

# Srimad Bhagavad Gita

Chapter 5  
Karma Sannyaasa Yogah:  
Yoga of Renunciation of Action

Transliterated Sanskrit Text

Free Translation

&

Brief Explanation

By

T.N.Sethumadhavan

Published  
In  
Esamskriti.com  
&  
Medhajournal.com

Nagpur

September 2010

[tnsethumadhavan@gmail.com](mailto:tnsethumadhavan@gmail.com)

## Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 5 (Part-1)

Karma Sannyaasa Yogah:

Yoga of Renunciation of Action

**T.N.Sethumadhavan**

### Preamble

Arjuna doubts which of the two ways - whether renunciation of action or participation in action - is the nobler and the greater. To Arjuna action meant ritualism and renunciation meant a total retirement from everything and running away to a place of solitude. Sri Krishna attempts here to give deeper insights to these oft misunderstood terms. The Lord propounds the theory of self-development in three stages viz. through desire-prompted activities, through desireless activities and through pure meditation.

Having practiced the Yajnas prescribed in the preceding chapter and gained wisdom, a seeker sheds his vasanās / desires and develops a dispassion for the world. He enters into a state of renunciation, an essential pre-requisite for practicing meditation. This chapter elucidates this stage of development preliminary to meditation and realization.

This Chapter answers the questions: What is the spirit of renunciation? How the Yoga of renunciation of action can be practiced? What are its effects on the human personality? Thus this Chapter deals with both Action and Knowledge and is therefore a link between Karma Yoga and Pure Meditation.

In the opening verse of the chapter Arjuna asks Krishna to advise him conclusively as to which is better of the two – the path of action or the path of renunciation. Krishna clarifies the doubt by explaining the three distinct stages of spiritual growth. A seeker embarking on his spiritual journey with vasanās / desires is termed Yogi. Through Karma Yoga, the path of action, he sheds the bulk of his vasanās. As he does so, he becomes dispassionate towards the world and becomes an ascetic, a Sanyasi. A Sanyasi following the path of knowledge practices contemplation and meditation until he reaches the ultimate state of realization to become a Jnani, an enlightened soul. Both Karma Yogi and Sanyasi reach the supreme goal. Thus, one takes up either the path of action or the path of renunciation according to one's basic nature.

The above three types of individuals (Karma Yogi, Sanyasi, Jnani) relate differently to action. The enlightened one, the Jnani, having merged with the Self, realizes that the Self does not act at all. In and through all actions, external and internal, the Jnani remains a silent witness while the senses contact the sense objects. The Sanyasi, in his state of dispassion, dedicates all his actions to Brahman. He acts without any attachment. Consequently, his actions are not sinful and do not leave a residue of vasanās / desires. Such a person, like a lotus leaf in water, remains in the world, but detached from and unaffected by it. The Karma Yogi, the one at the beginning of the spiritual journey, detaches himself from worldly entanglements and directs all his physical, mental and intellectual activities towards his own self purification.

## The Text

**arjuna uvaacha**

**sannyaasam karmanaam krishna punar yogam cha shamsasi  
yacchreya etayorekam tanme broohi sunishchitam // 5.1 //**

*Arjuna said*

*Renunciation of actions, O Krishna, you praise and again Yoga, performance of actions.  
Tell me conclusively that which is better of the two.*

In Chapter IV, verses 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 32, 33, 37 and 41 The Lord has spoken of the renunciation of all actions and in the verse 42 He exhorted Arjuna to engage in Yoga, the performance of action. Owing to the mutual contradiction between these two injunctions, action or renunciation, as they cannot be followed by the same individual at the same time, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna to indicate decisively that one path which will lead to spiritual welfare.

**sri bhagavaan uvaacha**

**sannyaasaah karmayogashcha nihshreyasakaraa vubhau  
tayostu karmasannyaasaat karmayogo vishishyate // 5.2 //**

*Sri Bhagavan said*

*Renunciation of action and Yoga of action both lead to the Highest Good; but of the two, performance of action is superior to the renunciation of action.*

Man is essentially prone to be inert and inactive. He prefers to get the maximum benefit from the outside world with the minimum exertion. From this stage of utter inactivity he goes to the first stage where he works because of the promptings of his desires; the second stage of his evolution is from the desire motivated activities to dedicated activities in the service of others with the least ego. In this stage when the ego is subordinated his vasanas get exhausted and mind becomes pure. With the purity of mind he reaches the third stage where he meditates for realizing the ultimate goal of joy and peace.

Thus the spiritual path of self-evolution falls into three stages viz. a) desire prompted activities b) selfless dedicated activities and c) meditation.

The first - Karma Yoga - was dealt with in Chapters III and IV while the technique of Meditation will be taken up in Chapter VI.

This Chapter deals with as to how one can renounce the desire oriented ego-centric actions and take up selfless dedicated activities. In this Chapter, Yoga means Karmayoga and Sankhya means the intellectual way with renunciation of works.

The Lord says renunciation of action (Karma Sanyas) and performance of action (Karma Yoga) both lead to the liberation or the highest bliss. Yet of these, performance of action is much better than renunciation of action without the knowledge of the Self. However, it

will be seen later that renunciation of action with the knowledge of the Self is decidedly superior to performance of action without such knowledge.

**jneyah sa nityasannyaasi yo na dweshti na kaangkshati  
nirdwandwo hi mahaabaaho sukham bandhaat pramuchyate // 5.3 //**

*He should be known as a perpetual Sanyasi (as constantly practicing renunciation) who neither hates nor desires; for, free from the pairs of opposites, O Mighty Armed, he is easily set free from bondage.*

According to The Lord he is a true Sanyasi who `neither likes nor dislikes'. Likes and dislikes, gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and censure, success and failure, joy and sorrow and similar other pairs of opposites are the attitudes of mind by which it gains life's experiences.

The Karma Yogi, a true worker, is known as a *nitya sanyasi* or a true renouncer, for he does his work in a detached spirit without being influenced by the pairs of opposites. A man does not become a Sanyasi merely by giving up actions for whatever reason. One need not take Sanyasa formally; if he has the mental frame of renunciation of egoism and desires he is a true Sanyasi. Mere physical renunciation of objects is no renunciation at all.

#### KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION ARE ONE

**saankhyayogau prithagbaalaah pravadanti na panditaah  
ekam apyaasthitah samyag ubhayor vindate phalam //5. 4 //**

*Children, not the wise, speak of Sankhya (knowledge) and Yoga (Yoga of action) as distinct; he who is truly established in one obtains the fruits of both.*

This verse clarifies that there is no contradiction between the paths of Sankhya (knowledge) and Yoga (action).

There are two ways of making an ordinary action into a divine action of dedication and worship viz.

1. By renouncing the idea of agency or doership in every action or
2. By performing actions without any anxiety for their fruits and maintaining equanimity in success and failure.

The former is called Sankhya method and the latter is Karma Yoga.

The Lord says that only the ignorant people (here referred to as children) who have no knowledge of the Self find a contradiction between the two methods. But the wise who have lived through either of the paths say that both the paths lead to the same goal viz. liberation or God consciousness.

#### HOW TO OBTAIN THE RESULTS OF BOTH BY FOLLOWING ONE PATH?

**yatsaankhyaih praappyate sthaanam tad yogair api gamyate  
ekam saankhyam cha yogam cha yah pashyati sa pashyati // 5.5 //**

*The state (of liberation) reached by the Sankhyas (Gnanis) is reached by the Yogins (Karma Yogins). He truly 'sees', who 'sees' Sankhya (knowledge) and Yoga (performance of action) as one.*

Sri Krishna emphasizes that the goal reached by the Sankhya method is also reached by those who practice Karma technique. Those who have renounced the world and immersed themselves in the knowledge are the Sankhyas. Through *Sravana* (hearing of Vedantic texts), *Manana* (reflecting on what is heard) and *Nidhidhyasana* (profound meditation) they attain liberation directly. The Karma Yogis who engage in selfless service, who perform their actions as offerings to The Lord, also reach the same state as is attained by the Sankhyas indirectly through purification of the heart, renunciation and the consequent realization of the knowledge of the Self.

He who sees that Sankhya and Yoga are one and that both lead to the same goal, is the one who really understands the Truth of the Vedas.

It is to be noted that Karma Yogins perform actions, surrendering the result to God, attain purity of mind and thus qualify themselves for the path of knowledge i.e. Sankhya, the path of knowledge, through which the final experience of Bliss is achieved. Thus both ultimately produce the same result, viz. liberation through Self-Knowledge.

#### RENUNCIATION SUCCEEDS ACTION

**sannyaasastu mahaabaaho duhkham aaptumayogatah  
yogayukto munir brahma na chirenaadhidigacchati // 5.6 //**

*But renunciation of action, O Mighty Armed, is hard to attain without performance of action (Yoga); the sage purified by devotion to action, quickly reaches Brahman.*

The Lord means that the method of performance of action is easier for a beginner and qualifies him for the higher path by purifying his mind. Hence it is the proper and therefore the superior course, specifically for such beginners. Without performing action the renunciation of action is impossible.

Mind gets purified by performing right actions which enables one to have a deeper meditation leading to renunciation of all activities. If this process is cut short and activities are renounced in the beginning itself it will amount to physical inactivity where the purity of mind and meditative power cannot be gained.

One who is engaged in selfless and unattached activities develops single pointed meditative power. He is called a Muni (sage) who will reach the Supreme experience of the Self in him before long. A sage, purified by the performance of selfless action, soon attains Brahman.

The true renouncer is not he who remains completely inactive but he whose work is done in a spirit of detachment. Renunciation is a mental attitude, the casting off of desire in work; true work is work with all desire renounced.

**yogayukto vishuddhaatmaa vijitaatmaa jitendriyah  
sarvabhootaatmabhootaatmaa kurvannapi na lipyate // 5.7 //**

*With the mind purified by devotion to performance of action, and the body conquered and senses subdued, he who realizes his Self, as the Self of all beings, is not tainted though he is acting.*

Sri Krishna explains the different stages of development and change that would take place in an individual through Karma Yoga. One who is established in Karma Yoga gets his intellect purified which reduces agitations caused by desires or emotions from within. With the selfless action and no anxiety for the fruits, his intellect becomes immune from disturbances which are reflected in his mind.

When a man gains inward peace at intellectual and mental levels, it becomes easy for him to control his sense organs from their tendency to run after sense objects. A seeker who controls his body, mind and intellect in this manner is qualified for the highest meditation because all the stumbling blocks for purposeful meditation arise from desire-motivation and emotional agitation. If these obstacles are removed, meditation becomes natural and the rediscovery of the Self is easier to achieve.

This realization of the Self is complete and not partial. He sees the divinity of the Self as all pervading. He finds divinity everywhere at all times. Hence The Lord says `realizes one's own self as the Self in all beings'.

When an individual after achieving the inner change comes to realize the Infinite Divinity and performs actions in the world, his actions cannot have any reactions on him because no sense of ego is left in him. This verse highlights that it is the desire motivated egocentric activities alone that create vasanas in the intellect which block the discriminative power to experience one's own essential nature of Eternal Divinity.

**naiva kinchit karomeeti yukto manyeta tattwavit  
pashyan shrunvan sprishan jighrann ashnan gacchan swapan shwasan // 5.8 //**

**pralapan visrijan grihnан nunmishan nimishannapi  
indriyaaneendriyaartheshu vartanta iti dhaarayan // 5.9 //**

*The knower of the Truth, being centered in the Self, thinks 'I do nothing at all' - though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, going, sleeping, breathing, speaking, letting go, seizing, opening and closing the eyes - convinced that it is the senses that move among the sense objects.*

It is explained that a man of wisdom will not have any egoism even in the common, natural and unavoidable activities of the world, where he happens to live, like eating, sleeping, breathing, speaking, closing and opening of eyes etc.

He remains as a witness to all the activities of the senses, endowed with the knowledge of the actionless Self, with an 'I do nothing at all' feeling. He identifies himself with the Self and sees inaction in action for he realizes that in all works the senses occupy themselves with their objects and the Self remains inactive. He may be said to have renounced action, for he sees no action as performed by himself.

**brahmanyaaadhaaya karmaani sangam tyaktwaa karoti yah  
lipyate na sa paapena padmapatram ivaambhasaa // 5.10 //**

*He who performs actions, offering them to Brahman, abandoning attachment is not tainted by sin, just as a lotus leaf remains unaffected by the water on it.*

A life of detachment where one renounces the sense of doership is not easy to attain. This verse instructs us how to live the Gita way rather than talk about it i.e. how to lead a life of intelligent detachment. One should be clear that total detachment is impossible for the human mind. So long as there is a mind it has to attach itself with something because that is its nature. The only practical way of achieving detachment therefore is to disassociate the mind from the false and attach it to the Real.

The advice given is to surrender the sense of Agency and do the actions without egoism and attachment to their fruits, considering all actions as offerings to The Lord. The more the thoughts on The Lord the less will be the attention on one's own ego. Once this is realized, the actions of the body, mind and intellect will not leave any impression on the Self. Such a yogi has no attachment even for liberation.

Having thus realized the Self the Yogi lives in the world of objects with perfect detachment like the lotus leaf existing in the water without getting itself moistened. The sage lives in the world of objects detaching himself from his own perceptions of the world, likes and dislikes etc.

**kaayena manasaa buddhyaa kevalair indriyairapi  
yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyaktwaatmashuddhaye // 5.11 //**

*Yogis perform actions only with the body, mind, intellect and the senses without attachment, for the purification of the heart.*

The Karma Yogis always utilize their organs of action, knowledge, mind and intellect renouncing all attachments .The sage remains as if he were a mere observer of all that is happening around him.

The Karma yogis are those who are devoted to the path of action, free from egoism and selfishness, who work for the purification of their hearts without any attachment to the results of their actions and who dedicate all their actions to The Lord as their offering.

**yuktah karmaphalam tyaktwaa shaantim aapnoti naishthikeem  
ayuktah kaamakaarena phale sakto nibadhyate // 5.12 //**

*A selfless man who has renounced the fruit of his action attains Peace, born of steadfastness; but the one, who is not selfless, led by desire, is attached to the fruit of action and therefore bound.*

The harmonious man who does actions for the sake of The Lord without expectation of the results and who considers all his actions as offerings to The Lord only and not for any personal gain or profit attains peace arising out of steadfastness or devotion. Steadfastness is achieved through the following four stages of development viz.

- purity of mind
- gaining of knowledge
- renunciation of action
- steadiness in wisdom.

Peace is not a product of external origin but it is a mental condition in an individual when he is not agitated by any kind of disturbing thoughts. Peace is an unbroken feeling of joy and a symbol of an integrated personality. Sri Bhagavan says that this can be brought about through selfless actions undertaken in a spirit of Yagna . When a worker renounces his egocentric sense of agency and desire for the fruits of his actions he immediately becomes an integrated personality and experiences peace.

The one who is unbalanced or unharmonised, who is motivated by desire and attachment to the fruits of actions and who is full of egoism and sense of agency gets himself bound and tortured by the reactions of his own actions.

## Concepts and Issues

Sri Krishna earlier explained the greatness of both the paths of renunciation of actions (Sannyaasa or Sankhya Yoga) and the performance of actions (Karma Yoga). Arjuna had therefore doubts and asked Him to clarify which is better for him.

Sri Krishna tells that the paths of renunciation and performance of actions will both lead the man to the same spiritual goal to provide inner freedom. But performance of actions for the welfare of all with no selfish motive is far better than non-performance of action because pure meditation is impossible to any one who has not offered himself and his belongings in the service of others.

The ignorant alone thinks that Karma Yoga and Sankhya Yoga are different. But both are inseparable and lead to the same goal. A Karma Yogi lives in the world without bondage like a lotus leaf on water. Without offering selfless service in Yajna spirit, it is difficult to

gain the true spirit of renunciation-Sanyasa. The performer of selfless actions- Karma Yogi- has the spirit of renunciation in him and renounces the desire for the rewards of his actions.

A Sankhya Yogi who is established in the Self, does not identify himself even with such activities as seeing, hearing, touching, smelling etc., but feels he is a witness to all the actions of the body, senses, mind and intellect. He lives in a world untouched by the happenings around. He, who has identified himself with the Pure Self, stands aside, not contaminated by the effects of actions and enjoys eternal peace within

### Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

Verse 10 of this Chapter instructs us how to live the Gita way rather than talk about it i.e. how to lead a life of intelligent detachment. One should be clear that total detachment is impossible for the human mind. The practical way of achieving detachment is to disassociate the mind from the false and attach it to the Real. Surrender the sense of Agency and do the actions without egoism and attachment to their fruits, considering all actions as offerings to The Lord. The more the thoughts on The Lord the less will be the attention on one's own ego. Once this is realized, the actions of the body, mind and intellect will not leave any impression on the Self. Such a yogi has no attachment even for liberation and he lives in the world of objects detaching himself from his own perceptions of the world, likes and dislikes etc. like the lotus leaf existing in the water without getting itself moistened.

### Points to Ponder

1. How do the paths of renunciation of actions and performance of actions lead to the same goal?
2. If both the above mentioned paths lead to the same goal, how then the Yoga of action is superior?
3. How one should work so as not to be tainted by sin and attain Brahman?
4. How does a Sankhya Yogi remain untainted by even physical functions?
5. What is the difference between performing actions with and without selfishness?

**Next time we will proceed from the Verse 5.13**

*Harih Om*

## Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 5 (Part-2)

Karma Sannyaasa Yogah:

Yoga of Renunciation of Action

**T.N.Sethumadhavan**

### Preamble

Sri Krishna explains the spirit of renunciation and the state of Supreme Being in more details. The Self, Atman, though the primeval cause of all actions, is not at all liable for either the merit or demerit accruing from them. Though the Self enlivens the actions of all beings, it is neither the actor nor the action nor is it responsible for the fruits of action. Those ignorant of this relationship remain deluded in the world. But he whose ignorance has been removed by knowledge of the Self reaches the Supreme state from where there is no return. Thereafter, he maintains a universal vision of oneness and evenness towards everything he comes across in the world. Having reached that eternal state he has forever transcended the cycle of birth and death.

The Lord advises that renunciation precedes meditation and realization. Sensual enjoyments arising out of external contacts have a diminishing value and they culminate in sorrow. The very sight of sense objects inflames desires in people. Then they lose control and succumb to the lure of the sense objects. The wise understand the ephemeral nature of contact-born enjoyments and prevent any desire from developing into an uncontrollable force of momentum. Instead of indulging in such temporary bouts of sensual pleasure they divert their attention and interest to the Self within. Thus they free themselves gradually from desires, subdue their mind and turn introvert. They begin to revel in the bliss of the Self. When the mind is subdued and relatively peaceful it becomes fit for meditation. This chapter concludes with a few procedural details for practicing meditation and realizing the ultimate Self in oneself.

### The Text

THE ENLIGHTENED SELF

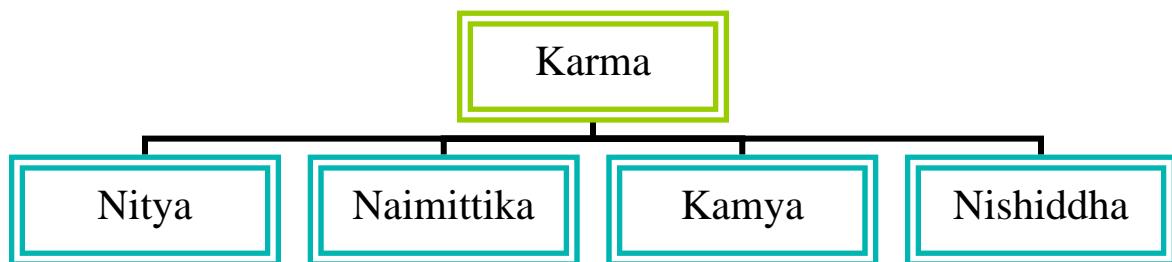
**sarvakarmaani manasaa sannyasyaaste sukham vashee  
navadwaare pure dehee naiva kurvan na kaarayan // 5.13 //**

*Mentally renouncing all actions and fully subduing his senses, the embodied soul dwells happily in the city of nine-gates, neither acting nor causing others (body and the senses) to act.*

Sanyas is not a mere physical escapism but a mental withdrawal from things which have no real significance. It is a state of mind and not an external symbol. Therefore one who has brought all his sense cravings under perfect control and renounced all his egocentric and desire prompted actions comes to live in peace, joy and contentment in the city of nine gates. City of nine gates means the body which has nine apertures in its physical form viz. two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, the genital and the excretory outlet

without which life cannot be sustained. The Self within this physical structure activates the instruments of action and perception governing the life of all of them though by itself it does not perform any actions. Krishna says that such an individual, always identifying with the Self, observes the activities around him unaffected, unattached and without any agitations. Hence he neither acts nor causes others to act.

All actions in life (Karma) can be categorized as under.



- Nitya Karma - Obligatory duties such as daily prayers.
- Naimittika Karma - Actions to be performed on special occasions such as on birth of a child.
- Kamya Karma - Works intended for securing special ends such as for curing illness etc.
- Nishiddha Karma - Actions forbidden by scriptures like stealing and other crimes.

The enlightened soul refrains from all these actions and lives only for the sake of exhausting the *prarabdha karma* which has caused his present body. He lives happily established in Self-Knowledge. Unlike the ignorant, he does not identify himself with the body which is termed here as the city of nine gates. He neither acts nor causes others to act means that he is totally free from consciousness of ‘I’ ‘me’ or ‘mine’ and is free from the idea of acting or causing action. After the exhaustion of *prarabdha karma* his soul merges in Brahman.

IDEAS OF ACTION, ACTOR ETC, ARE DUE TO MAYA

**na kartritwam na karmaani lokasya srijati prabhuh  
na karmaphala samyogam swabhaavas tu pravartate // 5.14 //**

*The Lord creates neither agency nor actions for the world, nor does He bring about the union with the fruits of actions; but it is nature that does all this.*

This verse gives a general definition of the concept of God. But the principle stated here is not that described in the ritualistic portion of the Vedas but a description of the relationship between the Self and the not-Self, the Atman and the matter.

The Supreme Self (*Prabhuh*) neither creates any sense of agency nor does it initiate any action. It does not match every action with its corresponding fruit.

However when the Self functions through the equipments - physical, mental and causal bodies - It becomes a conditioned Self and gathers to itself all the egocentric attitudes of agency, action and fruits etc.

Thus the beneficiary of the fruits and the performer of actions in us is the ego and not the Atman or the Self. The Self becomes an actor performing all actions only when it gets conditioned by 'Swabhava'- nature or the Divine Maya made up of the three Gunas. The Self comes under the control of maya and regards itself as acting and enjoying the fruits of action. As long as the Self remains identified with maya it is bound. But when it detaches itself from maya it becomes free. Thus such ideas as those of duty, work and the result belong to the relative world. They have no relevance from the standpoint of the Supreme Lord. It is the Prakriti or nature that does everything.

**naadatte kasyachit paapam na chaiva sukritam vibhuḥ  
ajnaanenaavritam jnaanam tena muhyanti jantavah // 5.15 //**

*Nor does the all-pervading Spirit take on the merit or demerit of any. Knowledge is enveloped in ignorance and hence beings get deluded.*

The Supreme who is all-pervading (Vibhu) and underlying in all the lives' activities cannot be considered to take note of all the activities that are happening in the finite world. From the point of view of the Infinite, the finite does not exist.

When the sun light passes through a plane glass it comes out clearly but if it passes through a prism it emerges as seven colors which are part and parcel of the same sun light. Similarly the Self passing through Knowledge emerges out as the Self which is all-pervading. But when the same Self passes through ignorance i.e. body, mind and intellect it gets itself split up into the unending world of plurality.

As there is neither day or night from the stand point of the sun, so there is neither virtue nor vice from the standpoint of the Supreme whose nature is Existence-Knowledge - Bliss absolute, *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. Through ignorance man separates himself from the Lord and comes under the spell of ego. Thus he thinks of himself as the agent of various works, good or evil and experiences pleasure and pain accordingly. The law of Karma applies only to the embodied beings in the relative world. When the aspirant becomes free from ignorance and realizes his identity with the Lord, he goes beyond virtue and vice and is not affected by the results of his actions.

Where there is knowledge there is no place for ignorance and where there is ignorance knowledge cannot exist. So the statement that knowledge is enveloped by ignorance means that unveiling of truth is a process of removal of ignorance and not creation of knowledge and therefore it is only a re-discovery.

**jnaanena tu tadajnaanam yeshaam naashitamaatmanah  
teshaam aadityavajjnaanam prakaashayati tatparam // 5.16 //**

*But to those whose ignorance is destroyed by the Knowledge of the Self, that knowledge, like the Sun, reveals the Supreme (Brahman).*

In the case of ordinary mortals the Self is screened off by ignorance or Avidya whereas the man of realization is the one in whom the ignorance is removed by Knowledge. Ignorance creates the egocentric concept which thrives in the body, mind and intellect and is the root cause of all sufferings. When this ignorance is destroyed by knowledge of the Self, the ego ends and the Self becomes manifest just as the sun illuminates and reveals all the objects of the physical universe when the clouds surrounding it move away.

Knowledge is the very faculty of knowing. So when the ego re-discovers the Self it becomes the Self. Therefore, the Self is awareness, consciousness or the Atman.

#### RESULT OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUPREME

**tadbuddhayas tadaatmaanas tannishthaas tatparaayanaah  
gacchantlyapunaraavrittim jnaana nirdhoota kalmashaah // 5.17 //**

*Fixing their minds on Him, at one with Him, abiding in Him, realizing Him alone as the Supreme Goal, they reach a state, from which there is no return, their sins having been destroyed by their Knowledge.*

They fix their intellect on the Supreme Self. They feel and realize their identity with the Self. By constant meditation they get established in the Self. The whole world of names and forms cease to exist for them. They live in the Self alone. They have the Self alone as their goal. They rejoice in the Self alone. They are satisfied in the Self alone. Such men never return to this world as their sins or impurities (vasanas) are removed by knowledge.

The import of this verse is that Self-Realization is the final experience in the process of evolution whereby the Soul of an illumined person does not return to the relative world to assume a physical body. He does not come again under the sway of maya.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF KNOWLEDGE

**vidyaavinaya sampanne braahmane gavi hastini  
shuni chaiva shvapaake cha panditaah samadarshinah // 5.18 //**

*The wise see the same in all - whether it be a Brahmana endowed with learning and humility, or a cow, or an elephant or a dog or an outcaste.*

The wise see divinities everywhere just like the ocean which does not make any difference between one wave and the other. He finds no distinction in the world of names and forms. The liberated sage has equal vision as he recognizes the Self everywhere.

The Self is not affected by any limiting factors as it is subtle, pure, formless and attributeless just as the sun's rays fall on the river Ganga, on the ocean and on the dirty canal and yet the sun's purity and splendor are not spoilt by the quality of water on which its rays fall. The limiting adjuncts do not affect the Supreme Self just as the outer space is not affected by the pot, cloud etc. The Brahmin is Sattvic, the cow is Rajasic, the elephant, the dog and the down trodden are Tamasic. But the wise see in all of them one homogeneous immortal Self that is not affected by any of the three Gunas. This is the quality of equal mindedness of the wise.

**ihava tairjitat sargo yeshaam saamye sthitam manah  
nirdosham hi samam brahma tasmaad brahmani te sthitaah // 5.19 //**

*Even here (on earth) the created world is overcome by those whose mind is established in unity. Brahman is flawless and the same in all. Therefore these persons are indeed established in Brahman.*

Created or relative world means all bondages of birth, death etc. All possibilities of bondage are destroyed when the mind attains perfect evenness which in other words means becoming Brahman.

Perfection is not an idealism that has to be realized in the heavens only after death. Contrary to this vague expectation, Sri Krishna asserts that the relative existence of bondage can be ended and the imperfect individual can be made to live in the Consciousness of God and can come out of one's ego sense in this life itself, in this very body and among the very same worldly objects.

The method of achieving this goal is stated in the verse as the one whose mind rests in evenness and gains the Divine tranquility. Where the thought flow is arrested there the mind ends. Where the mind ends, which is the instrument through which life expresses itself as ego, the sense of separate existence also ends and the egocentric slavery of *samsar* ceases. The ego, devoid of samsaric sorrows, rediscovers itself to be none other than the Self Itself.

Such persons who have conquered their minds and live in perfect harmony in all conditions of life and its relationships are indeed aware of their identity with Brahman who is even, ever-perfect and uncontaminated though indwelling in all pure and impure bodies.

Brahman is all pervading and homogeneous. Everything happens in it and nothing happens to it. Thus the Truth is changeless just as a river-bed remains motionless though water flowing on it is ever changing. The substratum is changeless and remains the same but the superimpositions and manifestations will change by their very nature. An individual with his identification with body, mind and intellect is changing factor but the Substratum, the Self, remains the same.

The Lord says that a mortal who can maintain his equanimity under all conditions is indeed the one who rests in Brahman i.e. aware of Brahman.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF A MAN OF PERFECTION OR A KNOWER OF BRAHMAN

**na prahrishyet priyam praapya nodwijet praapya chaapriyam  
sthirabuddhir asammoodho brahmavid brahmani sthitah // 5.20 //**

*Resting in Brahman, with intellect steady and without delusion, the knower of Brahman neither rejoices on obtaining what is pleasant nor grieves on obtaining what is unpleasant.*

From this verse onwards the characteristics of a man of perfection are given.

The Lord describes him as having always a balanced intellect because of the absence of egocentric influences. He is never deluded. He has abandoned all actions as he rests in the Self.

He is neither exhilarated when he gets pleasant objects nor feels disappointed when he obtains unpleasant objects. This does not mean that he has no reactions at all but it means that he remains balanced always with a sense of equipoise which cannot be shattered easily.

**baahyasparsheswasaktaatmaa vindatyaatmani yatsukham  
sa brahma yoga yuktaatmaa sukham akshayamashnute // 5.21 //**

*With the heart unattached to external contacts he discovers happiness in the Self; with the heart engaged in the meditation of Brahman he attains endless bliss.*

The happiness from the enjoyment of outer objects is transitory while the Bliss of Brahman is eternal. When the mind is not attached to the external objects of the senses, when one is deeply and constantly engaged in the contemplation of the Self, one finds eternal peace within. If one wishes to enjoy the imperishable happiness of the Self within, one has to withdraw the senses from their respective objects and enter in deep meditation on the Self within. It is to be noted that through self-control a void is created in the mind and heart which will have to be filled in with bliss through contemplation of Brahman.

**ye hi samsparshajaa bhogaa duhkhayonaya eva te  
aadyantavantah kaunteya na teshu ramate budhah // 5.22 //**

*The enjoyments that are born of contacts with objects are generators of pain only, for they have a beginning and an end, O Son of Kunti, and the wise do not find delight in them.*

Man goes in search of happiness among the external and perishable objects. He finds no permanent joy in them but receives a load of sorrows instead. One should, therefore,

withdraw the senses from the sense objects which are not at all a source of permanent joy. One should fix the mind on the immortal, blissful Self within. The sense objects have a beginning and an end. The pleasure out of them is therefore momentary and fleeting during the interval between the contact of the senses with the objects and their separation. One who has discrimination or knowledge of the Self will never rejoice in the objects of the senses.

#### LUST AND ANGER ARE THE GREATEST ENEMIES

**shaknoteehaiva yah sodhum praak shareera vimokshanaat  
kaamakrodhodbhavam vegam sa yuktah sa sukhee narah // 5.23 //**

*He who is able to withstand the force of lust and anger even before he quits the body - he is a Yogi, a happy man.*

Desire (lust) and anger are powerful enemies of peace. It is extremely difficult to annihilate them. One has to make strong efforts to destroy these enemies. He who has controlled desire and anger is the happiest man in the world.

Desire is longing for a pleasant and agreeable object which gives pleasure when it is seen, heard or remembered. Anger is the feeling one gets when he finds obstacles in the way of getting the desired objects. The greater the desire for an object the greater will be the anger against any obstacle that comes between the desirer and the objects desired. Lust and anger create an agitation of mind accompanied by appropriate physical symbols.

A Yogi is the one who controls the impulses of desire and anger, destroys likes and dislikes and attains equanimity of mind by resting in the Self. He is always happy because there is neither desire nor hatred in him. The implication of what Sri Krishna says is that in this very world and in this very life one can be perfectly happy if one learns to withstand the avalanche of desire and anger.

#### WHAT KIND OF YOGI ATTAINS BRAHMAN?

**yo'ntah sukho'ntaraaraamas tathaantarjyotireva yah  
sa yogee brahma nirvaanam brahma bhooto'dhigacchati // 5.24 //**

*He who is happy within, who rejoices within, who is illumined within, such a Yogi attains absolute freedom or Moksha, himself becoming a Brahman.*

It will be seen from the above three verses that the man of perfection does not attain joy in the ordinary sensual objects of the world. Renouncing all these he reaches a state of bliss where there is no place for desire or anger, love or hatred. The Lord says such a man alone can be said to be happy. Such an individual who lives in the Self is the one who has known Brahman. He becomes a Jivanmukta. The next verse clarifies that this state is not annihilation but the positive one full of knowledge and Self-possession.

**labhante brahma nirvaanam rishayah ksheena kalmashaah  
chinnadwaidhaa yataatmaanah sarvabhootahite rataah // 5.25 //**

*With sins destroyed, doubts dispelled, senses controlled, and devoting themselves to the welfare of all beings, the sages attain freedom in Brahman.*

When a man of perfection brings his senses under control, his sinful mental impressions are cleared which were blocking his vision of the Self behind several doubts about the Reality. Knowledge of his real nature comes to dawn on him and he comes to rediscover himself as the Self.

Having thus reached the goal of all evolution his duties till he leaves his mortal body will be to engage himself in the good of all beings. Thus *loka-seva* becomes his obsession. To overcome the world is not to become other-worldly. It is not to evade social responsibilities. His body, mind and intellect are offered to the sacred fire of activity for the common welfare while remaining at rest with himself and living in an unbroken consciousness of the Divine, the Eternal.

The two sides of religion viz. personal and social are emphasized here.

**kaamakrodha viyuktaanaam yateenaam yatachetasaam  
abhitto brahma nirvaanam vartate viditaatmanaam // 5.26 //**

*Released from desire and anger, the mind controlled, the Self realized, absolute freedom exists for such Yogins both here and hereafter.*

When the seeker conquers his lust and anger and can face all the threats coming from within and without, he knows the Self and gains the Bliss of Perfection both here and hereafter.

The import of this verse is that those who renounce all actions and do intense *Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana*, who are established in the Self and who are steadily devoted to knowledge of the Self, attain liberation instantly (Sankhya Yoga). But Karma Yoga in which action is performed in complete devotion to The Lord and as dedication to Him, leads to liberation step by step; first the purification of the mind, then knowledge, then renunciation of all action and lastly liberation.

To enunciate the Dhyana Yoga, which is the nearest and effective means to right knowledge, The Lord teaches the path of meditation in the following two verses.

**sparshaan kritwaa bahir baahyaamshchakshus chaivaantare bhruvoh  
praanaapaanaau samau kritwaa naasaabhyantara chaarinau // 5.27 //**

**yatendriya manobuddhir munir mokshaparaayananah  
vigatecchaabhayakrodho yah sadaa mukta eva sah // 5.28 //**

*Shutting out all external contacts, steadyng the gaze of his eyes between the eyebrows, regulating the outward and inward breaths flowing within his nostrils, the senses, mind and intellect controlled, with Moksha (Liberation) as the supreme goal, freed from desire, fear and anger, such a man of meditation is verily liberated for ever.*

In these two verses The Lord has given a pre-view of the next Chapter. Sri Krishna gives a scheme of practice by which one can gain in himself a complete integration.

The external world of objects by itself cannot bring any disturbances unless one remains in contact with them through body, mind or intellect. But if we shut out external objects - not physically- but through discreet intellectual detachment at the mental plane, we shall discover in ourselves the necessary tranquility for starting meditation.

Then the gaze should be fixed in between the eye brows so that the eye balls remain steady. This is followed by rhythmical breathing which makes the mind quiet and perfect harmony is developed in the system. These instructions relate to physical adjustments.

The instructions relating to mental and intellectual adjustments are then given. The seeker is asked to be free from desire, fear and anger to attain perfect peace of mind. When the senses, mind and intellect are subjugated by dedicating all his outer and inner activities to achieve the goal of realizing the Self he attains liberation. The mind gets restless because of the agitations caused by desire, fear and anger. When it is desireless, it proceeds towards the Self spontaneously and Liberation becomes one's highest goal. When an individual follows these steps he can remain in the contemplation of Truth without any distractions. Such a man of meditation comes to experience the freedom of the God-hood before long.

The question as to what a person of balanced mind has to know and on what to meditate upon in the Dhanya Yoga is discussed in the following last verse of this Chapter.

**bhoktaaram yajnatapasaam sarvaloka maheshwaram  
suhridam sarvabhootaanaam jnaatwaa maam shaantim ricchati // 5.29 //**

*He who knows Me as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, the supreme Lord of all the worlds and the friend of all beings, attains peace.*

The words 'knowing Me' do not mean Sri Krishna in the bodily figure but indicate knowing that the Self in the individual is the real illuminator behind the ego (Jiva).

Yajna is the dedicated selfless work in any field of activity. Tapas means all self-denial and practice of self-control which the ego undertakes to seek identity with the eternal. Self is the Lord of all Lords- the Maheshwara. Iswara is the controller of all activities of perception and action -individual faculties illuminating the respective organs. The Self is the Lord of all these individual Lords governing the various fields, *Sarva Loka Maheswara*.

The gist of this verse is that spiritual experience is to realize that the Self is the one great ruler within, who presides over all the activities within the body-politic and before whom the ego surrenders. Knowing Him to be none other than Sri Krishna, the individual reaches the goal of peace, the eternal Perfection.

**om tat sat iti srimad bhagavadgeetaasu upanishatsu brahma vidyaayaam  
yogashaastre sri krishnaarjuna samvaade karma sannyaasa yogo naama  
panchamo'dhyaayah||**

Thus in the Upanishads of the glorious Bhagavad Gita, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, ends the fifth discourse entitled : The Yoga of Renunciation of Action

### Concepts and Issues

Sri Krishna explains the spirit of renunciation in more details. Renunciation is not a mere giving up at the body level. Real renunciation comes when one renounces at the mental level also never desiring the thing renounced with the conviction based on discrimination.

The Self unaffected, watches the work done by the various instruments of perception and organs of action in the body. He himself does not do any work. He neither orders the body, mind and intellect to perform their functions nor expects the fruits of actions done by the ego. All actions are done by prakriti, the nature.

The Self does not give or take merit and demerit. It enjoys undisturbed peace. But when it is identified with vasanas it begins to think that it is ego-Jiva-the doer and the experiencer and therefore expects the fruits of actions. But the Pure Infinite Self is not interested in any finite actions or their resultant imperfect joys of the ego. This is the relationship between the Self (Atman) and the ego (Jiva).

Due to ignorance the ordinary man is under the impression that he is the physical body equipped with the mind and intellect. This ignorance disappears at the experience of the knowledge when the ego concept vanishes and we come to live the nature of the Infinite Self in our hearts.

When knowledge dawns one realizes that all are the play of the One Reality. The learned Brahmin, the cow, the elephant, the dog and the outcaste are all manifestations of the same Divinity. When he begins to see others as none other than his own Self he is liberated for ever and enjoys unbroken peace within himself. He neither gets excited in his joys nor gets drowned in his sorrows.

Those who perform selfless actions experience the same Bliss as that enjoyed by those who are absorbed in meditation because both of them do not entertain any ego. The Lord advises Arjuna that he can also attain the same Bliss provided he gets away from the agitations caused by desire and anger.

The Lord explains meditation. There should be a harmonious co-operation among the three aspects of a personality - the body, mind and intellect. The body should detach itself from the external objects which cause endless disturbances in the mind. Insulated thus from external irritants a meditator should calm his mind slowly and steadily by breathing evenly. Sitting with the backbone erect, concentrating on the Infinite Lord, detaching the mind from desire, fear and anger, one should direct the intellect to concentrate on the Supreme Goal. This is the method of meditation where the body and the mind withdraw themselves from their respective functions to help the intellect concentrate effectively upon The Lord, the Great Friend of All. Meditation takes the meditator to the supreme peace and joy.

### Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

This Chapter teaches that renunciation or the detached spirit is the fundamental principle of all Yogas. All beings experience joy in renunciation. In deep sleep all beings feel immense happiness by renouncing all their unnatural superimpositions of personality, whether he is a king or a beggar, because in that state intellect, mind and senses cease to function unconsciously and go towards the Self. When one consciously renounces the activities of the senses, mind and intellect one will surely merge into one's essential nature of the Supreme Consciousness. Thus renunciation or loss of personality becomes a means to supreme perfection. This is the glory of wisdom of renunciation. The action done with freedom from individuality spontaneously unites one with Universality. Such wise sages see divinity everywhere just like the ocean has no difference of feelings between one wave and the other. He finds no distinction in the world of names and forms.

### Points to Ponder

1. Explain the concepts:
  - The Supreme Self (Prabhuh) neither creates any sense of agency nor does it initiate any action.
  - The all-pervading Spirit does not take on the merit or demerit of any.
  - Knowledge is enveloped in ignorance and hence beings get deluded.
2. How does one get established in equanimity?
3. Who attains Brahman?
4. What are the characteristics of an enlightened soul?
5. What are the methods to get oneself liberated?
6. Write short notes on:
  - Samadarshan i.e. equal vision
  - Meditation
  - Lotus leaf on water
  - Enjoying sense-objects and enjoying one's own Self

### Next time we will take up Chapter 6

*Harih Om*