

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

BHAGAVAD GEETA – 2

The Yoga of the Supreme Self

“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”

**TEXT
28.02**

Reflections by
SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA





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14	<i>"Tat Twam Asi" – Chand Up 6</i>	37	<i>Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living)</i>
15	<i>Dhyana Swaroopam</i>	38	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
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17	<i>Manah Shodhanam</i>	40	<i>108 Names of Pujya Gurudev</i>
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This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

– The Author, 21st March 2019, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Jayanti

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text
28.02



साङ्ख्ययोगः

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA – 2

“Yoga of the SUPREME SELF”

Sri Veda Vyasaji

Reflections

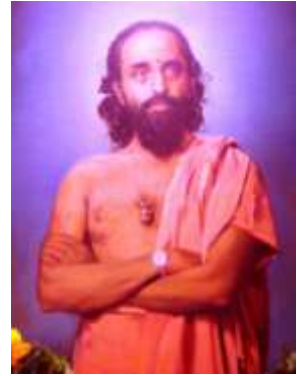
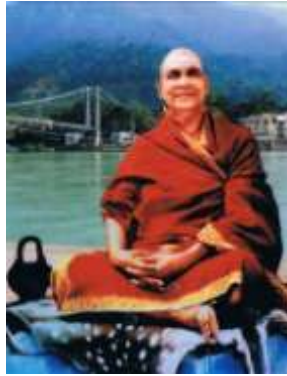
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Personal Dedication

1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan

who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;

2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj

the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;

3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)

for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;

4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji

my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.

BHAGAVAD GEETA - 2

“Yoga of the SUPREME SELF”

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

अथ द्वितीयोऽध्यायः ।

साङ्ख्ययोगः

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA

Discourse – 2 (72 Verses)

“Yoga of the SUPREME SELF”

LORD KRISHNA, IN THE first ten verses, brings Arjuna to a state of receptivity for the knowledge, and thereafter he begins imparting the knowledge. He starts with **Saankhya Yoga**, which describes what the highest Goal is. Then He follows it immediately with where Arjuna has to begin the Path, namely, **Karma Yoga**. The chapter ends with one of the most classical descriptions of the **Stithaprajna**, one who has perfected himself. This is the general thought-flow of this Chapter.

The Chapter can also be considered as a concise coverage of the entire theme of the Geeta. All the ideas which the Lord wishes to convey are covered in it. The rest of the Geeta is an expansion on each idea presented in this Chapter.



BHAGAVAD GEETA – 2
“Yoga of the SUPREME SELF”

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2.1 THE LORD RESPONDS TO ARJUNA

(Verses 1-3, 3 No.)

Verse 1: *Sanjaya: The Scenario at Present*

सञ्जय उवाच ।
तं तथा कृपयाविष्टमश्रुपूर्णाकुलेक्षणम् ।
विषीदन्तमिदं वाक्यमुवाच मधुसूदनः

॥ २-१॥

sañjaya uvāca |
taṁ tathā kṛpayāviṣṭamaśrupūrṇākulēkṣaṇam |
viṣīdantamidaṁ vākyaṁuvāca madhusūdanaḥ

॥ 2-1॥

	<i>Sanjaya Uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sanjaya said:</i>
1	<i>Tam tathaa kripayaa aavishtam</i>	<i>To him who was thus overcome with <u>pity</u>,</i>
2	<i>ashru poorna akulekshanam;</i>	<i>with eyes full of tears and <u>agitated</u>,</i>
3	<i>visheedantam idam vaakyam</i>	<i>and despondent, these words</i>
4	<i>uvaacha Madhusoodanah.</i>	<i>did Madhusudana (Krishna) speak:</i>

Sage Vyasa breathes a lot of meaning into innocuous looking introductory pronouns. Of this usage we have to be aware throughout the Geeta.

1 Tam: “To him” or “that”; a very significant *him* is meant here, referring to his past: This is the Arjuna we know as being the Brave Archer; the pride of his teacher, Dronacharya; The one who had no peer in the skill of archery.

Tathaa: “thus”; this word is to tell us the present state of Arjuna. It is an Arjuna who is not in control of himself; who is deluded; who has become a slave. The once valorous Arjuna has become an emotionally overwhelmed victim, willing to retreat from the battlefield. The past Arjuna has no semblance to the present one. Is it the same person?

Who can correctly see Arjuna’s condition? It is **Sanjaya**, “one who has full control over his senses.” The movement of a boat can be noticed only by a still observer.

Arjuna’s condition resembles that of Uttara on the battlefield. During the thirteenth year of the Pandava’s exile they had to live *incognito*. Arjuna impersonated a female role as Brihanala. In an emergency, ‘she’ played the role of charioteer to Uttara, the Prince. When the manly Uttara displayed effeminate fear in facing the enemy, it was the apparently ‘effeminate’ Brihanala who swapped roles with Uttara and single-handedly routed the enemy army! That was the power Arjuna once wielded. How did this get reversed? –

Kripayaa, “compassion”; as a result of pity and emotion that are misplaced. This is delusion in the guise of compassion. If one is poor, dressed in rags, or without shelter or food, we can rightly feel compassion for him; we can assist him out of compassion. But the Kauravas are known to be unrighteous and are unworthy of such compassion.

2 Tears and agitation, in its proper place, can be very purifying. If it were pure compassion, the eyes would have a pleasing, soft, appealing look, they will not show signs of

agitation. The agitation makes Arjuna's compassion dubious. It is a compassion that is misdirected – it is, in fact, not compassion but attachment.

3 The grief or despondency is an *effect* of Arjuna's delusion. There is an undertone in it that is asking, "Why me?" It is an ego-centred 'me' that is seeking a sympathetic hearing from Sri Krishna.

4 *Madhusoodana*: "one who has killed Madhu (an Asura)". Sanjaya seems to be hinting to King Dhritarashtra that here is one who has defeated the mighty Madhu in battle, and that He is capable of repeating that feat now. Won't Dhritarashtra yet consider withdrawing his troops from the battlefield?

Thus Sanjaya introduces Sri Krishna's first response to Arjuna. It is time for the Lord to speak, and thus do His bit to save Arjuna from being considered a traitor by the world. That is the scenario at the outset of Chapter 2.

Verse 2: *The Lord Strongly Disapproves*

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम् ।
अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यमकीर्तिकरमर्जुन

॥ २-२॥

śrībhagavānuvāca |
kutastvā kaśmalamidaṁ viṣamē samupasthitam |
anāryajuṣṭamasvargyamakīrtikaramarjuna

॥ 2-2॥

	<i>Shree Bhagavaan Uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>Kutah tvaa kashmalam idam</i>	<i>Whence has this dejection of yours,</i>
2	<i>vishame sam-upasthitam;</i>	<i>this <u>perilous condition</u>, come upon thee?</i>
3	<i>anaarya jushtam asvargyam</i>	<i>It is un-Aryan-like, heaven-excluding,</i>
4	<i>akeertikaram Arjuna.</i>	<i>and disgraceful, O Arjuna.</i>

The most significant part of this verse is Sri Krishna's direct, uncompromising disapproval of Arjuna's state of mind.

1-2 The opening words of the Lord clearly state the cause (dejection) and its effect (peril). If this is Arjuna's condition on the battlefield, the result can only be perilous ruin.

3-4 There is no mincing of words here. Later in the Geeta, the words are filled with more human understanding, more reflective explanation, and softer in impact, but the true response from which Sri Krishna never departs is seen in these opening lines. In just three key words, Sri Krishna expresses His clear, though unpalatable, response to Arjuna's strange turn in behaviour.

i) **Anaaryajushtam**: "unworthy"; ignoble. It is unlike Arjuna to behave like this, being a seasoned warrior, commanding the highest position in the Pandava army. Such behaviour is seen only amongst the lowly. In this first term, the Lord appeals to Arjuna's valour and his sense of duty, which he is clearly abandoning.

ii) **Aswargyam**: "heaven-excluding"; heading for hell. On the journey that is bound to take him to heavenly worlds, Arjuna is considering a U-turn that would lead him to hell! In

this second term, the Lord makes Arjuna aware of the stark contrast in the result of his action.

iii) **Akeerti-karam:** “disgraceful”; this behaviour is going to bring a bad name to Arjuna. People will talk about him in distasteful terms. In contrast, if he takes part he will gain great fame. In this third term, Sri Krishna appeals to Arjuna’s sense of pride. He teaches us that delusion twists our thinking and overturns our judgements head over heels.

These three words are an adequate reply to Arjuna’s long list of arguments of the last chapter. Sri Krishna is clearly not impressed by the arguments brought forth by Arjuna. These three words are like three hammer blows administered on Arjuna to bring him to his senses. One suffering from mental delusion needs this shock treatment in order to make his mind available for correction.

Acharyaji quoted a verse from the *Yajnavalkya Shruti* which says: “Be it your own brother, your own sons, your father-in-law, whoever – no one is beyond Royal justice. It is the duty of a King to bring to book all who trespass against morality.”

Verse 3: “Yield Not to Impotence”

क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।

क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप

॥ २-३॥

klaibyaṁ mā sma gamah pārtha naitattvayyupapadyatē |

kṣudram hṛdayadaurbalyaṁ tyaktvōttiṣṭha parantapa ॥ 2-3॥

1	<i>Klaibyam maa sma gamah, Paartha,</i>	<i>Yield not to impotence, O Partha!</i>
2	<i>na etat tvayi upapadyate;</i>	<i>It does not befit thee.</i>
3	<i>kshudram hridaya-daurbalyam</i>	<i>This mean <u>weakness of heart</u> –</i>
4	<i>tyaktvaa uttishtha, Parantapa.</i>	<i>cast it off! Stand up, O scorcher of foes!</i>

Krishna and Arjuna were of the same age, and they were close friends. This may help us to understand Sri Krishna’s frankness. In the fewest of words, Krishna tells Arjuna what He expects of him in these circumstances. The Lord’s words are direct, and go to the root of the solution. The only way to deal with delusion is to “cast it off”, not nurture it.

By simply addressing Arjuna with two different terms, opposite in nature, Sri Krishna addresses two major aspects of his personality:

1-2 Partha: “*descendent of Kunti*”. Sri Krishna, in order to bring about the desired change in Arjuna, starts by appealing to the quality of courage inherited from his mother. Arjuna’s decision to withdraw from battle is shown to be unbefitting of his glorious lineage.

Acharyaji paraphrased the Lord’s words: “Your mother (Kunti) was a brave woman. Arjuna, you come from a great family whose sons, including you, are all Devatas. Look what has come over you now! That Gandiva bow in your hand was held by Brahma for 1000 years, and another 500 years by Varuna. This very chariot was a special gift to you for the war. Be a man, Arjuna! Show manliness in your behaviour. Don’t be a eunuch.”

3-4 Parantapa: “*Scorcher of one’s foes*”. Having invoked Arjuna’s lineage, Sri Krishna now turns to his personal qualities quite apart from his inherited one. Weakness of heart has never been Arjuna’s quality, and is unbefitting to the occasion.

Acharyaji again re-phrased the Lord's words in proper context as follows:

"You, on your own merit, apart from your heritage, have been a terror to others in battle. You are no mean warrior yourself. Weakness of heart is meanness. I know elephants do not get up in a hurry, but when they do they can be devastating."

Despite being so powerful, Arjuna has succumbed to a 'small' weakness of delusion. Is this really telling us that delusion is a greatly underestimated foe of man? We think it is too small to deserve our attention, yet it could be our greatest weakness.



Lord Krishna & Arjuna blow their conches

2.2 ARJUNA ON THE DEFENSIVE

(Verses 4-10, 7 No.)

ARJUNA IS NOW GIVEN a second chance to respond – a second “bite at the cherry”. His words this time round are to be weighed against the initial response of Sri Krishna, which is not very palatable or sweet to his *Ego*, but which is precisely the cure needed by his Soul.

Arjuna has just received a hammering to his ego from his friend, Sri Krishna. It was not sympathetic or complimentary. They were tough blows. It was as if Krishna had said to him, “I do not expect you to do this. You are bringing disgrace to Me also.”

Throughout Chapter 1, Sri Krishna had remained silent. Arjuna was waiting for a reaction from Krishna, his **Friend**. Instead, he got a reaction from Krishna, the **Teacher**. Arjuna’s first reaction is to go on the defensive. He is unable to correct himself at once. He needs some more time, more explanation of the Lord’s course of action.

Arjuna picks up, point for point, each of the three criticisms levelled at him by Sri Krishna. He lays his dilemma squarely and honestly before Sri Krishna. He is in that inter-mediate zone in which he is unsure whether to take Krishna as his friend or as his teacher.

Verse 4: *Arjuna on the Defensive*

अर्जुन उवाच ।
कथं भीष्ममहं सङ्ख्ये द्रोणं च मधुसूदन ।
इषुभिः प्रतियोत्स्यामि पूजार्हावरिसूदन ॥ २-४॥
arjuna uvāca |
katham bhīṣmamaham saṅkhyē drōṇam ca madhusūdana |
iṣubhiḥ pratiyōtsyāmi pūjārhāvarisūdana || 2-4||

	<i>Arjuna Uvaacha:</i>	<i>Arjuna said:</i>
1	<i>Katham Bheeshmam aham sankhye</i>	<i>How shall I engage in battle with Bhishma</i>
2	<i>Dronam cha Madhusoodana;</i>	<i>and Drona, O Madhusudana,</i>
3	<i>ishubhih prati-yotsyaami</i>	<i>and fight them with arrows, (for they are)</i>
4	<i>poojaa-arhau, Arisoodana.</i>	<i><u>worthy of worship</u>, O destroyer of enemies?</i>

1-2 The feeling for his teachers is too strong in him. He just cannot see how he could bring himself to kill his own teachers Bhishma and Drona. He has always held them in the highest regard. They deserve to be worshipped, not killed; how could he pierce them with his arrows? Both Bhishma and Drona had the boon that they could not die except by their own consent. Bhishma was a Naishtik Brahmachari, a lifelong celibate, which gave him tremendous spiritual strength, and made him worthy of reverence.

3-4 We see that Arjuna's response challenges all three words which Sri Krishna used to describe his despondency. It shows how attentively Arjuna was listening to Sri Krishna; it shows how deeply affected he was by Sri Krishna's words; in the process, it also shows the literary brilliance of Sage Vyasa, and the analytical brilliance of Acharya.

- i) Was he being unworthy? Which worthy person would attack his own teachers?
- ii) Was he denying himself entry into heaven? What right has a person to gain entry in heaven, if he does the atrocious deed of killing his own teachers?
- iii) Was he disgraceful? What could be more disgraceful than to kill one's own teacher?

We also had a taste of the analytical brilliance of Acharya. He brought to our attention the subtle distinctions that separate three types of logic:

- i) Factual logic: This type always checks out the correctness of all facts before coming to conclusions.
- ii) Emotional logic: This is swayed heavily by emotion (which is really an *effect* of delusion) and is invariably accompanied by wet eyes.
- iii) Legal logic: This is devoid of any foundation of truth. It is a ruthless application of logic that can be twisted to suit one's desired conclusion, as typically used by lawyers.

Arjuna's logic fits into the second category, whereas Sri Krishna's is from the first. Arjuna is perplexed because his vision is limited to his small circle; Sri Krishna is viewing things from the larger standpoint. His circle is all-encompassing. The two views are bound to differ. Only from a wide perspective, can Truth be seen.

We see more of Arjuna's limited vision in the verses that follow...

Firstly, the change of meter in the next four verses conveys to us the heavy load of emotion carried by Arjuna.

When we depart from the Truth, emotions and sentiments hold sway over us. Emotional logic has great convincing power. As much as Arjuna is convinced of this logic, Sri Krishna is unmoved by it because He knows it starts with a wrong premise.

Arjuna's premise is: "One should never engage in war with relatives or teachers." Such a premise is incorrect as truth and justice override such considerations.

Verse 5 ***The "Bread of Beggary"***

गुरुनहत्वा हि महानुभावान्
श्रेयो भोक्तुं भैक्ष्यमपीह लोके ।
हत्वार्थकामांस्तु गुरुनिहैव
भुञ्जीय भोगान् रुधिरप्रदिग्धान्

॥ २-५॥

gurūnahatvā hi mahānubhāvān

śrēyō bhōktuṁ bhaikṣyamapīha lōkē |

hatvārthakāmāṁstu gurūnihaiva

bhuñjīya bhōgān rudhirapradigdhān

॥ 2-5॥

1	<i>Guroon ahatvaa hi mahaa anubhaavaan</i>	<i>Instead of slaying teachers who are <u>most noble</u>, indeed</i>
2	<i>shreyah bhoktum bhaikshyam api iha loke;</i>	<i>It is better to eat “the bread of beggary”; for even here in this world,</i>
3	<i>hatvaa artha-kaamaan tu guroon iha eva</i>	<i>for the sake of wealth and desire, if I kill my teachers, then those very</i>
4	<i>bhunjeeya bhogaan rudhih apradigdhaan.</i>	<i>objects of enjoyment I wish to enjoy will be <u>stained by their blood</u>.</i>

Arjuna gives himself two options:

1-2 i) If he avoids the fight, he would be happier to eat the “bread of beggary”;

3-4 ii) If he fights and wins, all his enjoyments will be “tainted in blood” and he will live every moment suffering from his conscience.

Artha-Kaamaan: We note that amongst the “enjoyments” only wealth and desire are mentioned. Ungenerous to himself, Arjuna precludes Dharma (virtue) and Moksha (liberation), as he is convinced he would have transgressed them.

The logic is sound, but the premise on which it is based is incorrect.

Arjuna’s Honesty Commendable

Arjuna is honestly saying what he feels in his heart. His honesty corresponds to a patient narrating his condition to his doctor. He is not hiding his feelings. That is a good sign and it is recognized as an asset by his Doctor who has to treat him. Krishna welcomes Arjuna’s openness, as we shall soon see. One who is in delusion cannot help seeing things from that angle. It is for the Doctor to do that by which the patient’s vision is rectified.

Verse 6: Arjuna’s Intellect Disengaged

न चैतद्विद्मः कतरन्नो गरीयो
यद्वा जयेम यदि वा नो जयेयुः ।

यानेव हत्वा न जिजीविषामस्-

तेऽवस्थिताः प्रमुखे धार्तराष्ट्राः

॥ २-६॥

na caitadvidmaḥ katarannō garīyō

yadvā jayēma yadi vā nō jayēyuh |

yānēva hatvā na jijīviṣāmas-

tē:'vasthitāḥ pramukhē dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ

॥ 2-6॥

1	<i>Na cha etat vidmaah katarat nah gareeyah</i>	<i>I can <u>scarcely say</u> which for us (the Pandavas) will be better:</i>
2	<i>yat vaa jayema yadi vaa nah jayeyuh;</i>	<i>that we should conquer them, or that they should conquer us.</i>
3	<i>yaan eva hatvaa na jjeevishaamah te</i>	<i>After slaying whom we would wish not to live, they</i>
4	<i>avasthitaah pramukhe Dhaartaraashtraah.</i>	<i>stand facing us – namely, the sons of Dhritarashtra.</i>

1-3 “To Do or Not to Do” – that is Arjuna’s dilemma, and it is typical of the indecisive mind. Acharyaji quoted two selected verses from Hindu scriptures which throw light on Arjuna’s wavering mind.

“Even if it is one’s Guru, if a principle is violated, the necessary action has to be taken to correct it.”

“A small child, a Brahmana and even a Guru, who have become Atatayins (felons) should without hesitation not be spared due punishment, including capital punishment.”

4 There is a time and place for such assessments; it should have been done long before the battle is declared, and in the boardroom in consultation with others.

Acharyaji quoted a verse from the Tirukkural: “Before entering an action, decide: i) if it is right; ii) if you have the capacity for it; iii) what your opponent’s power is; and iv) who is supporting who.” In today’s management terms, this would be a SWOT analysis, i.e. gauging one’s **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats.

LIGHT ON ARJUNA’S DILEMMA

Arjuna’s indecision is the message conveyed in this verse. It indicates that Arjuna is being dominated by his mind, the natural quality of which is to be indecisive. The intellect, which is the decision-making instrument, has clearly been disengaged and is not available to him. This adds to his predicament greatly. It means that personal considerations predominate in his thinking, rather than the principles for which the war was declared.

Arjuna himself had made the following statement prior to the war. Speaking to Duryodhana once, he said, “You speak arrogantly. Whose strength are you taking support from (referring to Bhishma and Drona)? We shall take their life in this battle.” [In the war Arjuna eventually killed Bhishma, and Drishtadyumna killed Dronacharya.] He had taken this resolve on behalf of his brothers. For such a strong-minded person to resort to ‘beggary’ now is tantamount to Nishiddha Karma (forbidden action).

It is easy for us as observers to see and assess Arjuna’s difficult condition. For Arjuna himself, entangled as he is in emotionally-charged thoughts, it is a near impossibility. From the security of our study room, we see how engulfed Arjuna is in his mind, and what confusion he is steeped in. Would we have done better than Arjuna? Could we have the same detached view of ourselves in the thick of our own trials as we expect Arjuna to have?

For Arjuna there is light at the end of the tunnel – from the very depths of his own mental anguish, out of the womb of pain that he is experiencing, there emerges something that saves him from disgrace . . .

Verse 7: ***Arjuna Surrenders to Krishna***

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः

पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसम्मूढचेताः ।

यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे
शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम्

॥ २-७॥

kāraṇya-dōṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ

pr̥cchāmi tvāṁ dharmasammūḍhacētāḥ |

yacchrēyaḥ syānniścitaṁ brūhi tanmē

śiṣyastē:'haṁ śādhi mām tvāṁ prapannam

॥ 2-7॥

1	<i>Kaarpanya-doshah upahata swabhaavah</i>	<i>Overpowered by the taint of pity is my whole being.</i>
2	<i>pricchhaami tvaam dharma-sammoodha-chetaah;</i>	<i>At this point I ask Thee for <u>guidance</u>, for my mind is <u>confused as to duty</u>.</i>
3	<i>yah shreyah syaat nischitam broohi tanme</i>	<i>That which is for my ultimate good, tell me that decisively.</i>
4	<i>shishyah te aham shaadhi maam tvaam prapannam.</i>	<i>I come to Thee as a <u>disciple</u>; instruct me who has <u>taken refuge</u> in Thee.</i>

1-2 Arjuna has one great redeeming quality in him – he *admits* that his mind is too clouded for him to think decisively on what he should do. He hands over the reins of his intellect to Krishna. This crucial surrender draws forth the Lord’s Grace in his time of need.

An Introspective Arjuna

3-4 Arjuna is willing to turn the searchlight within and becomes introspective. Fortunately for him he has the world’s Number One friend and confidante in the Lord Himself beside him. He willingly places himself at the mercy of Sri Krishna, who is very dear to him, and in whom he has confided his innermost thoughts, and whom he can trust without reservation to decide what is good for him.

At this critical juncture, it is sincere humility and surrender that provide him with a lifeline to haul him out of trouble. The rest is in the divine hands of Sri Krishna.

ARJUNA’S CHANGE OF HEART

What caused Arjuna to switch from “I am right” to “I think I am wrong”? In spite of the heavily charged emotion in his mind, Arjuna is still capable of taking a square look at himself. He recognises the flaw in his sense of “overwhelming pity” and his confusion about his duty. This is the exceptional case of Arjuna. Arjuna here represents the spiritual aspirant poised to begin the spiritual journey.

There is a definite change in Arjuna. He reveals a quality that is very uncommon among those in power and who experience a similar deluded mental condition. It is rather rare for one to admit his weakness, yet Arjuna has been able to come to that point. He recognizes his own weakness, delusion and confusion. It is also rare for one to give all the arguments that Arjuna has given, and then give them up as well.

He recognizes that on his own he cannot overcome his state of mind. He sees that he needs the guidance of his Friend. He sees that he needs to get help from Him. In spiritual terms, Arjuna recognizes the need for a Guru to take charge of his life.

There is a saying that rings in our mind: “To err is human”. Arjuna has just taken it a notch further – **“To accept that one has erred is to be a better human!”**

Arjuna’s Mind

There is no need to go into Arjuna’s mind; he has himself opened it up to us in the presence of Sri Krishna. However, for our benefit, Acharyaji attempted it anyway:

“I know my Dharma is to fight at the moment. But there is a confusion here. What I should be doing is also what I feel I should not be doing. You have told me it is wrong, yet I cannot overcome it. What am I to do? I cannot decide myself. Please, Krishna, I seek your counsel now. Tell me what I should do. I feel like a fish out of water. A very strong feeling stops me from doing my duty. Tell me what is Sreyas or good for me. You alone can do that. I know you have just told me what I should do, but tell it decisively again for my sake.”

The great Indian spiritual tradition is being seen here: It is the disciple’s duty to go on asking until he understands; and the Guru’s duty to go on explaining until the student understands.

Arjuna’s Surrender:

Arjuna pre-empts any doubt that Sri Krishna may have to repeat His instruction. Arjuna tells Sri Krishna that he now stands before Him as a disciple, not as a friend. He places himself entirely in His hands.

What is amazing to see in Arjuna is that he is not clinging to his viewpoint. This made Acharyaji remark, “When it is ready for liberation, one’s own Self appears as one’s Guru.”

Arjuna has just taken the most important step that saves him from disgrace – he surrenders unreservedly to the Lord. “Krishna, I place the strings of my life in your hands. The tune is Yours; the enjoyment, too, is Yours!”

Verse 8: *The Sacrifice that Ends Sorrow*

न हि प्रपश्यामि ममापनुद्याद्
यच्छोकमुच्छोषणमिन्द्रियाणाम् ।
अवाप्य भूमावसपत्नमृद्धं
राज्यं सुराणामपि चाधिपत्यम्

॥ २-८॥

na hi prapaśyāmi mamāpanudyād
yacchōkamucchōṣaṇamindriyāṇām |
avāpya bhūmāvasapatnamṛddham
rājyaṁ surāṇāmapī cāधिपत्यam

॥ 2-8॥

1	<i>Na hi prapashyaami mama apanudyaat</i>	<i>I do not see the removal of my</i>
2	<i>yat shokam ucchhah ushanam indriyaanaam;</i>	<i>grief, which intensely burns my senses,</i>
3	<i>avaapya bhoomau asapatnam riddham</i>	<i>by attaining unrivalled prosperity on Earth</i>
4	<i>raajyam suraanaam api cha adhipatyam.</i>	<i>or dominion and lordship over the Gods.</i>

This verse focuses on the price that Arjuna is prepared to pay for being guided by Sri Krishna out of Sorrow or Despondency as it is named in the Geeta. To be freed from sorrow the price is immaterial. Even the world's billionaires know what it costs to be relieved of pain. Arjuna makes a sacrifice that few in this world would dare to make.

1-2 The relief of the despondency of Arjuna is not a physical problem. It is not even a mental problem. The most prosperous kingdom on earth together with access to every imaginable pleasure in quality and quantity is being wagered for relief from this sorrow. Arjuna's father was the Lord of Heaven. Taking over Indra's job would have been like continuing the 'family business' for him! But Arjuna is not keen on Lordship in heaven. He is not interested in such things for they will increase his sorrow. This is no ordinary sorrow; indeed, it is the sorrow of being bound to cosmic delusion. That is what makes it a Yoga.

The Birth of the Bhagavad Geeta

The sorrow Arjuna feels is so intense it has the proportions of being close to birth pangs. Would that not be a most appropriate simile in this situation? These are Arjuna's last words on this subject. It is a moment pregnant with expectation, a moment that could turn over his whole life, a moment that is poised to change the spiritual history of all mankind.

Arjuna's despondency represents the despondency of all mankind of all ages.

The battlefield has become a "maternity ward" for a while, with Arjuna feeling the pangs of labour. In a few minutes, the great *Bhagavad Geeta* is to be born through him to the world in the very midst of a battlefield!

The birth of a scripture rarely gets more dramatic than this!

The Antidote for Sorrow is Knowledge

Kaarpanya was the word used in the previous verse for "pity". Now it is *Shokam* or "sorrow". What is the antidote for sorrow?

3-4 If joy were the antidote, why would Arjuna cast aside all the joys that the world is able to give? Not even heavenly Lordship attracts Arjuna. He asks Krishna to relieve him of this sorrow, which means he has the faith that He is able to do so. And what can Krishna give him in the middle of the battlefield?

The answer is Knowledge. Knowledge is the only antidote for sorrow. It can get rid of sorrow once and for all. That is what Sri Krishna does in the message He is about to deliver through Arjuna to the world – the Bhagavad Geeta.

Acharyaji grew eloquent on this theme, showing us how dear knowledge is to his heart: "When a person tries to put an end to sorrow through *joy*, he is a pleasure-seeker. When he tries to put an end to it through *knowledge*, he is a Truth-seeker!"

Again Acharyaji went into Arjuna's mind: "Krishna, I trust You, I know you will not douse my sorrow with something superficial. You are the only one who can give me a lasting solution, something that will be for my long-term good."

Thus is Krishna entrusted with the responsibility of building Arjuna's spiritual life.

Verse 9: “I Will Not Fight”

सञ्जय उवाच ।
एवमुक्त्वा हृषीकेशं गुडाकेशः परन्तप ।
न योत्स्य इति गोविन्दमुक्त्वा तूष्णीं बभूव ह ॥ २-९॥
sañjaya uvāca |
ēvamuktva hr̥ṣīkēśaṁ guḍākēśaḥ parantapa |
na yōtsya iti gōvindamuktva tūṣṇīm babhūva ha ॥ 2-9॥

	<i>Sanjaya Uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sanjaya said:</i>
1	<i>Evam uktvaa Hrisheekesham</i>	<i>Having spoken thus to Hrishikesha (Krishna),</i>
2	<i>Gudakeshah parantapah;</i>	<i>the “Conqueror of sleep” or “Destroyer of foes”</i>
3	<i>na yotsya iti Govindam</i>	<i>said to Govinda thus: “<u>I will not fight!</u>”</i>
4	<i>uktvaa tooshneem babhoova ha.</i>	<i>Saying this, he became <u>silent</u>.</i>

Verse 10: “Arjuna Chaitanya” is Born

तमुवाच हृषीकेशः प्रहसन्निव भारत ।
सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये विषीदन्तमिदं वचः ॥ २-१०॥
tamuvāca hr̥ṣīkēśaḥ prahasanniva bhārata |
sēnayōrubhayōrmadhyē viṣīdantamidam vacaḥ ॥ 2-10॥

5	<i>Tam uvaacha Hrisheekeshah</i>	<i>To him (Arjuna), the “Master of senses” spoke,</i>
6	<i>prahasan iva Bhaarata;</i>	<i>as if smiling, O Descendent of Bharata (Dhritarashtra),</i>
7	<i>senayoh ubhayoh madhye</i>	<i>whilst in the midst of the <u>two armies</u>, and while</i>
8	<i>visheedantam idam vachah.</i>	<i>overwhelmed by <u>despondency</u>, the following words:</i>

With these two verses ends the full report of Arjuna’s condition. We are at the dawn of a new phase of the Geeta – the teaching of Sri Krishna is about to begin. Sri Veda Vyasa separates the two portions by allowing two verses to Sanjaya as a “Programme Director”!

1-4 In the first verse Sanjaya closes the curtains on Arjuna’s despondency.

5-8 In the second, Sanjaya lifts up the curtain to usher in the wisdom teaching of the Lord that will end seventeen chapters later with an Arjuna healed of his despondency, and revived to enter the fray as the vintage Arjuna we know him to be.

By devices such as this, we see the brilliance of Veda Vyasa as a literary craftsman who keeps our pulse beating as he unfolds the human drama lodged within the Geeta.

8 Visheedantam: Since verse 1.26 (i.e. 32 verses ago), Arjuna has not recovered from his “despondency”. We have seen many sides of this despondency, but at root it is one of delusion; he is seeing things out of context due to delusion, and that has taken the form of attachment to his kith and kin. The moral arguments he poses need not be taken literally; they are out of context with the war situation. They are offshoots of his “Delusion”.

On the spiritual ladder Dhritarashtra stands in contrast to Arjuna. Arjuna has just begun climbing up; Dhritarashtra seems to be plunging down heedlessly.

THE BIRTH OF “ARJUNA CHAITANYA”

What Sri Krishna had said in two verses (2.2 and 2.3) was aimed at an Arjuna who had just cast away his bow and arrow and was plunged in despair. It was a shock treatment to a patient who had become “lifeless” on the battlefield.

The Krishna we are going to hear from the next verse has a new tone in His voice. He is **Prahasan**, “as if smiling”. The content is going to be unchanged. His message is repeated, but his manner of doing so is now welcoming. The few words that Arjuna has just uttered have pleased the Lord. It is exactly what Sri Krishna had wished for. The context has changed now. He is speaking to a different Arjuna; Arjuna is now a *disciple*, not a ‘friend’.

With a little bit of imagination, we can presume that while Sanjaya is busy with his “change of scene” speech, Sri Krishna drew Arjuna close to Him and whispered into his ear the Mantra of initiation. Then He handed over two pieces of yellow cloth to him. To the new “Arjuna Chaitanya”, Krishna gives a warm smile, welcoming him as a new Brahmachari (initiate) into the spiritual world!

Krishna smiles when about to say these words. Could He be smiling mockingly? No, there is now no need to add salt to Arjuna’s wounds. A spiritual Teacher does not devastate his disciple; he educates him. The three blows earlier were given to His *friend* Arjuna. Now, to the *disciple* Arjuna, he has to give knowledge. Every Teacher is most pleased when he is called upon to do that. That is the true significance of the Lord’s smile.

“Now My job begins,” says a smiling Krishna. What job? His Job as an Avatara!

Bharata: Addressing Dhritarashtra by this name, Sanjaya is conveying to him a subtle message: “One of your own people is going to be listening to the Lord’s message. Does that not make you proud? And listen to what message He is going to give – Fight, Arjuna! You can stop that needless killing even at this late hour if you call back your armies. Won’t you do that for the sake of your country, for Bharat Mata?”



2.3 THE GEETA PHILOSOPHY COMMENCES

INTRODUCTION TO THE GEETA TEACHING

By Pujya Acharyaji

THE *BHAGAVAD GEETA* OCCURS in the *Bhishma Parva* of the *Mahabharata* [Chapters 25 to 42]. It is very detailed in content. Every possible aspect of the spiritual path is covered in it. Hence it is ranked as one of the *Prasthan-Traya*, the three scriptures which claim the highest degree of authenticity in Hinduism.

The *Geeta* is universal; its teaching is for all times and all climes. Man's core pursuits and concerns are dealt with. For example: How to get rid of fear? How to conquer the mind? How to meditate? What is man's duty on earth? – and so on. Social issues are not discussed here, such as poverty, women's empowerment, etc. However, the teachings of the *Geeta* provide a sound basis for such issues to be dealt with in the context of the social and economic climate prevailing at any time in history.

In our Shastras, the *Geeta* ranks very highly. It is considered to be the book for the common Hindu, i.e. it is a Dharma Shastra. It is also regarded as a Pramana Grantha (a valid source of knowledge). All other schools of philosophy have to write a commentary on the *Geeta* in order to establish their standpoints relative to that of the *Geeta*. Many courses on Management today are based on the *Geeta*.

Topics that would interest a particular group are picked out and viewed in the light of the *Geeta*, for example, "Efficiency at Work"; "A Spiritual Code of Ethics in Business", and many other subjects of common interest. Gandhiji found it invaluable in anchoring him on the spiritual path as well as throwing light on the political issues of India's freedom. Similarly, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who wrote the *Geeta Rahasya*; Sri Vinoba Bhave, who wrote *Talks on the Gita* while in prison; and Sant Jnaneshwar who wrote the *Jnaneshwari*, a commentary on the *Geeta* in Marathi – all these great ones have thrown light on the *Geeta*.

The *Geeta* has something for all that come to it. Primarily, it is a text on the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, teaching the path of realizing the Divine Self of Man.

The Blessed Lord Speaks:

Listen to the World Teacher lovingly guide His disciple along the path of Self-Knowledge. From this verse to the end of the *Geeta*, the message of Brahma Vidya marches ahead for 17 Discourses. Each discourse is called "***Yoga***" as each one is a segment on the Path towards union with the Supreme Lord.

These discourses may be split into three parts:

- i) ***Twam Pada***: "You". Discourses 1 to 6 are about the seeking individual Jeeva;
- ii) ***Tat Pada***: "That". Discourses 7 to 12 are about the Supreme Being;
- iii) ***Asi Pada***: "Are". Discourses 13 to 18 are about the identity of *Twam* and *Tat*.

We have just begun learning about *Twam*, that is, ourselves – our essential nature; our functions, duties or role in society; our mind and intellect; and so on.

PREFACE TO THE GEETA BHASHYA

By Sri Adi Shankaracharyaji (around 8th century A.D.)

Taken from his Bhashya (Commentary)

TWO BROAD HIGHWAYS ARE accepted in the Vedas for man's spiritual growth:

i) **Nivritti Marga**: This is the path of Brahma Jnana, also the subject matter of Vedanta, and the main teaching in the *Geeta*. This path is based on the principle of *Vairagya* or dispassion and leads one to liberation from Samsara or the cycle of births and deaths. It leads the aspirant to attain complete union with the Supreme Brahman, who is none other than one's true Self. It is the path of pure spirituality, there being no reference to any religious observances, worship or performance of any duties. It is not against these practices; it is simply not determined by them.

ii) **Pravritti Marga**: This is the path more commonly trod by mankind, as it is more within the common experience of most people. Whilst the Nivritti Marg is a path of renunciation, the Pravritti Marg is a path of involvement, engagement and enjoyment of the physical manifestations of this world. The path includes but is not restricted to the multitude of religious rites and rituals prescribed in the Vedas, the Karma or actions to be done or avoided, the various forms of Upasana or worship to be done to achieve various goals, even the heavenly worlds. This path in itself does not lead one to the goal set in Nivritti Marga, but its experience eventually makes one realize the futility of its impermanent goals. Thus dispassion arises in an indirect way through it.

It is said that the Nivritti Marga was taught to the 4 sages (Sanaka, etc) who were Sannyasis or renunciates; while the Pravritti Marga was taught to Grihasthas or householders such as Mareechi and Prajapati.

The Cause and Solution of Arjuna's Despondency:

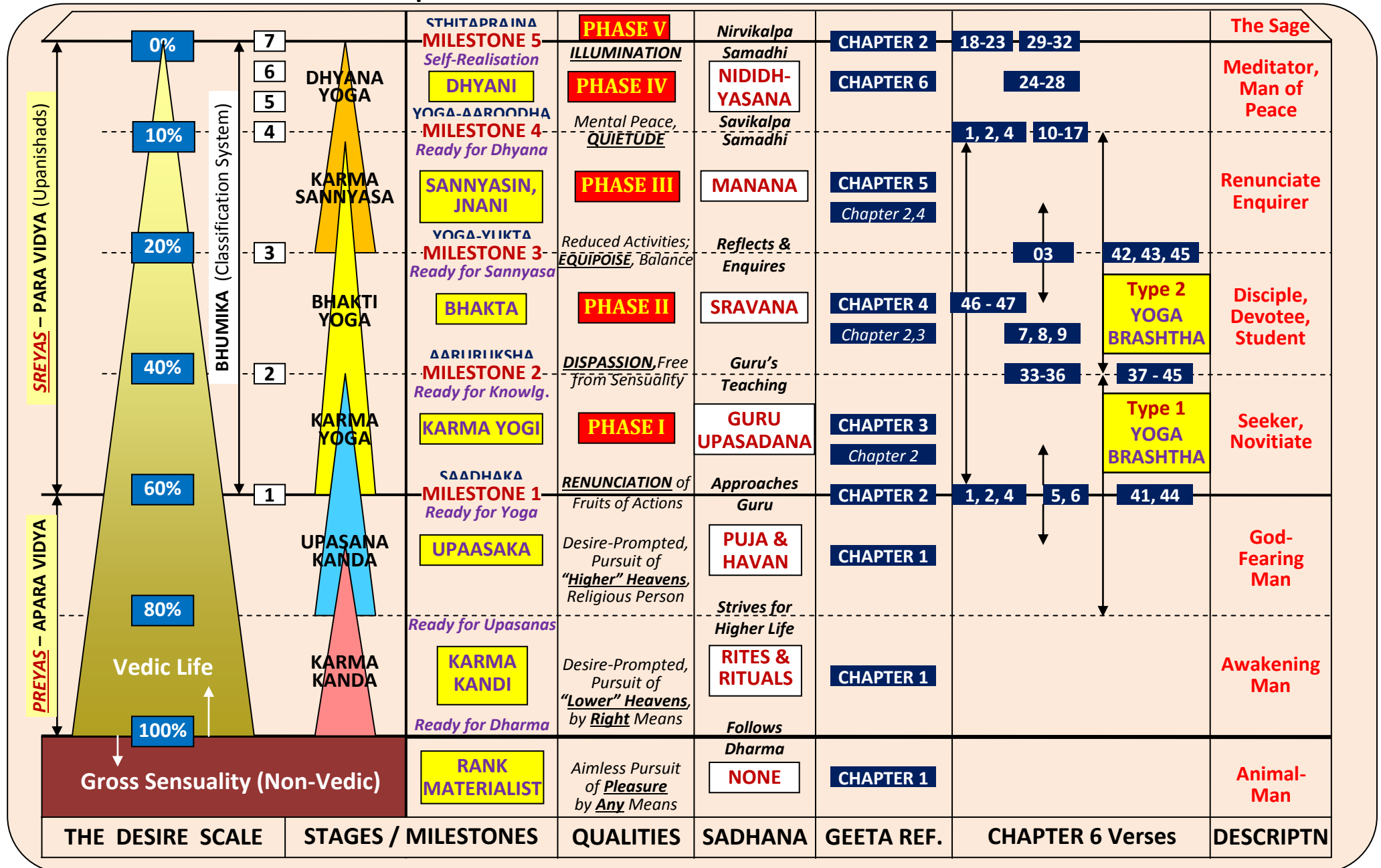
The Bhashya declares the cause to be ***Moha***, *delusion*, from which arises ***Shoka***, *sorrow* (and joy). These are fundamental causes of the endless wheel of Samsara.

The root form taken by Moha is the thought "I belong to these" or "they belong to me". The arguments that Arjuna has given arise from this delusion and sorrow.

When the mind comes under the sway of Moha and Shoka, we see the kind of behaviour displayed by Arjuna. In the absence of a firm conviction of one's duty, there arises either i) the desire to do the duty of others, or ii) one's own duty is imperfectly done, with incorrect motives.

Such behaviour, which ties one endlessly to the cycle of births and deaths, can be removed only through ***Brahma Jnana*** or knowledge of the Self. The knowledge, when properly understood with a pure and clear mind, naturally leads to detachment from the world, which amounts to Renunciation. Renunciation becomes the cornerstone of the solution that severs us from delusion. It may start with strong distaste for pleasure and end with renunciation of all duties (Sannyasa), according to the intensity of one's desire for God. With this in mind, Sri Krishna begins His teaching in the Geeta with Brahma Jnana, without which no one can be freed from Samsara.

BHAGAVAD GEETA: Chapters 1 – 6 SUMMARY – The Individual's Progress in Sadhana Verses 1-47



2.4 THE ELIMINATION OF GRIEF

(Verses 11-15, 5 No.)

ONE NORMALLY ASSOCIATES the discussion of this knowledge in a sylvan retreat where solitude and silence prevail. But in the *Geeta* the Lord imparts it in the middle of a battlefield. The criterion for imparting this knowledge is not time and place; it is a ready disciple; a thirsty, burning aspirant who yearns desperately for enlightenment to free himself from the bondage of delusion – and Arjuna meets that requirement perfectly.

Verse 11: “Jagatguru Krishna” Begins

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।

गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः

॥ २-११॥

śrībhagavānuvāca |

aśōcyānanvaśōcastvaṁ prajñāvādāṁśca bhāṣasē |

gatāsūnagatāsūṁśca nānuśōcanti paṇḍitāḥ

|| 2-11||

	<i>Shree Bhagavan uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>Ashochyaan anvashochah tvam</i>	<i>For those that should not be grieved for, you <u>have grieved</u>;</i>
2	<i>prajnaa-vaadaan cha bhaashase;</i>	<i>yet you speak words of wisdom.</i>
3	<i>gataasoon agataasoon cha</i>	<i>For the dead and for the living,</i>
4	<i>na anu-shochanti panditaah.</i>	<i>the wise <u>never grieve</u>.</i>

Vritti Anuvada – Major Sub-Heading

1 This verse serves as a major *sub-heading* (Vritti Anuvada) for the verses to follow. The subject of GRIEF is covered in the next 20 verses, right up to verse 30.

2 The Lord’s reply to the ‘wise words’ spoken by Arjuna is given in verses 31 to 38.

3-4 How to become totally freed from all grief is the subject matter of the whole of the *Geeta*. It is like a major heading or Anuvada for the entire content of the *Geeta*.

The Teaching Begins

1 A great Truth of life that is opened with the very first Pada – the subject of Grief. At the very outset one is placed with a problem requiring our discrimination. Who is to be grieved for and who is not worth grieving for? The only thing we should be grieving is our separation from the Lord, a deeply subjective and spiritual matter. Nothing external should cause us any grief.

We note that the teaching starts at once from the highest level. This is the typical approach in the *Upanishads*. The highest Truth is quickly declared. Other viewpoints are

secondary. They enter from the level of the mind. Arjuna asks many questions along the way. The Lord answers them from different standpoints to suit the disciple's stage of growth. However, the basic Truth remains our guiding beacon throughout the Geeta.

2 Krishna's words may sound mocking, but they are full of love. Arjuna's words had sounded very wise, but because of delusion they are actually arising from Ignorance.

The Subject is GRIEF, not Death

3 The matter of Death here is purely circumstantial, due only to Arjuna's situation in the battlefield. 'Death' is only serving as an example of a *cause* for grief. The idea being conveyed is not that death should not cause grief, but that any circumstance whatsoever should not become a cause for grief. There ought to be no cause whatsoever for grief. That is the supreme state the Lord is holding aloft before us.

Agataasoon: Since death is certain, this word meaning "*neither for the living*" should really be interpreted in this context as "*those who have not yet died*".

4 Pandita: The "*wise person*" never grieves, whatever the circumstances. Who are the wise men? Nowadays Pandita is taken to mean a Pujari, one whose livelihood is to perform Poojas. In Vedic times, Pandita had a higher meaning. It meant those who have substantially lived the spiritual path with some success and elevated their vision above the ordinary mundane level. They are the cream of society, and their behaviour is taken as the benchmark to be followed by others. That is the importance of the statement, "The wise grieve not..."

Discussion: Moha 1 – Shoka 1 – Moha 2 – Shoka 2

Acharyaji asked, "Which comes first – delusion or sorrow?" This led us into an interesting discussion:

Both could be right. Delusion (with a capital D) is, no doubt, the original root cause of Sorrow (with a capital S). We can call it Moha 1, which is due to primordial Ignorance or Avidya, and Shoka 1, which is the primary or deep Sorrow of separation from the Divine. When these two are applied to the mundane life, we observe their effects or ramifications, which may then be termed Moha 2 and Shoka 2 respectively. The latter two can take on various secondary forms. In this way Acharyaji guided us towards clearly identifying what is the cause and what is the effect.

When one comes under the sway of Delusion, one experiences the fundamental Sorrow of disengaging with God, our divine roots. Due to this Sorrow, one's mind gets completely disabled from the intellect, and in such a condition its behaviour pattern is termed delusion (lower case d), which is Moha 2 for the sake of clarity. This refers to the expression of the Jeeva through imperfect Upadhis, i.e. the limitations of the body, mind and intellect. The intellect gets clouded due to the Sorrow.

From this state of delusion arises the numerous forms of sorrow (lower case s) that occur in our life. This is Shoka 2. Thus both Moha and Shoka always go hand-in-hand. For a student of the Geeta, it is vital to grasp this sequence and clearly understand what is being referred to. This is dealt with thoroughly in the Bhashya.

Dharma and Adharma

Shoka and Moha give rise to the concepts of Dharma and Adharma (order and disorder), which in turn give rise to the notions of Punya and Paapa (merit and demerit). The

latter are deep “scars” on our soul, and to work them out of our system we enter the cycle of Samsara, or endless number of births and deaths. Each cycle is another opportunity given to us to work out our Paapa and Punya.

Thus we see that Shoka and Moha are far-reaching in their effects. Shoka and Moha keep spiralling down; at the third spiral it is Moha 3 and Shoka 3; at the fourth, Moha 4 and Shoka 4, and so on. For this reason, Sri Krishna has to lay down the foundation of knowledge thoroughly. He takes no short-cut. The knowledge is given in full. Only an exhaustive knowledge, leaving no stone of doubt unturned, can destroy Delusion 1 and Sorrow 1 at the primary level. However, this does not discard the need to make efforts to overcome the secondary and tertiary levels of delusion and sorrow in one’s life.

Vedanta teaches one to dissociate oneself from sorrow in order to be free from it. The Geeta is a very practical manual. Acharyaji made it clearer: “The less we speak Vedanta, the more we can practise it in our heart.”

Verse 12: *Time Scale is for the Body, not Spirit*

न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः ।

न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम्

॥ २-१२॥

na tvēvāham jātu nāsam na tvam nēmē janādhīpāḥ |

na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarvā vayamataḥ param

|| 2-12||

1	<i>Na tu eva aham jaatu na aasam</i>	<i>Not at any time (in the past), indeed, <u>was I not</u>;</i>
2	<i>na tvam na ime janaadhīpaah;</i>	<i>nor you, nor these rulers of men;</i>
3	<i>na cha eva na bhavishyaamah</i>	<i>and nor ever <u>shall we cease to be</u>,</i>
4	<i>sarve vayam atah param.</i>	<i>every one of us, from this point forwards.</i>

Birth and death are defining points for the existence of the Jeeva, the individual self or the ego-self. Our true Self is eternal, and independent of the existence of the body. This is why it is so futile to grieve over the “dead or the living”, as mentioned in verse 11.

The Use of the “Double Negative”:

The reason for this is more cultural than a device to enhance meaning. In Indian languages, the double negative is a very common form of expression. It sounds awkward in English, but is considered very tasteful in the Indian languages. Afrikaans (in South Africa) also makes use of the double negative – “Ek kan nie klaar nie.” The Irish have something even stranger – “It was not me, it wasn’t.”

Thus, instead of “I always exist”, we find the Indians prefer to say, “There never was a time when I did not exist.” In the same way, death is referred to as, “Nor shall I cease to be”, another double negative.

The Time Scale for Existence

Two periods when the body does not exist but the Self does, are highlighted:

1 i) The time prior to our birth, when the body was not there but the Self was.

2 This applies to every living creature – you, I and even the King is no exception!

3-4 ii) The second period is the time after our death, when the body falls off but the Self still remains.

So who is being born and who is dying? – no one, only the body, both the subtle and the gross body. What is causing the grief then? – our attachment or identification to both these bodies. The grief is felt in the subtle body. The gross body may trigger it.

By de-emphasizing the moments of birth and death, Sri Krishna draws our attention to our spiritual being and takes our mind away from our material body. In the context of the Geeta, Sri Krishna is trying to take Arjuna's mind away from giving too much importance to death (his own as well as his kith and kin's). In the war context, death is nothing to worry about – it is as common as autumnal leaves falling from a tree!

Verse 13: *Passing of Childhood, Youth and Old Age*

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।

तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति

॥ २-१३॥

dēhinō:'sminyathā dēhē kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā |

tathā dēhāntaraprāptirdhīrastatra na muhyati

|| 2-13||

1	<i>Dehinaḥ asmin yathā dehe</i>	<i>Just as in this body the embodied soul</i>
2	<i>kaumaaram yauvanam jarā;</i>	<i>passes into <u>childhood</u>, <u>youth</u> and <u>old age</u>;</i>
3	<i>tathā dehaantara-prāptih</i>	<i>so also, it passes into <u>another body</u> (at death).</i>
4	<i>dheerah tatra na muhyati.</i>	<i>The firm, wise man does not grieve thereat.</i>

1-2 This verse ends the focus of the discussion on death, and begins to focus on Life instead. The same lesson can be learnt through events in life itself. Three of these events are mentioned – childhood, youth and old age.

The soul is the non-material part of our being. This is the part that Sri Krishna wants Arjuna to be concerned with. Why should we attach so much importance to birth or death? It is only with reference to the body that these occur. What is the situation if we consider ourselves as spiritual entities?

The same soul which passes through birth and death as two major events in its existence, also passes through other events such as childhood, youth and old age. We do not weep when we move through these stages, do we? We are fully aware that when childhood passes, we still exist as youth, and when youth passes away we still exist.

3 The Lord teaches us to view death in the same way – we will still exist after death in some other body unknown to us now, but which we need not fear. After death we will enter into another body and continue our existence as before. There may be a period when we are without a body, but that is not a cause for us to lament. It is simply another state of existence comparable to youth or old age.

4 When viewed in this broad manner, which fully takes into account the spiritual nature of our existence and not just the physical nature, then there is found to be no cause at all for grief. In this way, Sri Krishna applies knowledge of the Self to the practical purpose of removing the very cause of grief.

Such an understanding is possible only when we learn to see the body as an instrument separate from our spirit. With this new view of our essential being, we have an intellectual conviction to aid our detachment from the body and live without any grief.

Death takes us into another ‘stage’ of life – a stage which is free from sense perceptions, and which therefore offers much greater scope for experiences in Reality, something like the way in which dream expands the horizons of our mental activity. We still exist as before, but without a body encumbrance, that is all. We have only to consider what it is like living without the limitations of a body to understand the post-death experience.

Verse 14: *Other Experiences that Resemble “Death”*

मात्रास्पर्शस्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः ।

आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत

॥ २-१४॥

mātrāsparsāstu kauntēya śītōṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ |

āgamāpāyinō:'nityāstānstitikṣasva bhārata

|| 2-14||

1	<i>Maatraa-sparshaah tu, Kaunteya</i>	<i>Contacts of senses with objects, O son of Kunti,</i>
2	<i>sheetaḥ ushna sukha duḥkha daah;</i>	<i>produce cold and heat, pleasure and pain;</i>
3	<i>aagama-apaayinah anityaah</i>	<i>they have a beginning and end, are <u>impermanent</u>;</i>
4	<i>taan titikshaswa, Bhaarata.</i>	<i><u>endure them</u> bravely, O descendent of Bharata.</i>

Besides the modifications, there are other experiences also which resemble death. We now move away from the focus on both death and life, but stay with the subject of Grief. There are many apparently distressing experiences in life besides death. This verse directs our mind to them. We are now moving towards the broader picture of Grief.

1 Maatraa-Sparshaah: All “sense contacts” indeed have the potential to produce wide-ranging sensations.

2 The extremities of such sensations are what we call the pairs of opposites, e.g. heat and cold, etc. The extremes of every sensory experience is where pain or discomfort is felt. It could be too much cold, or too much heat, etc. In moderation, sense experiences are comfortable. We call that our ‘comfort-zone’.

A. The Beginning & End of Sensory Experiences

3 The analysis is taken a dimension further. Each sense experience, regardless of where it lies in the spectrum of experience, has a beginning and an end. This is a feature in all sensory experiences. They are all impermanent. Being that, why grieve over them? Even the worst experience has to come to an end sooner or later. We are asked to endure them till they naturally come to an end.

Like this human body which is born and has to die, sensory experiences also have a limited lifespan. No sense condition lasts forever. A scratch may give us pleasure for a few seconds; beyond that it hurts us. A cut may give pain for a couple of days, but eventually it heals. An insulting remark may bring pain to the ego for a week or a month but soon it has to be forgotten or else life can become unbearable. Winter has to be followed by summer in an annual cycle.

The duration of sensory experiences may vary but they all have a time span. Bearing that in mind, we can develop the detachment needed to remain unmoved by them.

B. The Incoming & Outgoing of Sensory Experiences

3 Acharyaji introduced a further dimension into the analysis of the same experiences. Each experience has two sides to it – the input and the output. The beginning can be thought of as an input; the end can be thought of as the output. What does this teach?

i) Incoming Sensations: “heat and cold”. These are incoming sensations. All other types are to be considered as included, such as loud and soft, bright and dark, sweet and sour, etc. Sensations may be physical or psychological, such as praise and censure, honour and dishonour. All such experiences come into our life to teach us some lesson. We have little control over what comes in from our environment.

ii) Outgoing Responses: “pleasure and pain”. These are outgoing responses. All other responses are to be taken as included, such as joy and sorrow, satisfaction and anger, love and hatred. Responses are totally our responsibility. They go out from our life. They reveal our state of mind. They are yardsticks of our spiritual growth. Responses are the area of concern to a spiritual seeker. We are fully responsible for and in control of them.

In other words, heat or cold may come from the environment, but we determine whether they are pleasurable or painful. Whether they bring pleasure or pain depends on how much we “live” in our senses. If we are too engrossed in sense experiences we are bound to be disturbed by every extreme (crest and trough) of sensory fluctuation.

Titiksha or Endurance

4 That quality which makes us immune to such fluctuations in our environment is called Titiksha or Endurance. Titiksha makes us learn to “endure them bravely”.

The Geeta's guide is that we should learn to be balanced in all variations of sense experiences. This is only possible if we learn to detach ourselves from sensory stimuli. The knowledge about the sensory experiences taught in 2 and 3 above helps us a great deal in enduring them with a balanced mind.

This is a typical example of how Lord Krishna approaches problems in life. He is a great advocate of Knowledge as a means to tackle problems. The more we equip ourselves with knowledge the better will we be able to deal with problems in life.

Kaunteya: Arjuna is deliberately addressed as “son of Kunti” because Kunti was a perfect example of one who endured all hardship, sorrow, pain, grief, etc, with patience and equanimity. She actually asked Krishna once to give her more pain so that she could remember Him more often!

Verse 15: *Passing the Trials of Life*

यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ ।
समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ॥ २-१५॥

yam hi na vyathayantyēte puruṣam puruṣarṣabha |
samaduhkhasukham dhīraṁ sō:'mṛtatvāya kalpatē ॥ 2-15॥

1	<i>Yam hi na vyathayanti ete</i>	<i>Whom surely these afflict not,</i>
2	<i>purusham purusharshabha;</i>	<i>such a man, a “Bull among men”,</i>
3	<i>sama-duhkha-sukham dheeram</i>	<i>is firm and faces equally both pain & pleasure.</i>
4	<i>sah amritatvaaya kalpate.</i>	<i>He alone is fit for realizing the Immortality of the Self.</i>

1-2 Endurance of difficulties, trials and tribulations prepares a seeker. It is God’s way of putting us through the grinding mill so that we are better equipped to tread the divine path. The cultivation of the right attitude is most important in this regard.

If the ATTITUDE is right, pain can make a person; if it is wrong, the same pain can break a person.

Acharyaji gave us a beautiful Samskrit quotation which says: “Just as joy cannot cause one any sorrow, so too, sorrow should not cause one any Sorrow. By the same token, we should not allow joy to be the cause of our Joy.” In the above quote, the highlighted words refer to the deeper level of experience; the other terms are at the superficial level.

Acharyaji’s take was: “Sorrow will only not matter, if joy does not matter.”

Sorrow comes with a self-addressed envelope; when its visit is over it has to go back to where it came from.

The important point Acharyaji tried to stress was that sorrow and joy, Sukha and Duhkha, are not our properties, they do not belong to us. We should not identify with them. If we allow them to rule our life, it will be a series of ups and downs. We will have a very bumpy ride.

The “Bull Among Men”

3 Dheerah: The wise person has the poised intellect that gives him clarity on all experiences in life. His attitude is, “Why should I worry about worry? It comes and goes, so why should I worry about it?”

How is it possible to see both happiness and sorrow as the same? Are we expected to be like some sort of “super-granite”? The answer Acharyaji gave us is: “I can be the same to both if my attention is not on them. If I raise my attention to a higher ideal, I will not be aware of them as ‘joy’ or as ‘sorrow’. That is the state we should aspire for.”

4 Having the will to withstand hardships is a great quality in life. It brings its own rewards. In this verse that reward is said to be “*fitness for the spiritual life*”. One is brought closer to God by having this one quality of endurance in pleasure and pain. This speaks volumes of the importance of having endurance.

Such a person becomes a “lion among men.” Such a person becomes fit for the rigours of the spiritual life.

Some Examples:

1. The example quoted was of the freedom-fighters of India. Lokamanya Tilak, one of the leaders of the freedom struggle and political mentor of Gandhiji and many others, was in prison once. A letter was brought to him – “Your wife has just passed away” – while he was busy with a letter to the country’s people. He folded it up and threw it in the dustbin. When the warden asked him why he reacted so coldly, he said, “I am feeling the tears of the nation every moment of my life. I have none to spare for my own.”

2. A person received a gift of a ring from his father. The father told him not to remove the ring from his finger except when things go really bad for him. During a very bad period in life, when he was about to take his life, he remembered his father's words. He took out the ring and, as he played with it, he noticed an inscription on it. He began to read it – *"Even this will pass away."* Tears came to his eyes. He decided to endure his problems. Soon they did pass away.



LORD KRISHNA BEGINS TO INSTRUCT ARJUNA IN THE SCIENCE OF LIFE

2.5 SAANKHYA YOGA

(Verses 16-25, 10 No.)

LORD KRISHNA TAKES US from a focus on the unreal, that is, the subject of death, grief, pain, etc, to the Real which has no death and is indestructible.

When we are on a scenic drive the view depends on our position. In philosophy it is common that views vary depending on one's standpoint. From our unenlightened perspective, engrossed as we are in the knitty-gritty of worldly life, the world is so real to us that these ten verses sound absurd. Yet, as one grows to the heights, this is the ultimate vision that the *Geeta* presents before us, to inspire us, to thrust us forward, to keep our boots firmly marching on!

Verse 16: *The Unreal Never Exists*

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।

उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः

॥ २-१६॥

nāsatō vidyatē bhāvō nābhāvō vidyatē sataḥ |

ubhayōrapi dṛṣṭō:'ntastvanayōstattvadarśibhiḥ

|| 2-16||

1	<i>Na asatah vidyate bhaavah</i>	<i>The Unreal has no being;</i>
2	<i>na abhaavah vidyate satah;</i>	<i>there is no non-being of the Real;</i>
3	<i>ubhayoh api drishtah antah tu</i>	<i>the truth about both these has been seen</i>
4	<i>anayoh tattwa-darshibhih.</i>	<i>by the <u>knowers of the Truth (or Essence).</u></i>

1 In the ultimate analysis, this is how we shall all one day view life – that which is unreal will simply not be our concern as we will actually feel that it does not even exist!

2 And that which is Real will always be there; It can never leave us, so there is no fear of ever losing It. What a grand vision that would be!

3-4 The Self-realised sages are seeing *That* alone every moment of their lives, having purified themselves of all impurities and cleaned the 'mirror' of their intellect.

This is an oft-quoted verse to indicate the essence of the Vedantic viewpoint. It may be easier to understand it if we take the snake and rope example. As far as the rope is concerned, the snake never existed at any point in time. It is only we in our ignorance who superimposed the snake on it, and then we could not see the rope!

The Blessed Lord asks us to hold on to this Highest Truth with dear life!

Acharyaji, knowing how difficult this is for most of us, said it was like seeing the unreality of a dream not just on waking up but even while still dreaming! – an impossibility for the average individual.

However, the wise have known this. They clearly see the distinction.

Verse 18: *Eternal & Incomprehensible*

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः ।

अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्युध्यस्व भारत

॥ २-१८॥

antavanta imē dēhā nityasyōktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ |

anāśinō:'pramēyasya tasmādyudhyasva bhārata

|| 2-18||

1	<i>Antavantah ime dehaah</i>	<i>These bodies have an end, but</i>
2	<i>nityasya uktaah shareerinah;</i>	<i>Eternal is the Self of the embodied, it is said,</i>
3	<i>anaashinah aprameyasya</i>	<i>which is <u>Indestructible</u> and <u>incomprehensible</u>.</i>
4	<i>tasmaat yuddyasva Bhaarata.</i>	<i>Therefore, fight, O Bharata!</i>

Again, Krishna rapidly takes a grieving Arjuna to the heights of Vedantic vision, for that is the only antidote to his delusion. From the changeability of birth and death, we have moved to the Real. The Real has since been described as all-pervading, changeless, imperishable, and now as eternal and incomprehensible!

The movement in understanding is swift. Can Arjuna bear the pace of the shift in viewpoint? Is Sri Krishna not rushing him by adding “Fight, O Bharata!” into His message? Is He not expecting too much too quickly from a bewildered Arjuna?

1 Ime Deha: “these bodies”; from the grossly perishable body, to

2 Nityasya: “the Eternal”, is a massive leap for any student to make. Yet the Divine Teacher is in control of the situation. He knows He has to hammer the point home to break the delusion of His student. The intellectual shock may be good for Arjuna – perhaps it is the most effective way to absorb not just truths of this nature, but the Truth of the Universe!

The root of Deha is ‘da’, “to burn”, the body is certain to decay one day. That which grows because of food, will one day not be able to take any food. The body has an end. The Self, however, does not just outlast the body; it is eternal and will never die.

3 Aprameya: The Eternal is so because it is indestructible. This much has already been seen. Now we go a step further: What does indestructibility mean in practice?

The indestructible is hard to grasp. Everything we know with the senses is destructible. Logically the indestructible is beyond the comprehension of the intellect, because the intellect itself is destructible. How can the destructible comprehend the indestructible?

Perhaps, Sri Krishna, fearing that all this may be too much for Arjuna, comes to the point of declaring the Truth to be incomprehensible so that Arjuna will give up the idea of trying to follow Him intellectually. The Lord is effectively saying, “Arjuna, you cannot go further than this. This is the limit your intellect will permit you to go. Now let’s drop all this theory, and get down to practise. What is that *practice*? . . .

4 There are sufficient reasons given by now for Lord Krishna to suggest to Arjuna: “I want you to get up and fight these people standing before you. Come on, *Fight!* That is the only practical thing you can do based on the theory I have bombarded you with.”

This answers the statement made by Arjuna in 2.9 where he says, “I will not fight!”

[For those who may be inclined towards greater analysis of this word, the following additional discussion may help. Others can bypass it and go to the next verse.]

Aprameya – In Greater Detail:

This word means ‘*incomprehensible*’. Its opposite, Prameya (knowable), is the very basis of the Triputi – knower, known and knowledge or means of knowing. In Aprameya, the Triputi merges in Consciousness. When we are merged with the Self or Pure Consciousness, our knowing is not in the realm of thoughts, but we actually become *knowledge* itself. This could also be seen as dissolution of the Triputis, whichever way one chooses to look at it.

Aprameya also literally means “*not an object of knowledge*”. Pramana, the six valid means of knowledge, do not apply to it. From *Vedanta Sara* (Text 22), we recall that the six means of knowledge are: a) *Pratyaksha*, direct perception; b) *Anumana*, inference; c) *Upamana*, analogy; d) *Shabda*, an authoratative (scriptural) statement; e) *Arthaapatti*, presumption; and f) *Anupalabधि*, non-apprehension or absence of a thing. The Self is beyond all six means of obtaining knowledge.

In the Bhashya this incomprehensibility is explained further. The scriptures are a valid means to know the Self, but in a way that is different from d) *Shabda* Pramana. It brings us to the Self not by adding something to our knowledge, but by removing certain things which obstruct us from the Self. It is an indirect means. Scriptural knowledge helps us by removing the false knowledge. In this sense it, too, becomes a Pramana.

Verse 19: Self is Neither Subject Nor Object

य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम् ।

उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते

॥ २-१९॥

ya ēnaṁ vētti hantāraṁ yaścainaṁ manyatē hatam |

ubhau tau na vijānītō nāyaṁ hanti na hanyatē

|| 2-19||

1	<i>Yah enam veti hantaaram</i>	<i>He who takes this (Self) to be the <u>slayer</u>,</i>
2	<i>yah cha enam manyate hatam;</i>	<i>and he who thinks this (Self) is <u>slain</u>;</i>
3	<i>ubhau tau na vijaaneetah</i>	<i>both these <u>know not</u>.</i>
4	<i>na ayam hanti na hanyate.</i>	<i>For He slays not, nor is He slain.</i>

This verse is from the *Katha Upanishad*, 2.19 (see the coincidence!). Sri Vyasaji has placed it in his *Geeta* to authenticate a point He is making to Arjuna.

1 Hantaaram: “*the slayer*”. This is the subject of the action of slaying; it is the Doer or Kartaaram. Arjuna was under the notion that he was killing the Kauravas.

2 Hatam: “*the slain*”. This is the object of the action of slaying; that upon which the action is done or the Karmana. Again, Arjuna was under the false notion that the Kauravas were being slain by him.

3-4 Neither of the above, subject or object, is the Self. The Self as defined in Vedanta, is the most subtle Reality upon which both subject and object are superimposed. It does not have any association with the properties of subject and object. So it can neither slay nor can it be slain.

These, of course, are statements made from the standpoint of the Reality. From the relative standpoint, we dare not make such statements since the subject and object are considered to be distinctly separate objects. Man’s laws will not permit such statements!

Verse 20: *The Object Aspect of Action*

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्
नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे

॥ २-२०॥

na jāyatē mriyatē vā kadācin
nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ |
ajō nityaḥ śāśvatō:'yaṁ purāṇō
na hanyatē hanyamānē śarīrē

|| 2-20||

1	<i>Na jaayate mriyate vaa kadaachit</i>	(The Self is) neither born , nor does It ever die ;
2	<i>na ayam bhootvaa bhavitaa vaa na bhooyah;</i>	After having been, He ceases not to be;
3	<i>ajah nityah shaashvatah ayam puraanaḥ</i>	He is <u>unborn</u> , <u>eternal</u> , <u>changeless</u> , <u>ancient</u> ,
4	<i>na hanyate hanyamaane shareere.</i>	(The Self is) <u>not killed</u> when the body is killed.

Here is another verse quoted from the *Katha Upanishad*, 2.18, to illustrate how the Self cannot be the **Object** of any action.

1 The Self is not an object like the body upon which any action can be done. Two examples of actions done on the body are birth and death. By implication, the other four modifications of the body (existence, growth, decay and disease) are to be considered as included.

2 The Self is considered as being beginningless and endless, i.e It is beyond Time. Strictly speaking, we cannot even say “after having been”, because there was never a time when the Self was not in existence. Objects, being superimposed on the Self, are dependent or governed by Time, not the Self, which is their Substratum. The Self is not an object.

3 Again, as in verse 18, four descriptive qualities of the Self are given for our understanding only, not that the Self has those as qualities. Relative to our experience in the world of phenomena, the Self is birthless, deathless, changeless and ageless.

4 Finally, the Kauravas are not in reality being slain; only their body is slain. ‘Kauravas’ stands here as an example of physical ‘objects’.

These are the four reasons why Arjuna should not take his actions of killing in the war as actions that are unworthy. In war such actions are considered as one’s duty, and have to be done. *Not doing* them would be considered to be unworthy.

Verse 21: *The Subject Aspect of Action*

वेदाविनाशिनं नित्यं य एनमजमव्ययम् ।
कथं स पुरुषः पार्थ कं घातयति हन्ति कम्

॥ २-२१॥

vēdāvināśinaṁ nityaṁ ya ēnamajamavyayam |
kathaṁ sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṁ ghātayati hanti kam

|| 2-21||

1	<i>Veda avinaashinam nityam</i>	<i>One who knows that he is <u>indestructible</u> and eternal –</i>
2	<i>ya enam ajam avyayam;</i>	<i>that his Self is unborn and <u>inexhaustible</u> (deathless);</i>
3	<i>katham sah purushah Paartha</i>	<i>how can that man, O Paartha,</i>
4	<i>kam ghaatayai hanta kam.</i>	<i>be a cause <u>to slay</u> Him, or <u>be slain</u> by Him?</i>

This verse tells us that the Self cannot be the **Subject** of an action either.

1&4 From the point of view of the subject, the same knowledge of the Self as given in the previous verse (i.e. It being indestructible, eternal, unborn and unceasing) is put forth as a reason for the subject not to be considered as the cause of slaying or as the one who is slain. Another way to look at this is that the subject cannot kill nor be killed, because the subject is also the Self.

This verse absolves both Krishna as well as Arjuna. Krishna is not guilty of being the cause of Arjuna's acts of killing, and Arjuna himself is not guilty of doing the killing.

The reason for these deductions is that the Self does not die. No dying of the Self is taking place, so how can there be any killing!

DOES THE GEETA ADVOCATE WAR?

Acharyaji made it very clear to us that these verses are valid only from the point of view of the Self. The action of 'slaying' or of 'being slain' are non-existent from the viewpoint of the Self. At the phenomenal level, the laws of morality and justice apply. If one applies the Absolute viewpoint at the relative level, there is a complete distortion of truth and justice. The laws of Karma are applicable fully at the phenomenal level.

The spiritual seeker has to read these lines with great care. These verses are not intended to advocate indiscriminate acts of killing. Indeed, the topic is not about killing, but about one's dutiful actions. Only two cases qualify to apply these statements:

i) The first case would be that of a realised saint who beholds the Self only and has risen above his body and mind equipment, and who has relinquished the sense of doership. Arjuna does not qualify in this category. A saint will not act out of any selfish motive.

ii) The second case is that of a warrior engaged in a righteous war, in which case it is an unavoidable part of his duty. Arjuna qualifies in this category. His killing is not murder, but an authorised duty and responsibility. It bears no moral consequences.

Philosophically, the only point made by the verse is that the Self stands blameless and unaffected by any actions done by man. This principle in itself does not justify this or any war. The war justification is a separate moral issue that is considered in detail in the Mahabharata. By the time the Geeta begins, it has already been conclusively shown that the Pandavas are fighting honourably for the cause of righteousness, and that the Kauravas are the unjust aggressors.

Thus the Geeta does not raise a debate on the justification or otherwise of war. The debate is a matter dealt with in the Mahabharata, not the Geeta.

Verse 22: “Old Clothes” Need to be Changed

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही

॥ २-२२॥

vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhṇāti narō:'parāṇi |
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇā-
nyanyāni saṁyāti navāni dēhī

॥ 2-22॥

1	<i>Vaasaamsi jeernaani yathaa vihaaya</i>	Old <u>worn-out clothes</u> – just as they are cast off,
2	<i>navaani grihnaati narah aparaani;</i>	and <u>new clothes</u> are taken on in their place by a man;
3	<i>tathaa shareeraani vihaaya jeernaani</i>	so also it is with human bodies – worn-out bodies are cast away,
4	<i>anyaani samyaati navaani dehee.</i>	and other bodies are entered (“united with”) – new bodies – by the embodied.

After an intense and serious philosophical discussion of 10 verses, Lord Krishna gives Himself and His listener Arjuna a brief respite by introducing a very appropriate simile. Acharyaji said to us that such devices offered a welcome relief to both speaker and listener – they are like a brief interval.

Thus far all the discussion has been taking place from the perspective of the Self. We are placing ourselves in the shoes of the Self and trying to view life.

1-4 Vaasaamsi Jeernaani: “A change of clothes” - this is how a Self-realised person would see death and birth; they are like taking off the old clothes (death), and putting on new ones (birth), nothing more than that. Grief and sorrow have no part to play in it.

The point is made clear that nothing happens to the Self, whatever happens is happening to the body only.

Verse 23: Even “New Clothes” May Need Changing!

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः

॥ २-२३॥

nainam chindanti śastrāṇi nainam dahati pāvakaḥ |
na cainam klēdayantyāpō na śōṣayati mārutaḥ

॥ 2-23॥

1	<i>Na enam cchindanti shastraani</i>	Weapons (earth) cleave It not;
2	<i>na enam dahati paavakah;</i>	Fire burns It not;
3	<i>na cha enam kledayanti aapah</i>	Water wets It not;
4	<i>na shoshayati maarutah.</i>	Wind dries It not.

Extending the above simile of “old clothes” which refers to death by natural causes as in old age, death can also take place due to unnatural causes and we could die at any age. The simile is being extended to include an occasional change of “new clothes” also, as in the case of premature death. Where does the Self stand in such an eventuality?

1-4 Weapons may be taken as the earth element, and is the unnatural cause in the context of a war. This has already been considered since we began the topic. The other three are fire, water and wind. Each of these three tries to exclude the others. For example fire tries to dehydrate a person; water tries to keep heat out of the body, or keep air out by drowning, or brings dampness that encourage bacteria and thus disease or decomposition. Whatever way they may try, the main point is that it is impossible to destroy the Self. **“Materiality is immaterial to that which is non-material.”**

Verse 24: *The Self is Beyond the Gross Body*

अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च ।

नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः

॥ २-२४॥

acchēdyō:'yamadāhyō:'yamaklēdyō:'śōṣya ēva ca |

nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇuracalō:'yam sanātanaḥ

|| 2-24||

1	<i>Acchhedyah ayam adaahyah ayam</i>	<i>This Self cannot be cut, nor can It be burnt;</i>
2	<i>akledyah ashoshyah eva cha;</i>	<i>nor can It be wetted, nor can It be dried;</i>
3	<i>nityah sarvagatah sthaanuh</i>	<i><u>The Self</u> is eternal, all-pervading, stable,</i>
4	<i>achalah ayam sanaatanah.</i>	<i>immovable and ancient.</i>

The previous verse’s message is repeated but, in addition, the reason is given.

1-2 The repeated message is that the Self cannot be destroyed by any one of the five elements, nor by any combination of the five elements, because It pervades all of them, being subtler than all of them.

The idea that is being driven home is that we should never forget that this physical body is only an instrument for us to use in our dealings in the world.

3-4 The essential “I” or Self is not the body but that which is the Master of the body. The descriptions given here – eternal, all-pervading, ancient, and so on – are temporary. These are concepts which we hold in our mind, until such time as we progress further and extend our understanding. Then we can drop these pegs which assist us in the beginning.

Acharyaji especially emphasized the choice of words in Samskrit, which brings out phonetically the indestructibility of the Self. This is also perhaps why these words are repeated over three verses – 20, 21 and 24.

One may find the following reflective exercise, given by Acharyaji, very useful: Take each of the 4 Verbs and pair it with each of 5 Nouns. There will be 20 combinations in all. Reflect on how the Self would be in each of these 20 cases, finding examples for each combination. Here is a table to assist us:

VERBS (for Actions on Self)		NOUNS (for Qualities of Self)	
SAMSKRIT	ENGLISH	SAMSKRIT	ENGLISH
<i>Acchediyah</i>	not cuttable	<i>Nityah</i>	eternal, timeless
<i>Adaahya</i>	not burnable	<i>Sarvagatah</i>	all-pervading
<i>Akledyah</i>	not wettable	<i>Sthanu</i>	stable, changeless
<i>Ashoshyah</i>	not dryable	<i>Achalah</i>	motionless
		<i>Sanatanah</i>	ancient, ageless

Verse 25: *Therefore, Do Not Grieve!*

अव्यक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योऽयमविकार्योऽयमुच्यते ।

तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हसि

| २-२५||

avyaktō:'yamacintyō:'yamavikāryō:'yamucyate |

tasmādēvaṁ viditvainaṁ nānuśōcitumarhasi

| 2-25||

1	<i>Avyaktah ayam, achintyah ayam,</i>	<i>This Self is <u>unmanifested</u>, <u>unthinkable</u>,</i>
2	<i>avikaaryah ayam, uchyate;</i>	<i>and <u>unchangeable</u> – thus is It spoken of.</i>
3	<i>tasmaat evam viditvaa enam</i>	<i>Therefore, knowing This to be such,</i>
4	<i>na anu-shochitum arhasi.</i>	<i>you should not grieve.</i>

1-2 These three qualities – **Avyaktah**, **Achintyah** and **Avikaaryah** – may be added to the list of nouns in the table, and further reflected upon in the way shown above. An interesting outcome would be that we will find that just one quality *on its own* is sufficient to describe our immortality against all the verbs listed.

3-4 Tasmaat: This *tasmaat*, unlike the one in verse 18 which referred Arjuna to do his duty and “Fight”, rounds up the more profound subject of “Grief” which began in verse 2.11. Grief denotes a more fundamental issue than duty, and it requires the knowledge of the Self just imparted to remove it completely. It implies that what Sri Krishna has said up to now is all that is needed for one to attain enlightenment (removal of sorrow). The rest of the Geeta is a commentary on the teaching of verses 11-25.



AN ANECDOTE BREAK

The topic of **Grief** was getting a bit depressing for the class. Acharyaji wisely brought much-needed relief to everyone with an appropriate anecdote on the same theme:

A Sardarji was sitting in the balcony on the 8th floor of his Mumbai apartment, sipping tea. All of a sudden someone from the 13th floor on the opposite side shouted to him, “O Bindusingh, your daughter Pratima has eloped with Rohit from Pune!” That was terrible news for poor Sardarji; what was worse was that it was shouted at the top of the man’s voice for all to hear. It was too much for the Sardarji. How was he going to face the community now? He at once thought that the only way out would be for him to die. Without thinking further, he jumped from his balcony.

As he fell past the 6th floor, he remembered that he did not have a daughter by the name of Pratima! Then, as he past the 4th floor, he remembered that he was still a bachelor!! And as he past the 2nd floor, he remembered that his name was not Bindusingh!!!

A little later, he could not remember anything!



2.6 STANDPOINT OF THE LAYMAN

(Verses 26-30, 5 No.)

(Verses 26-30, 5 No.)

SRI KRISHNA NOW SAYS to Arjuna: “Look, I will not force Vedanta onto you. Look at this whole thing from an ordinary layman’s angle. He sees the reality of birth and death. It is only too real for him. Even then there is no need for you to grieve.”

It does not mean that Sri Krishna's belief has changed. This viewpoint is only taken up for the sake of argument. Sri Krishna's viewpoint will always remain what we have just heard. This is for those to whom direct perception is regarded as the proof of truth, i.e. from the point of view of the common man.

What we learn from this section is that the Lord encompasses both, the absolute realm as well as the relative realm. No point of view is insignificant to Him.

Verse 26: *The Vyavaharic Point of View*

अथ चैनं नित्यजातं नित्यं वा मन्यसे मृतम् ।

तथापि त्वं महाबाहो नैवं शोचितुमर्हसि

॥ २-२६॥

atha cainam nityajātam nityam vā manyasē mṛtam |

tathāpi tvam mahābāhō naivam śōcitumarhasi

|| 2-26||

1	<i>Atha cha enam nityajaatam</i>	<i>But even if (the Self is) taken as constantly <u>born</u>,</i>
2	<i>nityam vaa manyase mritam;</i>	<i>or you consider It to be as constantly <u>dying</u> –</i>
3	<i>tathaa api tvam, Mahaabaaho</i>	<i>even then, O mighty-armed, you</i>
4	<i>na evam shochitum arhasi.</i>	<i>have no reason to grieve.</i>

1-2 The main thrust of the argument from the common man's standpoint is:

“Death is inevitable. We experience it in life. How can we ignore it? Whether we agree with it or not, it is how God has made us. How does it help us to see it from the Absolute standpoint? That goes over our head. We can’t see it in our lives. What can You tell us that we can understand at our level?”

The Lord hears this, and is sympathetic towards such a view. He hears it coming even through the mind of his disciple, Arjuna, let alone from the rank materialists.

3-4 To them, the Lord has – believe it or not – the very same message!

“Yes, I can see that you are too caught up in your body and mind to be able to accept what I have just said. You cannot help thinking this way – that the body is real and it has to go through birth and death, perhaps many cycles of them if you accept reincarnation of the soul. But still, you have no reason to *grieve*.”

And the Lord proceeds in the next four verses to explain why . . .

Verse 27: *The Inevitability of Death*

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च ।

तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि

॥ २-२७॥

jātasya hi dhruvō mṛtyurdhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca |

tasmādaparihāryē:'rthē na tvam śōcitumarhasi

|| 2-27||

1	<i>Jaatasya hi dhruvah mrityuh</i>	For certain is death for the born,
2	<i>dhruvam janma mritasya cha;</i>	and certain is birth for the dead;
3	<i>tasmaat अपरिहार्ये अर्थे</i>	therefore, in matters that are <u>inevitable</u>
4	<i>na tvam shochitum arhasi.</i>	there is <u>no need</u> to grieve.

The earlier argument that there is no such thing as death has been temporarily withdrawn. We have moved into **relative existence**, in which birth and death are commonplace.

1-2 In classic poetic style, Sri Veda Vyasaji brings out the argument of the Lord in a convincing form. Something as predictable and certain as death, and something as certain as birth – surely we can do nothing about these events. They are certainties.

3-4 For the very reason that they are so inevitable, they do not deserve our grief-stricken attention. This is just seeing the whole thing from an ordinary perspective. Of what use is it worrying over something that is so certain!

The suggestion by Sri Krishna is: “Only a fool will grieve over something that is inevitable. You, Arjuna, have grown up. You should not grieve over this, being a Dheera Purusha. As death is followed by birth, the sorrow that death brings is compensated by the joy that birth will bring soon after death.”

The word *Tasmaat* is used here in its normal sense as ‘therefore’, not to demarcate one section from another. It simply links the two Padas before it in the same verse. The overall *Tasmaat* which links all the verses from verse 2.11 to 2.30 is yet to come in verse 2.30, when the subject of grief will be closed. This section continues the topic of grief; the only thing that has changed is the standpoint - it is now from the layman’s angle.

BUDDHA & THE WEEPING LADY

There was a nice story told by Acharyaji about the lady who came to the Buddha weeping over the death of her little child. It made a pathetic sight. Buddha on the surface also felt very sorry for the lady and, being pressed by her, he agreed to bring the child to life on one condition: The lady should get a little wheat grain from any home, but the condition was that it must be from a home in which no death had occurred.

The lady had many offers of grain, but not a single house was free from any death in their family. The lady had to turn back in disappointment from every home. Then she understood the wisdom of the Buddha, and wept no more.

Verse 28: Life is Like a Bubble

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत ।

अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना

॥ २-२८॥

avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyaktamadyāni bhārata |

avyaktanidhanānyēva tatra kā paridēvanā

॥ 2-28॥

1	<i>Avyakta aadeeni bhootaani</i>	Beings are unmanifest in their <u>beginning</u> ,
2	<i>vyakta-madhyāni bhaarata;</i>	manifest in their <u>middle</u> state, O Bharata,
3	<i>avyakta-nidhanaani eva</i>	and are noticed to be unmanifest again in the <u>end</u> .
4	<i>tatra kaa pari-devanaa.</i>	What is there then to grieve about?

1-3 A bubble of air in water has a very short duration of existence. It arises from nowhere, grows in size just like humans do, and then suddenly bursts and becomes nothing. So, too, is the life of every living being. It is so ephemeral; the period during which it actually exists is negligible – it is just a tiny dot on the macroscopic time scale.

What applies to life also applies to one's relationships in life. They, too, are just as evanescent as bubbles. They come go. People come together, and suddenly break off from each other. This is seen daily in the world. "Arjuna, those relatives out there . . . how long are they going to remain your relatives? It is just a flashing thought in the mind.

And the same applies to everything else in life – our joys and sorrows, our jobs, our pleasures, possessions and status; our bank balance. Everything is evanescent as a bubble!

Acharyaji then tried to show us that the body is only made up of food. And he made the point so real by adding, "It is just a plate of beans, peas and tomatoes!"

4 Knowing that, is it still worth grieving over the body?

Verse 29: The Wonder of Wonders!

आश्चर्यवत्पश्यति कश्चिदेन-

माश्चर्यवद्भवति तथैव चान्यः ।

आश्चर्यवच्चैनमन्यः शृणोति

श्रुत्वाप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित्

॥ २-२९॥

āścaryavatpāśyati kaścideṇa-

māścaryavadvadati tathaiva cānyaḥ |

āścaryavaccainamanyaḥ śṛṇōti

śrutvāpyēnaṁ veda na caiva kaścit

॥ 2-29॥

1	<i>Aashcharyavat pashyati kashchit enam,</i>	As a wonder does some person see This;
2	<i>aashcharyavat vadati tathaa eva cha anyah;</i>	As a wonder does another speak of This;

3	<i>aashcharyavat cha enam anyah shrinoti</i>	<i>As a wonder does a third hear of This;</i>
4	<i>shrutvaa api enam veda na cha eva kaschit.</i>	<i>yet, having (seen, spoken and) heard, of it, <u>none understands</u> This at all.</i>

This is another verse almost bodily taken out of the *Katha Upanishad* (1.2.7).

Aashcharya: The word ‘wonder’ can be taken in two senses; it could be as an adjective describing the state of wonder a person experiences, or it could be as a noun, as one who is endowed with wonder, or possessed of wonder.

Who sees such wonder? – Only a rare individual, a rare seeker, a rare realized soul, a rare teacher of the Self. That whole fraternity is very rare that sees the Truth of this world. Nevertheless three types of people are identified in this verse:

1 i) Pashyati: This is the sage who has actually had the direct vision of the Self, he has seen the Cosmic Form of the Lord. He is the Self-realised Master. He can also rightly fall into the next category.

2 ii) Vadati: This is the one who speaks of it, i.e. teaches it to others. He, too, is a wonder. The sage is automatically in this category. These two types are able to speak of the Truth and spread the knowledge of Vedanta to others, and inspire them.

3 iii) Shrinoti: Over and above the previous two types, there are the sincere seekers who are just beginning to take interest in the spiritual path. They are thrilled to listen to the talks of saints and to the stories of His glory such as in the *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavatam*. They are deeply inspired by the wonderful subtleties and explanations of Brahman, and are filled with wonder as they hear them.

4 And there are many people who are unable to understand the significance of what they hear because they have not prepared themselves through purification of their minds. They hear the talks, etc but cannot appreciate the wonder of the Lord as clearly as the above category of seekers.

Indirectly, Sri Krishna is saying how precious this knowledge or wisdom is. It is not something to be trifled with. The verse is a glorification of the Lord. Krishna is asking Arjuna to pay the greatest attention to His words as He cannot be repeat them again.

Verse 30: Finally, Do Not Grieve, O Arjuna!

देही नित्यमवध्योऽयं देहे सर्वस्य भारत ।

तस्मात्सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि

॥ २-३०॥

dēhī nityamavadhyō:'yaṁ dēhē sarvasya bhārata |

tasmātsarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvam śōcitumarhasi

|| 2-30||

1	<i>Dehee nityam avadhyah ayam</i>	<i>Ever <u>indestructible</u> is the Indweller</i>
2	<i>dehe sarvasya, Bhaaratah;</i>	<i>in the body of all beings, O Bharata;</i>
3	<i>tasmaat sarvaani bhootaani</i>	<i>therefore, for any creature,</i>
4	<i>na tvam shochitum arhasi.</i>	<i>you have no reason to grieve!</i>

1-2 The essence of the teaching so far is summed up in these two Padas. This is the conclusion on the full topic of Grief, from both levels discussed – the Transcendental as well as the phenomenal (Paramarthic and the Vyavaharic).

3-4 *Tasmaat*: Once again we have the third *tasmaat* since the Lord began this topic in verse 11. This concludes the whole effort of the Lord to eradicate Arjuna's grief. He has tried to get through to Arjuna in every possible way, presenting His arguments systematically and convincingly. We have seen what a fine Teacher He is.

Overcoming Arjuna's grief is only the first step in Sri Krishna's plan of teaching. Whilst Arjuna remained in grief, nothing would have sunk into his mind. Having now rid him of his grief, the Lord can move on to answer all his arguments. This he does in the next eight verses.



2.7 ARJUNA'S SWADHARMA CLARIFIED

(Verses 31-38, 8 No.)

ARJUNA, SOON AFTER hearing his Friend's scathing response to his arguments made in the previous Chapter, still defended them on the basis of three main points:

i) **Bhishma and Drona**: These are his revered grandfather and Acharya respectively – who are worthy of his worship. How could he kill them in battle?

ii) **Maha-Anubhavan**: by killing these noble great men, there would sit upon his soul a lifelong guilt which he would never be able to wipe out – all his enjoyments would be “stained with their blood”! Dharma and Moksha would not be his any longer, only Artha and Kama would remain.

iii) **The Accrual of Demerit**: The consequence of all the killing in the war would heap loads of sin upon him, from which he would never recover.

These three arguments relate to his sense of duty. They cause him to have great indecision about his own duty or **Swadharma**. Sri Krishna (in verse 2.11) calls these three arguments as **Prajnaa Vaadaan** – “wise-sounding words”, but in reality considers them to be words of delusion and foolishness.

Arjuna the patient did not ask about Atma Jnana;. It was Sri Krishna the doctor who decided to spend His first 20 verses (11-30) on a strong dosage of Atma Jnana. He had to wipe off Arjuna's tears, get rid of that stultifying grief sitting all over him. However, even for the subject of Swadharma, it was necessary for Him to have given Arjuna that opening blitz of Atma Jnana. Against the clear background of the knowledge of the Self, it is easier to understand one's duty.

The Lord now takes up the question of Swadharma directly. The thought uppermost in Arjuna's mind is: “I am confused as to duty. Tell me decisively what is good for me (2.7).” In this section of eight verses, that confusion is exhaustively answered.

Verse 31: *The Kshatriya's Call to Duty*

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि ।

धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते

॥ २-३१॥

svadharmamapi cāvēkṣya na vikampitumarhasi |

dharmyāddhi yuddhācchrēyō'nyatkṣatriyasya na vidyate || 2-31||

1	<i>Swadharmam api cha avekshya</i>	<i>Further, looking at your own duty,</i>
2	<i>na vi-kampitum arhasi;</i>	<i>you ought not to <u>waver</u>;</i>
3	<i>dharmyaat hi yuddhaat shreyah</i>	<i>for, indeed, higher than a <u>righteous war</u></i>
4	<i>anyat kshatriyasya na vidyate.</i>	<i>there is nothing other for a Kshatriya.</i>

iii) They had followed all the codes of how to settle a dispute.

iv) Only after failing to come to a settlement, were they compelled to take the last resort and fight it out with their cousins.

Indeed, the Pandavas had not put a foot on the wrong side of Dharma.

Yadrichhayaa: This has been an “*unsolicited opportunity*” to fight. Death in a war of this nature would mean certain entry into heaven. There is a heavenly world called *Veera Swarga* which is especially reserved for those who die in a righteous war.

3-4 These Padas are a repeat from the previous verse. Arjuna is addressed as Partha, son of Pritha, another name for Queen Kunti. Krishna utters it as though He has just heard Kunti say to Him, “O Krishna, remind him of the very purpose for which I have given him birth. The moment for fulfilling it has come. O tell him now; this is the moment.”

THE RULES OF WAR

Modern warfare has acquired an ugly reputation. Influenced by today’s war standards, people may not grasp the respectability that war once had in the times of ancient India. In comparison, today’s wars are brutal and ruthless, and bring out the animal nature of man. At the time of the Mahabharata War, there were gentleman’s rules in place regarding the conduct of war which made it an honourable activity.

Here are some rules that may surprise the people of today:

i) Battles were only to be fought between sunrise and sunset. Those were ‘Business Hours’ for war. After hours, people from both sides could meet each other openly without any threat of danger.

ii) One could not fight someone who leaves the battlefield, whatever their reason could be. If a soldier suffered an injury, or if he just wanted to have some rest, he just had to step out of the battlefield and he would be safe from attack.

iii) If an individual or an army surrenders in the appropriate manner, he or they could not be attacked and killed.

iv) If a general was challenged by an opponent to engage with him in battle, it was his duty to oblige and accept the challenge, even if he had planned some other attack.

v) One could not enter into a scuffle or engage with an opponent who is already engaged in a fight with an opponent. If a fight is in progress between two soldiers, no one is allowed to interfere unless invited to do so or called for help.

vi) Fighting could only be between equally ranked opponents.

vii) Before beginning a fight, the opponent had to be notified of one’s intention to fight. There had to be some order in the proceeding, as for example in a boxing match.

viii) Fights between highly ranked generals followed certain rules. One had to defeat the opponent in stages before killing him. For instance, the opponents ensign would be brought down as a first warning; then his head cover; then his helmet; then his chariot. At each of these warnings, the opponent is given a chance to surrender. If he opts to continue to fight, only then is he killed.

ix) It was illegal to ambush a soldier by outnumbering him. One could not gang up against a lone soldier. That was accepted as being cowardly.

Occasionally, soldiers from both sides would break these codes of conduct. For that, there were codes by which these breaches of conduct were punishable in a manner agreed by both parties, so that a vicious cycle of revenge is averted. That being said, we have in the Mahabharata itself, an almost endless string of revenge killings, breaking of the established codes, etc, some of which are given in the Episodes that precede this Volume.

Generally, the code of honour made the duty of a warrior an honourable profession. It was an honour to be a Kshatriya and represent one's country in battle.

At this point, Acharyaji made a poignant remark about war: *“War does not show who is **RIGHT**; it only shows who is **LEFT**!”*

Verse 33: Not Fighting – the Sin of Omission

अथ चेत्त्वमिमं धर्म्यं सङ्ग्रामं न करिष्यसि ।

ततः स्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि

॥ २-३३॥

atha cēttvamimam dharmyam saṅgrāmaṁ na kariṣyasi |

tataḥ svadharmam kīrtim ca hitvā pāpamavāpsyasi

|| 2-33||

1	<i>Atha chet tvam imam dharmyam</i>	<i>But if you, in this righteous</i>
2	<i>saṅgraamam na karishyasi;</i>	<i>warfare, do not engage yourself,</i>
3	<i>tatah swadharmam keertim cha</i>	<i>then, your own duty as well as fame,</i>
4	<i>hitvaa paapam avaapsyasi.</i>	<i>having abandoned, you shall incur sin.</i>

One would think that this verse was hardly necessary in the case of a revived Arjuna who has been well-tutored by his Master. But the words of the Lord are for all humanity and somebody would need this advice. For completeness it is necessary to have it.

1-2 Atha: The word ‘but’ ushers in an alternative course of action. Here is given another facet of Swadharma – where the sin lies in not doing what one should be doing; the sin of omission.

Imam: “this”; this word is more significant than it would usually be. *This* war was particularly looked forward to by Arjuna. He was second only to Sri Krishna in blowing the conch to start the battle on the Pandavas’ side. It was he that took the initiative to be placed in the middle of the battlefield to survey what had to be done. That same Arjuna wanted to desert ‘this’ war – how absurd of him!

3-4 More than about losing fame – which is no sin – this line is about shirking one’s duty. When a duty is omitted, it is invariably because of cowardice. The verse puts it down to “abandonment of duty”. That is the primary sin. As a secondary concern, not as a sin, and in the case of Arjuna especially, it would reflect poorly on his reputation as the Number 1 archer of the nation. The fame of Arjuna is an inspiration to the whole community and so it belongs to the community, not to the individual. Arjuna is expected to guard his fame for the community’s sake, not for any selfish reason.

The sin incurred is due to his call of duty to the community which pins its faith in him to fight. To retreat would be unpardonable. It would mean desertion of duty.

LOSS OF REPUTATION

We now have three verses on the loss of Arjuna's reputation should he refuse to fight. Each verse presents the view of different categories of people as they would see him.

All three verses speak of the deadly loss of reputation that Arjuna will be faced with if he does not fulfill his duty now. Sri Krishna is aware of this and does not want to see His friend-turned-disciple ruined in this manner. He goes all out to rescue Arjuna from such a fate and disgrace.

Verse 34: *i) Dishonour From People*

अकीर्तिं चापि भूतानि कथयिष्यन्ति तेऽव्ययाम् ।
सम्भावितस्य चाकीर्तिर्मरणादतिरिच्यते ॥ २-३४॥
akīrtim cāpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti tē:'vyayām |
sambhāvitasya cākīrtirmaraṇādatiricyatē ॥ 2-34॥

1	<i>Akeertim cha api bhootaani</i>	<i>There will be dishonour from the people -</i>
2	<i>kathayish-yanti te avyayaam;</i>	<i>they will <u>everlastingly speak</u> of it;</i>
3	<i>sam-bhaavitasya cha akeertih</i>	<i>and to one who has been honoured,</i>
4	<i>maranaat atirichyate.</i>	<i><u>dishonour</u> is worse than death.</i>

Dishonour From the General Public

1-4 Firstly, we have '**Bhootaani**', the general public, dishonouring him. Those people who looked up to him as a valourous soldier would now lose that respect for him. That would be worse than death to him.

Acharyaji also said that '**Bhootaani**' need not be restricted to people alone. Even the animals should be included. And he humorously imagined a cat and a dog facing each other ready to tear the other. The cat then says to the dog, "Don't you dare try to attack me. I am not like that Arjuna who ran away from his enemies like a coward in the battlefield!"

Pujya Gurudev re-phrases Krishna's words more diplomatically: "History will immortalize your cowardice, Arjuna. Death is just once, the pain comes for a brief moment and it is over. But defamation is like prolonged death. The agony will be hard to bear."

Verse 35: *ii) Dishonour From One's Equals*

भयाद्राणदुपरतं मंस्यन्ते त्वां महारथाः ।
येषां च त्वं बहुमतो भूत्वा यास्यसि लाघवम् ॥ २-३५॥
bhayādraṇāduparataṁ maṁsyantē tvāṁ mahārathāḥ |
yēṣāṁ ca tvāṁ bahumatō bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam ॥ 2-35॥

1	<i>Bhayaat ranaat uparatam</i>	<i>"He has withdrawn from battle <u>out of fear</u>!"</i>
2	<i>mamsyante tvaam mahaarathaah;</i>	<i>Thus will great commanders think of you.</i>
3	<i>yshaam cha tvam bahumatah</i>	<i>By whom you were once highly thought of,</i>
4	<i>bhootvaa yaasyasi laaghavam.</i>	<i>you will now be held in <u>light esteem</u>.</i>

Dishonour From One's Equals

Secondly, we have '**Mahaarathaah**', the great commanders who are Arjuna's peers, dishonouring him. These would be all the Army Generals on the Pandavas' side as well as some of the seniormost Generals on the Kaurava side, such as Bhishma, Dronacharya and Kripacharya. All their respect for Arjuna will now be lost. How would he bear that? Their respect will turn into disrespect. It will be impossible to bear their comments about him.

Archaryaji then developed a typical scenario of what they would say: "Arjuna did what? Did he put his tail between his legs and walk away! I cannot believe this. That is not the Arjuna we knew. It is shameful of him, really – this will make the headlines tonight!"

Verse 36: *iii) Dishonour From One's Enemies*

अवाच्यवादांश्च बहून्वदिष्यन्ति तवाहिताः ।

निन्दन्तस्तव सामर्थ्यं ततो दुःखतरं नु किम्

॥ २-३६॥

avācyavādāṁśca bahūnvadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ |

nindantastava sāmāthyam tatō duḥkhataram nu kim || 2-36||

1	<i>Avaachya-vaadaan cha bagoon</i>	<i>And many words that <u>should not be spoken</u></i>
2	<i>vadishyanti tava <u>ahitaah</u>;</i>	<i>will be uttered by your enemies,</i>
3	<i>nindatah tava saamarthyam</i>	<i><u>caviling</u> (belittling) your powers.</i>
4	<i>tatah duhkhataram nu kim.</i>	<i>What, indeed, can be more painful than this?</i>

Dishonour From Enemies

Thirdly, we have '**Ahitaah**', his sworn enemies, dishonouring him.

This will be the worst to bear. The enemies will not be restrained and polished like his friends would be. They will taunt him and mock at his cowardice. They would laugh and jeer at him. They will have foul words to say about him. "You will become a laughing stock at their drinking parties. Who is going to restrain his tongue and couch his words at a party?" Enemies are very good at mocking. They will say that all of Arjuna's previous battles were just 'flukes'.

Acharyaji gave as an example of this the performance of a tailender in cricket. Everyone knows that tailenders in the batting line-up are good for nothing. But still you get the occasional tailender who swings his bat wildly and gets a six. Such people can get 3-4 sixes like that in a row. However well-played those shots may have been, people will always just call them 'fluke'-shots! People will not credit him for them. In this way, Arjuna will be taunted and ridiculed over his previous successes.

There is a saying in the *Tirukkural*, the great Tamil poem written by Tiruvalluvar. It goes: "It is said that in a deer if even a single hair falls from its body, it loses its life." This has no literal truth in it; its meaning is symbolic. It means that in life people often forget all one's virtues, and speak only of his single vice. That is sufficient to ruin a man's reputation.

The infamy we earn goes down to our children and to their children. Imagine a child at school being told by another child, "O, you are Arjuna's grandson? – the Arjuna that retreated from the battlefield!"

Verse 37: *Fight! – There’s Victory Either Way*

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।

॥ २-३७॥

hatō vā prāpsyasi svargam jītvā vā bhōksyasē mahīm |

|| 2-37 ||

1	<i>Hatah vaa praapsyasi svargam;</i>	<i>If <u>slain</u>, you will obtain Heaven;</i>
2	<i>jitvaa vaa bhokshyase maheem;</i>	<i>If <u>victorious</u>, you will enjoy the Earth;</i>
3	<i>tasmaat uttishtha, Kaunteya,</i>	<i>therefore, stand up, O son of Kunti,</i>
4	<i>yuddhaaya krita-nishchayah.</i>	<i>resolved to fight!</i>

In verse 6 of this chapter, Arjuna expressed uncertainty about the outcome of the battle. This verse answers that in no uncertain terms. There will be victory in success or in defeat! This is solely because he would be seen as doing his duty, not cowardly shirking away from it.

1 Victory in Defeat: Is Sri Krishna playing some game with Arjuna? Certainly not - if Arjuna fights, he will be doing his duty. If he dies in the effort, he would have died for a worthy cause, and that itself would guarantee him a high place in heaven. He would gain certain admission there. Would that not be a victory?

There is a heaven specially reserved for warriors who die on the battlefield. We have mentioned it earlier; it is called “Veera Swarga”, which means “A Warrior’s Paradise”. Arjuna will be guaranteed a place there should he be vanquished in this battle.

2 Victory in Conquest: This is easy to understand from the layman's point of view. But there is more benefit than just enjoying a kingdom. Victory in this war means the victory of righteousness over unrighteousness, victory of light over darkness. The kingdom will be such that it will bestow enjoyment to all who dwell there, not only upon the King.

In a kingdom governed with Dharma, life can promote our highest welfare. Man's spiritual endeavours flourish, spiritual Sadhana is given a boost, and man can act without obstacles to fulfil worthy projects for the good of the society. That is how Ayodhya was run during the reign of Lord Rama. For Arjuna, there is the hope of such rule being extended over the whole sub-continent.

3-4 Tasmaat: Once again we have a *Tasmaat* – for the fourth time. This concludes not only this sub-section, but the whole argument of Krishna from verse 11. “After all that I have said now, Arjuna, what are you waiting for? Come on, take the resolve and fight! You will gain immortal glory, whether you win or lose.”

Verse 38: *Fight! – There’s No Sin Either Way*

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।

॥ २-३८॥

sukhaduhkhē samē krtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau |

|| 2-38||

1	<i>Sukha-duhkhe same kritvaa</i>	Keeping your balance of mind in pleasure and pain,
2	<i>laabhaa-laabhau jayaa-jayau;</i>	in gain and loss, and in victory or defeat,
3	<i>tat yuddhaaya yujyasva</i>	engage yourself in <u>battle for battle's sake</u> ,
4	<i>na evam paapam avaapsyasi.</i>	thus you shall incur no sin.

Closing the Loophole

This final verse on the subject of Arjuna's delusion, closes the last possible loophole by which Arjuna may yet seek to wriggle out of the war. What is that loophole?

The previous verse promises that Arjuna is certain to enjoy either lordship on earth or lordship in heaven. However, Arjuna had declared earlier that both these were undesirable to him. So he may still not feel Sri Krishna's argument sufficiently convincing.

Thus Sri Krishna advises Arjuna with what attitude he has to enter the battlefield so that the same delusion does not overtake him again.

1-2 Sri Krishna asks Arjuna to beware of three pairs of opposites. These are:

i) **pleasure and pain**; ii) **gain and loss**; and iii) **victory and defeat**.

These pairs of opposites are inter-related. They have a cause and effect relationship. The 1st pair is caused by the 2nd, and the 2nd by the 3rd. Pleasure and pain are caused by gain and loss; gain and loss in turn are caused by victory and defeat. So the subtlest is the primary cause, namely, victory and defeat. Arjuna was advised in the previous verse itself not to have his mind concerned with victory or defeat. Equipped with this attitude, the other two pairs will take care of themselves and not trouble him.

3 To make sure Arjuna has understood, the Teacher expresses the same advice differently: "Battle for battle's sake," i.e. fight for the sake of doing your duty, having no concern for the result. Then everything will come out as willed by the Lord.

4 In performing action in *this* manner, with *this* attitude and with *this* spirit of surrender, no sin can be accrued. (see verse 2.33 to trace the emphasis on 'this')

This whole verse is a perfect condensed version of the next section. It prepares us for the message that is to unfold from the next verse onward about **Karma Yoga**, where such an attitude of balance is most essential. This verse contains in an informal way what we are going to learn from the Lord formally in the whole of the next section.

Here, as far as Arjuna's question is concerned, the Geeta could have ended. The answer has been given to Arjuna. Arjuna seems to be satisfied, since he has not raised any further questions or doubts.

However, Sri Krishna goes on, and on . . . for another 16+ chapters! Only He would know why. In the birth of the *Bhagavad Geeta*, the head has just emerged; the rest of the body has still to come kicking out!



2.8 THE SCIENCE OF KARMA YOGA

(Verses 39-41, 3 No.)

BEFORE PRESENTING Sri Krishna's masterpiece on the Science of Karma Yoga, there are a few introductory facts and terms we need to learn that will help us to grasp it.

INTRODUCTORY TECHNICAL NOTES

1. **Saankhye Buddhih Yoge:** In verse 39 we find these words. The centre word 'Buddhi' meaning "wisdom" is an example of *Deheli Deepa Vat*, which means it applies to the word before and after it. Both these words are in the 7th Case, in the usage meaning "concerning". Thus, we have 'wisdom concerning Saankhya' + 'wisdom concerning Yoga'.

2. **The Terms Sankhyaa and Saankhya:** The root *khyā* means "to tell". The Upasarga (prefix) *sam* added to it makes it "to tell well". That which tells well about something is called 'Sankhyaa' (note the 'a' and 'aa' syllables). In the context of the *Geeta*, this means the *Upanishads*. Thus,

"SANKHYAA" = UPANISHADS, the Pramana or Means to the goal.

That which is told about by Sankhyaa is called 'Saankhya' (note the reversal in the 'a' and 'aa' syllables). What do the *Upanishads* tell well? They tell about the Atman. Thus,

"SAANKHYA" = ATMAN, the Prameya or Goal itself.

3. **Saankhya Yoga:** What has been said of the Atman from verse 11 to 30 represents Saankhya Yoga as it is all about the Atman. This is not the Saankhya Yoga that Rishi Kapila founded, which is one of the six philosophical systems of India based on the Vedas. Kapila called his system by the same name because he thought he was explaining the Atman, but he was not. To him the Atman was the Mind only, not the Supreme Self as in the *Upanishads*. As students we have to note this difference carefully.

4. **Karma Yoga:** From point 1 above, the words 'wisdom concerning Yoga' have started the use of the term Yoga of Wisdom or Buddhi Yoga in the *Geeta*. This Buddhi Yoga is none other than the Karma Yoga spoken of elsewhere in the *Upanishads*. Thus,

"BUDDHI YOGA" = The Yoga of Wisdom = KARMA YOGA in the Geeta.

5. **Main Subject of the Geeta:** In the *Geeta*, Saankhya Yoga, the Yoga dealing with the science of the Self or Atman, is the main Yoga taught by Sri Krishna. All the other Yogas mentioned in the *Geeta*, starting with Karma Yoga, are in the context of serving Saankhya

Yoga. They are all subsidiary to and sub-sets of Saankhya Yoga, which is the Yoga they are all leading one to.

When this fact is forgotten, much confusion arises about what the main teaching of the Geeta is. For instance, Sri Lokamanya Tilak's Geeta Rahasya, written in Marathi in prison when he was a political prisoner during the freedom struggle, lays great stress on the Karma Yoga aspect, and Tilak considers **Karma Yoga** to be the main purpose of the Geeta. Similarly, there are others who read **Bhakti Yoga** as the main purpose of the Geeta. And still others consider that **Jnana Yoga** is the main purpose in the Geeta!

This is why Sri Shankaracharya in his Bhashya continually refers everything said in the Geeta back to the fundamental science of the SELF, namely **Saankhya Yoga**. He never loses sight of the fact that the Geeta is teaching us the knowledge by which we can attain liberation from Samsara. The subject is not Samsara, but the transcending of Samsara.

Although it may appear that numerically more verses are devoted to 'other' Yogas in the Geeta, we should keep in mind that the whole Geeta is about Saankhya Yoga.

Verse 39: The Yoga of Wisdom (Karma Yoga) Begins

एषा तेऽभिहिता साङ्ख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु ।
बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि ॥ २-३९॥

ēṣā tē:'bhihitā sāṅkhyē buddhiryōgē tvimāṁ śṛṇu |
buddhyā yuktō yayā pārtha karmabandhaṁ prahāsyasi || 2-39||

1	<i>Eshaa te abhihitaa Saankhye (buddhi)</i>	<i>What has been taught so far is wisdom concerning Saankhya;</i>
2	<i>buddhi Yoge tu imam shrunu;</i>	<i>Now listen to the wisdom concerning Yoga.</i>
3	<i>buddhyaa yuktah yayaa, Paartha,</i>	<i>Knowing this <u>wisdom</u>, O Partha,</i>
4	<i>karma-bandham prahaasyasi.</i>	<i>you shall cast off the <u>bonds of action</u>.</i>

1-2 Verse 38 smoothly introduced us to Karma Yoga as described in the *Geeta*. It contained both the key principles of Karma Yoga. [These are the same two that we learnt in *Upadesh Sara* (Text 7), namely:

- i) Renunciation of the Fruits of Action: The fruits of action have to be received as Prasad of the Lord. Whatever the results are have to be accepted as His Prasad.
- ii) Dedicated Action: Actions have to be dedicated to the Lord moment by moment; this takes out all selfishness from them.

Sri Krishna uses the word Shrunu, "listen", when He starts speaking on Karma Yoga. He did not do so when he taught Saankhya Yoga. That shows the importance of Karma Yoga.

3-4 Karma Yoga as a preliminary sub-branch of Yoga that breaks down Karma Bandhan, meaning "our bondage to action." By lightening our Karmic burden, it prepares the seeker for the higher steps of spirituality, for Saankhya Yoga.

Acharyaji said, "Karma Yoga gives the right attitude to approach the Lord. Saankhya Yoga then gives the right altitude to reach the Lord, the pinnacle of Perfection."

THE GREATNESS OF KARMA YOGA

“Karma Yoga is hunger for Saankhya Yoga!”

KARMA YOGA IS unparalleled in its ability to purify the Jeeva of the burden of Karma. Sri Krishna is very fond of Karma Yoga – He splashes it out everywhere in the Geeta. It is His pet subject! He introduces it to Arjuna in the very beginning because He believes it will help purify Arjuna’s mind and thereby enable him to understand Saankhya Yoga better.

Karma Yoga is a Yogic science because it helps to bring us to the doorstep of Saankhya Yoga, and through it to unite with the Self.

In Karma Yoga, the mind is hooked to God while engaged in actions. The actions are performed without desire for enjoyment through the act. Even if the action fails to bring a good result, it does not matter to the Karma Yogi. This principle helps the Karma Yogi to discover that happiness is independent of the fruit of one’s action.

Karma Yoga thus can be viewed as an activity done for the sheer joy of hooking oneself onto the Lord. It stops impurities from the outside coming in, and helps the impurity that is already stored within to come out. It “sweeps” the room of the mind clean.

Acharyaji inspired us with another magnificent simile:

“In Karma Yoga, one hand reaches out to the world and one hand to God. The first hand has a Divine ‘glove’ on, so we are not tainted by the world; the other hand has Divine ‘Love’ on, and gets kissed by God!”

We should always remember that when Karma Yoga is eulogized, it does not mean that Saankhya Yoga is being relegated to the background. Karma Yoga is glorified so that Saankhya Yoga can get fulfilled. When a child is praised, the father gets very pleased!

Verse 40: *Karma Yoga: Results are Immediate & Certain*

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्

॥ २-४०॥

nēhābhikramanāśō:'sti pratyavāyō na vidyatē |

svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyatē mahatō bhayāt

|| 2-40||

1	<i>Na iha abhi-kramanaashah asti</i>	<i>In this there is no loss of any effort,</i>
2	<i>praty-vaayah na vidyate;</i>	<i>nor is there any production of contrary results.</i>
3	<i>svalpam api asya dharmasya</i>	<i>Even a little practice of this knowledge or Yoga</i>
4	<i>traayate mahatah bhayaat.</i>	<i>becomes the cause of protection from <u>great fear</u>.</i>

ANALYSIS OF KARMA YOGA (KY)

Karma Yoga has six distinct qualities. These are all mentioned in **Verse 40**:

1a i) Quality 1: No Loss of Effort: The actual activity in KY is not the physical action, but the clinging to or remembrance of God, and making it into a continuous offering dedicated to God. That is the definition of KY. If this be the case, then how can there be any loss in KY? The 'loss', if any, is in the hands of the Karma Yogi.

1b ii) Quality 2: Results are Immediate: Since KY is not the external action but an internal action, it is independent of what happens outside to the activity itself. The internal action in KY cannot be affected by any external factor, so its result is guaranteed as well as immediate. It does not require patience to wait for it. The immediate result comes in the form of increasing love for God and increasing purity (reduction of desire). There is no doubt about this. It is certain, minute by minute! No one can be denied their rightful claim to the result because it comes as they do the KY. There is no time delay for the fruit.

2a iii) Quality 3: No Contrary Results: There can be no Pratyavayah or contrary results in KY. The hand stretched out to God can bring only His Love. The danger hand is the one stretched out to the world; and if that is well-gloved, there can be no contrary result there either. By 'well-gloved' it is meant that one follows certain strict codes of conduct in mixing with people, speaking, behaving, etc. If all such rules are followed nothing can harm a Karma Yogi. There can be no contrary result, externally or internally.

2b iv) Quality 4: Mistakes Do Not Matter: In KK (or DPA) even if all the actions are perfect, there could still be a negative result – as the dispensation depends on so many unknown factors, including the Karma of the doer. In KY it is virtually the opposite. Even if there are mistakes in the actions, the result will always be good because it is done with a love for God, and love is the sole objective of the Karma Yogi. The action is only a means of channeling one's love to God. For example, offerings made in a Havan are measured by the love put into it, not by the quantity or quality of the ghee offered!

3 v) Quality 5: Completion Not Essential: In KY even if the work happens to remain incomplete, it is not a problem. If the attitude is right, the result comes then and there! Thus the true Karma Yogi does not feel disappointed, does not demand perfection even though he will always try to give God his best. He does not get angry if the work turns out to go different from what was planned. None of these stress-producing factors enter into KY when truly done as KY.

As Acharyaji put it, "Just the scent of KY in a person is enough to start the chain of transformation in his life!

4 vi) Quality 6: Problemless: True KY protects one from the fear of sin or demerit. Problems in KY arise only when it is actually 'pseudo-Karma Yoga', i.e. the work has only the label of KY on it, but in fact it is through and through KK. Naturally, KK done in the name of KY will not bear any spiritual fruit. Goods acts done pompously, to make an impression, to obtain name and fame, etc, fall into this category. They are not KY at all.

Lord Krishna does wonders in pin-pointing what Karma Yoga really is.

FACTORS ENCOURAGING UNITY & DISUNITY

Acharyaji took us deeper into the details of the mental state of Karma Yoga:

People can be united at the mental level by many factors. Language is one of them. In a country like India, there is a different language spoken in each state. When two Indians meet in their own country, the first thing they try to establish is which language is spoken by the other person. If the language is common, a unity is at once already established. The two persons at once 'open up' to each other as they have something in common.

Then there is the unity at national level. When two Indians meet in a foreign country, the fact that they are both Indian brings them together easily. Then language is not a consideration. State barriers are brought down, as it were, simply because of their common nationality.

In the same way, when people see each other as children of God, many other barriers are brought down. God is the ultimate uniting factor. God unites all beings together into one family. This is the factor which the Karma Yogi utilizes to unify his intellect and see all persons with equality.

If God is the uniting factor, then the Ego is the divisive factor. The Karma Yogi strives to avoid letting the Ego divide him into fragments, separating him from others. He aims to see others as his own by giving the least importance to his Ego. Ego constricts our thinking, narrows it down. Many things we do in the name of our ego appear very foolish when we see it from a higher perspective.

Acharyaji pin-pointed this problem in the words: ***"We are not at peace when we are in pieces."***

Thus we should strive to move away from ego if we wish to integrate our intellect and make it unified, one, single and one-pointed. An integrated intellect is the perfect instrument to perform Karma Yoga.



2.9 THE PATH OF KAMYA KARMA

(Verses 42-44, 3 No.)

THERE ARE TWO TYPES of persons, each having a different approach to action:

Type A: jumps into action by nature; he has an action-oriented approach.

Type B: avoids actions by nature; he has an action-repelling approach.

Both approaches are valid and can occur in the same person at different stages of his growth; this illustrates two inherent qualities in action. The qualities are:

i) **Quality 1:** Actions are Absorbing, yet Addictive: Once we start an activity, it absorbs our attention. The action itself can bring great joy because the mind gets fully occupied. When we see results coming, we get greater joy. Thus actions can become addictive. At this point, the person tends towards Type A and gets attracted to action.

Actions are self-denerating. Soon action snowballs and grows on its own and get beyond our control. We become enslaved by it and cannot disengage ourselves from it. At this point, the person wants to go for a vacation. He tends towards Type B and develops an aversion for action.

ii) **Quality 2:** Actions Demand Perfection, yet are Uncertain: An activity is never isolated but is part of a Project or group of activities strung together and spread over a time scale. The project could be quite long depending what it is. In agriculture the time-scale between sowing and harvesting would be a season. In construction, a road may take years to build. All this requires careful planning, supervision and execution. Projects demand Perfection, which explains a Type A's attraction for it.

However, the result of such activity only comes when the last action in the string is performed. And there is no guarantee as to what the result will be. It may even turn out to be a total failure. If rains do not come, there could be no harvest at all. If rains are heavy, the whole road can get washed away. The uncertainty of the results puts some people off. Results demand Patience. This explains Type B's aversion for action.

The three verses of this Chapter are taken together. All of them illustrate what happens when our intellects are rooted at the Ego level – the intellect gets completely disintegrated. As just expressed, God is the ultimate uniting factor. The opposite is that the Ego is the ultimate dividing factor, leaving just one person – one's own self!

The Vedas speak of desire-prompted actions only so that we begin to realize how futile it is to spend our life aiming for such temporary pleasures. The Vedas hope to instill dispassion in us through these elaborate explanations in the Karma Kanda. However, people given to sense pleasures do not see this benevolent spiritual intention behind the Vedas. Hence they consider their inclusion in the Vedas as divine consent to continue pursuing them. It suits their low aim of life perfectly to do that. They blind themselves to the broader context of the Vedas, which always directs the human mind towards dispassion for the world and towards God, the ultimate source of happiness.

Verse 42: A. The Misquoting of Scripture

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यविपश्चितः ।

वेदवादरताः पार्थ नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः

॥ २-४२॥

yāmimāṃ puṣṭitāṃ vācam pravadantyavipaśchitaḥ |

vēdavādaratāḥ pārtha nānyadastīti vādinah

|| 2-42||

1	<i>Yaam imam pushpitaam vaacham</i>	That speech which is <u>flowery</u>
2	<i>pravadanti avi-pashchita;</i>	is uttered by the <u>unwise</u> ;
3	<i>veda-vaad-arataah, ,</i>	delighting in the <u>sweet words</u> of the Vedas,
4	<i>Paartha na anyat asti iti vaadinah.</i>	O Partha, saying, “There is nothing else.”

1-4 This verse tells us where the materialists get their philosophical sanction from, i.e. what their support base is. It is the portion of the Vedas that deals with desire-prompted actions or Kamya Karma. The Vedas, which are the whole body of knowledge concerning all human endeavours, naturally also include the Karma Kanda in which the legitimate ways in which people can attain success in worldly pursuits are also given. The science of action can be used to satisfy any desire if the proper procedures are followed.

The Vedas, being a total science, cover worldly actions also in their scope, but show how to fulfil them legitimately without violating the Laws of Nature. The Materialistic School take these portions as justification to fulfil their goal of seeking pleasure. They overlook the overall spiritual plan or purpose which the Vedas have in mind.

Verse 43: B. The Pursuit of Pleasure

कामात्मानः स्वर्गपरा जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम् ।

क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति

॥ २-४३॥

kāmātmānaḥ svargaparā janmakarmaphalapradām |

kriyāviśēṣabahulāṃ bhōgaiśvarya-gatiṃ prati

|| 2-43||

5	<i>Kaamaatmaanah svarga-paraah</i>	Full of desires, having Heaven as their goal;
6	<i>janma-karma-phala-pradaam;</i>	they pursue the <u>rewards</u> of their actions, which leads them (only) to <u>new births</u> ;
7	<i>kriyaa-vishesha-bahulaam</i>	They plunge all their efforts into specific deeds ,
8	<i>bhoga-aishwarya-gatim prati.</i>	for the attainment of <u>pleasure</u> and <u>lordship</u> .

5-6 Based on the above philosophy is the lifestyle that accompanies it. Their deluded minds draw them towards the pursuit of pleasure. These people of the materialistic schools are seen in this verse with a magnifying glass.

The elaborate rituals spoken of are those in the Karma Kanda section of the Vedas. People with numerous desires will certainly take this part of the Vedas as being their “Gospel”. The attainment of heavens for the sake of enjoying pleasures is not uncommon among the pursuers of pleasure. They may even deny themselves some pleasure on earth in order to enjoy them more intensely in heaven! Such is their faith.

Kaamaatmaanah: “full of desires”. When taken to its logical conclusion, this philosophy leads to Krodaatmaanah, which means “full of anger”. All desires can never be fulfilled. The unfulfilled ones are bound to bring frustration and anger in their wake. Unfulfilled desires automatically pull their souls back again to another birth to obtain opportunities to fulfil them.

7-8 Engaging themselves in an endless stream of actions, these people work hard to accumulate wealth and enjoy the maximum amount of pleasure. Some of them work endlessly to earn Punya for the sake of enjoying the pleasures in heaven.

Verse 44: C. The Result? – Addicted Minds

भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तयापहतचेतसाम् ।
व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते ॥ २-४४॥
bhōgaiśvaryaprasaktānām tayāpahṛtacētasām |
vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyatē ॥ 2-44॥

9	<i>Bhoga-aishwarya-prasaktaanaam</i>	<i>For, those who cling to pleasure and lordship,</i>
10	<i>tayaa apahrta chetasaam;</i>	<i>whose minds have become addicted to them –</i>
11	<i>vyavasaayaatmikaa buddhih</i>	<i>none of these are <u>determinate</u> and <u>resolute</u>,</i>
12	<i>samaadhau na vidheeyate.</i>	<i><u>meditative</u> and <u>tranquil</u>, or <u>studious-minded</u>.</i>

9-10 Since the fruit of Karmas is impermanent, chasing them leads one to sink deeper and deeper into Samsara. Birth after birth is thus simply wasted away in pleasure-hunting. The result of such frenzied activity is that the intellect becomes completely disintegrated. Addiction to pleasure is the ultimate result.

These lines take the level of pleasure to its logical limit, i.e. the addicted state. Any pleasure, when over-indulged in, makes one addicted to it. Thereafter, the addict seeks more and more of that pleasure again and again. The pleasure he gets is naturally impermanent, and so he is drawn repeatedly to it to satisfy his craving. This makes him lose all sense of decency to obtain the addicted pleasure. He opens himself up to all vices in order to satisfy his hunger for pleasure. The fences of righteousness begin to fall apart.

The Net Overall Result

11-12 These two Padas are meant to summarise all the three verses. They reveal the deplorable state to which the man of desire can sink.

The power of decision, which is the main function of the intellect, gets wasted away when it is scattered in the direction of endless desires. Intellectual power is depleted. The main point made here is to contrast the splintered intellect and the decisive intellect.

A mind that is scattered towards numerous desires cannot have the holding power to stay concentrated in meditation, let alone being absolutely fixed in Samadhi. It is impossible for it to be so.

Samaadhau: “meditative and tranquil”. The irresolute mind is opposed to Samadhi. As Acharyaji says, “It has not even stepped into the portals of spirituality.”

The word Samadhi has an interesting derivation. ‘Dhi’ stands for the mind, and ‘sam’ the prefix or Upasarga means ‘that which is done well’. Samadhi would thus mean “the mind that is standing well” or kept well, well-disciplined or well-trained. Such a mind alone is suitable for steady contemplation and eventually to enter the state of Samadhi or total abidance in the Self within.

The Steady Mind Contrasted With the Unsteady Mind

In effect what the Lord has just done is compared Kamya Karma to Karma Yoga. If one takes us north, the other will take us south. The two can never go together.

Kamya Karma or actions with desire are the very antithesis of Karma Yoga. Their goals are opposite to each other. The former aims at pleasure and splinters the intellect; the latter aims at union with God and integrates the intellect. It aims to fix the mind to one goal – namely God.

Left to itself the mind is sure to remain indisciplined, due to its very restless nature. If unrestrained by the power of one’s will, it will run towards more and more pleasure-fulfilling desires.

The restless mind can take a long while to become tamed. If it gets drawn to Karma Yoga, the latter has the power to tame it – even the most restless of them.

The Vedas, being compassionate as our Mother, hold the hope that one day such people who are given to Kamya Karma will realize how fruitless all their efforts are and then turn to what She really wants them to follow – the path of dispassion and renunciation.



2.10 THE PRESCRIPTION FOR ARJUNA

(Verses 45-48, 4 No.)

(Verses 45-48, 4 No.)

HAVING PRESENTED TO Arjuna both Sankhya Yoga and a full breakdown on Karma, both Karma Yoga as well as Kamyā Karma, the Lord now prescribes a path that is **tailor-made** for Arjuna. The path selected for him lies in between Sankhya Yoga and Kamyā Karma. Sankhya Yoga is yet beyond his reach and he has passed the stage for Kamyā Karma. Arjuna is thus a ripe candidate to begin the spiritual path with **Karma Yoga**. He has a long way to go, but at least he has qualified himself for it by realizing the futility of worldly power, possessions and pleasure.

In the next 4 verses, from 45 to 48, Sri Krishna gives Arjuna precise instructions on how to follow the path of Karma Yoga. Instructions are given to equip Arjuna for all the rigours of the path. Towards the end the Lord summarises the path of Karma Yoga in two practices. These two principles encompass the whole science of Karma Yoga.

The prescription is unique for each individual, but since Arjuna is a typical example of spiritual seekers who are ready to begin the path, these instructions apply to most seekers in the early, purificatory phase of their spiritual lives.

Verse 45: *An Overview of the Path Ahead*

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन ।
निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥ २-४५॥

traiguṇyaviṣayā vēdā nistraiguṇyō bhavārjuna |
nirdvandvō nityasattvasthō niryōgaksēma ātmavān ॥ 2-45॥

1	<i>Traigunya-vishayaah vedaah</i>	<i>The Vedas deal with the Three Gunas or attributes;</i>
2	<i>nistraigunyaah bhava, Arjuna;</i>	<i>O Arjuna, be you <u>above</u> these three attributes.</i>
3	<i>nirdvandvah, nitya-sattwasthah,</i>	<i>Free yourself from the pairs of <u>opposites</u>; ever remain in Sattwa or goodness,</i>
4	<i>niryogakshemah, aatmavaan.</i>	<i>free yourself from <u>all anxieties</u> of preservation; and get established in the Self.</i>

The overview of the Path for Arjuna is chalked out in this verse. He is given the main phases that he will be passing through. Four stages of growth are identified along this path:

A. The Higher Knowledge in the Vedas

1 The true import of the Vedas is now given, as opposed to its mis-quoting in verse 2.42. The Vedas are a vast ocean of knowledge. Vedic study is prescribed for one as the first stage of growth. The portion that is going to be relevant henceforth to Arjuna is the Jnana Kanda. He does not need the Karma and Upasana Kanda which speak of goals that are still in the mundane realm. He has achieved them already. Now he has to aim beyond them.

The Jnana Kanda speaks of the differentiation of the Real and the Unreal. The three Gunas or qualities of nature – Tamas, Rajas and Sattwa – are the starting point for the whole body of knowledge of Creation or the not-Self. This is where Para Vidya begins.

The three Gunas are the basic building blocks of nature. All the five elements are made up of these three qualities in innumerable combinations. From them are produced the gross and the subtle creation. Sattwa is purity, Rajas is restlessness and Tamas is lethargy or inertia. More will be said in Chapter 14, 17 and 18 about these Gunas of nature.

B. Conscious Progress Through the Gunas

2 Nistraigunyah: *“beyond the three Gunas”*. Lord Krishna is giving Arjuna an overview of the path that he is going to tread. The plan of the Jnana Kanda is to make us evolve initially from Tamas to Rajas, then from Rajas to Sattwa, and finally to go beyond even Sattwa. The Vedas make provision for the training of man at all these levels.

All people are catered for in the Vedas; no one is left out of God’s plan. The Tamasic people who have many desires are taught by the Karma Kanda how to go about satisfying their desires in an organized manner without violating righteousness. Similarly, the Rajasic people who have very restless minds, are taught by the Upasana Kanda to narrow their minds to the Deity they worship. They are trained to make their minds more focused. The Sattwic person who has developed purity is taught by the Jnana Kanda to grasp the knowledge about the deeper truths of life.

The aim of the Vedas is to take us upward. However, if we do not take Her help, then the worlds attained are determined by our Guna as follows:

- i) **Tamas**, pushes one towards Nishidha Karma or forbidden actions; it leads one to the lower worlds, one or the other of the seven ‘hells’.
- ii) **Rajas**, drives one towards Kamya Karma or desire-prompted actions; it leads one to the intermediate heavenly worlds, from earth to Pitru-loka.
- iii) **Sattwa**, makes one stick to Nitya Karmas or one’s ordained duties in life; it leads one to the higher heavens from Swargaloka to Brahmaloka, the highest.

C. Remaining in Sattwa Guna

3 Nirdvandvah: *“free from the pairs of opposites”*. The way to attain the third stage is to train oneself to be free from the opposites, especially likes and dislikes. This is called Raga and Dwesha. If one can remain evenly poised in the midst of the opposites, it is a sign that one is established in Sattwa Guna.

Arjuna is being instructed that he will at first have to strive to get established in Sattwa. The Karma Yoga will help him to do that. It will work out most of his Karma and purify him so that he can face the pairs of opposites with equipoise.

D. Abiding in the Self

4 Nir-Yogakshema: *“free from anxieties of survival (acquisition and preservation)”*. The fourth stage is to establish oneself in the contemplation of the Self for increasing periods of time, until one gets permanently established in It.

To achieve this, one is asked to surrender completely to the Lord and leave all personal concerns to Him. The seeker develops sufficiently to place his full trust in the Lord to take over the care of all his needs (Yoga-Kshema). With his mind thus freed from external anxieties, he can spend all his time remaining in God-remembrance or Self-abidance.

Verse 46: “Drink What you Need, and Leave the Rest”

यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः सम्प्लुतोदके ।

तावान्सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः

॥ २-४६॥

yāvānārtha udapānē sarvataḥ samplutōdakē |

tāvānsarvēṣu vēdēṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ

|| 2-46||

1	<i>Yaavaan artha udapaane</i>	As much use as a reservoir of water is
2	<i>sarvataḥ samplutodake;</i>	in a place where there is a flood everywhere ,
3	<i>taavaan sarveshu vedeshu</i>	so much use are all the Vedas
4	<i>braahmanasya vijaanatah.</i>	to the knower of Brahman who is ‘flooded’ by the Self.

This verse relates to the first stage of the above verse, namely, the study of the Vedas. The person that is being addressed could be taken as a beginner, like Arjuna, or as the adept or sage. It was interpreted to us in two ways by Acharyaji, each one differing according to the person assumed to be addressed:

A. Addressed to the Beginner

This is the first interpretation.

i) **Vijaanata**: The person being addressed is taken to be the beginner in Karma Yoga (for example, Arjuna in this case) who is just starting on this path of the Higher knowledge after realizing the fruitlessness of the Lower knowledge, i.e. the path of desire-prompted activities which keeps one in Samsara.

ii) **Udapaane**: The water is taken to represent the instructions given by the Vedas; the ‘water’ is abundant in the Vedas; it is overflowing (**Sampluta**) and more than one’s need. The Karma Yogi needs to take only the Jnana Kanda portion and ignore the rest.

iii) **The Context**: is the start of Karma Yoga.

The meaning then is:

“To the Karma Yogi who has come to realize that the Self alone is worth striving for, the bulk of the water of the Vedas (all the Karma Kanda parts which offer so many promises of pleasure) are of no use; he takes just the water of knowledge on devotion to the Lord, for that is all he needs for his immediate purpose. (Very soon he will be ready to drink more – of the water of Brahma Vidya also.)”

B. Addressed to the Realised Sage

This is the second interpretation.

i) **Vijaanata**: Here, the person being addressed is taken to be a Self-realised sage who has brought to culmination the knowledge received on Brahma Vidya.

ii) **Udapaanam**: This interpretation takes the ‘water’ to mean the rewards of Punya, i.e. the pleasures to be attained by doing the rituals prescribed in the Karma Kanda of the Vedas;

iii) **The Context**: is the accomplishment of Brahma Vidya.

The meaning then is:

v) Finally, he has a deep desire to be rid of the ***Moha and Shoka*** (delusion and sorrow) that has overcome him.

These qualifications make him eligible for entering the first hall of Brahma Vidya, namely Karma Yoga. From there, his Divine Guru will lead him into further halls of progress.

Renouncing the Fruit of Action

2-3 There is a tendency among capitalists to maximize their profits at the expense or exploitation of others. They exert economic power over workers to keep them under their subjection. If this verse were to be seen against this capitalist perspective, it would perfectly suit their philosophy: Imagine capitalists quoting this verse and telling workers to do their work and not to worry about other matters, especially not to worry about their pay!

Can a charge be laid against the Geeta that it advocates a similar system? The answer from the spiritual perspective is a definite “No!”

In an economic set-up, workers are helpless; in the spiritual field, the Karma Yogi voluntarily accepts poverty upon himself for his own growth. In the Geeta, the aim is to free one from the defects inherent in all action. One’s acts are dedicated exclusively to the Lord. This verse does not ask the spiritual aspirant to make himself vulnerable to external exploiters. Exploitation of a Karma Yogi is out of the question because he places himself in the service of his Guru whom he can trust fully.

The verse teaches the Karma Yogi to cultivate the correct inner attitude of surrender so that he becomes free of all taints inherent in actions.

3 Why is the Karma Yogi asked not to pin his faith on a particular result? If he hankers for a particular result, that binds his mind. He can free himself only by being free of that desire. If he does that, the result is replaced by an equivalent amount of purity. The Karma Yogi voluntarily renounces the fruit in order to get more purity. The real action for him is not the external one, but the internal act of renunciation.

Let us compare this to the system of the capitalists. In the latter case, fear is instilled in workers to gain power over them. The Geeta’s teaching is based on love not fear. Acharyaji took “Exam-fear” as an example in class, and considered how it affected students preparing for examinations. Acharyaji said, “The real fear is the fear of being judged by the *result* of the exam. This causes stress.

The mental renunciation of the result frees one from that stress. By the words “Relinquish the result” is meant that the Karma Yogi does not crave for the result. The result is not his motive. He is fulfilled by the very performance of duty, which he dedicates to God.

Let us take a deeper look at this statement: Karma Yoga is an internal attitude in the Karma Yogi. It is between him and God. No one else need enter the picture. Thus there is no possibility of exploiting or being exploited in true Karma Yoga.

Inaction vs. Laziness

4 The verse furthers our understanding of how to spiritualize our actions. The subject of Inaction is yet to unfold in the Discourses that follow. It forms a key concept in understanding Karma Yoga. There is an internal inaction that is advocated by the Geeta later in the text. Here, to begin with, the Lord is referring to external inaction, which the Geeta does not advocate. As Arjuna is very likely to misunderstand this as “abandonment” of actions, the Lord quickly says He does not mean that one should not become lazy.

Usually dullness comes to one who has no result to look forward to in his work. But we find that when a person dedicates everything to God, he becomes more enthusiastic, more perfect in his work, more rejuvenated at heart, and filled with greater inspiration for the cause he is working towards. The teaching here is, “If you rest, you rust.”

Verse 48: Summary Statement on Karma Yoga

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।
 सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ २-४८॥
 yōgasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya |
 siddhyasiddhyōḥ samō bhūtvā samatvaṁ yōga ucyatē || 2-48||

1	<i>Yoga-sthah kuru karmaani</i>	<i>Be steadfast in Yoga by performing actions</i>
2	<i>sanga tyaktvaa, Dhananajaya;</i>	<i>without attachment, O Dhananjaya;</i>
3	<i>siddha-siddhyoh samah bhootvaa</i>	<i>Become <u>balanced</u> in success and failure.</i>
4	<i>samatvam yogah uchyate.</i>	<i>Evenness of mind is called Yoga.</i>

In this verse, we have the perfect definition for Karma Yoga according to the teaching of Sri Krishna. If we see this definition in the light of the cause which Sri Krishna champions throughout the Geeta, then this verse becomes a major statement that summarises the entire philosophy of the Geeta.

Before looking into the definition, we note that Arjuna is addressed as Dhananjaya. It means “a successful provider of wealth” to the community. He is one who has done his service to society well. He cannot be charged with escaping from his responsibilities to society. If he now practices some renunciation, it cannot be because of cowardice.

There are two practical aids in Karma Yoga: i) Non-attachment; and ii) Equipoise.

**“NON-ATTACHMENT leading up to EQUIPOISE” –
 This is Sri Krishna’s definition of Karma Yoga.**

Acharyaji snatched a moment to tell us a short joke. “How does a Karma Yogi send his emails? Answer: Without any attachments!”

What is Attachment?

1-2 Acharyaji gave a simple definition: **“Attachment is the belief that ‘I and You’ is a good combination for happiness.”**

In mathematical terms, this can be written as a formula:

“I” + x = Happiness

One’s happiness is linked to another person, represented by ‘x’. The formula has led to people getting attached to ‘x’ for their happiness. This is the basic flaw in attachment. If we can change that formula to just ‘I’, it should be sufficient for true, inner happiness that is independent of any other source of happiness. Sri Krishna teaches here that the Karma Yogi should free himself from such dependence by depending entirely on the Lord within.

“Drop the ‘x’ factor and place yourself entirely in the hands of the Lord.”

Removing attachment simply means replacing ‘selfishness’ with ‘selflessness’. It does not mean abandoning relationships carelessly, foolishly or improperly with a ‘don’t care’ attitude. No such foolishness is permitted in the field of Karma Yoga. Detachment is an inner attitude – love is there but without dependency or selfishness. This is a science of interacting in such a manner that one remains unscathed by the relationship.

What is Equipoise?

3-4 The test of Equipoise is absence of exhilaration in success, and absence of dejection in failure. “Balance in success and failure” is equipoise.

With this verse ends the teaching on Karma Yoga. The remaining chapters have many references on Karma Yoga, but no further principles on the science are added.

Acharyaji made a brief comparison between the Karma Yoga as taught in *Upadesh Sara* (Text 7) of Sri Ramana Maharshi and in the Geeta. As one may expect, there is absolutely no difference at all, only the terms used are different. The two main steps are identical. This can be seen from the meanings in the following table.

UPADESH SARA	BHAGAVAD GEETA
<u>Ishwararpana Buddhi:</u> <i>Dedicate</i> all one’s actions to God alone.	<u>Vyavasaayaatmikaa Buddhi:</u> Make life <i>God-centric</i> , not ego-centric.
<u>Prasada Buddhi:</u> Accept whatever results come from the actions as the <i>Lord’s gift</i> .	<u>Samatvam Buddhi:</u> Remain totally balanced or <i>equipoised</i> , whatever the results may bring.

A COMPARISON WITH UPADESH SARA



2.11 THE GLORY OF KARMA YOGA

(Verses 49-53, 5 No.)

IN THE FIVE VERSES of this chapter, Arjuna is given the encouragement to begin Karma Yoga by listening to its glorification. Arjuna is just coming on board the “SS Karma Yoga” oceanliner, and is about to set sail. The last two verses of this section describe two well-defined ports at which he will dock along his journey – the first is an interim stop, the second is the Destination.

Another purpose served by these verses is to place Karma Yoga in its true perspective as a *sine qua non* for the development of purity of heart. There is no doubt that Lord Krishna holds it very dear to His heart, for it applies to every spiritual seeker without exception.

Verse 49: *Karma Yoga vs. Ordinary Karma*

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय ।

बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः

॥ २-४९॥

dūrēṇa hyavaram karma buddhiyōgāddhanañjaya |

buddhau śaraṇamanviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phalahētavaḥ

|| 2-49||

1	<i>Doorena hi avaram karma</i>	Far lower (inferior) is the <u>physical action</u>
2	<i>buddhi-yogaat, Dhananjaya;</i>	than <u>yoking it</u> to the intellect, O Dhananjaya.
3	<i>buddhau sharanam anvicchha</i>	Seek ye refuge in the intellect (in wisdom).
4	<i>kripanaah phala-hetavah.</i>	Wretched are they who seek only the reward .

1-2 Here we see how vastly different Karma Yoga is from what Arjuna is doing at the moment. In this verse Karma Yoga is described as action that is “yoked to the intellect”. In comparison, ordinary worldly activity is merely a physical exertion, if done with the intellect disengaged.

3 This line is equivalent to, “Seek refuge in Karma Yoga, which is rooted in wisdom.”

4 Kripanaa: “wretched”. The word Kaarpanya, meaning “of pity”, used by Arjuna in verse 7, has the same root as this word.

Ordinarily man engages himself in actions with selfish desire, with results as his aim, and pleasure as his end. Seeking to arouse disgust in Arjuna for such a foolish use of actions, Sri Krishna uses the term Kripanaa to describe them. Why are they so wretched?

Acharyaji’s answer to that was: “Such people are indeed to be pitied. They are like beggars. What a wretched state! They go on asking the Lord, ‘Give me this, give me that’.”

Kripanaa has another connotation to it. It points to the foolishness of such people. Action done in the spirit of Karma Yoga has the potential to free one. Instead of using it for this purpose, man foolishly performs it for selfish purposes and gets himself bound further

What wretched miserliness! Addressing Arjuna as ‘Dhananjaya’ could not be more appropriate in the context – it means “one who commands great wealth”.

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।
तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥ २-५०॥
buddhiyuktō jahātīha ubhē sukṛtaduṣkṛtē |
tasmādyōgāya yujyasva yōgaḥ karmasu kauśalam ॥ 2-50॥

3 The contextual meaning of Yoga here is 'Karma Yoga'. Sri Krishna is connecting the highest goal to Karma Yoga since Karma Yoga leads to it.

When a mother wants to point out the moon to her child, she says, “Look, it’s just beyond the tip of that tree branch.”

Acharyaji quoted to us a beautiful anecdote which Pujya Gurudev loved for this topic. A certain Sri Gupta from North India was married to Smt Lakshmi. On his visits to South India he secretly wedded Kalyani also. When Mr Gupta dies, both ladies become widows at the same time. This is the point of the story: These two wives represent the good and evil deeds respectively. Mr Gupta’s death represents the condition when the Karma Yogi becomes ‘dead’ to the world by offering himself totally to God. At that time, both good and evil deeds leave him, i.e. they become ‘widows’.

Yoga is Skill in Action:

4 There is great skill involved in practicing Karma Yoga. The “double-hit” is part of that skill. Karmas have a natural tendency to bind people. To come out of that bondage is a mammoth task. Karma Yoga accomplishes that task to perfection. It turns ordinary earth-bound Karma head over heels and directs it Godward, and to Liberation. This is the superb ability that Karma Yoga has.

We were reminded of Pujya Gurudev’s golden words on this topic. Skill in Action is interpreted as: “When all old Vasanas are exhausted, and no new Vasanas are created.”

TRUE KARMA YOGIS

True Karma Yogis become very powerful forces in the evolution of society. They command the obedience of large numbers of people. People stand in awe of great men skilled in KY. They become icons in the spiritual field. This is due to their power of concentrated action, with devotion to God alone as their driving force.

Acharyaji cited the example of the construction of Pratishwara Temple in Tanjore. Many parts needed to be assembled together with perfect precision. It also has the uniqueness of not having its shadow fall on any part of the ground, at any time of the day, throughout the year.

[Science-minded readers may infer from this that the perimeter of the temple was the widest locus of the shadow of the highest point at any time of the year. So the shadow could only fall on the temple, not on the ground.]

The same architect’s father was a great Karma Yogi. When the father was once supervising the construction of a temple, one of the artisans had a habit of spitting as he worked. So the father provided for him a person to hold a spittoon for him while he worked. On one occasion this person left the spittoon and went away. The father noticed it and ran to hold it himself for the artisan, who did not notice any change, happily spitting into the spittoon. Only at the end of the day did he realize who was carrying the spittoon!

Such are the awe-inspiring examples of skilled Karma Yogis in Action.

In the Bhashya, Shankaracharyaji places KY on the highest pedestal. The selflessness is taken to its heights when he says that the Karma Yogi renounces even the thought, “May it please God”!

In concluding this verse, Acharyaji brought balance to the discussion by adding just one line of wisdom – **“God sees not our ability but only our availability!”**

Verse 51: The Fruit of Karma Yoga is Jnana Yoga

कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः ।

जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम्

॥ २-५१॥

karmajam buddhiyuktā hi phalam tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ |

janmabandhavinirmuktāḥ padam gacchantyanāmayam || 2-51||

1	<i>Karmajam buddhi-yuktaah hi</i>	Knowing fully well that birth arises from <u>actions</u> ,
2	<i>phalam tyaktvaa maneeshinah;</i>	the wise ones <u>renounce the fruits</u> thereof.
3	<i>janma-bandha-vinir-muktaah</i>	Thus they become freed from the fetters of birth ,
4	<i>padam gacchhanti anaam-ayam.</i>	and go to the state which is <u>beyond all evil</u> .

This verse serves two purposes. Firstly, it adds a final touch of encouragement to get Arjuna to perform his duty on the battlefield. Secondly, it serves to wrap up the theme of glorification of Karma Yoga.

1-2 Buddhi-Yuktaah: Once again, as in the last verse, this word (in the plural this time) is used for Karma Yogis, who perform actions with the full knowledge of what in actions binds them to rebirth, and how they can liberate themselves from the bondage of action. The emphasis is on being wise enough to have the knowledge before one sets out to do Karma Yoga.

A novel simile was given to us by Acharyaji: The Karma Yogi does not allow joy and sorrow to cling to him. He shakes them both off as a dog shakes off water from its body after a bath. Such is the wisdom of the **Maneeshinah**, the wise one.

3 It is a fact in life that when an immediate gain is turned down or resisted, it accumulates into a much larger benefit later. In the field of action we see the principle at work in Karma Yoga. The Karma Yogi first abandons his likes and dislikes (Raga-Dwesha) and approaches his work with great equipoise. On another front, he is willing to lay down his own desires and do all his actions just to please God. Thirdly, when results do start surfacing as they certainly will, he remains firmly equipoised whatever the results are. By abandoning the fruits of action, he actually converts them into **Purity** of heart.

4 Purity of heart brings the seeker to the state where he gains control over his mind and intellect. This is where KY ends and Jnana Yoga begins. The *Geeta* gives it the term Saankhya Yoga or Buddhi (wisdom), the direct means of Self-enquiry". At this point, the Karma Yogi has graduated to Jnana Yoga.

Now we have two milestones in Karma Yoga to measure our growth:

Verse 52: The First Milestone: Nirvedam (Indifference)

यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति ।

तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च

॥ २-५२॥

yadā tē mōhakalilam buddhirvyatitarīṣyati |

tadā gantāsi nirvēdam śrōtavyasya śrutasya ca

|| 2-52||

1	<i>Yadaa te moha-kalilam</i>	<i>The mire of delusion – as much as your</i>
2	<i>buddhih vyati-tarishyati;</i>	<i>intellect crosses beyond it;</i>
3	<i>tadaagantaasi NIRVEDAM</i>	<i>so much you shall attain to indifference as to</i>
4	<i>shrotavyasya shrutasya cha.</i>	<i>what is yet to be ‘heard’ and what has been ‘heard’.</i>

1-2 This and the next verse describe two key milestones in the life of a Karma Yogi. In this verse the first milestone he reaches is **Nirvedam** or “*indifference*” (see note below). The pre-condition for it is crossing over the mire of delusion. Essentially, Nirvedam is a measure of the *purity of heart* and of dispassion that has been gained.

Mohakalilam: “*The mire of delusion*”. Delusion is seen at two levels:

i) **Dharma Moha:** At local level, this refers to the quandry Arjuna has about his Swadharma. The test that proves the removal of this delusion is Nirvedam or indifference to what one experiences. It is the first milestone, and is covered in this verse.

Arjuna’s dilemma as to his duty was due to this Moha. In Arjuna, this Dharma Moha led to his refusal to do his duty on the battlefield. The delusion manifested as an overwhelming sense of self-pity and grief.

ii) **Brahma Moha:** At cosmic level, this refers to the overall power of Maya which veils us from the Self. The first Moha is an effect of this second Moha. The test that proves its removal is Samadhi or abidance in the Self for long periods. It is the second milestone, and is covered in the next verse.

Overcoming delusion at the root or cosmic level calls for a lot more work. Karma Yoga alone is not sufficient. Jnana Yoga, i.e. Saankhya Yoga, is needed to achieve this. It means the intellectual enquiry has to extend deep into the Self, not remain only at the level of action or thought.

Nirvedam & Steps Leading to It:

3 The Geeta uses the word Nirvedam, which in practice is equivalent to Vairagya, which in turn is seen as equipoise or balance under all conditions. Nirvedam is indifference to worldly pleasure, without any feeling of revulsion for it; it is a more neutral word than Vairagya. One simply observes the world-show without being judgemental about it.

The steps to attain Nirvedam were detailed for us by Acharyaji as follows:

Step 1: The *Karma Yoga* begins;

Step 2: *Chitta Shuddhi* or purity of heart is gained;

Step 3: *Attachment* goes;

Step 4: With it *Raga and Dwesha* (likes and dislikes) also go;

Step 5: Then the “*mire of delusion*” leaves;

Step 6: One gains *Nirvedam* as the Phala of Karma Yoga.

The first milestone, the attainment of Nirvedam, is a big achievement, but it is not yet the goal of spiritual life. It is an *entry-point* for proper Vedantic Sadhana. More work is still needed. Nirvedam opens the way for the mind to be directed fully towards the Divine.

4 ‘Heard’ and ‘yet to be heard’ refer to experiences through all the five senses. Indifference or non-attachment to all experiences leads to **Equipoise**; i.e. Nirvedam is a quality that *precedes* the stage of Equipoise or perfect Balance of mind . . .

Verse 53: *The Second Milestone: Self-Abidance*

श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला ।

समाधावचला बुद्धिस्तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि

॥ २-५३॥

śrutivipratipannā tē yadā sthāsyati niścalā |

samādhāvacalā buddhistadā yōgamavāpsyasi

|| 2-53||

1	<i>Shruti-viprati-pannaa te</i>	<i>Though perplexed by what you have ‘heard’,</i>
2	<i>yadaa sthaasyati nishchala;</i>	<i>yet, standing <u>immovable</u> in the face of it,</i>
3	<i>samaadhau achalaa buddhih</i>	<i>your intellect remains steadfast <u>in the Self</u>,</i>
4	<i>tadaa yogam avaapsyasi.</i>	<i>that is when you shall attain complete union.</i>

This is the second and ultimate milestone reached by all spiritual seekers. It heralds the entry into the next section which deals with the state of the Stithaprajna, the man of perfect wisdom, the God-realised saint.

In verse 48, Sri Krishna had concluded Karma Yoga by mentioning its two characteristic gains – non-attachment and equipoise. Here He is concluding His entire message from verse 2.11 onwards, i.e. both Karma Yoga and Saankhya Yoga. And he does so in a similar manner. The ultimate gain of Saankhya Yoga is perfect **Equipoise** in the face of all encounters in the world. Under all conditions one is able to remain fixed in the Self.

Perfection in Equipoise

1 Shruti-Vipratipanna: As for the previous verse, the words “*what is heard*” should be interpreted widely to cover that which is reported by all five senses, i.e. all that is heard, seen, tasted, smelt and touched. These inputs in an ordinary individual would cause all the “perplexities” of life.

2 Nischalaa: “*immovable*”. The stage now being described occurs when these sensory data no longer perplex or disturb the seeker, due to the purity of his mind gained by the practice of Karma Yoga and Saankhya Yoga. Another name for this immovability is Equipoise or balance of mind. The mind remains unshakeable in all conditions. This is the second milestone.

3 Achalaa: “*steadfast*”. As more and more purity of mind is developed through Karma Yoga and then through Saankhya Yoga, the intellect gets sharpened with every encounter from the sensory world. A stage comes when the intellect is razor-sharp and alert. At that point, even if it is blasted by wide-ranging stimuli from all the five senses, it is able to withstand them with perfect poise.

This can happen only when the intellect is firmly established in the Self, not under any other condition.

4 This firm abidance in the Self is called Yoga or complete identity or oneness with the Self. At first, the means to achieve the goal are called Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga. Now, the Goal itself is being called ‘Yoga’.

Journey from 1st to 2nd Milestone

Acharyaji explained that the journey between the first and the second milestones, i.e. from Nirvedam to Samadhi, or from Indifference to Equipoise, referred to the very

stormy period of Antaranga (internal) Sadhana involving Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana. Only after successfully overcoming these hurdles does one arrive at the stage of Equipoise or “inner stabilisation of the mind”, which is followed by Self-realisation itself.

A brief outline of the internal Sadhana is given here for completeness:

i) **Sravana**: this is the attentive hearing of the Truths expounded by the Guru. The Guru can only do this when the first milestone of Dispassion has been reached. This removes all Abhavana from the seeker, i.e. all wrong notions which he had previously held due to incorrect thinking.

ii) **Manana**: this is intense reflection that the seeker has to do in order to clear all traces of Asambhavana or doubt from his mind. The seeker uses the logical analysis methods approved by the Srutis to clear these doubts.

iii) **Nididhyasana**: the deep and steady practice when the seeker is plunged in deep meditation. At these times, he discovers that there are deeply seated Vasanas which begin to surface and trouble him. This is the experience of Viparita Bhavana. The seeker has to deal with these Vasanas and eliminate them successfully.

iv) **Yogam**: The fruit of attaining the Nischala state (another name for Equipoise) is Self-realisation, when the seeker abides in an unbroken continuity in the state of union with the Self. It is the result of Karma Yoga as well as the above three Vedantic Sadhanas.

In Discourse 6, the stages of Sadhana are analysed in great detail. The Sadhaka who achieves Nirvedam is described there as **Aarurukshah**, the qualification which prepares one for Sravana. Then comes the stage of Equipoise, and the Sadhaka reaching it is referred to as **Yoga-Yuktah**, and is prepared for Manana. Finally, comes the stage of mental Quietitude, and the Sadhaka reaching it is referred to as **Yoga-Aaroodhah**, and is prepared for Nididhyasana or serious meditation.

Arjuna has been listening intently without interruption since verse 2.11 for 43 verses. The Lord now gives Arjuna a brief moment to regain his breath – after all, all this must have been quite “breath-taking” for Arjuna; in addition, he has to prepare himself to get up soon and start fighting!

A very different Arjuna now comes up with just the right question to keep the Geeta moving on to greater and greater heights. The section that follows is known the world over for its brevity in expressing the most sublime state of the **Steady-Minded Sage**.



2.12 THE MAN OF STEADY WISDOM

(Verses 54-67, 14 No.)

SINCE SRI KRISHNA BEGAN His Upadesh to Arjuna in verse 2.11, this is the first break Arjuna gets to put a question across to Him. The last we heard from Arjuna was as one who was totally confused about his duty, and who surrenders completely to Sri Krishna. Now we see a new Arjuna, who is in deep thought over what Sri Krishna has been explaining to him. We have an Arjuna who is responding very well to the spiritual treatment being administered to him.

The Lord has completed an exhaustive explanation of **Saankhya Yoga**, the goal of spiritual life, supported by **Karma Yoga**, the means to that goal. He has pin-pointed Karma Yoga as Arjuna's immediate course of action. Before closing the chapter, the Lord provides Arjuna with a living ideal who represents the greatest achievement of man:

Sri Veda Vyasji's Artistic Masterpiece

Sri Veda Vyasa attempts one of the most difficult tasks that a poet is called upon to do. In these last 19 verses of the Chapter, he attempts to paint a picture of the **Sthitaprajna** on the canvas of our mind. He can best succeed only if our mind is kept steady enough for him to paint on. As Sri Vyasji knows that our minds will fluctuate, he has to hold our attention for the full 19 verses to minimize spoiling his picture. How does he do so?

Acharyaji compared Sri Vyasji's feat to the equally difficult task of drawing a picture using coloured powder on the surface of water. The water has to be absolutely still in a place free from all air currents. The artist has to have the highest concentration so that the powder remains afloat instead of sinking!

Whether Vyasaji has succeeded or not can be seen in the number of seekers the Geeta has inspired in the world through these verses. They compel our attention through some of the most sublime philosophic poetry one could ever read in spiritual literature. Sri Vyasaji takes recourse to every device known to a first-class poet to hold our attention. The result is that these verses have become known to every household in India. Mahatma Gandhi had them chanted daily at his prayer meetings.

Verse 54: *Arjuna's Four Questions*

अर्जुन उवाच ।

स्थितप्रज्ञस्य का भाषा समाधिस्थस्य केशव ।

स्थितधीः किं प्रभाषेत किमासीत ब्रजेत किम्

॥ २-५४॥

arjuna uvāca |

sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā samādhisthasya kēśava |

sthitadhīḥ kiṁ prabhāṣēta kimāśīta vrajēta kim

|| 2-54||

	<i>Arjuna Uvaacha:</i>	<i>Arjuna said:</i>
1	<i>Sthitaprajnasya kaa bhaashaa</i>	<i>Describe to me the man of steady wisdom,</i>
2	<i>samaadhi-sthasya, Keshava?</i>	<i>who is in the <u>Superconscious State</u>, O Keshava?</i>
3	<i>Sthitadheeh kim prabhaasheta?</i>	<i>How does the one of steady wisdom <u>speak</u>?</i>
4	<i>Kim aaseeta? Vrajeta kim?</i>	<i>How does he <u>sit</u>? How does he <u>walk</u>?</i>

1-4 The four questions asked by Arjuna may be divided into two major categories:

From the Absolute Standpoint This applies to the first question.

1-2 Question 1: Describe to me the Sthitaprajna who is merged in Samadhi?

From the Relative Standpoint This applies to the next three questions.

3 Question 2: How does he speak? – i.e. when he is talking;

4a Question 3: How does he sit? – i.e. when he is by himself;

4b Question 4: How does he walk? – i.e. when he is interacting with others.

Verse 53 introduced the Sthitaprajna by giving an account of one whose intellect stands steady and immovable in the Self. Arjuna's questions follow directly from it. We are advised not to consider these as questions. They are really statements expressing wonder and amazement at the behaviour of such a perfect being. In other words, they are rhetorical questions, expressing wonder that such a one could ever exist on earth.

Arjuna's questions 2, 3 and 4 are clearly not to be taken literally. Mere physical imitation of a saint leads us nowhere. If by just copying a person's talk, walk and posture we could become like him, it would stultify spiritual Sadhana. We have to follow the saint's mind. There is a philosophic sense in which Arjuna's questions have to be taken. It is from this perspective that Sri Krishna answers these questions.

A Zen Story: A person had gone to a Zen Master just to observe him day-to-day. He found that the Master's day was filled with the same things that he did – brushing his teeth, bathing, having meals, resting, working, dealing with workers, and so on. At the end of his stay, he could not help asking, "What is it that is different between us two?" The Master replied, "When I eat, I eat; when I work, I work; when I rest, I rest. With you it is not like that. When you eat, you are thinking of your work; when you rest, your mind is thinking of food."

Verse 55: ***Q1: "Who is a Sthitaprajna?" – Absolute Level***

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्पार्था मनोगतान् ।

आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते

॥ २-५५॥

śrībhagavānuvāca |

prajahāti yadā kāmānsarvānpārtha manōgatān |

ātmanyēvātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñastadōcyatē

|| 2-55||

	<i>Shree Bhagavaan Uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>Prajahaati yadaa kaamaan</i>	<i>DESIRE – when a man casts off</i>
2	<i>sarvaan, Paartha, manogataan;</i>	<i>all of it from his mind, O Partha,</i>
3	<i>aatmani eva aatmanaa tushtah</i>	<i>and lives <u>satisfied</u> in his Self, by his Self,</i>
4	<i>sthitaprajnah tadaa uchyate.</i>	<i>then he is said to be one of steady wisdom.</i>

The Blessed Lord begins His work of art: It is destined to set a benchmark in our minds of the highest attainment possible by man, despite being saddled in a body and mind. The first verse answers Arjuna's **Question 1**, the Sthitaprajna from the Absolute standpoint.

1-2 There is a prior condition to having a mind that can be steadily applied to meditation. That condition is “*when all desires are cast off*”.

Desire keeps the mind “alive” – and the suffering, as well! Desire is where all the evil qualities find their origin. From it arise qualities like greed, anger, jealousy, delusion, envy and attachment. Removal of desire eliminates all these other vices at the same time.

Prajahaati: this verb literally means “giving up well”. Kaama is desire, and has to be given up thoroughly if it is not to return again in some other form. When we sleep we are free from desire, but that lasts only till we get up the next morning, when all the same desires bounce out of bed with us, and grip our attention the whole day once again.

3 Without going into the How and the Why of overcoming one's desires, it is stated that this is the secret behind successful meditation practice. A meditator is one who possesses this prior condition. He is fully satisfied in the Self because his mind does not run after anything else as it gets all the satisfaction it needs by being absorbed in the Self.

Atmani Eva Atmanaa Tushta: “*satisfied fully, in the Self (7th case), by the Self (3rd case)*”. The sage finds fulfillment in the Self, so he does not hanker after lesser pleasures. He is quite content within himself. For him it is breakfast, lunch and supper – the Self. In his case, desires eventually leave him. They find that it is useless to trouble such a person who pays no attention to them. So they abandon him!

The Seven Bhumikas & the Sthitaprajna

4 At this point Acharyaji digressed to give us a background into the states of consciousness or Bhumikas as they are called. We first encountered these in Text 21 *Yoga Vasishtha*. Our objective here is to identify to what Bhumika the sage of steady wisdom belongs. There are seven Bhumikas or states, of which from the fourth onward are all states of Samadhi (varying from Savikalpa through to Nirvikalpa). The seven Bhumikas are:

1. **Subecha:** One who comes to realise the futility of worldly pursuits.
2. **Vicharena:** Reaching a Guru, he takes up deep Self-enquiry.
3. **Tanumanasa:** Begins Nididhyasana and progresses towards Savikalpa Samadhi.
4. **Sattwapatti:** Gains a first glimpse of direct Self experience – Savikalpa Samadhi.
5. **Asamsakti:** Progresses towards Nirvikalpa Samadhi, backed fully by knowledge.
6. **Padartha Abhavana:** The Samadhi has become very intense, stays longer.
7. **Turiyaga:** He is permanently immersed in the God-intoxicated state; he cannot be dislodged from it, even under extreme provocation. This is Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

From 4 to 7, are the states of the Sthitaprajna. He has direct experience of the Self.

States 1, 2 and 3 are the so-called “Jagrat states”. Duality is given validity at this stage. State 4 is “Swapna state” because the person sees duality as just a dream. State 5 is compared to “Sushupti” as it is like normal sleep in Brahman. There is no Duality from this level onwards. State 6 is called “Gada Sushupti” as the sleep of Samadhi is now very deep. One is virtually ‘dead’ to the world. Finally, he comes to the 7th state wherein he is totally in the state of Samadhi all the time.

The Sthitaprajna state is perfected in the 7th Bhumika. The first question of Arjuna refers to the 7th Bhumika. The sage in this state has no interaction with the world. The next three questions refer to the 4th to 6th Bhumikas, where interaction with the world is there.

Verse 56: Q2-4: The Sthitaprajna – Relative Level

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।

वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते

॥ २-५६॥

duḥkhēṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukhēṣu vigataspr̥hah |

vītarāgabhayakrōdhaḥ sthitadhīrmunirucyate

|| 2-56||

1	<i>Duhkhesu anudvigna-manaah</i>	<i>In adversity, his mind remains <u>unshaken</u>;</i>
2	<i>Sukhesu vigataspr̥hah;</i>	<i>In pleasure, it remains <u>without hankering</u>;</i>
3	<i>veeta-raaga-bhaya-krodhah</i>	<i>Free from <u>attachment</u>, <u>fear</u> and <u>anger</u> –</i>
4	<i>sthitadheeh munih uchyate.</i>	<i>such a man is called a “Sage of Steady Wisdom”.</i>

This verse continues the definition of the Sthitaprajna, this time from the relative level. It summarises **Questions 2, 3 & 4**. The detailed answers to these questions follow in the subsequent 11 verses. The fundamental principles that describe the Sthitaprajna from the mental perspective is given here. The definition is not a superficial assessment of the sage’s mind, but goes deep into his very inner nature.

The three essential features of the Sthitaprajna’s mental state are:

1 “A mind unshaken by adversity (Duhkha)” ; Blissful;

2 “A mind unhankering after pleasures (Sukha)” ; Contented;

3 “A mind unattached, fearless and without anger ;” Peaceful.

4 These three define the state of mind of the Sthitaprajna. There are no reliable ‘external signals’ for such states. Any external sign could be very misleading; so much so that it is not even considered by Sri Krishna. The next 11 verses expand on these features.

An Objection: A point to be noted is that mental states come and go in any person. They are ever fluctuating and dynamic in their character. They depend on the blend of Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas in the mind at a particular time. For this reason, objectors may argue that these mental states listed above are “external” relative to the Self. This argument is put forward by those who do not wish to credit the Sthitaprajna with higher spiritual attainment. They claim that these three states are not the highest spiritual state.

The Lord’s Reply: Sri Krishna’s answer in the previous verse makes it clear that the objection is unsound. The Sthitaprajna is the highest level attainable by man. He is none other than a God-realised sage. A more accurate description of him is not possible in words.

In a Sthitaprajna, these are to be considered as “*mental states*”, as they are always present in him. The mind of a steady sage is well above the fluctuations to which the ordinary mind is subjected. Suffice it to say that the Sthitaprajna lives in another level of experience compared to the ordinary observer.

Sri Krishna’s definition is considered by Sri Shankaracharyaji to be difficult to improve upon. The reason given is that the three states described are such that they exclude all presence of the human **Ego**. The Ego cannot survive under the conditions described in these three states. Every Ego wants to expand itself, it wants recognition, it keeps away from what hurts it, it is afraid of losing what it has, it is threatened by other egos which compete with it, and it is frustrated when denied what it wants. This is egoic life, the very antithesis of the states described here by Sri Krishna.

Verse 57: Q2: “How Does He Speak?” – His Output

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।

नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता

॥ २-५७॥

yah sarvatrānabhisnēhastattatprāpya śubhāśubham |

nābhinandati na dvēṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

|| 2-57||

1	<i>Yah sarvatra anibhi-snehah</i>	<i>He who is everywhere without Attachment;</i>
2	<i>tat tat praapya shubha-ashubham;</i>	<i>on meeting with anything <u>good or bad</u>;</i>
3	<i>na abhinandati, na dveshtih,</i>	<i>who neither <u>rejoices</u>, nor <u>hates</u>;</i>
4	<i>tasya prajnaa pratishthitaa.</i>	<i>his wisdom is said to be fixed (steady).</i>

We now begin to expand on Questions 2-4 of Arjuna’s questions, which are asked from the Relative Level, and which Sri Krishna answers from that level. The sage, in his encounters with the world, meets with various situations as we all do. He interacts with the world in a way that leaves him as well as the world unscathed by it.

Question 2 is “How does he speak?” It really means: What outputs does he make to the world? How does he respond to influences that come to him from outside? What is his impact on others? The answer is given at the deepest mental level.

1-4 The Lord says, “Arjuna, the Sthitaprajna is unattached and equipoised in all situations. You will not hear such a person complaining of anything. He does not feel any dislike for anyone, nor does he leap into ecstasy when he is among favourable people. In good or bad he is the same. Such a person cannot be displeased or shaken in any way. He is fixed in wisdom, steady in all conditions. He is free from fear or anger in all his speech.”

Ordinarily we respond to sorrow by wanting to know who is causing it or who is obstructing the entry of joy. We then turn to this person and unleash our anger upon him. He, the external agent, is taken to be the cause of our misery.

The Example of Jesus: While on the cross, Jesus was heard to say, “O Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” There is not a tinge of anger in these words. They are words of unconditional forgiveness, complete surrender, and filled with compassion. They have become a source of inspiration to millions of aspirants on the spiritual path.

DEFECTS IN DEFINITIONS

In this regard, Acharyaji mentioned to us the three defects latent in definitions:

i) **Ativyapti Dosha**: “Cows have horns”. This is defective because other creatures who are not cows also have horns.

ii) **Avyapti Dosha**: “Cows are white”. This is defective because there are other cows who are not white.

iii) **Alakshya Api Dosha**: “Cows are not like elephants”. This totally distracts one from the subject of cows. It has the defect of not contributing anything to the meaning.

Sri Krishna carefully avoids these defects by steering clear of all possible ambiguities. He is very clear that if these qualities are displayed by anyone, that person would be a Sthitaprajna. There is no possibility of any ambiguity in his definition. The definition cannot include one who is not a Sthitaprajna, nor can it exclude one who is a Sthitaprajna.

All three of the values listed in the defining verse 56 are present in the Sthitaprajna naturally and at all times. They do not fluctuate in him. They govern all his interactions in the world. He is ever steady in his wisdom; ever rooted in his Self.

The excitement which usually accompanies worldly conversation is not present in the conversation with a sage.

Verse 58: Q3: “How Does He Sit?” – the Tortoise Simile

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः ।

इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता

॥ २-५८॥

yadā saṁharatē cāyaṁ kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ |

indriyāṇīndriyārthēbhyastasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

|| 2-58||

1	<i>Yadaa samharate cha ayam</i>	<i>When a man Withdraws,</i>
2	<i>koormah angaani iva sarvashah;</i>	<i>as a <u>tortoise</u> does its limbs from all sides,</i>
3	<i>indriyaani indriyaarthebhyah</i>	<i>his senses from the <u>sense-objects</u>,</i>
4	<i>tasya prajnaa pratishthitaa.</i>	<i>then his wisdom becomes steady.</i>

From this verse, for the next six verses the question taken up is “How does the Sthitaprajna sit?” The sitting implying when he is not doing anything, which in turn means when he is all by himself. In this question, the focus is on those occasions when the sage is alone, in solitude and with no one around to observe him. This is referred to as “sitting”.

The best indication of a man’s true personality and character is seen when he is alone. There is no one around him to influence his actions. There is no one whom he can impress, and so the behaviour seen is that which is inherent in the person. There is no one to see what wrong he is doing, and so the person is free to do any wrong without fear of being observed and criticised for it! For this reason, being all alone is the acid test of a person’s character. It brings out what he really is, whether both good or bad.

1-2 In such a situation, the sage is described as a tortoise who “withdraws all his limbs” from objects of danger. He pulls his senses out of the danger zone.

3 The sage similarly withdraws all his senses from the sense objects of attraction. He will not sit and watch TV all alone, because then the temptation is very strong that he will watch the wrong programmes and no one is around to notice him. When this art of avoiding the danger zone by withdrawal is mastered in the mind, the person has fulfilled the first part of the Sadhana. This phase is called Dama in Vedanta, and refers to the non-cooperation of the senses to fulfill the mind’s desire. The senses are stopped from fulfilling the desire.

The withdrawal of the senses is just one step. On its own it is termed suppression. Inwardly the “relish” for the objects has still to be sublimated. This inner relish is called Vasana in Vedanta.

How to deal with Vasanas is shown in the next verse.

Verse 59: Q3: Overcoming the Inner “Relish”

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।

रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते

॥ २-५९॥

viṣayā vinivartantē nirāhārasya dēhinaḥ |

rasavarjaṁ rasō:'pyasya param dṛṣṭvā nivartatē

|| 2-59||

1	<i>Vishayaah vinivartante</i>	Actually, the Objects of the senses <u>turn away</u>
2	<i>niraahaarasya dehinah;</i>	from the man of abstinence; (and then)
3	<i>rasavarjam rasah api asya</i>	even the inner Longing of such a man
4	<i>param drishtvaa nivartate.</i>	turns away upon seeing the <u>Supreme Being.</u>

1-2 The tortoise example in the previous verse suggests an effort on the part of the aspirant to withdraw from the sense objects. In actual fact, once the person is fairly well established in the practice of abstinence, it is the sense objects that keep away from him! The objects find that there is no point in lingering around a person who does not entertain them, and so they of their own accord they stop harassing him.

The tortoise that withdraws its limbs represents one step in the response of the steady-minded sage. The work is not complete with just that single step, although it is by no means a small step. A second step is required. It is called Shama or control of the mind.

The Inner Longing

3-4 If the inner longing is not removed, there is every possibility that the person’s restraint will “run out of stamina”, and the desire will soon find expression. To stop that happening, in Shama one clings to a higher ideal and upholds it. When our actions are dedicated to a higher altar, the lower desire loses its pull on us. That secures a more permanent freedom from the attraction of sense objects.

The verse could also mean that only by realizing the Self is it possible to become completely safe from the pull of the senses. Until such realization, there will always be a tinge of Rasa or taste for the enjoyment of the sense objects. This Rasa will tug at our senses relentlessly, needing us to be fully alert and attentive to withstand all temptations at any time. Only the “vision of the Self” can end the very source of the temptations.

Hence, until the Rasa or Vasana has been removed, the aspirant needs to be vigilant. He has to be ever watchful against slipping into inadvertence. He is warned of the following danger to spiritual life . . .

Verse 60: Q3: Even the Wise Can Succumb

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।
 इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥ २-६०॥
 yatatō hyapi kauntēya puruṣasya vipāścitaḥ |
 indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabhaṁ manaḥ ॥ 2-60॥

1	<i>Yatatah hi api, Kaunteya,</i>	<i>O Kaunteya, even though he strives (to control them),</i>
2	<i>purushasya vipashchitah;</i>	<i>and even though he be a wise man,</i>
3	<i>indriyaani pramaatheeni</i>	<i>the senses are very turbulent, indeed,</i>
4	<i>haranti prasabham manah.</i>	<i>and do violently carry away his mind.</i>

Using some powerful poetry, this verse brilliantly conveys how dangerous it is to be inadvertent on the spiritual path. Shama and Dama have to be used in conjunction with each other. Both external and internal vigilance have to be maintained at all times.

1-2 In the first two Padas there are three words, all set in 6th case: **Purushasya** is the “person” we are speaking about; he could be a **Yatatah**, a “striver” who is striving very hard practising his Sadhana, doing Japa, meditation and service; he could even be a **Vipashchitah**, a “wise and learned” person, by qualification or by reputation.

Meanwhile, here is a warning about the tactics used by our senses:

GUERRILLA ATTACKS FROM SENSES

We should ponder over this unexpected contingency of a fall even for a striving Sadhaka. It could be quite disconcerting for us to know that such a thing is possible. It makes us wonder: “If the spiritual path has to be trod with such great care and caution; if a backlash of desire can come even to a Sadhaka, what chance have ordinary people against such forces of nature?”

The truth is that Sadhana is one way of activating these lurking desires. The senses get their life from deeply seated Vasanas or tendencies. These are unknown to us until they mature and become activated. When we start doing Sadhana, we come under the sway of these lurking Vasanas. The seeker should not feel surprised by these “guerilla” attacks. Through them he learns to gain more strength to face them.

Subconscious memories can be triggered by events in one’s conscious life. These memories have the power to activate or revive old desires. That is another factor the Sadhaka has to learn to deal with. Memory brings up the object of desire to the mind’s eye. We say to it desperately, “Go away!” It pretends to be deaf. It does not go away, but stands its ground. Then it even starts dancing before our inner eye. Worn out with resistance, the Sadhaka yields and entertains the memories. That is the start of the calamitous chain that follows, ending in “violently being carried away”.

YATATAH ⇨ **PURUSHASYA** ⇩ **VIPASHCHITAH**
Striving **Person** **Wise & Learned**

3-4 Even though the person could be striving and he could be wise, yet he could be carried away “violently by the turbulent senses”, in spite of all his hard effort and learning. The subtle point being made by Sri Krishna is that there is something missing still in the Sadhaka’s qualification. That will be told to us soon.

However, there is no need to feel powerless. Sri Krishna tells us what is needed . . .

MATPARA: LOVE FOR THE LORD

So far Sri Krishna has never asserted Himself over Arjuna. This is the first time, (and there are going to be a few more occasions as the Geeta progresses), when Sri Krishna asks the seeker in Arjuna to surrender to Him in devotion and love. He knows what a key role divine love can play in succeeding in sense control. That is explained in this verse.

Matpara is the word that introduces us to Bhakti in the Geeta. In later Chapters we shall see more of it.

With love centred on God, the senses get mastered by themselves. Here we are dealing with the most effective means known to a Sadhaka to overcome his weaknesses. When failure seems to stare us in the face, Love for God is the one ingredient that can turn the equation around in favour of success.

How fulfilling is even ordinary love! People find great fulfillment in loving their pet dogs and cats. Even more fulfilling is love towards one’s family – the children and one’s spouse. That same fulfilling feeling is diverted in Matpara to the Lord’s feet, becoming even more fulfilling and empowering.

The message is clear from here onwards: Love God and continue doing the same Sadhana. That Love is like adding 1 in front of a series of zeroes. It changes the value of all the zeroes. If our love does not catch God, it is sure to catch some lesser object – and face the disappointment that is natural to such objects.

As Pujya Gurudev puts it, “The mind abhors a vacuum. It has got to have something to hold on to.” Sri Krishna offers Himself for that duty! “Hold on to Me!”

What happens if we do not accept Krishna (God) into our lives? That is explained in the next two dramatic verses. The context of these verses is this:. The Lord has just let out the greatest secret in spiritual Sadhana – **Matpara**. If we are too slow in catching it, these are the consequences that will follow. Could there be a more effective Teacher than Lord Krishna Himself, the Master of human psychology?

Love – towards the Divine – can be the greatest sublimator of life.
Love – towards sense pleasures – can be the greatest terminator of life.

Verse 61: **Q3:** ***Matpara: Turning to the Lord***

तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्परः ।
वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता

॥ २-६१॥

tāni sarvāṇi samyamyā yukta āsīta matparah |
vaśē hi yasyēndriyāṇi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

|| 2-61||

1	<i>Taani sarvaani samyamyā</i>	Having <u>restrained</u> them all (i.e. the senses),
2	<i>yuktah aaseeta matparah;</i>	he should sit steadfast, intent on Me ;
3	<i>vashe hi yasya indriyaani</i>	he whose senses are <u>under control</u> ,
4	<i>tasya prajnaa pra-tishthitaa.</i>	his wisdom is said to be steady.

We are still on **Question 3**, “How does the sage sit?”, i.e. How does he spend his time when he is alone and nobody is watching?

1-2 Sri Krishna has built up the argument for sense control perfectly. He has kept a key ingredient as a secret till now – and gives it at the right psychological moment when the seeker may be most bewildered by how to succeed in his efforts, and his hunger for the solution would be maximum. The secret ingredient is **Matpara**, love for the Lord.

Verse 62: **Q3:** *Without Matpara – the Slow Descent*

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।

सङ्गात्सञ्जायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते

|| २-६२||

dhyāyatō viṣayānpuṁsaḥ saṅgastēṣūpajāyatē |

saṅgātsañjāyatē kāmāḥ kāmātkrōdhō:'bhijāyatē

|| 2-62||

1	<i>Dhyaayatah vishayaan pumsah</i>	When a man <u>thinks of objects</u>
2	<i>sangah teshu upajaayate;</i>	<u>attachment</u> for them arises;
3	<i>sangaat sanjaayate kaamah</i>	from attachment <u>desire</u> is born;
4	<i>kaamaat krodhah abhi-jaayate;</i>	from desire arises <u>anger</u> ;

In case we refuse to take the help that the Lord has offered to us, namely, Matpara, then the following is the scenario that we must prepare for:

In two verses, **62** and **63**, we have what is called the “**Ladder of Descent**”. The first verse gives the part where the descent is slow, gradual, almost imperceptible to the Sadhaka. The next verse gives us the steep descent, where the crash comes so suddenly it is unstoppable, and the end result is inevitable.

The Slow Descent:

1 Tying with Thoughts of Pleasure: All advertising thrives on this aspect of human life. Window shopping has its charm because of this. Advertisers know that repeated blasting of the mind with thoughts of pleasure plants desire in the mind. They exploit this principle in their advertising campaigns. Soon we yield and are ready for the next rung.

2 Attachment to Pleasure: Once a pleasure is tasted, rolling the thoughts of past enjoyment does the same thing as does advertising in planting a new seed. One’s own mind becomes the ‘Advertiser’! “I think it is a good idea” – says attachment. Constant churning of these thoughts is certain to whip up a harmless looking attachment into a demanding one. Where there was only “I”, now there is “I” + “x” in the mind. “X” is the object of attachment.

3 Desire for Pleasure: The thought of attachment or liking builds up and becomes “I must have it” – that is desire. Up to here it can still be reversed if the thought process is purified. If this reversal at this stage is not done, the desire rarely remains in the mind for long. Soon it prods the senses, which begin to start itching.

4 Taking Action to Acquire Pleasure: The person, seeking to acquire the object of his desire, sets about making elaborate plans of action to obtain it. That is not too difficult a task. Soon he succeeds. He may succeed again, and again – perhaps many times. In fact, the success is part of the ploy to pull the unsuspecting person onward.

Obstructed Desire Brings Anger: Then, sure enough, the day arrives when he meets with an obstacle that stands in his way . . . and then we have a visit from **Anger**. Anger is the other side of enjoyment. Desire fulfilled brings enjoyment; desire denied brings anger.

The first visit may just bring some irritation. The next visit brings disappointment. The third becomes a source of pain. At this point, one decides that the obstacle has to be eliminated. The emotion of anger arises to deal with it. Anger may come in varying degrees of intensity depending on how intensely one wants a thing. Anger is no respecter of people – even if the Guru or one’s father stands in the way he gets the same treatment. When anger arises, the road is clear for a rapid descent down the Ladder.

The anger is directed at the person or factor that obstructs one’s desire. There is no other reason for it to appear. It is not about the qualities of the other person but purely the denial of desire that causes this anger to arise. But Anger finds a reason – any reason – to get angry!

The reasons Anger finds are termed justification. The other person is always blamed – he is like this or that; he hates me; he is jealous of me; what business has he to do that; and so on. The reasons given could be endless. But denial of desire is the real reason. Unfortunately, we are blinded to the real reason.

What follows is described in the next verse.

Verse 63: Q3: Without Matpara – the Fast Descent

क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
 स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥ २-६३॥
 krōdhādbhavati sammōhaḥ sammōhātsmṛtīvibhramah |
 smṛtibhramśād buddhināśō buddhināśātpṛaṇāśyati ॥ 2-63॥

5	<i>Krodhaat bhavati sam-mohah</i>	<i>From anger comes delusion;</i>
6	<i>sam-mohaata smriti-vibhrama;</i>	<i>from delusion comes loss of memory;</i>
7	<i>smriti-bhramshaat buddhi-naashah</i>	<i>from loss of memory, destruction of discrimination;</i>
8	<i>buddhi-naashaata pranashyati.</i>	<i>from destruction of discrimination, he Perishes.</i>

The Fast Descent:

The “**The Ladder of Descent**” continues, with the gradient suddenly getting steeper:

5 Anger Brings Delusion: With anger comes clouding of the mind. The eye sees ‘red’ only everywhere. It cannot think straight anymore. There is no sense of proportion. Even if it

is a small desire the anger does not see it as that, but blows it out of proportion. That is delusion or Moha. Nothing appears straight as it is. The hand of friendship appears as a fist aiming a blow. A compliment appears as a sarcastic remark. The disease of delusion seems to have no cure.

6 Delusion Brings Loss of Memory: From Delusion one forgets his social standing, how he relates to the other person, etc. He completely loses his memory which normally would have helped him to calm himself down. Now that it is not there, he lets himself go, with the result that his words become inappropriate, disgraceful and shameful. He has essentially lost respect for himself, and that reflects in his loss of respect for everyone else.

7 Loss of Memory Brings Loss of Discrimination: When this loss of memory occurs and one forgets himself, his honour and his etiquette, with it goes discrimination, which rests on memory of past experience. The bout of anger has boiled out all the water, and only the pot sits directly on the fire.

8 ...then Comes the CRASH! Such a wretched state brings one to utter ruin of his reputation, his character. The relationship with the other person and perhaps with many others related to that person, is destroyed, with hardly a chance to recover them.

As Gurudev puts it, “The man becomes a *two-legged* animal.” The hungers of the flesh reduce the person to just that – a lump of flesh!

Verse 64: Q4: “How Does He Walk?” – With Self-Control

रागद्वेषविमुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् । ब्यवियुक्तैस्तु
आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥ २-६४॥
rāgadvēṣavimuktaistu viṣayānindriyaiścharan | byviyuktaistu
ātmavaśyairvidhēyātmā prasādamadhigacchati ॥ 2-64॥

1	<i>Raaga-dvesha-viyuktaih tu</i>	<i>But, free from attraction and repulsion,</i>
2	<i>vishayaan indriyaih charan;</i>	<i>moving among the objects with senses</i>
3	<i>aatma-vashyaih vidheyaatmaa</i>	<i>under self-restraint, the self-controlled one</i>
4	<i>prasaadam adhi-gacchhati.</i>	<i>most certainly attains the ‘Prize’ of peace.</i>

We now move on to **Question 4**, “How does he walk?” This question concerns his interactions with others. In addition to the three principles given in verse **56**, this question is specifically answered in the four verses, **64-67**. Then in verse **68** of the final section, all the 4 questions are summarized. That is where a *little surprise* awaits us!

Acharyaji reminded us of how in ordinary mundane business people are able to keep their balance of mind because of monetary incentives. They deliberately suppress their undesirable feelings just so that they can do business with the other party. Such restraint is an application of will without any root in spirituality. It is purely a mental feat, not a spiritual Sadhana. It is done for worldly profit, not spiritual merit.

However, in the case of a Sthitaprajna, the control of the senses is natural because he has gained the qualities required through Sadhana. Being a master over his senses, he moves amidst the sense objects with complete self-restraint and self-control. He is a picture of one who is calm, cool and collected – unshaken by turmoil.

STHITAPRAJNA'S 8-STEPS TO HAPPINESS

1. SENSE CONTROL	<i>Vidheyaatmaa</i>	(verse 64, 67)
⇒ 2. EQUIPOISE & BALANCE	<i>Raaga & Dvesha</i>	(verse 64)
(verse 64 & 65)	⇒ 3. A TRANQUIL MIND	<u>PRASAADA</u> <i>(interim Prize)</i>
(verse 65)	⇒ 4. DESTRUCTION OF PAINS	<i>Duhkha Haanih</i>
(verse 65, 66, 67)	⇒ 5. STEADY INTELLECT	<i>Buddhi Avatishthate</i>
(verse 66)	⇒ 6. MEDITATION	<i>Bhaavana</i>
<i>(ultimate Prize)</i>	(verse 66)	⇒ 7. PEACE OF MIND <u>SHAANTI</u>
	(verse 66)	⇒ 8. HAPPINESS <i>Sukham</i>

The Geeta holds aloft this state as a key qualification for the contemplative stage of Sadhana (Steps 5 to 8). Equipoise and balance, freedom from the sway of attraction and repulsion, can arise only after the turbulent senses have been controlled.

4 Prasaadam: “the prize” (Step 3). The reward attained by this self-control is a very precious prize. Like the Nobel Peace Prize, this is the “**Noble Peace Prize**”, the prize for nobility in handling one’s senses. What is the ‘prize’? The next verse spells it out.

प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।
प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥ २-६५॥

prasādē sarvaduḥkhānāṃ hānirasyōpajāyatē |
prasannacētasō hyāśu buddhiḥ paryavatisthatē ॥ 2-65॥

1	<i>Prasaade sarva-duhkhaanaam</i>	In that ' Prize ', all <u>pains</u>
2	<i>haanih asya upajaayate;</i>	of his get destroyed as they arise;
3	<i>prasanna-chetasah hi aashu</i>	because of his Tranquil Mind (the Prize), soon
4	<i>buddhih paryava-tishthate.</i>	his intellect becomes <u>steady</u> .

1 What that 'prize' is we will know soon, but from it the Sadhaka is entitled to two distinct and separate results:

2 i) Pains Get Destroyed: This is Step 4, and is due primarily to the absence of likes and dislikes in the mind. Likes and dislikes subject one to great pains in life. Their absence enables one to sail through life smoothly. Their absence cuts out the everyday disturbances such as emotional and mental stress, disappointments, failures, etc.

4 ii) Intellect Gets Steady: This is Step 5. This is the second benefit bestowed upon the Sadhaka by the 'prize' resulting from sense-control. Once the intellect is rendered steady, it can easily be made one-pointed and concentrated for meditation on the Self for lengthy periods. This opens the door to Samadhi, the state of total abidance in the Self, which is called Self-realisation.

Both these results come to one at the same moment – the moment one gains the 'prize'. The first detaches the mind from worldliness; the second attaches it to Godliness. This is what Swami Sivananda means when he teaches devotees to "Detach and Attach".

Now we come to the covetable PRIZE, which has been kept a 'secret' so far.

3 Prasanna-Chetasah: "a tranquil or peaceful mind". This is Step 3, the Prasad or prize of making the effort to keep our senses controlled. It is an interim gift that the mind gives to itself. A tranquil mind is a Sattwic mind. The Sattwic mind has sufficient purity and clarity to take one through the higher stages of Sadhana. However, it is not the goal yet.

Important Note: We take note that the 'prize' referred to here is the fruit gained through sense-control. It is not the Peace that is gained as a result of meditation on the Self. The tranquil mind has the peace that enables one to start meditation, and the word used for it is Prasaada, the 'gift' (of the mind to itself). The next verse unravels what the ultimate 'Prize' is and the term used to describe it. It is this latter Peace that is referred to in the last two verses of this Discourse.

We have come up to Step 5, a steady intellect. How does it help to reach the Goal?

Verse 66: Q4: From Steady Intellect to Pure Happiness

नास्ति बुद्धिरयुक्तस्य न चायुक्तस्य भावना ।
 न चाभावयतः शान्तिरशान्तस्य कुतः सुखम् ॥ २-६६॥
 nāsti buddhirayuktasya na cāyuktasya bhāvanā |
 na cābhāwayataḥ śāntiraśāntasya kutaḥ sukham ॥ 2-66॥

1	<i>Na aasti buddhih ayuktasya</i>	<i>There is no knowledge of the Self to the <u>unsteady</u>;</i>
2	<i>na cha ayuktasya bhaavana;</i>	<i>and to the unsteady, no <u>meditation</u> is possible;</i>
3	<i>na cha abhaavayataḥ shaantih</i>	<i>and to the unmeditative, there is no PEACE;</i>
4	<i>ashaantasya kutaḥ sukham?</i>	<i>to the one with no peace, whence is <u>Happiness</u>?</i>

A Sadhaka's path is strewn with dangers of all sorts. The basic fault in a Sadhaka is usually the absence of sufficient faith and trust in the Lord. When the very crucial step of **Matpara** is omitted from the Sadhaka's Sadhana, when he attempts to do serious Sadhana such as meditation without surrendering his mind to God, then he takes a big risk. It is as good as impossible to control the senses without having an anchorage in God, who represents the higher ideal.

1 If a Sadhaka's intellect remains unsteady, it is not possible to move a single step further. Without a steady intellect that can intellectually grasp the knowledge of the Self during the time of Sravana, one cannot conceive of what the Self is.

2 If this intellectual grasp of the knowledge in Sravana is not obtained, the seeker cannot even start the practice of meditation (Step 6) on the Self. An unsteady intellect simply cannot meditate. It will not know what to meditate on!

3 To such a person who is not able to meditate, how can he get established in his Self? He will go on wavering in his thoughts. Thus without meditation it is not possible to obtain the **ultimate 'Prize'** of "the Peace that passeth all understanding" (Step 7).

4 And without this ultimate state of Peace how is it possible to get Happiness (Step 8)? Happiness here refers to the **Brahmic Bliss** that the sage experiences upon realisation.

In this very logical way, Sri Krishna forewarns the seeker who tries to walk this path without controlling his senses. Sri Krishna Himself asserts that sense-control is not possible without Matpara or love for a personal God. Without Divine Love the spiritual Path is just about impossible to tread.

Just as Shaanti is superior to Prasaada although both refer to peace, so also there is another "Absence of Pain" superior to Step 4 and which is due to Absolute Purity. This follows the attainment of Shaanti. It is freedom from the **Pain of Karma**. When all our Karmas are destroyed, we are freed from the pain of taking birth in an embodied form ever again. This is a pain of an altogether greater order from that of Step 4, ordinary pain.

Pujya Gurudev says, "Without a glorious goal in front of us to beckon us unto Itself, our life shall be a lost ship in the bosom of an ocean, reaching nowhere, and ultimately floundering upon some treacherous rock."

Indeed, this is the very metaphor that Sri Krishna uses in the next verse . . .

Verse 67: Q4: The Sadhaka Facing Grave Danger

इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन्मनोऽनुविधीयते ।

तदस्य हरति प्रज्ञां वायुर्नावमिवाम्भसि

॥ २-६७॥

indriyāṇāṁ hi caratām yanmanō:'nuvidhīyatē |

tadasya harati prajñāṁ vāyurnāvamivāmbhasi

|| 2-67||

1	<i>Indriyaanaam hi charataam</i>	<i>If in the wake of the wandering senses,</i>
2	<i>yat manah anu-vi-dheeyate;</i>	<i>the <u>mind follows</u> with eagerness;</i>
3	<i>tad asya harati prajnaam</i>	<i>that would carry away his <u>discrimination</u></i>
4	<i>vaayuh naavam iva ambhasi.</i>	<i>even as the wind carries away a <u>boat in water</u>.</i>

The "wind carrying away a ship in the ocean" is a powerful metaphor to illustrate how a Sadhaka's life can be completely destroyed if the foundation of sense control is not laid properly. The metaphor is laid out in a tabular form below for easy understanding:

1. Who is the passenger? It is the Jeeva or individual soul. Here the mind represents the Jeeva that is trapped on this side in worldliness.

2. Where does it want to go? It wants to go to the other shore of Samsara, across the waters of the ocean. Instead, the mind follows the senses and gets totally lost.

3. The ship we have to take us there is our intellect or Buddhi. The Intellect provides the discriminating power and knowledge which will help us to reach our goal.

4. Unexpectedly, heavy winds and cyclonic weather are encountered in the deep seas. The ship sways dangerously. To stabilize it, we have to have the anchors of Matpara, or remembrance of God. Without the anchor of Matpara, it is not going to be possible to get across safely.

METAPHOR		APPLICATION	
Function Represented	Part of Metaphor	Part of Application	Function Represented
<i>Who is travelling?</i>	PASSENGER	THE JEEVA	<i>The transmigrating soul</i>
<i>What are we crossing?</i>	OCEAN WATERS	SAMSARA	<i>Worldly existence</i>
<i>What takes us across?</i>	THE SHIP	INTELLECT	<i>Self-enquiry, Discrimination</i>
<i>What can hinder us?</i>	CYCLONIC WIND	SENSES	<i>Restlessness of Senses</i>
<i>How to stabilize the ship?</i>	ANCHORS	MATPARA	<i>Love for God</i>



2.13 THE SADHANA FOR PERFECTION

(Verses 68-72, 5 No.)

Verse 68: *A1-B3: Full Summary – The Sthitaprajna*

तस्माद्यस्य महाबाहो निगृहीतानि सर्वशः ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ २-६८॥
tasmādyasya mahābāhō nigrhītāni sarvaśaḥ |
indriyāṇīndriyārthēbhyastasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā ॥ 2-68॥

1	<i>Tasmaat yasya mahaabaaho</i>	Therefore, O Mighty-armed, he who has
2	<i>nigriheetaani sarvashah;</i>	<u>completely restrained</u> in every way all his
3	<i>indriyaani indriya-arthebhyah</i>	<u>senses</u> from the <u>sense-objects</u> ,
4	<i>tasya prajnaa pratishtitaa.</i>	his knowledge is steady (he can succeed in Sravana).

The minimum Sadhana to become a steady-minded sage is given in this verse. At the same time, this verse summarises the whole teaching of Sri Krishna so far. Indeed, throughout the Geeta, this is the fundamental Sadhana to be practised.

1 Mahaabaaho: “one with strong arms”. This is significant. It is as if Sri Krishna is throwing out a challenge to Arjuna: “O you of strong arms! Come, try your famous strength on this problem. Control your senses – that is the real test of your strength.”

2-3 Now for the “little surprise” we referred to earlier in verse 64. All the four questions of Arjuna are found to have the same answer – **the senses have to be restrained**; that is the minimum requirement. Sense-control is the foundation upon which a Sthitaprajna is built. One who achieves that enters the fold of the steady-minded sages.

4 Knowledge refers to knowledge of the Self obtained during Sravana, i.e. Sri Krishna’s opening words on Saankhya Yoga. Here at the conclusion of the discussion on Sthitaprajna, we return to highlight the value of this knowledge. While sense-control may be the external Sadhana, living in the spirit of the knowledge is the internal Sadhana.

Only when Matpara is combined with both these aspects, can we succeed in them. Let us fill our heart with love for God as much as possible, then we can make this journey safely. Let God be the anchor of our life.

Verse 69: *The “Night and Day” Simile*

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥ २-६९॥
yā nishā sarvabhūtānām tasyām jāgarti saṁyamī |
yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni sā nishā paśyatō munēḥ ॥ 2-69॥

1	<i>Yaa nishaa sarva-bhootaanaam</i>	<i>When it is night for all beings,</i>
2	<i>tasyaam jaagarti samyamee;</i>	<i>then the self-controlled man keeps awake (day).</i>
3	<i>yasyaam jaagrati bhootaani</i>	<i>When all beings are awake (day),</i>
4	<i>saa nishaa pashyatah muneh.</i>	<i>then it is night for the sage who truly sees.</i>

If taken literally, this description of a sage would include every night-watchman! But it is a metaphor – the implied meaning has to be taken. The interpretation is:

- i) 'Night' or 'darkness' stands for the unknown, for ignorance, or that which is feared.
- ii) 'Day' or 'light' stands for the known, for knowledge, and for fearlessness.

This verse defines the Sthitaprajna over the full range of conditions, from *top* (the Self) to *bottom* (the “minimum requirement”):

1-2: From the top end, the definition given for a Sthitaprajna is “one who takes the Divine alone as the Reality, and who sees the duality of the world as false or unreal.”

The Divine is “night”, dark and unknown to the ignorant. The ignorant are defined as those who take the physical to be the Self. Matters of the Spirit are “Greek and Latin” to them! To the sage, that same Divine is his own Self. He revels in It – he is “awake” to It, he is alive to It, and fully contented with It. That is “day” to him. To the sage, the Divine is not just a dead intellectual concept, but a vivid experience.

3-4: From the bottom end, we see the Sthitaprajna from the world’s viewpoint. We see the Sthitaprajna in a state of perfect sense-control. This is the “minimum requirement”.

When the world is awake to the ‘day’ of sense pleasures, etc, the sage finds that to be strange territory to him. That is darkness or ‘night’ to him. He is not interested in them. It really is a world of sorrow to him.

“NECESSARY” & “SUFFICIENT” CONDITIONS

The division between knowledge and sense-control may need a little clarification to some. Knowledge is a “sufficient” condition for a Sthitaprajna; sense-control is a “necessary” condition. The following example illustrates the difference:

A customer wants to see the CEO of a company. Firstly, he has to go to the premises of the company. On reaching it, he has to enter the gates and the building; he has to go through the security check; he has to take the lift to go to the top floor. All these are necessary conditions but not sufficient as the CEO still has not been reached. The only sufficient condition he has to fulfill is to enter the door of the CEO’s office. That alone is sufficient because it necessarily *includes* all the previous conditions which he fulfills on his way to the office.

Looking at the afore-mentioned diagram in verse 64, we see that the Tranquil Mind is a necessary condition, whereas the Peaceful mind is a sufficient condition. All items from point 1 to 6 are necessary conditions; point 7 is a sufficient condition; and point 8 is the fruit of the sufficient condition. Similarly, to be a Sthitaprajna, it is a necessary condition to control one’s senses, but that alone is not sufficient. It is a sufficient condition to abide in the Self, for which all the previous conditions are necessarily met.

The rivers may be clean or polluted, the ocean receives them all without complaint. So also, experiences may be pleasant or unpleasant in the eyes of worldly people, but they are received equally by the sage. Sometimes it is honour, sometimes dishonour; sometimes it is praise, at other times vilification. All these are received with equanimity by the mind of the sage. He is unmoved by their entry into his life.

4 Shaantim: We said earlier, in verses 64-65, that this word is reserved for the Supreme Peace “*that passeth all understanding*”. For the Sthitaprajnya, the word Shaanti is more befitting than Prasaada, which is used for the interim stage when the mind gains tranquillity. We are now speaking of the person who has not only controlled his senses but gone well past it all the way to Realisation. He has earned the passport to enter the domain of the Brahmic state that is to be described in the final verse of this chapter.

Kaama-Kaami: the “*desirer of desires*”; this is an emphatic way of describing those who are trapped in the quicksands of desire from which they cannot extricate themselves. Entering into an ocean is directly opposite to entering into quicksand.

Verse 71: *The Final Prize – A “Peaceful” Mind*

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति

॥ २-७१॥

vihāya kāmānyaḥ sarvānpumāṁścarati niḥspṛhaḥ |

nirmamō nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntimadhigacchati

॥ 2-71॥

1	<i>Vihaaya kaamaan yah sarvaan</i>	<i>He who abandons all <u>desires</u>,</i>
2	<i>pumaan charati nispriah;</i>	<i>and moves about without any <u>longing</u>,</i>
3	<i>nirmamah nirahamkaarah</i>	<i>devoid of ‘mine’-ness and ‘I’-ness (ego),</i>
4	<i>sah shaantim adhigacchhati.</i>	<i>he attains the Supreme Peace.</i>

Sri Krishna adds the final stroke to His painting of the Sthitaprajna on the canvas of our mind. The whole citadel of a steady-minded sage is now complete in every detail. If our minds have remained still up to this point, a perfect replica of it should appear to our mind’s eye. There should be no doubt in our mind as to what is required of us on this Path.

Aptly, the last stroke added to complete the picture is **Renunciation**. That tells us something – the dividing line between the paths of Karma/Upasana Kanda on the one hand and the path of Jnana Kanda on the other is Renunciation of desire. Liberation is undoubtedly a matter of Renunciation. It is no surprise that in Indian culture, Renunciation stands uppermost in the list of spiritual Sadhanas.

More on this most important theme will follow in later Discourses. The theme reaches a crescendo in the final Discourse, making it the kingpin of the Geeta philosophy.

The Four Stages of Renunciation

This verse gives 4 clear instructions on the basic requirement for Renunciation:

1 i) **Vihaaya Kaamaan** – giving up the external desire-prompted actions;

2 ii) **Nihspriha** – giving up the internal longing or craving for pleasures;

3a iii) **Nirmama** – giving up the ego’s identification with pleasures, i.e. “mine”-ness.

3b iv) Nirahamkara – giving up the ego-sense itself, i.e. the “I”-ness.

Peace of mind immediately follows one who carries out all four of these steps. Each holds a cause for Sorrow. Abandoning them, one is freed from all sorrow.

The Three Levels of Renunciation

Renunciation or the “abandoning of desires” takes place at three different levels:

1 Gross Level: This is the external renunciation. The sense objects are literally abandoned. There is no trace of attachment or craving for them.

2 Subtle Level: This is the internal, mental renunciation. At this level all planning, scheming, scheduling and organizing oneself for pleasure is rooted out. There is no longer any lingering taste or zest for the objects renounced; no thirst for them remains even in one’s imagination.

3 Causal Level: This is the renunciation of the very root of desire, namely, ignorance or delusion out of which arises the ego-self. Knowledge of the Self is needed to perform this operation. All lurking subconscious tendencies to enjoy sensual pleasures are the “smell”, as it were, that is left behind after the operation is done.

4 Shaanti: “Supreme Peace”. This is the final or highest goal attained through all these intense efforts. It is placed firmly before the seeker’s eye.

Verse 72: *PEACE – Passport to the Brahmic State*

एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति ।

स्थित्वास्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति

॥ २-७२॥

ēṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha naināṁ prāpya vimuhyati |

sthitvāsyāmantakālē'pi brahmanirvāṇamṛcchati

|| 2-72||

1	<i>Eshaa braahmee sthitiḥ, Paartha,</i>	<i>This is the Brahmic State, O Son of Pritha.</i>
2	<i>na enaam praapya vimuhyati;</i>	<i>Attaining this, none is <u>deluded</u>.</i>
3	<i>sthitvaa asyaam antakaale api</i>	<i>Established therein, even at the <u>end of life</u>,</i>
4	<i>brahma-nirvaana mricchhati.</i>	<i>one attains to Oneness with Brahman.</i>

1 The Brahmic state spoken of here is with reference to the immovable, steady state of wisdom which Sri Krishna had mentioned in verse 53, which prompted Arjuna’s question. In this way there is closure on this topic from verse 54 to verse 72. When features like this are incorporated into a text, it is a sign of professionalism in the writing and a credit to the writer, Sri Veda Vyasaji.

2 This state is irreversible. It takes one beyond delusion once and for all. Moha or Delusion has other names used for it such as Avidya or Nescience, and Maya or illusion. The purpose of the entire Geeta is to rid Arjuna of this delusion which stands in the way of the performance of his duty.

3 One can attain this state at any time during one’s lifetime, even just before death. Taking this thought up, Sri Shankaracharya makes a poignant remark. If it is possible to



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attain this state even at the time of one's death, then what doubt is there for those who renounce earlier in life and become renunciates from the time of their Brahmacharya training itself? Those who take to this path from an early age, foregoing the intermediate Ashramas, should have no doubt in their mind of being successful on this path.

The line may also read to understand with emphasis that illumination is something which takes place during one's lifetime and not after one dies. One has to be conscious in the body in order to become enlightened. Even the moment just before death is part of one's life, and therefore good enough to attain enlightenment; it is never too late!

A third point emphasised by this line is that one should never lose hope of realising the Truth. One cannot say, "I am too old for it." Nor can he say, "I don't think I have the time for it."

4 Nirvana comes from the 'Va' Dhatu, and means "blown away by knowledge". Avidya is blown out once and for all; there is total cessation of Avidya, Kama and Karma.

The final statement is of that Brahmic state – Nirvana – the state of Supreme Peace attained through absorption in the Self; the state for which the passport is the steady mind obtained through renunciation; the state which is Non-dual; and where there is Oneness in Brahman, i.e. complete identity of the individual with the Universal.

This Pada, which ends the second Discourse, may also be taken as the Mahavakya of the Geeta – the statement which declares the Oneness achieved between the individual and the Universal Self.

This is no temporary solution to one's sorrows. Once and for all the Geeta goes to the root of all sorrow and eliminates it through knowledge. Any other solution will be temporary relief only. The cause of sorrow will return. With Self-knowledge, the cause itself – namely, **Ignorance** – is destroyed.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु
ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे
साङ्ख्ययोगो नाम द्वितीयोऽध्यायः ॥ २॥

ōm tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyām yōgaśāstrē śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvādē
sāṅkhyayōgō nāma dvitīyō:'dhyāyaḥ || 2||

Om Tat Sat!

END OF DISCOURSE 2

"THE YOGA OF THE SUPREME SELF"

