and gandha enters the mind. Anyone of them can agitate the mind. Consider how a word from a person can throw you off. Words can create havoc with us. Once the mind is disturbed we cannot retain the vedantic knowledge. Just like a concrete floor has to be allowed to be set after pouring the concrete, so also our mind should not be agitated after vedantic teaching. It should be allowed to peaceful so that the knowledge sets in.

Sri Krishna recommends avoiding all emotional upheavals caused by sense organs. This is not easy. One has to be very alert to

what is going on in the mind. Even a person with restraint can be pulled away by the senses.

Citing example of Sita, Swamiji says she was enticed by the golden deer (senses). It pulled Sita away from Rama, the symbol of spiritual ananda.

Shloka 61:

“Controlling them all, one should sit integrated, deeming ME supreme. Stable is his wisdom who has brought his senses under control.”

Sri Krishna says: Oh Arjuna let the sense organs be your instrument. Do not allow them to control you. Restrain them. However, do not suppress them. There is a difference between restraint and suppression. Suppression is when I am following the advise of somebody. It is not based on my own will. It is an imposed denial. However, if I value the action, then whatever I do is mastery. It is based upon my own will.

To one who masters his senses, Vedantic Self -Knowledge becomes very relevant. This is sense control.

Now Sri Krishna also discusses the second discipline. When senses are pulled from outside pursuits, there is no distraction. However, a mind without distraction should also not be allowed to be idle. Use this time to dwell on me. Dwell on Sri Krishna as Ishwara or as Sri Krishna, the Atma. See me in your-self. Do Atma dhyanam. This Atma Dhyanam is also not easy. However, with integration it becomes easier. This is called Nidhidysanam.

Shlokas 12-25 is description of the Atma.

Dwelling on the essence of Shankaracharya's famous shloka below also helps.

“manobuddhyahamkaracittani naham

na ca srotrajivhe na ca ghrananetre
na ca vyomabhumih na tejo na vayuh
cidanandarupah sivoham sivoham.”

This is called Nidhidyasanam.

Shloka # 62:

“Attachment to objects” is born when one ponders on them. Of attachment is born desire, and of desire, wrath.”

From this shloka onwards Sri Krishna teaches Thought discipline. Before this he taught sensory restraint. Sensory restraint is easier than restraining one’s mind. This is also called Manonigraha or Kshama.

What happens if you do not restrain your thoughts? When one interacts with the world many things enter your mind. You cannot avoid the world entering your mind. This is called Vishaya Dhyanam. Ishwara Dhyanam is difficult while Vishaya dhyanam is easy. Vishaya means sense objects. Ask yourself if it is healthy and worthwhile to fantasize. If you are alert, you can curb the thoughts. It will stop a feeble thought from becoming a powerful one.

Thus sense objects cause feeble thoughts that by constant reinforcement become strong thoughts.

As per Vedas a word in itself is neither joy or sorrow. We are the one’s who create the joy and sorrow.

When you dwell on something the mind tends to get attached to it. This is called Sangaha or fancy or yearning for something. The mind fantasizes about things and I feel I will be more complete if I get it. As we keep dwelling on it, it then becomes “ I want it” and then “ I cannot live without it”. This can apply to an object or person. Thus, the height of this fantasy is called Kama. One is trapped or enslaved by the

thought. When this happens I have forgotten all my teachings.

So here is how it works:

Vishaya Dhyanam> Vishaya Sangaha>Vishaya Kama>Vishaya Krodha>Budhi Nashaha.

Kama, we have already described as the height of fantasy or height of desire. Kama typically has two results.

- If the kama is not fulfilled, it results in anger also called Krodha.
- If Kama is fulfilled it leads to more desire also called Lobha.

Anger is desire in another form. Anger wants to destroy the source of obstruction.

With Lobha, the fulfilled Kama results in wanting more of it. There is no end to this desire. It leads to greed. Dhamaputra himself gambled and lost because of greed. Thus, kama leads to Lobha.

Shloka 63:

“From wrath arises delusion; failure of memory. Due to this latter, intelligence perishes, and from its loss total destruction ensues.”

When mind is in anger discriminative power, decency, dignity etc. are lost. I forget the person in front of me (father, mother, guru etc.). Americans call it, getting mad. Temporary madness occurs. All learning is not available to me. Knowledge was to be available to me in a crisis. Swamiji calls anger a Virus (vital information resources under seize). Anger is a virus for our brain computer. So, our knowledge is temporarily lost. Then there is loss of memory. Once knowledge is obstructed, discriminative power is permanently lost. This loss of Budhi is loss of human life.

If you want to shout at somebody, do it with thinking, rather than impulsively. In impulsive action we lose our purushartha.

(Note: **Puruṣārtha** means an “object of human pursuit”. It is a key concept in Hinduism, and refers to the four proper goals or aims of a human life. The four **puruṣārthas** are Dharma (righteousness, moral values), Artha (prosperity, economic values), Kāma (pleasure, love, psychological values) and Mokṣa (liberation, spiritual values).

Shloka # 64:

“Approaching objects with senses free from attachment and aversion, and controlled by the mind, the man who has mastered his mind wins serenity.”

Now, Sri Krishna comes back to sense control again. He places a lot of importance to Indriya Nigraha. He tells Arjuna: “May you perceive sense objects through the sense organs but do not allow Raga (attachment or an object of joy) or Dvesha (dislike or an object of sorrow) to form. Do not allow this misconception to come in. Never get addicted to anything. Let sense organs obey your mind. It is easy to say no first, later it becomes more and more difficult. This is a life of mastery. This is a person with self-control. In this shloka Atma means instrument or mind. In such a person there is no more violent emotions. He is able to see any situation and act calmly without getting agitated. If an argument develops, he walks away from it. This way, your composure is back very soon. So, you have to be very alert.

The word Prasadam in the shloka means peace of mind or shanthi.

Swamiji says, to stop an argument does not mean I am conceding. It just means I have postponed. It avoids mental turbulence. This is very important in assimilation of knowledge.

With best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 30

Greetings All,

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

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

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

And the **second attribute** is “because I am as I am; I do not require things to complete me.” Missing things in life is desire. Thus, one has desire for marriage or a home or a car. The seeking for the missing is the beginning of desire. The Sthithapragyaha, however approaches this differently. He feels “I am happy as I am”. He does not miss anything, or need anything. Possessing and needing are different, says Swamiji. Possessing does not mean that the object I possess binds me. However, in case of need it is the need that makes me the

possessed one. So, never be the possessed. Sarva Kama Tyaga or no more need for things.

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

The **fourth attribute** is Vairagyam. He does not emotionally depend upon anything. Emotional dependence is our biggest problem.

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

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

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

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

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

Upto shloka # 57 Sri Krishna talks of a person who has converted knowledge to emotional strength. Thus, from a

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

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

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

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

“manobuddhyahamkaracittani naham

na ca srotrajivhe na ca ghrananetre

na ca vyomabhumih na tejo na vayuh

cidanandarupah sivo ham sivo ham.”

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

2. **Indriya Nigraha:** This is the second discipline of regulation of sense organs. Until knowledge becomes steady, we should avoid violent emotions. They are detrimental to Vedanta. Knowledge must be protected. It is like protecting a sapling from heavy rain, winds etc. Once it becomes a tree it cannot be destroyed. Emotions come through our five sense organs of sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa, and gandha. This five-fold world is gatecrashing into my mind. They enter the mind through the five doors and any of them can disturb the mind. Avoid such things that can disturb us.

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

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

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

(Raga: emotional attachment, Likes.

Dvesha: dislikes

Kama: lust, craze, desire

krodha :anger, hatred

lobha: greed, miserliness, narrow-minded

moha : delusory emotional attachment)

This is indriya nigrahaḥ.

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

Someone tells you your comments are nonsense. You get upset. You keep dwelling on his comments and this keeps building up in your mind. Suddenly a molehill of a comment builds itself into a mountain of anger. No event in itself produces a momentary emotion. Rather, it gradually builds up to a powerful emotion. Thought build up is in my hand. I can control it. This is mental regulation. I can observe the event in my mind to learn from it and then drop it.

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

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

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

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

Shloka # 59:

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

Addictions are of two types:

1) Sensory and

2) Mental.

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

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

Shloka 60:

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

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

Pramathini Manthanam means powerful churning rod (sense organs). Our five sense organs are constantly churning our mind. They can churn our mind into violence. Words are the biggest problem. They can take away the mind from Vedanta. One

word uttered by someone can disturb us so violently from all the teachings of Gita that temporarily I can become a violent animal. We must be alert and balanced at all times.

With best wishes

Bagawat Geeta, Class 29

Greetings All,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This process is called Nidhidhyasanam.

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

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

Shloka # 55:

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

Characteristics of a Sthitha Pragyaha:

1. Gyani does not have any expectations meaning he has performed Kama Tyaga. When an expectation is not fulfilled, I get upset. Expectations are a source of sorrow. I, however, will behave, as I want. If I ask someone to do something, without expectation, it is a non-poisonous expectation. Usually this sort of expectation is for the benefit the other person. Expectation becomes poisonous when my expectation is not met and I become upset. This is called Samsara. Gyani has no expectations from anyone. So, expectations have to be dropped.
2. He is full and complete in himself because he feels, I am “I”. If the completeness is dependent, you are not a

gyani. This is called Atma Tushtih or Self Sufficiency.

3. Samatvam: One with a poised state of mind. How often am I disturbed? What is intensity of disturbance? How long is the recovery time? One should consider maintaining an emotional log to discover one's state of evolution. A gyani is, for most part, not disturbed at all.

Shloka # 56:

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

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

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

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

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

Thus: Raga>Bhaya>Krodha.

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

Shloka # 57:

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

Sri Krishna describing Sthita Pragyaha Lakshanani says he is one who is free. Gyani is Anabhisnehaha. Sneha means attachment or stickiness. One who is in Sneha is attached and as such weak. A Gyani is one who loves everyone but does not get stuck on any one. This psychological freedom is called Anabhisnehaha.

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

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

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

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

With best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Baghavat Geeta, Class 28

Greetings All,

Shloka # 55:

Sri Krishna answered:

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

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

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

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

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

3) But even this prajñā status is not enough, because the knowledge remains at the intellectual level and therefore in the third stage, he has to convert the intellectual knowledge into emotional strength, because throughout the life, it is our emotional personality that is interacting. Emotional personality is the one that stands out in all of us. Any little disturbance bothers us. This personality bears the brunt of every situation. And if that emotional personality is not transformed, knowledge will be there at one level, but in my day-to-day life, I may continue to go through the turmoils that I went through before. And therefore, if Vedanta should be of any practical use, I have to spend time, converting this knowledge into emotional strength, which is called Sthitha (Sthira) Pragyaha. This status should be great help, especially during a crisis.

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

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

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

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

Tyaga or renunciation is of two types.

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

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

Swamiji says there are two types of desires:

1) Allowed desires and

2) Not allowed desires.

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

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

for the disappointment as well. Citing an example consider you are watching your favorite TV show when the power goes off. I must be mentally prepared for this disappointment. This is converting the Kama from binding to non-binding or Shuddha Kama (Legitimate, moderate and nonbinding). Shudha Kama is allowed. Even Shankaracharya had desires that allowed him to write the Bhashyam. As per Vedas, even Bhagawan had desires.

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

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

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

So, Ashudha Kama should be renounced.

Shloka # 56:

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

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

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

Check for the following:

1. The frequency of mental disturbances, are they becoming less? Consider maintaining a daily diary.
2. Watch the intensity of mental disturbances. When intensity is small, the reaction goes away soon. When reactions are strong, it can overflow into the organ of speech. Speech can become harsh. If it overflows to physical body, shivering and other symptoms occur and both body and mind are affected.
3. How much time do I take to recover balance? Emotional trauma can take a long time to recover sometimes weeks, years, or even a lifetime. With knowledge recovery should be faster.

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

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

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

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

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

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

to the other person.

Gyani has love in his heart.

Take away from this class:

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

With best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 27

Shloka # 52:

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

Shloka # 53:

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

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

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

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

spectacles that are resolved in this knowledge of the Self.

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

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

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

Shloka 54:

Arjuna asks:

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

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

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

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

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

Thus, we have three definitions of an enlightened person.

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

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

Shloka # 55:

Sri Krishna answered:

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

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

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

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

Sthitapragyaha sadhanani:

1. What are his natural traits?

2. What are the disciplines to be practiced, to become an Sthita Pragyaha?

Sri Krishna does not discuss all sadhanas here.

Swamiji says everybody has to go through Karma Yoga and Gyana Yoga. Gyana Yoga has three stages:

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

somebody overtakes your car etc. You get angry and disturbed. Day to day life is a series of such disturbances. **One must free themselves from all unhealthy emotional responses.**

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

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

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

The mind of a Sthitha Pragyaha is now described:

1. Such a person is self sufficient, self-content and does not require external factors emotionally. He might require external factors to provide for food, clothing, shelter, but as far as his emotional being is concerned, he is not going to go with a begging bowl, asking each and everyone, whether you will take care of me. His life is for giving love and care, but his life is not for begging for love and care. What a wonderful attitude. As long as I beg, there will be sanctions. You know what a

sanction is? It is constant blackmail. His life is not for begging, but for giving. He also does not depend on the physical condition of his own body.

2. Once there is fullness in oneself then there is renunciation of all expectations and desires.

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

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

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 26

Shloka # 49:

“ Work impelled by the desire for fruit is indeed far inferior, evenness of mind being far above it. O Arjuna, Take

refuge in the evenness of intelligence. Pitiful are those impelled by the desire for the fruits of works.”

Shloka # 50:

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

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

Chapter 3 has two aspects of Karma Yoga.

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

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

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

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

What is the benefit of Karma Yoga?

Immediate benefit is peace of mind. There is no stress or

strain. Even relationship improves. However, Gita is talking about the ultimate benefits. First, mind becomes more refined. Interest in self-knowledge increases, as mind becomes purer and purer. Self-knowledge becomes more appealing. So, wherever he goes he will see only this topic. Soon, he will come to an appropriate Guru. Under him he graduates from Karma Yoga to Gyana Yoga. He then gets Gyanam and is then ultimately freed or liberated.

Definition of Karma Yoga is:

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

What is skill in action?

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

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

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

Shlok 51:

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

What are stages leading to liberation?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So it is also with animals.

I, as a human, am also an integral part of creation. There is a difference between animals and humans. Animal's growth is only physical. Human being grows physically, mentally, emotionally, and intellectually. Human grows to show love, compassion and a capacity to share. Vasudaiva Kudumbakam.

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

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

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

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

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

Karma Lasts. After that he becomes a Videhi Mukthi or merges with God or Ana-mayam.

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

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

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

Shloka # 52:

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

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

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

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

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

myself.

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

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

Shloka # 53:

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

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

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

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

So, therefore, there is a big switchover, that is the discovery of purnatvam, abhayatvam, and anandaha, within oneself. And this is called self-discovery. Many people want love and care. This confused mind, which was struggling as to

where to turn to, to get some love and care with no one enquiring about us? Now it decides to go to its inner most source. It discovers the Atma.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With Best Wishes,

Bagawat Geeta, Class 25

Shloka # 47:

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

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

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

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

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

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

them; that freewill, is also called puruṣhartha.

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

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

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

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

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

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

If you can predict all other contributing factors you can predict the result. Meteorologists try to predict weather where there are many variables. Thus, there are many factors. Some are known, some are unknown, some are controllable and some are uncontrollable. Hence, I can never predict the result.

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

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

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

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

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

describes this further in the 6th chapter.

Withdrawal also contributes to growth. However, keep in mind that, what "Activity" can contribute "Withdrawal" cannot contribute. In its initial stages of spiritual growth, action alone helps, as in Grihastha-ashrama. Later in life, Vanaprastha, or withdrawal, helps. Action is most important. Withdrawal is only of secondary importance.

Shloka 48:

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

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

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

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

Citing example of the executive who was very successful.

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

This mental balance is called Samatvam. One who values inner

growth has Samatvam. In prosperity and adversity great people enjoy mental balance. Example of the rising sun was cited.

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

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

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

Shloka # 49:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shloka # 50:

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

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

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

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

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

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

With Best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta Class 24

Shloka # 45:

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

Continuing his teaching swamiji reminded us about shloka # 45.

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

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

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

Discussing Yoga and Kshema, Swamiji says, we need certain things for survival and they are called yoga or Apraptya

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

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

Shloka # 46:

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

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

Thus, all benefits of Karma Kanda are gained in the moksha of

a wise man. Therefore Arjuna choose moksha, become a Karma Yogi.

Shloka # 47:

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

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

Swamiji, defining a Karma Yogi says:

We act in the world. This is called Karma.

Karma Phalam is the result of our action.

We must have a healthy attitude towards our actions.

Attitude depends on understanding.

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

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

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

When Sri Krishna says you don't have a choice with respect to the results of your actions, what he means is, you do not have a “total” choice. Very often, you are just one of the contributing factors. Thus, in farming, you may till the land, sow the seed, water it etc., but you have no control on the cyclone that comes through damaging the crop. So Sri Krishna

is suggesting that we do not become optimistic or pessimistic but be more a realist or a rational person. In group decisions the individual has limited responsibility. Thus, in an election, I may vote for a candidate, however that person may not win. Many others also influence an election. However, this does not mean you should not vote. Your vote is very important, although the result may not be to your choosing. Therefore, our efforts do help determine the result, but keep in mind that there are other factors impacting the situation as well.

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

With Best wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy