

Bagawat Geeta, Class 43

Greetings All,

Shloka # 19:

कर्मणो यो नान्तरहितो भवति कर्मणो यो नान्तरहितो भवति
कर्मणो यो नान्तरहितो भवति कर्मणो यो नान्तरहितो भवति 3.19

Therefore, unattached, always do the work that has to be done; for, doing work with detachment, man attains the supreme.

Continuing his teaching of the Gita and refreshing our memory of the last class, Swami Paramarthananda said, Sri Krishna talked about the important topic of Karma Yoga from Shloka's 8 through 18. The essence of Karma Yoga can be described as giving more and taking less. A life of contribution need not only be monetary. It can even be in the form of knowledge, one's energy or even kind words. Sri Krishna looked at this way of life from different angles. They were:

Agya: Command

Yagya: Worship

Chitta Shodhakam: Preparation of mind

Dharma: Means of maintaining harmony at all levels. This includes at the individual, family, societal, and ecological levels.

So, You have to take to a life of Karma Yoga. Since it is required for all people for spiritual progress, you, Arjuna, should also follow it. Through this you will attain the highest progress, that of Moksha.

Note that Karma yoga has to be followed by Gyana yoga to attain Moksha. Karma yoga prepares one for Gyana Yoga. Karma Yoga involves doing one's duty and maintaining harmony. As a

Now, a new topic starts with Shloka # 21. In Shloka's 17 and 18 respectively, Karma Yoga is shown as important for purification of mind and attaining knowledge. After liberation one does not need Karma yoga. Gyani may or may not perform Karma Yoga. He does not need to perform Karma Yoga; he can be a passive Gyani.

So, Arjuna too wants to get out of this painful Karma or duty. He can claim to be a Gyani. There is no test for a Gyani. Gyanam is the only criteria and it is not a visible one.

Anticipating this objection, Sri Krishna says, Arjuna, even if you are a Gyani, you should continue doing Karma Yoga. Even though you do not require Karma after Gyanam, for the sake of society and Dharma you need to follow Karma yoga.

In our tradition there are three sources of knowledge to know if a situation is Dharmic or not. If not we will have a let-go Philosophy (Laissez faire) or a Raga Dvesha based life also called Prakritha Purusha. It is not a life of a cultured person called Samskruta Purusha. So one goes back to Dharma Adharma life. So, how to know if it is Dharma or Adharma?

If I have to be a refined person, I should not do what I like to do; I should do what is proper. Propriety is more important. Naturally, I should know what is proper. And

I should know what is improper. So the question, what is the source of knowing dharma and adharma? Poorva Mimamsa sutra says Vedokilam Dharmamulam or that the entire vedas are our scriptures and are the primary source of dharma-adharma jnanam..

Thus:

1) Sruthi: The Vedas are the primary source of Dharma/ Adharma Gyanam. The human being can never know totally because, human beings' knowledge is Limited.

- Smrithi: All secondary literature based upon Vedas are also a source. They have to be interpreted according to the times. The interpreters have the freedom to interpret. They must, however, have no axe to grind. Ramayana and Bhagawatham are examples of Smrithi's.
- Shishta Achara: A life led by cultured elders who show by example. They serve as role models of Dharma. They are called Shishta's. Of the three sources the Shishta Achara is the most important. Sruthi and Smrithi are only literature. Live models have greater impact on society.

Shloka # 21:

ಏನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ ಅದೇನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ ಅದೇನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ
 ಏನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ ಅದೇನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ ಅದೇನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ 3.21

Whatever is done by the best of men, others also do; the world conforms to the standard that he sets.

Who are Shishta's? The most powerful person is the mother. She is the greatest influence on a child. Even in the womb the child knows mothers' thoughts. It knows if it is wanted or not. Ceremonies such as Simantham are meant for welcoming the child. The child knows the atmosphere in the house.

Next role model is the father. A father should perform noble things in the house. He should not swear. A child is deeply influenced by a father's action as well. Others will follow a good man's actions.

Shloka # 22:

ಏನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ ಅದೇನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ ಅದೇನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ
 ಏನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ ಅದೇನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ ಅದೇನು ಮಾಡಿದರೂ 3.22

I have Arjuna! no duty whatever to discharge in all the three worlds; there is nothing I have not won, and nothing remains to be won by Me; still I ceaselessly work.

Here Sri Krishna cites himself as an example. A society that gives healthy models to children is a healthy one. One example is Anjaneya. His story is full of morals. His attitude of respect towards women is taught. Human ingenuity alone is not enough; the grace of God is essential to succeed. Hanuman's Bhakti is an example of this devotion. Lakshmana was another exemplar. He could only recognize Sita's anklet, as he never looked above her feet. They had healthy attitude towards women, wealth and society.

Elders are responsible for the next generation. So, Arjuna you too should act.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 42

Greetings All,

Shloka # 15:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ३.१५ ॥

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ३.१५ ॥

Know that this work is born of the Vedas, and that the Vedas are born of the imperishable Reality. Therefore, the all-pervading Veda is eternally rooted in sacrificial work.

Continuing his teaching of the Gita and refreshing our memory of the last class, Swami Paramarthananda said, Sri Krishna was talking about the importance of Karma Yoga. He was looking at it from different angles such as Agya, Yagya, Chittashudhi, and now Dharma. Dharma is a way of life that maintains harmony of creation. Sri Krishna says everything in the universe is a

cyclical process. Giving follows receiving. If I only receive, the cycle is not complete and this results in a violation of the harmony. This violation is not good for society, our body, our psychology and our financials as well. If I take food only in and if I do not expend energy, again I am violating the harmony. Imagine a person who only eats. There will be stagnation through fat accumulation, increased cholesterol etc. The doctor will prescribe walking or jogging so that he expends energy and thus maintains harmony. This example can be expanded at all levels. The same can be said of knowledge. I should share the knowledge I receive. If you learn an art and do not share it with others they say you will become a Brahma Rakshasa. Whatever I take, I should give back.

It is the same at emotional level. Give love if you receive it. This is the cyclical process. If there is a stagnant pool and a river close by as well, most will choose the river. I should share money, energy, love etc. Each one of us must share. This will maintain harmony. We need to give, to maintain harmony. Giving is not natural. Grabbing is natural. Whatever is free, we take. Shashtra's need not teach us how to take; they need to teach us to give.

Among hundreds of people, you can find one courageous person. Among thousands of people you can find one true scholar; among lakhs of people, you may find one good communicator. But, how about a true giver? In the entire creation, to find a true giver is difficult. They are rare. So, Karma Yogi's are rare. So, Karma Yoga is all about giving. If I train myself to give, only then can I give up Ahamkara. I must give up Mamakara to become a Karma Yogi and give up Ahamkara to become a Gyana Yogi. God gave out Vedas. So, Vedas, given to us by God, taught us this life of sharing.

Shloka # 15 says Vedic teaching is all pervading. Especially wherever Yagya is going on or Danam is going on the Vedic teaching predominates.

Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga is not an end in itself. It is not an ultimate Sadhana. It cannot give us liberation or self-knowledge. Yet, at the same time, it is extremely important in beginning stages as it alone can give purity of mind. Karma Yoga will not lead to Moksha. After contributing to society and purifying the mind one has to go from Karma Yoga to Self-enquiry. Our problem now is self-ignorance, hence, we have to withdraw.

Follow karma yoga; purify the mind and grow out of karma yoga and go to the next stage of spiritual sadhana; it is like a child entering the womb of the mother and for nine months the child remains in the womb and then comes out. If it stays in the womb longer, it becomes a problem for both mother and child. In the same manner karma yoga is like the womb to purify the mind during Brahmacharya and Grihastha ashrama and later one goes to Vanaprastha and Sanyasa ashrama or grows out of activity. After Karma Yoga or purification of mind one grows out of activity and begins Nivriti or withdrawal. He starts asking who am I? What is life? What is my nature? Why this human struggle? Then, in Gyana yoga via Sravanam, Mananam and Nidhidhyasanam discovers the real I. Discovery of complete Self is Gyana Yoga. Only then struggle of life will be over. Consider the example of Puri in oil. It runs around in oil until it fluffs up. Once the Puri is full blown it is Poornathvam. Gyana is incomplete without Karma yoga. Without Karma Yoga, Gyana Yoga is not possible.

Sri Krishna now discusses the essence of Gyana Yoga.

Dayananda Saraswathi used to say: " Problem is you. Solution is you too."

Changing things outside is not going to help. Everything is inside us. This intelligent person comes to self-enquiry. He then makes the pleasant discovery that whatever I am seeking, I am it. Security, peace, and all basic needs of life are all

does not depend on anyone in creation.

Some people have pets and they depend on them. In fact one husband used to tell me in next birth I want to become my wife's dog. Whenever my wife comes from the class, the first question she asks is: did you feed the dog; she never asks if I have eaten. Therefore, if not people, we are addicted to pets; something or other, we want to hold on to.

A Tamil saying is " Even dependence on God is dependence".

World dependent is Samsari.

God dependent is Bhakti.

Self-dependent is a Gyani.

Therefore our progress is from world-dependence to God-dependence and from God-dependence to Self-dependence.

Shloka # 19:

कर्मणो यो नान्तरात्पुण्यं प्राप्नुयान्मोक्षमाप्नुयान्

कर्मणो यो नान्तरात्पुण्यं प्राप्नुयान्मोक्षमाप्नुयान्3.19

Therefore, unattached, always do the work that has to be done; for doing work with detachment, man attains the Supreme.

Sri Krishna tells Arjuna " Arjuna, you must have emotional independence. It can only happen by Self-discovery. Independence requires self-knowledge. Self-knowledge requires freedom from Raga and Dvesha (happiness or unhappiness with the external world).

Misunderstood I is source of unhappiness. Understood "I" is source of happiness. Until I recognize this there will be delusion. This delusion goes away through Karma Yoga.

The path is:

Karma Yoga: Purification of mind

Gyana Yoga: Discover Self sufficiency and Be Free.

implies self-less action.

Selfish action and selfless actions both are allowed, however, selfless action should predominate in life. Harmful action, however, is to be totally avoided. The attitude must be appropriate. Dedicating selfless actions and selfish actions with an attitude of Devarpanam to God and anything I receive in life must be with Prasada Budhi.

Sri Krishna is looking at it from different angles.

First angle is as a commandment from God. If a person refuses a life of Karma Yoga then he gets Pratyavaya Papam, a special papam, where he is imprisoned in Samsara. So, out of fear, one should follow Karma Yoga.

Second angle is one of love and worship. Swamiji says, in the first angle fear is used, but fear is not a healthy emotion. Fear is the darkroom in which all negatives are developed. Psychologists say, " Never try to discipline your children through fear". In fear a child's mind will not grow. They end up becoming terrible fathers, husbands, and teachers. In such cases it is the mistake of the parents who raised them in fear. In extreme cases punishment may be used, but as per Shastra's it is to be used sparingly.

Sri Krishna also used fear, as a method, to follow Karma Yoga. He, however, prefers love and worship rather than fear. Karma Yoga performed out of love is called Yagna. What God has given you, this body, this life etc., is his gift. When we get a gift we should reciprocate. What you do with the God's gift is your gift to the Lord. The body is a gift. I can enjoy the body living a life of indulgence or I can use it for Paropkara. Trees produce lot of fruits, as a gift. Even if one throws stones at them they still keep giving their fruits. The cow produces milk all for sacred purposes, our coffee and our tea. The rivers carry water, all for blessing the society. From looking at nature, we can easily understand why God has

dependent on rains. " When green goes from city, it is red", meaning air pollution increases and it becomes dangerous. A society is a healthy one when Dharmic people are allowed to follow dharma.

Follow Karma Yoga and God will grant you all blessings.

Swamiji points out that a question can come up. When I perform action I will get the Karma Phalam. Why should I ask God for the Phalam?

The answer is, phalam is the result of my work. I have worked hard for it. However, per scriptures phalam is per nature's laws. Citing an example, a microphone was discovered because the law for such a device was already present in nature. Human intellect discovered TV, but its mind cannot discover these natural laws. God has given us intellect. He has given us natural laws. My glory is only to tap into such a law. When you tap into such a law, please thank that God. Hence we thank God when we eat. Why do we do this? After all, I have worked for it, right? The production of food is possible due to laws created by God. Just remember God for a few minutes. Even our physical health is based on bio-chemical laws. The food is digested, transported and waste removed. Every disease is possible due to bio chemical laws. When my body temperature rises it is due to a natural law to fight a disease. I have never produced any law. I am only tapping into a law. Never forget this. If you do, you are a thief. Hence you should worship Devathas. If you don't thank them, you are an ungrateful person. It is the worst kind of papam. Ungratefulness has no Prayaschittam. Even in western cultures that is why you thank some one.

Citing another example Swamiji says he read recently that many temples have lands and properties assigned to them so that the temple can be maintained. However, unscrupulous people rent temple lands for one paisa. They are educated people too and they are abusing it. Many have not even paid their rent in a long time. Sri Krishna says one who enjoys without reciprocity

such a person is a thief.

In our culture, whatever we cook, we should offer it as a Naivedyam or as an acknowledgement. It is not an offering. God does not take it anyway. He just wants thanks.

In Hinduism every moment of our life is a life of reverence. Others have secular work and non-secular work. In Hinduism every action is sacred action. Every car driver before starting his journey prays; before starting construction of a building a Bhumi puja is performed. Swamiji says Non-reverential work is Karma while reverential work is Karma Yoga.

Shloka # 13:

“ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 3.13 ॥”

“ Good men who partake of what remains after offering sacrifices are liberated from all sins; whereas the sinners who cook for their own sake live on their sins”.

Sri Krishna now looks at karma yoga from a third angle.

The first angle was as God’s commandment

The second angle was as God’s worship or Yagna.

The third angle is as a spiritual purifier or Chitta Shodhakam.

A seeker of moksha can appreciate this angle. When I am a seeker, there is only one path and that is by Atma Gyanam. Without this Gyanam I cannot obtain Moksha. Gyanam occurs only with mental purity. That is why before installing a God in temple purification is performed. Similarly, before study of scriptures one has to go through Upanayanam; to cleanse the body and mind to install the Veda Mantra; else I will pollute the Vedas. Upanayanam is very important for Vedic chanting.

Even a pucca Brahmin cannot learn Vedas without Upanayana samskara. To paint a wall one has to sandpaper the wall first. Atma Gyanam occurs only when Kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya (lust, anger, greed, illusion, pride and envy) are removed. So, Karma yoga is the sand paper to cleanse the mind. The seeker of Karma Yoga is not interested in material prosperity. The whole world may consider him a failure because it considers material prosperity as the basis of success. Karma Yogi does not consider material success as important. His focus is on inner purification irrespective of whether material prosperity comes or not. Hence the shloka:

Isvararpitam necchaya krrtam
cittasodhakam muktisadhakam

If you dedicate your life to the Lord, and if you consider material prosperity as Subservient to spiritual growth then your karma yoga will lead to mental purity.

This mental purity may promote mukti sadakam. And therefore the third angle is Karma Yoga as an inner purifier. And that is why we say there is no failure in karma yoga.

Failure is usually in terms of material accomplishments. In karma Yoga inner purification takes place irrespective of material prosperity.

And therefore Krishna says, those people who convert their life into worship, receive the consequences as Ishwaraprasada or as yajna shistam. Yajna Shistam means left over from Yajna or Ishwaraprasada. Thus, one who considers all the karma phalams as yajna shistam (prasada) and eats it (means enjoy it), such a person becomes free from all the papams.

Citing an example, suppose you buy a book, and something is written on the book, the book is called a second hand book. The same second hand book signed by a mahatma becomes very valuable.

So if you do not offer to the Lord and enjoy without offering

to the Lord, without acknowledging the Lord's grace; it is papam. Even medicine is a law of the Lord, if a medicine has a curing property, it is God's gift; therefore I consume medicine as Ishwara Prasada. If you do not do that, Sri Krishna says you are a papi.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 39

Greetings All,

Shloka # 9:

संसारं कर्मणां तन्मयं दुःखमस्य सज्जनाम् ।
संन्यासोऽथ वा तस्य मुक्तिर्भवति नान्यथा ॥ ३.९ ॥

"This world is bound by works other than those done as sacrifice, O son of Kunti. Free from attachment, do work as sacrifice."

Recapping last week's teachings Swami Paramarthananda said Sri Krishna discussed Karma yoga from different angles. Karma Yoga consists of two paths. The first is appropriate action and second is proper attitude.

Appropriate action: All Satvika karmani fall under appropriate action. In this, I contribute more to the world through performance of Pancha Maha Yagya's or Proper Actions.

Proper Attitude:

- One should have Ishwara Arapana Budhi while performing proper actions.
- Consequences of actions are accepted without criticism with Prasada Budhi.

Thus, Proper Action + Proper Attitude= Karma Yoga.

Following are Sri Krishna's commentary on Karma Yoga, looking at it from different angles.

First angle, it is a commandment of the Lord. Nobody can escape it. By Agya, if we do not follow Karma Yoga, we will get Pratyavaha Papam. If we do not perform Pancha Maha Yagya we will bring down our spirituality. Here Karma Yoga is presented as a threat and more for immature people. Citing an example, violating the law of the land results in police action. If people follow the law no police action is required. So, here too, if people do not follow Karma Yoga the punishment is imprisonment in Samsara.

Second angle presented by Sri Krishna was that Karma Yoga is not a commandment; rather it is presented as a worship or expression of gratitude or love to God. The first angle was one of fear from which comes the saying "a God fearing person". In the second angle one follows not out of fear but out of gratitude. The more you enjoy the harmony of universe, the more you express gratitude.

Astronaut John Glenn, when he saw the world from far out in space, said " one who appreciates the creation, he cannot but believe in God, and he cannot but pray to Lord." Our morning worship is an appreciation of the universe and expression of gratitude for it. Even the opening of a tap for taking a bath results in an expression of gratitude for the glory of water. If you perform Sandhya Vandanam also you worship water. When they look for life, they look for water in a planet. I don't take Oxygen for granted either. Intense appreciation of the environment through fire worship, worship of water, worship of earth, worship of space etc., are all a part of Vedic religion. I don't have to produce or pollute. If I can maintain harmony, it is great.

Convert your life as an offering to me, as a Yagya.

If an action is not worship, it will cause bondage. Worship

will liberate. It is similar to the poison of a cobra. It can be a killer or a savior, depends upon how you handle it. Action by itself does not cause bondage or liberation. It is our attitude that matters.

Thus,

Action + Devotion= Liberating factor.

Action-Devotion=Binding factor.

Action + Devotion=Yagya, a liberator

Action – Devotion=Karma, a binder.

Therefore, Arjuna may you do all your actions as a worship of the Lord. Such action itself gives satisfaction.

That is why we use the expression: mamopatta-samastaduritaksaya-dvara sri-paramesvara-prityartham; It means: I am happy that I have done this as an offering to the Lord.

Swamiji says we are not supposed to expect appreciation. Shastra advises family members to appreciate the contribution of every member of family. Thus, a husband should appreciate his wife and she in turn should appreciate him as well. A teacher should not expect appreciation from his students. Rather, the students should appreciate the teacher. So, you have no rights. You only have duties. Our society is a duty based

Society. Dayananda Saraswathi said: “where duty is emphasized, humility will come. Where as, where right is emphasized, fight will come; court will come; divorce will come; all these things will come. Swamy Dayananda Saraswathi also used to say: “When you do your duty, others get their rights”.

Shloka # 10:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ३.१० ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ३.१० ॥

“Bringing forth creatures together with sacrifice, the Lord of creatures said of old: multiply by means of sacrifices; let it

yield whatever work you seek.”

A life of sacrifice is prescribed by the vedas themselves for the harmony and progress of the society. Such a life of contribution; such a life of sacrifice; such a life of sharing called the Yagna way of life, is prescribed by the vedas themselves for our own benefit.

Swamiji says, the Vedas are for our own benefit. They are a like a manual. Just as a manufacturer's manual let's the customer know how to handle his product. It is meant for the user. The instruction on how to take a medicine, are on the bottle. He who created the world was one with an extraordinary intelligence. Bhagawan has created this world and with it a manual on how to live in this world accomplishing Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Without this manual we will not know how to live in this world. So, Bhagavan gave us the Vedas. They preach a life of Yagya and with it you will prosper.

It is said that Prajapathi, Lord Brahma, created all living beings. He also created the human beings. He then called the human beings alone and gave them the Vedas. Vedas were not given to animals, as they don't have the free will to abuse. They follow dharma and harmony of creation. A forest is in harmony until humans enter it. It is the same with the ocean. They say there is a particular type of rodent species that once their population reaches a limit, some of the rodents will commit suicide as a way to limit the population. This is a way of sacrifice for the good of their society.

Therefore, God did not give Vedas to animals. For human beings it is a great blessing as well as a big curse. It depends on how we use it. Human beings can create their own heaven or hell.

A human being can lead an ideal life of giving and sharing, based upon freewill. Therefore humans can get the greatest

benefit of moksha; or they can create a hell for themselves as well.

With life of Yagya, may you prosper. Swamiji then discussed a life of competition versus cooperation. In competition one does not share knowledge. One turns selfish. In cooperation, there is growth. That is why, even in sports, when there is heavy competition, there is cheating; use of drugs; all prompted by a desire to win. As per Veda's competition is a disease called matsaryam. Among the six evils of kamah, krodhah, lobhah, mohah, madah and matsaryah, matsaryah alone is the evil of competition. Veda's says competition should be replaced by cooperation. I should be happy when the other person also thrives. In competition the worst instincts come out including qualities such as cheating.

Kamdhuk in the shloka means kamadhenu or one who fulfills all your desires. Swamiji says the human intellect is our Kamadhenu. We can accomplish anything with it. So, when we hear Vyasacharya could see the war, sitting in the palace, few people would have thought television was even possible. Now we have TV, internet, computers and many more.

All this (artha, kama, dharma)became possible due to applied human intelligence. Moksha also is possible with an intelligent way of living or by Karma Yoga. Vedas are not against material progress. If you are committed only to material progress without spiritual progress then you will not grow. We are a combination of Atma and Anatma. What is spiritual growth? It is the discovery that I am Atma, the substratum of everything. Materially you cannot expand beyond a certain limit, intellectually too one cannot expand beyond a certain limit. Spiritually, however, the possibility for growth is unlimited. And such a balanced pursuit of material well being (dharma-artha- kama) as well as self-knowledge is called Karma Yogaḥ.

Shloka # 11:

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“By means of this sacrifice nourish the Devas; let the Devas nourish you. Mutually nourishing, may you win supreme good.”

Continuing his talk on Karma Yoga as Yagna, Sri Krishna says by following Karma Yoga Yagna, you are propitiating the gods of the creation; you are propitiating the devathas. Devathas are presiding over natural forces. Thus, Indira presides over rain and thunder and Varuna over the ocean. Nature is propitiated. Nature is not violated. In return Gods will bless us. Creation and we need not be inimical rather we should live in cooperation. While Science wants to conquer nature, Vedas want the world and I to live in harmony. So, propitiate Gods. Gods will bless you with rains.

In the language of the Shashtra's, every tree is like the body of the Lord and every river is compared to the blood vessels of the Lord. So, when you are polluting the river, you are polluting the blood of the Lord. When you are blocking the river, you are blocking the blood vessels of the Lord. So the ultimate message is respect nature; live in harmony with nature, live in ecological harmony; this is called Karma Yogaha.

Even Kalidasa in his composition mangalashtakam addresses nature. He addresses all the trees; offers prostrations to all the rivers; offers prostrations to all the plants; and says, I appreciate the role of everything and I take a vow that my life will be in harmony with nature

May you Propitiate Devathas. May you accomplish overall well being including dharma, artha, and kama. We have enough for everybody and nobody needs to starve, however, there is no proper distribution or sharing. People are obese in some countries. Overeating destroys you. There is enough for human need but not enough for human greed. Through Karma Yoga may you attain all Purushartha's.

With Best wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 38

Greetings All,

Lord Krishna talked about the importance of karma up to the 7th verse; and now from the 8th verse onwards, up to 20th verse, the Lord is dealing with the important topic of karma yoga. Hence the chapter's name as well. It is a very important chapter of the Gita. In last class I pointed out Karma Yoga has two components to it.

Karma + Yoga= Karma Yoga.

Here Karma is proper action and Yoga is proper attitude.

Proper Action (karma)

Proper action is divided into three types of actions known as Satvic, Rajasic and Tamasic.

In **Satvic** actions there are more beneficiaries. I may also be benefited. It is Selfless action. I give more and take less. In a final accounting I should have given more and taken less. According to the material world, success is, when I can perform minimum action and get maximum money for it. As per Shastras it is the other way around. According to them I should do more and take less. This is what makes it Selfless.

Rajasic Karma is when the other beneficiaries are few. I am concerned about my immediate family and myself. In today's world people do not even care for their old parents anymore.

All this makes it selfish.

Tamasic Karma is when I am benefitted and others are not. Others are actually harmed. It is harmful action.

Satvic Karma provides fast benefit. Rajasic provides slow benefit. Tamasic does not provide any benefit. Tamasic person actually falls down spiritually. He may amass wealth by cheating and other such means, spiritually, however, he will move away from the shastras.

So a Karma Yogi should increase Satvic Karmas, reduce Rajasic Karma and avoid Tamasic Karmas. Satvic Karmas are defined in Shashtra itself as Pancha Maha Yagya's. They **are Proper actions**. They are:

- Deva Yagya: My contribution to Devas.
- Pitra Yagya: My contribution to Forefathers.
- Bramha Yagya: My contribution to scriptures and Guru Parampara.
- Manushya Yagya: My contribution to human beings.
- Bhuta Yagya: My contribution to environment, animals, plants etc.

In Hinduism all plants and animals are worshipped. They are all part of Pancha Maha Yagya. One should lead such a life of contribution. This is proper action.

Proper Attitude (Yoga)

The **second part is proper attitude**. Even the best action will not give benefit if I look down upon the action. (In Tamil :Kadane ne panren or I will do it like repaying a debt, reluctantly). Our attitude must be that every action must be an offering to God. It is called Ishwara Arpana Budhi. This applies to performance of Satvic as well as Rajasic Karmas. Even Rajasic karma performed humbly is uplifting. Thus, we have the saying Daridra narayan. I am not giving to that Daridra but to Daridra Narayan. Similarly we have the

expression Nara seva is Narayana seva and Manava seva is Madhava seva.

Even food should be offered to God first and then taken. This is all done to bring about an attitudinal change called Bhavana. Even the mundane task of cleaning a desk, do it as an offering to God. Once I make it an offering to God, I will do it wholeheartedly because I will not do anything inferior for God. If you do it in this manner, you will do the task well and wholeheartedly, as a Karta.

Whatever I do will produce a consequence. Even if you are doing selfless service in society people will criticize. People will criticize even good work. Whatever be the consequences have a Prasada Budhi; take the good and the bad as a gift from God. This attitude is called Yoga.

With this proper attitude, when I perform every action as an offering to God, I will not worry if it is pleasant or unpleasant. All our actions may not be that pleasant. Swamiji says we do perform unpleasant actions. If I have to take care of my old parent who is not that well, it is a duty. But it may not be pleasant, as it will involve money and inconvenience. Some such person may even pray for the speedy demise of that parent.

For many people going to office is an unpleasant task. Similarly, a housewife also has complaints. Cooking three times, year round, with no entertainment, she may want to dine out, while he may not want to. Arjuna too is faced with an unpleasant task of fighting his own Kith and Kin.

When every action is an offering to God, there is pleasantness in the work. One does not grumble about the work. A karma Yogi works with great enthusiasm. Chinmayananda used to say: "Keep smiling at all times".

Prasada Budhi: Whatever the fruits, I accept it with complete grace, without any complaints. Whenever I don't get the

expected result we tend to think of God as unjust. Whatever God gives is a just result of Prarabdha Karma. We should keep in mind that results often come from previous lives as well. When a local cricket umpire gives his decision it is accepted without question. If so, why can't you accept the decision of the universal umpire? This includes the decision of death as well. Whatever God gives, accept it. **When I am not able to accept it, pray to God to give me the strength to be able to accept it.** Budhi in this shloka means attitude.

This attitude gives Samatvam or a balanced mind brought about by a Prasada Budhi.

What is the benefit of Karma Yoga? The main benefit is very fast spiritual progress. This will be evident in self-knowledge. I will easily grasp self-knowledge. It may even provide some material benefit as a bye-product.

Shloka # 8:

कर्मणो भवेत्प्रथमं धर्मो धर्मश्च कदाचित् ।
अकर्तव्यं कर्म कुर्वन्निश्चयं कर्मसु कर्मभा ।
शुभं कर्म कदाचित् । 3.8

“Always do prescribed work; work is superior to inaction. Indeed, even life in the body is impossible without working.”

Action is always superior to inaction. In inaction mind is idle and it becomes the devils workshop. Only a Gyani can remain idle. Citing example of two quiet people who were in an ashram, one felt the ashram was quiet. The other felt it was a like cremation ground. Both people experience quietude differently.

If you resort to inaction, living in the world will be very difficult. Even if you have everything you need, you will still have to act to maintain your body. So, Arjuna, perform action. Perform the actions prescribed in the scriptures. The Pancha Maha Yagya's prescribed are compulsory. You have to contribute to society. It can be through teaching, giving

food, giving your time and even smiling at people. Somebody said, "People come from miles to get a smile".

The Pancha Maha Yagya's can be seen from different angles. It is a commandment from Lord. It is like following a traffic rule. Mature people will follow the law, as it is good for society. Citing JFK " Don't ask what your country can do for you, ask what can you do for your country"? Immature person may not follow the law, hence this commandment. If you don't perform the Karmas or omitting your duties you will get special Papam called Prathyavaya Papam and will fall down spiritually. Hence, the language of threat used, by scriptures.

Shloka # 9:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ३.९ ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ३.९ ॥

" This world is bound by works other than those done as sacrifice. O son of Kunti. Free from attachment, do work as sacrifice."

In previous shloka Sri Krishna said Karma Yoga has to be followed. New research shows fear must not be used with a child. It crimps the mind of the child. In USA a child cannot be beaten. Corporal punishment is considered very bad. It must be used very sparingly. Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, You need not take my commandment in previous shloka as Ishwara Agya (command). I used it for immature persons only. So, Karma Yoga should be converted to Ishwara Yagya or worship of the Lord.

From Ishwara Agya it becomes Ishwara Yagya. In this context the following saying comes to mind, "We have enough for man's need but we do not have enough for man's greed."

So, Karma Yoga is for worship of the Lord. Normally a puja is performed in a short time. Sri Krishna says, you may perform the short puja in the beginning, but ultimately the real puja

is to convert your very life into a puja. Let my very living become an offering to you.

Shankara says in Soundarya Lahiri: Oh! Mother, wherever I go, take it as pradakshanam. So also, whatever you are eating, make it an offering to God.

What is Karma Yoga? They say, "Work is worship". I can do worship during puja at home. How can I worship in my office? In Hinduism the whole world is a manifestation of God. Everything is God. You can worship him anywhere.

When work is performed with this attitude our actions will not be binding. There will be no bondage. This worship will lead to liberation.

Why is work the cause of bondage? Our actions create tensions. We wonder whether it will work properly. It results in a state of constant anxiety. We worry if the child will get admission or not? Will I be able to go to America or not? Will I win the contract or not. Every action results in stress.

That is the reason there are so many stress management programs offered today.

By the age of 40 many executives have psychosomatic diseases caused by stress. Some have high blood pressure, some have diabetes and some have high Cholesterol.

Although he has a high salary he cannot even enjoy good food. He cannot take salty food; he cannot eat sweets; he cannot eat sour things because of ulcer; and so on and on. What is the point of all this money if a man cannot enjoy the simple things of life, asks Swamiji.

He says, a man can work and enjoy his life under only one

condition. By converting your life into worship and telling yourself that whatever comes is prasada. Only by leading a life of converting work to worship can we lead a stress free work life.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 37

Greetings All,
Shloka # 6:

कर्मणो यो मत्प्रसादात्प्राप्तो भवति फलम् ।
कर्मणो यो मत्प्रसादात्प्राप्तो भवति फलम् ।
कर्मणो यो मत्प्रसादात्प्राप्तो भवति फलम् ।

“ Controlling the organs of action, he who has his mind dwelling on their objects has a confounded mind; he is said to be a hypocrite.”

Continuing his teaching of the Gita, Swami Paramathananda recapped last week’s class. In this shloka Sri Krishna is clarifying Arjuna’s doubts about Gyana Yoga and Karma Yoga. He says there is no choice between the two. Everybody has to go through karma yoga first which is the only means of purifying the mind and thereafter everyone has to go through gyana yoga, which is the only means of liberation. Gyana yoga means a

study of the scriptures under the guidance of a guru. Guru Shashtra Upadesha Sravanam is called Gyana yoga and everyone has to go through it.

Even though there is no choice between these two sadhanas, there is a choice in one's lifestyle. The choice is between Grihastashrama and Sanyasashrama. While there is no choice between these two sadhanas, Sri Krishna says, there is a choice with regard to the lifestyle that a person chooses. However, there is no uniform answer to this as it depends upon the type of seeker. Sri Krishna, however, observes that Sanyasashrama is a more difficult one to follow. Sanyasa is not for a majority of the people; it suits only a small minority. It is better to continue in Grihastashrama throughout or after Grihastashrama take to Sanyasa. He recommends Grihastashrama to Arjuna as well. He tells him activity is safer than withdrawal.

Sri Krishna gave three reasons in support of Karma Yoga (or not withdrawing from life) in shlokas 4, 5 and 6 respectively. They are:

1. By avoiding Karma, one cannot get peace of mind. If I have no action, I may think I will have peace of mind, however, inaction does not give you peace of mind.
2. Total Inaction is impossible. Based upon one's Gunas, one will perform action. Try staying at an Ashram for a week.

Swamiji then told the story of a Sanyasi in a temple.

In a temple, there was a Sanyasi sitting; without doing anything and he got daily Prasadam from the temple. A new officer took over the administration. He wanted to bring about changes and improvements. He asked how many people got the Prasadam. He got a list of names and at the end of the list was named the "Quiet Swamiji." If he did not do anything, why should the Quiet Swamiji get prasadam, was his question? The

people in the temple told the officer the Swamiji was a respected person and he should at least talk to him. He asked the Quiet Swamiji why he should get Prasadam for doing nothing. The Quiet Swamiji told him: My doing nothing is very good for the society. He said sitting quiet was not very easy and requested the officer to try it at least for a week. The officer thought it would be very easy and agreed. Once he sat with the Quiet Swamiji for some time, he got restless. After a few hours of quiet time he became extremely restless and gave up. He told the Pujari to give the Quiet Swamiji a double quota of Prasadam daily. Giving up action is not easy. Our gunas and svabhava will pressurize us to act.

3) Not only will action not result in moksha but it can also become a risky proposition. When there are no goals or plans in mind, the mind does not have anything to do, especially since he does not have Gyanam. An idle mind is ideal for seeking many types of enjoyments. In one's mind and imagination too one can enjoy a lot. He then violates Sanyasa and the suppressed emotions erupt. Such a person, wearing an ochre robe, declares himself to be a saintly person to the world, while in reality he is caught up in his sense world. This is called "Mithyachara", meaning what I am thinking, the society does not know. Such a person is also called a "Vimudatma" or a hypocrite. So, Arjuna, considering that inaction is dangerous, lead an active life.

Shloka # 7:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ३.७ ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ३.७ ॥

"Controlling the sense organs with the mind, he who commences the Yoga of action with the organs of action, unattached, is held to excel, O Arjuna."

What is an ideal Ashrama? As per Sri Krishna, it is

Grihasthashrama, where one can fulfill Artha, Kama as well as perform Service to society. Even a wife is called saha dharma charani, which means one gets married not primarily for fulfilling the Artha Kama desires, but for primarily fulfilling my service to the society. In this process I also fulfill my personal desires in a legitimate manner. And therefore, Sri Krishna says, it is better for one to remain in society.

What is an ideal life to lead? As a Grihastha, as an active person in society, let him regulate his sense organs first and then fulfill his artha & kama. Artha means security, money, possessions, house, status etc. name, fame all related to security while and Kama means entertainment. Shastras give freedom to fulfill the Artha & Kama desire only in Grihasthasrama and not in Sanyasasrama. Sanyasa is exclusively meant for fulfilling moksha desire only. Therefore Grihastha should fulfill his desires by regulating the sense organs and without violating dharma and morality.

Citing example of pickle, sometimes we forget that pickle is only a side dish and indulge in it as if it were the main dish. So too, in such a life, Dharma should dominate and not Artha and Kama. Giving must be more than receiving. This is a Dharmic Purusha. Sensory excesses should be controlled by a discriminating mind. It does not mean suppression. Shastras are against suppression. Citing example of a river, stopping the flow of a river will not help, it will cause flood. If you don't stop the flow of water, it will be wasted. Therefore the correct thing to do is to regulate the water by channeling it in a useful direction. Swamiji used the Tamil Saying to further inform us. Kan pona pokkile manam pokalama, manam pona pokkile manitan pokalama; (Should the mind follow whatever the eyes see; and should a man follow his wandering mind?)

After this the Grihastha should take to Karma Yoga that too without getting attached to anything. Whatever he uses is only

a means. Shastras say Grihasthashrama is not an end in itself. A wife or husband, both are not permanent. I have to grow out of all my attachments, including for my family, before Yama comes. Such a Grihastha excels a Sanyasi who is not mature and is without knowledge. Sanyasa is horrible if you do not know Vedanta.

Shloka # 8:

कर्मण्येवाङ्गिरसो व्रतमर्थात्मा ॥
कर्मसु कौशल्ये ॥

3.8

“Always do prescribed work; work is superior to inaction. Indeed, even life in the body is impossible without working.”

In the previous shloka Sri Krishna says Karma Yoga is the best path. However shastras do make an exception for one to skip Karma (Grihastha) and go to Gyana Yoga (Sanyasa). The exception occurs when a person has performed Karma Yoga in a previous life.

In this shloka Sri Krishna talks about what is Karma Yoga. In the two slokas, 47 and 48 of the 2nd chapter, Sri Krishna did summarize karma yoga. Now from shlokas 8 to 20 Sri Krishna is describing Karma Yoga. It should be noted that Sri Krishna’s teachings are all based upon Vedas. He is presenting it in a more modern form. The content is still the same. In Vedas, in Karma Kanda, Ishavasa and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads, all talk about Karma Yoga. In general karma Yoga can be defined as:

Karma +Yoga=Karma Yoga

Karma here means proper action.

Yoga here means proper attitude towards the action and the result of the action, both respectively.

What is proper action? Actions are of three types. They are Satvic, Tamasic and Rajasic.

Satvic: action is one in which more numbers of people get the benefit. It can include me as well. Example would be a businessman who gets profits but shares it with society. This is also called Nishkama Karma or Self less service.

Rajasic: action is one where beneficiaries are minimum. It is primarily focused on my near family and me.

Tamasic: action is one that is harmful. I hurt others for my benefit. I do not consider others. In India, a blaring mike is often encountered where there is no consideration of the people around. Any action that disturbs is Tamasic.

Karma Yoga should be primarily Satvic and Nishkama Karma. Shastras prescribe some of these Nishkama Karmas. They are known as Pancha Maha Yagna's. Performing the Pancha Maha Yagna makes our spiritual progress very fast. They purify one's mind. They reduce one's Raga, Dvesha, Kama and Krodha. The Pancha Maha Yagna's are:

1. Deva Puja: Life should consist of religious activity or worship. This may depend upon your Jathi, Varna etc. Sandhyavandanam, Rama Nama Japam all fall into this category. This is dedicating exclusive time for Devas. It is treating Devas as guests. It can also be called prayer time.
2. Pithru Puja: Worship of forefathers. Scriptures give great importance to this puja. Some time should be allocated for this. The ancestor worship can be as per family tradition.
3. Rishi or Brahma Yagna: This is the worship of scriptures. We have a glorious tradition. We have to do something to preserve it and propagate it. Daily Parayanam or study of scripture such as Ramayanam falls under this yagna. Our Gita class is a part of Brahma Yagna. We are also responsible for handing over these teachings to posterity. We should share it with children through daily study. There are ritualistic ways of

performing Brahma Yagna as well. In this process we also remember the Rishi Parampara (all Rishi's) who have brought down to this day the knowledge of our scriptures for our benefit.

4. Manushya Yagna: All types of social services fall under this Yagna. Feeding the poor, giving time to orphanages, giving time to old age homes, schools, etc., all fall under this Yagna. Feeding hungry is the primary Manushya Yagna also called Anna Danam.
5. Bhoota Yagna: This is protection of the environment and all other beings such as animals, plants, the water, air and the earth. This is the reason our scriptures show the animals as Vahanas of Devas. The story of Shakunthala makes the message clearer. Shakuntala, when she had to leave the ashrama of Rishi Kanva, she takes leave of all people, the plants, and even the deer. One particular deer was very dear to her. It pulled her dress, not allowing her to leave. Even the trees bowed their head down. Shakuntala had won the hearts of all by her service.

All these five mahayagnas are compulsory. One who leads such a life is a very blessed person.

Take away from this class:

Please consider incorporating Pancha Maha Yagna practices in your daily life. Swamiji says they will transform you spiritually.

With Best wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 36

Shloka # 3:

“The blessed Lord Said:

O Sinless One! Two kinds of disciplines in this world were set forth by Me of yore-for Samkhyas the disciple of knowledge , and for the Yogins, that of works.”

Recapping shloka # 3, Swami Parmarthananda, said, after listening to teachings in chapter 2, Arjuna now has questions about the roles Karma Yoga and Gyana Yoga. He thinks there is a choice between the two. This is a mistake. Sri Krishna at no point presented them as optional. All scriptures agree that Gyanam alone can liberate. So there is no choice. All have to go through Gyanam. Before going to Gyanam one has to be qualified for it. This can be done through Karma Yoga. Everybody has to prepare their mind and only then can they go to Gyana Yoga. So there is no choice, both are essential. One prepares the mind and the other removes ignorance. Arjuna did not understand this, hence his question. Sri Krishna wanted Arjuna to fully understand this requirement of scriptures. Here Sri Krishna introduces the concepts of Sadhana and Life style (also called Nishta). Everybody requires both of them. The lifestyles indicated are:

- 1) Pravriti Marga and
- 2) Nivritimarga

Pravriti marga is Grihastashrama and Nivriti marga is Sanyasa or Gyanashrama.

Swamiji says there are three possible lifestyles for human beings. They are:

1. Grihastashrama followed by Sanyasashrama. Karma , such as money, people etc. One uses these to lead an active life of service and in this process removes the sharp edges of mind. It removes the sharp edges of the

personality like kamaḥ, krodhaḥ, lobhaḥ, mohaḥ, etc. This is just like a knife sharpened by a rough surface. After Grihastashrama one goes to Sanyasashrama. This stage is to acquire knowledge. Here the person is free of responsibilities. He should not possess anything. Yoga (acquisition) and Kshema (preservation) are both, burdens. He has to shave his head or grow his hair. Grihastha's duties are prescribed, as are different ones for a Sanyasi. For a grihastha, parayaṇam is rudram, chamakam, sukthani, etc.; for a sanyasi daily parayaṇam is upaniṣhad, brahma sutras, bhaṣyam, etc. Even his (Sanyasi's) daily karmas are designed for the pursuit of Gyana yoga; and therefore Gyanam does not require any expenditure. However, Karma does require expenditure. This life style is considered the ideal one.

2. Grihasthashrama followed by a continuation in Grihasthashrama. One performs Karma yoga and then gradually moves to Gyana yoga, all within Grihasthashrama. This life style is a little more difficult but can be managed. In this life style, the Gyanam stage can occasionally be disturbed because of the life of a grihastha. This is just like a knife can occasionally be a screwdriver and a screwdriver too can occasionally be used for cutting. So this life style is strictly Grihasthashrama only.
3. In this third life style one skips Grihasthashrama to Sanyasa. Here the hope of purifying the mind is difficult. Here too one can manage with some difficulty. Here one performs Karma through Japas and service to his Guru. This is strictly Sanyasashrama. It is least favored of all life styles.

The first lifestyle is best and second one is also acceptable. So Arjuna, continue in the Grihasthashrama.

Clarification of some words used in the shloka 3:

Pura means- through the vedas, from past. It is said The Lord created Brahma. The Lord created the world and brought out Brahma from his navel, and at the same time gave the Vedic teaching as well. And that is reason Brahmaji has four heads representing the four Vedas.

Anadh: means the pure one or Arjuna.

Samkhya: means Sanyasi

So pure minded Arjuna, these two lifestyles I have introduced among the human beings; the animals do not have four ashramas; they do not have any problem. Only the human beings have these two main ashramas, Grihastha and Sanyasa.

Explaining further, a Sanyasi is supposed to remove his scared thread and give up Gayathri mantra. He now goes to Omkara Mantra. Swamiji explained the Om (A U M) is a shortened version of the Gayathri mantra.

Gayathri has got three lines; each line is simplified into one letter. Tatsavithurvarenyam is simplified into A; bhargodevasya dhimahi is simplified into U, dhiyo yona prachodayat is simplified into uM; A plus U plus uM is AUM or OM.

A Sanyasi should not worry about earning. He was to be dedicated to seeking knowledge and well being of society. In turn, society was supposed to provide for him.

Nivrithi: Pursuit of knowledge.

Yoginaha: means extroverted people not committed to knowledge. Karma Yoga and Sadhanas such as Pancha Maha Yagna govern such active people.

Swamiji will explain Pancha Maha Yagna in a future class.

Shloka # 4:

“Man does not achieve freedom from works by abstention from them. None attains perfection through the mere renunciation of works,

either.”

Whatever life style one adopts one has to go through Karma Yoga and then study the scriptures in a systematic manner under a Guru.

In this shloka Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, you should not avoid action. He gives three reasons for this:

Reason # 1: By avoiding or giving up action, you cannot get Moksha. You cannot move away from duties. Running away from problems does not solve it. Our true problem is internal, although we think it lies outside us.

In this Shloka Naishkaryam and Sidhi both mean Moksha.

In scriptures there are statements that say that by giving up Karma one can get liberation. Sri Krishna clarifies that wherever it says renouncing Karma will get liberation, it should also state that Gyanam should support Karma. Sanyasa works only when it is backed by scriptural studies.

Explaining what scriptural studies mean, Swamiji said, in his ashrama when they were studying the bhasyam, some of the Shankaracharya's bhashya was so deep, it took 15 continuous days of studies to complete one mantra.

By mere renunciation, wearing an Ochre robe, one cannot get Moksha. Sanyasa does not guarantee Moksha.

Shloka # 5:

“None indeed , even for a moment , remains without doing work. All, being dependent, are made to work by the constituents of Prakrti.”

Reason #2: Giving his second reason for not giving up action, Sri Krishna says, it is impossible to give up action. Everybody will be forced to perform some action based upon his nature. A man cannot give up physical action and even if one does so, your mind will become active. This is because

everyone's prakrithi causes him or her to act. Maya has three Gunas that pervade creation. The ornament will reflect the type of gold it is made up of. Thus, we have gold with more silver, lead and copper that reflects in the ornament. Traits of Karanam (cause) will be there in the effect as well. Parents are evident in their children. The three Gunas, Satva, Rajas and Tamas are present in different proportions in each one of us. The human being is helpless. The most you can do is channelize these energies. People try to stop thought in meditation; Swamiji says this is a mistake. Vedic meditation is more into directing your mind rather than stopping thought. Any type of meditation that we prescribe involves the appropriate thought. And therefore Sri Krishna says that if you try to give up your action, wherever you go, you will start fresh action. If you become a sanyasi and go to Rishikesh and if you are a rajasic person, your leadership qualities will exert and you will form a sanyasi association. So, even if you renounce action, you will still find action. So, Arjuna, please do what you have to.

Shloka # 6:

“Controlling the organs of action, he who lets his mind dwell on their objects has a confounded mind; he is said to be a hypocrite.”

Reason # 3: The third argument offered by Sri Krishna is that giving up action is very risky and can be counter productive. One can go to Vedanta only after purifying worldly desires. Everybody has got certain natural needs; so they talk about the hierarchy of needs; first the need is for survival; then food and clothing; and thereafter the need is for entertainment; thereafter the need is to be wanted; I want to love someone and I want to be loved by someone. Human mind has different levels of needs including needs for self-respect, doing something in the society, so that the society will remember me.

A person has to go through them and accomplish some self-respect, as they say, to let the ego ripen.

The ego has to ripen before it falls. This can happen only in society and through family life. Sanyasa Marga is a one-way traffic. A grihastha can become a sanyasi; but a sanyasi cannot become a grihastha. That is why Dayananda Swamiji used to tell us; when he went to Uttarakashi, he met many sadhus, sanyasis and he was talking with

them. During discussions, Swamiji said: I want to take sanyasa. Many of those sanyasis told him: Do not take that decision. One of them said: You know, somehow after a fight with my wife, I left and took up sanyasa, because one day my early morning coffee was delayed. And now here, on the first day, Himalayas and Ganges were wonderful and fine and I thought this is the best place to stay for life; but on second day, third day, fourth day, it was the same Ganga, same Himalayas, and

if you ask for bhikṣha, the bhikṣha would also be the same; unlike in my house, where it was different every day. Here, you will have have no choice.

A Grihastha cannot become a Brahmachari. If ego has not matured it can miss a lot. If mind is not ready for Sanyasa, it can misfire. It can become a life of Mithyachara. Pressure mounts in mind for pleasures. So it is risky to skip and go to Sanyasashrama.

Take away:

1. It is only by going through life's ups, downs and travails that eventually our ego will ripen and hopefully fall off. Running away from life will not help.
2. Even if you run away, as Swamiji points out, the grass is not greener on the other side. Sanyasa may not help.

With Best Wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 35

Shloka # 1:

Arjuna Said:

“O Krsna! If your view is that knowledge is superior to work, why do you bid me to undertake this fearful work of war?”

Starting the teaching of chapter 3 Swami Paramathanada said, this chapter begins with a question from Arjuna. Arjuna is confused about the teaching in chapter 2. In chapter 2, Sri Krishna, at different times, said: “wise people do not grieve in life”, “Wisdom alone is solution for all grief” and “Ignorance is cause of all sorrow and knowledge frees one from all sorrow”. At the end of chapter 2 Sri Krishna emphasizes Gyana Yoga in the Sthitha Pragyaha. Sri Krishna talked a lot about Gyanam and Gyani. At the end of the chapter 2 he says, a Gyani will not have delusion in life.

In chapter 1, Arjuna’s primary problems were diagnosed as sorrow and internal conflict. In chapter 2, Sri Krishna says Gyanam is the solution for all sorrows and internal conflicts. Gyanam can be obtained only from a Guru or a Gurukulam. In Chapter 2, in its middle, Sri Krishna talks a lot about Karma, while in beginning and end he talks of a lot about Gyanam. Here, he advised Arjuna to perform Karma. Arjuna’s question is, should I follow the path Gyana Yoga or the Karma Yoga? Arjuna is naturally inclined towards Karma. In this instance, however, he is looking for an escape. Normally, being a Kshatriya he is inclined to fight, however, in front of Bhishma, Drona and Other relatives he does not want to fight. Even as he wants to run away from the battlefield he also remembers Sri Krishna’s teaching that he should stand up and fight as it is Dharma. He now blames Sri Krishna rather than himself, saying you are confusing me. Having glorified Gyanam,

O Krishna, you are asking me to perform the Karma of battle.

Sri Krishna has not confused Arjuna. His confusion is due to his own improper understanding. Swamiji says it is not unusual that this question, if Karma Yoga is better than Gyana Yoga, often comes up. People even ask this about Bhakthi, Raja and Kundalini Yoga's as well. Karma Yoga should not be compared to Gyana Yoga. Comparison is possible only when there are options. Both Karma and Gyana are not optional. Both are equally important for a person. Karma yoga makes you fit for Gyana Yoga. Karma purifies your mind. Arjuna was asked to perform Karma to purify his mind and then gain knowledge. Unfortunately Arjuna has been taking in Sri Krishna's teaching through a filter. He basically wants to avoid Karma.

Sri Krishna, in his greatness, does not blame Arjuna for this confusion. He answers the question with great elation on the topic of Karma Yoga.

Swamiji clarified that in Sanskrit one word can have many meanings depending on its context. Thus, the word Budhi can mean: Object of knowledge, instrument of knowledge and Knowledge itself. In this shloka it means Knowledge itself.

Arjuna's question is after asking me to obtain knowledge you are now asking me to perform action knowing that the action cannot produce new knowledge. Karma cannot produce any new knowledge, that too when the action is unpleasant (terrible). In this instance it even involves blood. We know that certain actions are unpleasant and certain actions are pleasant. For Arjuna if it were a pleasant action, it would have been fine. But you are engaging me in bloody action that too one involved with killing. Even as he was seeing his dear Bhishma and dear Droṇa standing the thought of killing them was too revolting.

Shloka # 2:

Arjuna Said:

“By words that seem confused, You bewilder my intelligence, as it were. Therefore set forth one sure course by which I may attain the highest good.”

Arjuna says: Sri Krishna, you are using confusing statements or at least to me it appears so. Looks like I have not grasped your teaching properly. Please clarify.

Swamiji says, Vedanta emphasizes thinking. Blind acceptance is not advocated. Thus Bramhasutra is a logical analysis of scriptures. The process of preaching is initial and superficial, while teaching is for long term and it brings value to you. Through teaching alone internal transformation occurs.

Shloka # 3:

Sri Krishna Said:

“O sinless one! Two kinds of disciplines in this world were set forth by Me in times of yore-for the Samkhyas the discipline of knowledge and for the Yogins, that of works.”

Swamiji says Swami Dayanada Saraswathi used to say: “Value is a value only when the value of the value is valued.” Teaching conveys value of the value. Preaching only conveys the value. Example of this would be answering why Karma Yoga should be performed before Gyana Yoga.

Here too Sri Krishna is teaching Arjuna; He is not telling him to go and fight rather he is teaching him why karma is important. Sri Krishna now explains why Karma Yoga is important. This third shloka is an important one and is the foundation of chapter 3.

Scriptures point out that Karma Yoga Sadhana and Gyana Yoga Sadhana are both compulsory. It is like washing hand before eating. You clean your hand and then eat.

Karma Yoga makes you Gyana Yogyatha Prapthihi. Gyana Yoga has always been presented in scriptures at the end, not the

beginning or the middle. There are of course exceptions. Ninety-nine percent of people are not prepared for Gyanam. Ramana Maharishi was an exception. What worked for Ramana does not work for all. As per Shastras people like Ramana Maharishi also have gone through Karma Yoga, probably in some previous life. Once you have prepared, you can go through Gyana Yoga as well.

Paralleling this, scriptures also talk of two types of lifestyles called Ashramas. The word Nishta means Ashrama or lifestyle. Scriptures mention four ashramas. Of the four, Grihastha Ashram and Sanyasa Ashram are pertinent here.

Pravrithi Nishta: It is Karma Pradhana Ashram

Nivriti Nishta: It is Gyana Pradhana Ashram.

Note: The word Samkhya in the shloka is associated with Gyanam.

Swamiji says a human being can lead life in three different ways. They are:

1. Go to Grihasthashrama, follow Karma Yoga, purify, then take up Sanyasa Yoga and become free.
2. Go to Grihasthashrama follow Karma Yoga, purify, continue in Grihasthashrama and gradually change to Gyana Yoga and become free. Such a person is called Grihastha Gyani.
3. Without Grihasthashrama go to Sanyasa. In Sanyasa perform Karma Yoga unique to Sanyasi's. A Sanyasi can perform Japas, Guru Seva, and other such exclusive activities identified for them. After purification he has to go to Gyana Yoga and attain freedom. Such a person is called a Sanyasi Gyani.

Both Sadhanas have to be completed. Citing an example: Screwdriver is used for screwing and a knife is used for cutting. You can cut fruits with a screwdriver as well while a

knife can also occasionally screw.

Thus:

- Grihasthashrama is Karma Pradhana.
- Sanyasashrama is Gyana Pradhana.

Therefore Arjuna, do your duty. Right now your duty is to fight.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 34 – Chapter 2 Summary

Swamiji offered a summary of chapter 2. The chapter is divided into four parts:

1. Shlokas 1-10: Arjuna's Sharanagati
2. Shlokas 11-38: Gyana Yoga Part
3. Shlokas 39-58: Karma Yoga Part
4. Shlokas 54-72: Sthita Pragyaha Part

He summarized each topic.

Shlokas 1-10, Arjuna Sharanagati.

This was a continuity of chapter 1 where Arjuna discovered the problems of Samsara in the oddest place, the battlefield. Raga, Shoka and Moha are the problems associated with Samsara. Raga is attachment, a human problem and while it varies from individual to individual, it is also a universal problem. Arjuna discovers it with intensity in the battlefield. With attachment comes sorrow or Vishadha. I don't want to lose anything I am attached to. Any loss, actual or imaginary, I am

not able to withstand. Arjuna was intensely attached to Bhishma, Drona and others. He is unable to handle even the imaginary loss of these people close to him and this is called Shokaha. Once the mind is

caught in Raga and Shoka it loses its capacity to discriminate between Dharma and Adharma. Incapacity to decide what is the right course of action in a given situation sets in. This lack of capacity to discriminate is called Mohaha. Thus Raga, Shoka and Moha together are known as Samsara. Arjuna discovers this problem and also tries to solve it. Arjuna even gives Sri Krishna a lecture on his solution to the problem. He feels fighting is Adharma and wants to run away from the battlefield. Sri Krishna allows Arjuna to express himself.

In chapter 2 Arjuna's dilemma is continued. He has not yet surrendered himself to Sri Krishna as such Sri Krishna keeps quiet. Then, Arjuna feels Karpanya Dosha, feeling helplessness and only then surrenders to Sri Krishna. He is like a drowning person who finds Sri Krishna to hold on to. The surrender has to be real and from the heart. Arjuna

has to empty his mind in this process so that Sri Krishna can fill it up with wisdom. A Sanyasi shaving his head is a symbol of removing one's false notions. Arjuna, the Yajamana, now becomes Arjuna, the Shishya. Sri Krishna also changes roles from the Partha Sarthy to Gita Upadesha Jagat Guru. Gyani becomes a Guru because of his Shishya;

hence Shashtanga namaskaram is practiced. It shows emptiness of his mind and his humility. An arrogant intellect will find it extremely difficult to do namaskara and Arjuna is the most arrogant person in the world because he is a Kshatriya, a Dhananjaya with many names, glories, wealth, position and beauty and wives; Arjuna is such a person but he surrenders. So, Arjuna now asked for knowledge.

Shlokas 11-38: Gyana Yoga

From these shlokas the Gita teaching now starts. This is the main theme of chapter 2. Shlokas 11-25 are very important as

they convey the essence of Upanishads. Gyana Yoga or Samkhya Yoga is the theme. The gist of these shlokas is that Sri Krishna discusses the nature of the individual. Who am I, is being discussed. Unfortunately, we do not have a clear understanding of ourselves. While we study many things, we never study ourselves. Sri Krishna shows we are not the physical body. This is our biggest misconception. The second mistake we make is thinking "I am the mind". This body is only a temporary dress that we discard at death. Even in deep sleep we still exist but don't function through the physical body. At that time the body and mind are set aside. They are like one's spectacles (glasses) that are removed before going to bed. So, if I am not the body or the mind, then who am I? I am the consciousness principle, Chaitanyam. What is this consciousness? Describing it, Sri Krishna says:

1. It is not part of body, nor product of body and not even a property of the body.
2. It is the independent identity that permeates and enlivens this body.
3. Its capacity to permeate, enliven and illuminate is not limited to just one body.
4. Its capacity extends beyond the boundaries of this body and it continues to exist even after the body collapses.

Explaining the Consciousness principle with an example, Swamiji says:

1. The light you experience on your hand is not part of the hand.
2. It is not limited to the hand or by the hand.
3. The light survives even after the hand disappears. The only difference is that when the hand is there; light is visible; and when the hand is removed; light continues but you are not able to see it.

This consciousness is called the Atma. Sri Krishna describes the six main features of the Atma:

1. Atma is Nityaha or eternal.
2. Atma is Satyaha, or it is reality that exists independently, while everything else depends on Atma.
3. Atma is Sarvagathaha or it is all pervading. In body, it is contactable, when it is outside body, it is invisible.
4. Atma is Aprameya or it is ever the Experiencer and never the Experienced. Anything experienced is Anatma. Atma is the Subject and not the object. Every photo proves the existence of the camera although the camera is not visible in any picture.
5. Atma is Akarta and Abhokta. Atma does not do anything; as such it does not reap the results of any action. It is neither the Doer nor Enjoyer.

Atma is Nirvikaraha, meaning, free from all modifications of existence such as birth, growth, change, decay and death.

Sri Krishna asks Arjuna to recognize and claim this Atma as himself. Body and mind are incidental instruments, a gift from God. During sleep they are taken away temporarily. Later it will be taken away permanently. Knowing this truth claim the Atma as myself, says Sri Krishna. This is the permanent remedy to all life's problems.

Shloka 39-58: Karma Yoga:

Atma is the subtlest and most difficult topic to comprehend unless one has a prepared mind. Sri Krishna wants to help people who have difficulty grasping Gyana Yoga. To them he recommends getting Gyana Yogyata through Karma Yoga. Swamiji compares it to a tutorial class. Essence of Karma Yoga is:

Proper Action+Proper Attitude=Karma Yoga

Proper action: Actions are of three types. Satvic, Rajasic and Tamasic.

Satvic action is considered the best type of action. It is an action where beneficiaries are more. This is Nishkama Karma.

In performing such an action I take into account my family, village, society, world and environment. It is self less action.

Rajasic action is selfish action. I do not bother about society or world. The attitude that God will take care of it (when somebody is helpless) also comes in and it is thus fatalistic as well.

Tamasic action is when I benefit at the cost of others or society even causing harm in this process. It is a very selfish approach to action.

Proper Attitude: Whatever action I perform I should do it with love and sincerity, otherwise it is an insult to that action. Enjoy what you do. Learn to love the action. Even actions we do not like, we can learn to love them. Even the most menial action, do it well without worry for appreciation or reward. If I am doing it, I should do it properly. Do it as an offering to God. Every action, perform it as Ishwara Arpanam. Whatever be the consequences of my action (good or bad) take it as a prasada. This is karma Yoga.

Discussing benefits of Karma Yoga, Sri Krishna, says it is not a means for liberation. It, however, gives Gyana Yoga Yogyata Prapthihi. It gives the seeker the Sadhana Chatusthaya Sampathihi.

Shloka 54-72: Describes the Sthita Pragyaha.

He is one who has gone through Karma Yoga and Gyana Yoga. He is one who knows he is the Atma. He has assimilated the knowledge and converted it to emotional strength. Pragyaha is one who has the intellectual knowledge. Sthitha Pragyaha is one who has converted the knowledge to emotional strength. Sri Krishna discusses the following two topics related to Sthitha Pragyaha.

1. How to become a Sthitha Pragyaha or Sthitha Pragyaha

Lakshanani and

2. How to convert this knowledge to emotional strength or Sthitha Pragy Sadhanani

By Sravanam and Mananam with the help of a Guru one can convert the Agyaha to Pragyaha. Now the pupil has to work at converting from Pragyaha to Sthitha Pragyaha. Here Guru cannot help; it is a lonely journey.

So how does one convert the knowledge to emotional strength? What are the tools or Sadhanani available?

The three mental exercises, Sadhanani, prescribed by Sri Krishna are:

1. Indriya Nigraha: Mastering the senses. Without this you have no control on what enters your mind. Without it your mind will be disturbed and cannot assimilate the teaching. Swamiji clarifies that suppression of senses is not a tool to be used.
2. Mano Nigraha: Thought discipline. Many thoughts just come into us without asking and we have no control on them. Even with sense control thoughts do get in. Sri Krishna says, do not worry about arrival of thoughts, but once it comes in do not perpetuate them. Curb them at their source, especially the unhealthy one's.
3. Nidhidhyasanam: Dwelling on the teaching. Reading, listening, sharing the teaching with others are methods of Nidhidhyasanam. Through this process the teaching gets assimilated. Thus, one becomes a Sthitha Pragyaha.

Sthitha Pragyaha Lakshanani: What are the traits of a Sthitha Pragyaha? They are:

1. Freedom from binding desires. I have only preferences, I can also do without them. I am also accepting of success or failure. All bindings are gone. Non-binding desires

are harmless. and this is because of my self-sufficiency also known as purṇatvam. I do not miss anything in life.

2. The second important trait of this assimilation is Samatvam or equanimity of mind, which means freedom from ragaha, bhayaha, krodhaha, etc. The turbulences caused by anger, fear, jealousy do not come to me.

Sri Krishna gives the example the ocean. Just as the ocean is ever full, irrespective of rain and irrespective of rivers merging into the ocean, so also is the Gyani. Therefore, purnatvam and samatvam are the main traits of a Sthita Pragyaha. And Sri Krishna concludes the chapter by saying that this Sthitha Pragyaha is a free bird, both in life and in death. Wherever he goes he never faces any conflict. He enjoys freedom while living; he enjoys freedom after death, both as jivan muktih and videha mukthi.

With best wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy

Bagawat Geeta, Class 33

Greetings All,

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

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

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

Shloka # 69:

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

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

Even a Gyani has Prarabdha karma, although he avoids Sanchita and Agami Karmas. So, if both live in such a world, what is the difference in their respective responses to the world? Giving an example, Swamiji says, it is like two people sitting on the seashore and watching the waves. They both see the same waves. However, one person knows the truth of the wave, that it is water. The wave itself is just a name and a form. He focuses on the immortal water (Advaita) and not the perishable Wave. The other person, in the meanwhile, does not know this truth and is caught up in the name and form of the wave. He is, thus, immersed in the mortal wave.

Thus:

One person sees the Dvaita Anitya Tarangani

While the other person sees the Advaita Nitya Jalam.

Because of this perspective the ignorant person feels happy

when the wave rises and feels unhappy when the wave subsides.

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

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

Therefore:

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

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

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

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

wise man, it is a harmless place or Sarvam Shivamayam.

Shloka # 70:

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

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

In this shloka a Gyani is compared to an ocean. What is the glory of the ocean? It is ever full and independently full. It does not depend on any external factor. The ocean knows the rivers depend upon it for water. The ocean is also not easily polluted. Similarly the Gyani's mind is ever full (and not of samsara). Agyani's mind is never full and it is dependent on external factors. A Gyani is Samaha (equanimous) in all conditions. The Gyani's mind is like an ocean.

Even though pollution enters the mind it is always calm and poised.

Shloka 71:

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

Sri Krishna continues his description of the Gyani's state of mind. He is one who enjoys a poised mind. Swamiji says we have a poised mind when it comes to our neighbors as we can look at them dispassionately. He suggests we should also look at

ourselves in the same dispassionate manner. This poised state of mind comes and goes in us. In a Gyani, however, his poise is always maintained.

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

Shloka 72:

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

Sri Krishna says this state of mind, of a Sthita Pragyaha, is born out of Vedanta Gyanam. Shlokas 12 through 25 are important ones. We need to read them again and again. Based on this state of mind one obtains the Brahmi state. Once he reaches this state of mind he cannot fall back into the state of mental conflicts. He is in this state until his Prarabhdham. Then he will attain Videhi Mukti meaning freedom from the cycle of birth and death. At that time all three bodies (Karana, Sthula and Sukshma sharira) of his merge into totality.

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

This is the conclusion of chapter 2.

With best wishes,
Ram Ramaswamy