

# Saddarshanam, Class 11

I, the atma becomes ahangara because of ignorance. I become temporarily localized I, known as ahangara and this is the first product of ignorance. This is the foundation for space, time and plurality and this is alone is the cause of samsara.

Space is the first tyranny. Because of space alone I feel localized and distanced and struggle to reach people and places. In sleep, there is no space or distance and there is not necessary for travel.

Second tyranny is time. I want to complete my duties before die. Worry of old age, decease and ultimate death is all because of time.

Division is the third tyranny. Division causes raga, dwesha and asuya. Asuya is pain caused by comparison. Comparison caused by duality or plurality.

Samsara is caused by space, time and division. These three are possible because of ahangara foundation and ahangara is caused by ignorance and ignorance is resting on atma. Ahangara itself is caused by identifying I with the body.

There are two types of I:

1. The original I, the consciousness, this is atma.
2. Second I is the limited by body or anatma. Bagawan also falls into body but we call it avatara meaning it is a deliberate ahangara role Bagawan chooses to play. Avataras are vyvaharika lela which is mithya. If you start identifying with ahangara, the kala leela starts. This is the beginning of samsara and fighting against old age, death, decay etc. Solution is to tackle the foundation, which is ahangara. In Jagra and swapna vastha, there is time, space and duality tyranny. In deep sleep the ahangara is temporarily suspended and

there is not time space duality.

First stage is knowing the cause of samsara which is ahangara.

Second stage is to find the cause of ahangara. Cause of ahangara is the notion that I am the body. Remove the false notion by right knowledge. I am not the mind or body or sense organs. This knowledge is the only solution.

We don't exist in any particular time and space; We, the original atma, exist everywhere; in fact, space itself exist in me. Never trace outward.

Verse 19

*In the state of oneself being the body, the Wise Man and ignorant man are the same. For one, in the heart, in the body, the Self is lit up, full, encompassing the body and the world. For the other the Self is measurable only as the body.*

Experience of the body requires a medium, e.g., sense organs. But sense organs can only sense some of the experiences. I can feel the experiences of my body but I can't feel another body's pain.

Intimate experience of a particular body is (devatma бага) common to gyani and agyani. The confusion we may have for example, whether gyani will feel hungry and whether gyani will feel the hunger of everyone else. Ramana Maharishi says gyani will continue to have biological experiences. With regard to biological experiences, gyanam will not make any experience. A gyani has to go through prarabtha karma; he may avoid further agami karma or future rebirth's sanjitha karma.

One may hear that gyani does not have devatma бага and may conclude that gyani will not have biological experience. This is a misconception. Vedanta is not solution for biological pains, but is a solution for psychological pain, which is

caused by samsara. Sorrow, the emotional pain, which is response to biological pain, is not experienced to have the emotional pain. Gyani is similar in that respect and does not have emotional pain as a response to biological pain.

Based on the sunrise, biological experience, we may conclude that the earth is in the middle and the sun is traveling around earth. Based on science, we know now that the sun is not moving around the earth, but the sun rise and sun set is caused by the earth spinning. After this intellectual knowledge, the experience of sunrise and sunset does not change, but the conclusion is changed. In the same way, the biological experiences will continue, but the wrong conclusion that I am the body will change for a gyani. Vedanta is not meant to give you an experience change but a cognitive change or knowledge based change.

Gyani says I am not the body, but I am the consciousness in the body, consciousness in the mind and the consciousness in the sense organs. I am not only the consciousness, I remain pervading my own body and the whole universe. But biologically I experience only this localized body. This statement can take place only in a body. All pervasiveness can never be experienced, but can only be understood. You can never experience limitlessness as it is contradictory term because when you become an experiencer, you are localized and limited.

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## **Saddarshanam, Class 10**

When I say the I is the cause of all problem, that I represents the ahangara. "I am the cause of all problem" or "the I is the cause of all problem" are different. The HE and

The You are dependent on The I. Second and third person are dependent on first person, that is the finite ahangara I. As long as I exist as ahangara, I am susceptible to the second and third person. The Aham in Aham Brahma Asmi, is not first person, not second person and not third person, but it is the person or purushaha. Ahangara is needed to teach Brahma Gyanam Gyani continues to have ahangara, but it is seen as mithya or vyavaharika sathyam.

How do you falsify ahangara or rope snake? For rope snake the adhishtanam is rope similarly for ahangara adhishtanam is sathyam. Ahangara is vyavarika sathyam and not paramarthika sathyam. The false notion that there is a third person, the false notion that there is a first person and the false notion that there is a second person is the notion of division. This notion of division goes away for a gyani but the experience of the notion will continue. Experience of stationary earth does not displace the knowledge that the earth keeps moving. Similarly the gyani goes through many experiences but does not let that displace his brahma gyanam.

Verse 17

*The past and the future are, in their own time, the present. Giving up the truth of that present, will not discussion on the past and the future be laughable, like counting without the number one in the world?*

So far Ramana Maharishi has been discussing spacial division. In this version, he is discussing time division.

Spacial division is horizontal division; time division is vertical division.

Kala division or time division is also mithya and is caused by Ahangara. The very idea of three division of time is myth. There is no thing called past existing outside. Yesterday is the past which does not exist today, but it did exist yesterday. When yesterday existed outside yesterday, it was

not called yesterday. You only experience as a series of today. What is outside is today and today only. Similarly when you experience tomorrow, it is experienced only as today. So tomorrow does not exist outside. Yesterday is only a name for your memory and tomorrow is only a name for your projection. When you say past is hurting, it is not that past that is hurting, it is the memory that is hurting you. Memory exists in the past or present? Memory regarding the past exist in the present. What hurts is not future but the thought of the future that hurts you. The future thought exist in the present. So you only have memories and projections and not past and future.

Past and future exist as present in their own time. Present alone exist. If you want to analyze time, you have to analyze past, present and future. Since there is no past and future, you have to analyze only present. Every present has its own time line. For example, for a day, 24 hours are not present. Only one of those hour can be present. Others are past or future. Similarly the hour itself is made up of past, present and future. Only one minute is present. Not the entire minute is present, only part of it is present. What is a point is a mystery in mathematics and similarly what is present is a mystery in vedanta; it is apparent notion caused by ahangara. The timeless consciousness is localized as finite present because of the ahangara, which is caused by deha abimana. The truth of kala thrayam is ahangara and the truth of hanagara is atma. Atma appears as desa thrayam and atma appears as kala thrayam.

Trying to understand time without understanding atma is like trying to understand the number without knowing the number one.

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# Bagahwat Geeta, Class 55

In Chapter 2, Krishna gave a gist of Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga.

In Chapter 3, Karma Yoga was elaborated.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Jnana Yoga is elaborated.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter is the “jnana yoga pradhana”. There is a small diversion in the first 8 verses before diving into jnaana yoga. In the first three verses, Lord Krishna glorifies this knowledge consisting of Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga. The very essence of karma and jnana has already been taught in Veda at the beginning of the creation and this was received by Surya Bhagavan. This same wisdom is revived again in the name Gita. Veda was received by Surya Bhagavan and Gita is received by Arjuna. Therefore, it is an ancient and time-tested wisdom making it a reliable and a valid one.

Arjuna has a doubt about the timeline between creation and his current time. The times are different by few millennia, students are different yet the teacher is the same!

Krishna says in Chapter 4, Sloka 1:

मया तदात्मना कथितं तदात्मना कथितं वा | (मया कथितं तदात्मना I taught)

And now also, Chapter 4, Sloka 3:

मया कथितं तदात्मना कथितं तदात्मना कथितं वा | (मया कथितं तदात्मना taught by Me).

Arjuna asks “Your birth is recent but your initial student’s birth was too long ago. How can a recent person teach an ancient student?”

Krishna answers Arjuna from Verse 5 though Verse 8.

## Chapter 4 Sloka 5

My births and thy births

as well as mine have passed away, O Arjuna, I know them all

but thou knowest not. (4.5)

My births and thy births  
as well as mine have passed away, O Arjuna, I know them all  
but thou knowest not.

thou knowest not, O Parantapa.

The Blessed Lord said Many births of Mine have passed as well as of thine, O Arjuna; I know them all but thou knowest not, O Parantapa (scorcher of foes).

Lord Krishna introduces the topic of avatara in his answer to Arjuna. The Lord's incarnation is different from a human birth. Human birth is called janma but when the Lord appears in creation, it is called avatara. Krishna wants to point the differences between janma and avatara.

Swamiji elaborates on the topic of birth and incarnation before explaining Verse 5.

The differences between manushya janma and Ishvara avatara are:

Cause, Nature and Purpose

FIRST: the cause; at the cause level there is "kaaraNa bheda".

In the case of the birth of a jeeva, it is caused by ignorance of the jeeva.

Because of ignorance, the jeeva has the problem of ahankaara (ego).

Because of ego, there is the problem of karma.

Because of karma, there is the problem of punya and paapa.

Because of punya and paapa, there is the janma.

The birth of a jeeva is due to ignorance, so we can call this as a "fall of a jeeva".

In the case of Ishvara, His birth takes place never because of. It is because of His omniscience. Because of the knowledge alone, Bhagavan chooses to appear on Earth. This is knowledge and compassion based. Avatara means coming down out of compassion. There is a difference between falling into a well (helpless phenomenon) and going down the well. kaaraNa bheda is the first difference.

SECOND: the nature; svaroopam is different; "svaroopam bheda".

Since jeeva-janma is because of ignorance, jeeva continues to be a samsaari. He is a bound person, born with sorrow. He is helpless, not a master of himself. Janma is samsaaraH.

Since Ishvara avatara is backed by knowledge, it is nitya mukta svaroopam or asamsaari.

Jeeva is samsaari while Avatara is asamsaari.

Another technical difference that Krishna points out is that all the bodies are made up of matter whether it is manushya shariram or avatara shariram. But the scriptures say that there is a difference between the two sharirams. The jeeva shariram is not directly born out of prakriti or maya. Jeeva shariram is indirectly born out of maya. Maya or prakriti gets converted into five elements called pancha bhutani and these five elements get converted into paancha bhoutika shariram. Thus maya does not directly produce the body (jeeva shariram) but it produces through the five elements alone. Jeeva shariram is called paancha bhoutika shariram. From maya to bhutaas to the physical body.

In the case of Ishvara avatara, the maya does not go through



the intermediary stage of five elements. Maya directly gets converted into Ishvara avatara shariram. Avatara shariram is called mayika shariram. From maya to the physical body.

So the second difference is in the nature of jeeva shariram and avatara shariram.

Jeeva shariram is bound or samsaari shariram; paancha bhoutika shariram.

Avatara shariram is free or asamsaari shariram; mayika shariram.

This is the svaroopā bheda.

THIRD: the purpose; “karya” or “udheshya bheda”.

When a jeeva is born, it is purely to exhaust the punyam and paapam, which have been acquired in the past, called prarabdha. The prarabdha has to be exhausted. Prarabdha punyam is exhausted through sukham and prarabdha paapam is exhausted through dukham. To experience pleasure and pain, we require the body medium. It is the prarabdha that determines the type of the body for exhausting punya-paapa. The very design of the body is for the purpose of punya-paapa exhaustion. The purpose of jeeva-janma is for the depletion of punyam and paapam.

What is the purpose of an avatara? Avatara is not ignorant, not a samsaari, and does not suffer from the problem of ego. Since there is no ego, there is no question of punyam or paapam. Therefore, Ishvara does not need to take an avatara to exhaust punya-paapa.

Krishna tells an avatara’s purpose in Chapter 4, Verse 8:

शरीरं कर्तुं यत्प्रयत्नं तद्विनाशकं तदात्मनः ।

शरीरं कर्तुं यत्प्रयत्नं तद्विनाशकं तदात्मनः ॥ ८ ॥

To protect the righteous, to annihilate the wicked, and to reestablish the principles of dharma I appear on this earth, age after age.

Ishvara Avatara's purpose is for the protection of dharma and destruction of adharma by protecting the dharmic people and destroying the adharmaic people. This is why the very nature of avatara shariram is designed for protecting the people and establishing dharma. The design is determined by the type of protection that is required. Before every avatara comes, there is a portion in the Puranas, where all the noble people pray to the Lord to save them from some rakshasa (Hiranyakashipu, Ravana, etc). Rama Avatara's purpose was destruction of Ravana. The design of the body depends upon the situation.

Ravana's peculiar boon is that he cannot be killed by anyone or anything, except he didn't include humans, out of over-confidence. So, if Ravana had to be destroyed, Bhagavan's avatara had to be human. Hence the design of the body is determined by the purpose of the avatara. When the atrocities were done by Hiranyakashipu, the design for the avatara had to fit the loop holes of his boon. He could not be killed by humans nor animals nor any weapons; and not during the day nor night. The avatara was Narasimha with sharp nails.

In summary: the difference between janma and avatara:

Cause: kaaraNa bheda – ajnaanam vs jnaanam

Nature: svaroopA bheda – samsaari vs asamsaari

Purpose: udheshya bheda – depletion of punya-paapa vs protection of dharma

Krishna tells in this sloka that since avatara is not restricted by ignorance, the avataras know the past, present and future. Krishna says that He knows all his previous incarnations. However, in the case of jeeva-janma, since ignorance limits the jeeva, the jeeva cannot know the past

janmas.

How do you know if one is avatara or janma? We really don't have a method of knowing. We accept one as avatara wherever there is scriptural support ie. Rama is an avatara as written in the scriptures. If it is not mentioned in the scriptures, we cannot prove is one is an avatara or janma. It then becomes our personal belief.

If you consider people with extraordinary powers to be an avatara; then rakshasas will also fall under this. Having extraordinary powers is not proof that this person is an avatara.

Limitations does not disprove avatara. Certain avataras showed limitations. For example, Rama, who is accepted as an avatara, had several natural limitations. It is one's personal belief to accept someone as an avatara even with limitations and not accept someone with extraordinary powers as an avatara.

One consolation is that we do not need to know if one is an avatara or not for our spiritual growth. We need purity of mind! To attain purity of mind, worshipping any form of God is good enough.

The next thing required for spiritual growth is knowledge. This requires a Guru; who need not be an avatara. Even if an avatara has to bless, the blessing can be only by becoming a Guru. Krishna can never give moksha to Arjuna by any method other than by being his Guru.

Swamiji recites from Dhyana Slokas:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

And

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।

Therefore, for knowledge we don't require an avatara. Nor for knowledge. There may or may not be an avatara right now. I may be willing to accept someone as an avatara. The important aspect is to purify, know and be free.

We all uniformly accept Krishna as an avatara. Krishna says, "Arjuna, I am an avatara, different from you. My cause of birth is knowledge, my nature is moksha, my purpose is moksha (Chapter 4, Verse 8). This is the topic of avatara given in this portion.

With this background, let's look at Verse 5.

Krishna says, Hey Arjuna, Many janmas have gone by for you. I have also taken many sharirams. The number of sharirams does not prove superiority. So what is the difference between you and me? I continue to be a free person; a therefore I know all the past sharirams. What about you? You do not know your past sharirams. O Parantapa (Arjuna).

Chapter 4 Sloka 6

Though I am unborn, of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, governing My own Nature, I am born by My own Maya.

Chapter 4 Sloka 6

Though I am unborn, of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, governing My own Nature, I am born by My own Maya.

Though I am unborn, of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, governing My own Nature, I am born by My own Maya.

Krishna talks about the nature of the avatara.

Though I am unborn, of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, governing My own Nature, I am born by My own Maya.

I know that I am birth less Brahman; I know my nature. I know I am birthless reality and this shariram is a simple `शरीर` (assumed appearance) I have put on for a certain purpose. I know I am `जन्म` meaning `न` `जन्म` `शरीर` `शरीर` (no birth). `अमर` `अमर` I am of changeless nature, not subject to decay and death; `शरीर` `शरीर` (devoid of old age and death).

`जन्म` means `जन्म` `मरण` and `अमर` means `अमर` `अमर` | Not only am I free from birth and death, `अमर` `अमर` | I am the master of all living beings. I am not a limited entity but I am `अमर` – I am the master. I have not helplessly come down to this world, I have chosen to come.

How do I manage to come down? `अमर` `अमर` `अमर` – by keeping the prakriti, the matter, the material body under my control I am born. I am surrounded by matter; just as the jeeva also is surrounded by matter. The difference, however, is that I am the master of the matter whereas the jeeva is the slave of the matter (or shariram). Both the avatara (Bhagavan) and the jeeva are surrounded by the body-mind complex (`शरीर`) but Bhagavan is in control of the body-mind complex whereas the jeeva is controlled by the body-mind complex.

`जन्म` `जन्म` I take a body. How? `अमर` with the help of maya tattvam; by producing `शरीर` `शरीर` | This means that I don't require the five elements. Instead from maya I can directly convert into the shariram. This is why Bhagavan does not require the regular process of creation. Even `अमर` in case of Rama avatara is not the regular process. This is why it is said that the Lord entered into the garbha. In the case of Narasimha avatara, etc., there is no question of a father or mother. From where did the body come? They appear in full-fledged form. How is this possible? It is because of direct conversion of maya, otherwise called `अमर` | Therefore, Krishna says `अमर` `अमर` | And when do I take an avatara? See Sloka 7.

`अमर` Chapter 4 Sloka 7

ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥  
ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥4.7॥

ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥  
decline ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥  
of unrighteousness ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥  
manifest ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥ I.

Whenever there is decline of righteousness, O Arjuna, and rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself.

The purpose of the avatara is explained in this verse.

ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥ | Whenever dharma declines, values decline. ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥ | And ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥ | whenever adharma increases, unrighteousness and corruption increases. ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥ | Then, I create myself. I choose whenever it is required.

From a scientific viewpoint, the world can be compared to human body, a cosmic body. Like a body or an organism, it functions in harmony. Any harmonious system, will have its own intrinsic protection device. Our body has built in self protection. Suppose something enters your nostril, you sneeze automatically. The sneeze is involuntary; it is intrinsically built into the system. A natural system has natural protection. This faculty will not be operative all the time (like sneezing). ॐ धर्मो रक्षति अर्धं अधर्मो रक्षति ॥ whenever the system's harmony is disturbed, the system itself produces an appropriate remedy. The universe is a cosmic system, the Bhagavan's shariram, and whenever there is a disturbance, the world itself will find an appropriate method of defending the dharma. It will become active whenever it is required. The avatara is like the immunity system of the universe, the cosmic immunity system. Whenever it is required, an avatara will automatically happen.

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# Bagawat Geeta, Class 54

In the first chapter of Geeta, Vyasa chariyar revealed the human problem of samsara in the form of raga (emotional dependents of external factors), sogaha (grief or sorrow) and moga (delusion or conflict or indiscriminate). When Arjuna had this problem in the battlefield, he tried to solve this problem himself and was not successful and took the action of surrendering to the Lord. Lord Krishna accepted the role of Guru

In the second chapter, Krishna took the approach that the self-knowledge is the only solution. No other solution can solve the problem. And therefore, Krishna tried to give the self-knowledge to Arjuna. Geeta talks about many topics but Gaeta's primary teaching is atma vidhya. In this chapter, Krishna gives the entire range of sadhanas for this knowledge. In this chapter, Krishna taught the two sadhanas: Karma yoga and gyana yoga. Karma yoga is prescribed as a means of mental purity. Krishna makes it clear that karma yoga can only give preparatory knowledge. Gyana yoga involves self-inquiry through the scriptures under the guidance of a competent guru. The second chapter is the summary of Geeta.

The third chapter is elaboration of karma yoga. The fourth and fifth chapters are expansion of gyana yoga.

Krishna takes a small diversion initially to discuss two topics of chapter 4. The two topics are and glorification of Geeta and avatara ragasyam. Krishna wants to emphasize that the teachings of Geeta are vedic teachings and are beginning-less.

Verse 1

*The Lord said I imparted this eternal yaga to Lord Sun. Lord Sun taught the same to Manu. Manu taught it to Ikshvaku.*

I have given the same teaching in the form of Veda. Krishna says Geeta is the new name for Veda. I revealed this wisdom to Surya Bagawan. This teaching can never go out of date. It is relevant even now in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Surya Bagawan taught this teaching to Manu. Manu taught this to the King Ikshvaku.

Verse 2

*Oh Arjuna! The royal sages knew this which was thus traditionally handed down. Due to long passage of time that yaga is lost in this world.*

All the raja rishis (kings) knew this teaching. Gradually people started losing interest in this teaching. Therefore, Krishna is revising this teaching in the form of Geeta.

Verse 3

*That very same ancient yoga in this which has been taught by Me to you now, because you are My friend and devotee. This indeed is the highest secret.*

Veda Purva teaches karma yoga and called karma kandam. Veda Anta teaches gyana yoga and is called gyana kandam. This is the oldest teachings. Krishna chose Arjuna for this teaching, because Arjuna asked for it and because Arjuna is the friend of Krishna.

Self-knowledge is the greatest secret, because what we are searching for is within ourselves. Therefore this wisdom is called uthama ragasiyam.

Verse 4

*Arjuna asked: Your birth is later. The birth of Lord Sun is*



*much earlier. How am I to understand this statement of Yours that You have taught Lord Sun in the beginning of the creation?*

Vedas are called sruthi because the Rishis heard internally; all other scriptures are called smirhti.

Arjuna says that I can understand that you are teaching me Geeta, but I can't understand how you can also teaching Surya Bagawan at the time of creation, when we both are of the same age. What is the secret of your contrary statement? If you have taught Surya Bagawan, you can't teach me. If you are teaching me, you can't teach Surya Bagawan. As an answer to this question, Krishna will discuss Avataras.

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## **Swamiji's New Year Message**

Swamiji's gave a special talk on the new years day and the topic for this year was "Power of Prayer". Please click on the link below to listen to this special class:

Swamiji Talk on Power of Prayer

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## **Saddharshanam, Class 9**

Verse 13

*Can that be true knowledge when the knower does not know himself? To one who knows oneself, the support of knowledge and the object of knowledge the two will vanish.*

How para vidhya is different from apara vidhya? How abatma vidhya is different than atma vidhya

Verse 14

*Sleep is not knowledge. Perception of objects is not knowledge. In the knowledge as it is, one does not hold anything. True knowledge is other than sleep and the perception of objects. It is awareness alone, shining, not void.*

Any wordy knowledge is a process in which the intellect grasps something. Brahma vidhya is a knowledge in which the intellect does not grasp anything new. So drop the idea of grasping something new as Brahman. It may lead to the conclusion that Brahma vidhya is something where we don't grasp anything, so it must be nithra or state of blankness or thoughtlessness. But it is not a state of blankness or thoughtlessness. If thoughtlessness is Brahma vidhya, then sleep will be Brahma vidhya. Perception, knowing, objectification are also not Brahma vidhya and no perception, not knowing and not objectifying are also not Brahma Vidhya. Then what is Brahma vidhya – it is chaithanyam or consciousness itself.

This creates more confusion in that everybody already has consciousness so everybody is already liberated and no need for sravana manana nidhidhyasanam. Brahma vidhya is dropping the two fold misconception. It is not a thoughtless state or it is not grasping something. It is a state where thought arises which removes two misconceptions. What is that thought that arises in the mind is aham brahma asmi. At the time of brahma vidhya, I don't have thoughtless mind, but I have an unique thought that I am aham brahma asmi. This thought removes the following two misconceptions:

1. I am jiva different from Brahman.
2. Brahman is an object to be grasped, but it is the very

subject which grasps everything.

The thought that eliminates these two misconception is Brahma Vidhya.

Verse 15

*The Consciousness that is the Self is the Truth. The knowledge which is of various forms is entirely different nor can it exist without consciousness. Here, in the world, can the various gold ornaments exist without gold?*

One gold associated with different forms and names appear as ornaments. In the same way, when consciousness is associated with any particular thought, the consciousness becomes particular knowledge. General consciousness becomes particularized consciousness. Pot outside enters my mind through sense organs, generating pot thought. This is different than any other thought. Before this thought entered the mind, the general consciousness was in the mind. When I opened my eyes, I saw pot, creating pot thought and general consciousness became pot consciousness. This pot consciousness is pot knowledge. When turn my eyes to some other object, the pot knowledge disappears and replaced by the knowledge of that object.

Consciousness is called knowledge when it is associated with a thought. Plurality does not belong to consciousness, it belongs to thoughts. Every knowledge is consciousness associated with a relevant thought. If you extend this principle, Brahma Vidhya is also a consciousness associated with the relevant thought "Aham Brahma Vidhya". Consciousness itself appears as manifold cognition. Consciousness is one but cognition are many. These cognition can never exist separate from consciousness, because consciousness alone is appearing as cognition. Without consciousness, there is no knowledge of pot, ornament, wall etc. Just as ornaments do not exist separate from gold. Gold can exist without

ornaments, but ornaments can't exist without gold. Consciousness can exist without cognition, but cognition can't exist without consciousness. Consciousness is sathyam and cognition are mithya. Without real gold, ornaments exists? Similarly without consciousness, the unreal cognition exist? Brahma Vidhya is also a cognition, can it exist without consciousness. We boldly says that is also mithya. Brahman is sathyam, but Brahma vidhya is mithya. But this mithya gyanam is enough to remove the mithya samsara. To remove dream thirst, it is enough if you have dream water and dream water alone remove dream thirst. Similarly for mithya samsara, mithya gyanam and mithya gyanam alone is required. Vyavahariga sathyam not paramarthika sathyam is required.

Verse 16

*"That" and "thou" are based firmly "I". From the knowledge of their origin, when that "I" has perished, for one without the notion of "that", "thou" and "I", that natural state of oneself that is shining, will emerge.*

This thought is not generated by meditation but by guru sashtra pramanam. Misconception dropping is brahma vidhya. First misconception is that I am a finite localized individual. This misconception is ahangara creating individuality. Once I create this first person ahangara, then second a's and third person arrives. The finite second person and finite third person arise because of finite first person called ahangara. When gyani says aham, it denotes infinite first person and so there is not second or third person. The word first person is not relevant to gyani.

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# Bagawat Geeta, Class 53 – Summary of Chapter 3

In the second chapter Lord Krishna discussed karma yoga and gyana yoga, focusing more on gyana yoga. Lord Krishna begins second chapter with gyana yoga and concludes the second chapter with sthira pragya. In between the two, he discusses karma yoga and asks Arjuna to do his karma, which is to fight the Mahabaratha war. Lord Krishna glorifies gyana yoga but asks Arjuna to do karma yoga. Arjuna finds this unacceptable.

## Introduction Verses 1 to 7

Arjuna asks should I follow Gyna Yoga or Karma Yoga. If you consider Gyana Yoga is better, then why should I fight the war? In answering this question, we should note the following points:

1. There is no choice between karma yoga and gyna yoga. It is apples to orange comparison.
2. Qualifications for gyana yoga can be obtained only through karma yoga. Qualifications are detachment, purity, maturity. Many of us do not have these qualifications.
3. Moksha can be obtained only through gyana yoga.

Follow karma yoga to obtain qualifications; Use the qualification to acquire gyana yoga; Use Gyana yoga to obtain moksham. All other yogas like japam, parayanam etc. are all part of karma yoga. There are no other yogas other than karma yoga and gyana yoga.

Arjuna's question was wrong; both yogas should be followed. There is a choice regarding marga or life style; one can follow sanyasa asrama or gragasthasram; but both sanhyasi and grahastha should follow karma yoga and gyana yoga.

Which is better? Grahasthasram or sanyasa asram? Krishna is clear that grahasthasram is better for most people.

### **Karma Yoga Verses 8 to 20**

In these verses, Krishna elaborately discusses Karma yoga. Karma: Proper action; Yoga: Proper attitude. So proper action with proper attitude is karma yoga.

Types of actions:

1. Satvic – Promotes the spiritual progress the most; Best action; beneficiaries are more; unselfish
2. Rajesic – Mediocre; promotes some spiritual growth; Beneficiaries are less; confined only to family; selfish actions.
3. Tamasic – Does not promote spiritual growth, but results in degradation of spiritual growth; Harmful action; worst action. I get the benefits, but others get harmed.

Perform panca maha yagya to improve spiritual progress and become satvic. The goal is to become samtvam by accepting all results as a eeswara prasada.

Reasons to follow Karma Yoga, in four different angles:

1. Follow karma yoga as the command of God; follow out of fear of god
2. Follow karma yoga as a sense of gratitude or yagyaha
3. Follow karma yoga as a purifier of kama and soga
4. Follow karma yoga as dharma by which cosmic harmony can be maintained.

### **Verse 20, second line to verse 29: Duties of a Gyani**

Gyani does not require any sadhana (karma yoga, gyana yoga etc.) because he already achieved the goal of gyanam. But as long as he is in the society, he should follow karma yoga as a model to the society. In this verse, Lord Krishna is

indirectly advising all elderly people to be role models for rest of the society.

**Verses 30 to 35: Summarizes karma yoga; verse 30 is most important;**

Krishna gives five-part process of Karma Yoga:

1. Make the Spiritual goal as the primary goal; all other goals are subservient to this goal.
2. Eeswara arpana buddhi: Dedicate all your actions to god so you don't hate any of your duty
3. Eeswara prasadh budhhi: Be prepared for any future situations because future is not under your control. You are not the only one responsible for your success. Accept any result as Eeswara prasadh.
4. Nirmamaha: when success comes don't claim total credit
5. Maintain mental poise/balance

**Verses 36 to 43: Obstacles of karma yoga:**

Arjuna asks Lord Krishna what are the obstacles of karma yoaga.

Lord Krishna answers Kama/krodha or raga dvesha; materialistic attractions; Artha kama is important, but dharma moksha is also important. But when artha kama becomes more important than dharma mokhsa, that becomes an obstacle. There are two stages handle this obstacle:

First Stage: handle in relative measures;

1. Dhamaha – Mastery of sense organs; don't let anything enter your mind without control.
2. Shamaha – Discipline of mine and thought pattern. Undisciplined mind has a tendency to get attracted to anything.
3. Vivekaha – Discrimination; understanding that finite plus finite is always finite; insecurity plus insecurity

is more insecurity. Understand that I am complete (poornatvam) with myself and I will not be full with any amount of acquisition.

Second Stage: Obsolete solution is to discover fullness and security within myself.

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## Saddharshanam, Class 8

*All pairs of opposites and triads shine, taking the support of some entity. When that is searched, all will get dropped. To them who see the Truth, there is never any wavering.*

The idea given in this verse is self-inquiry always means atma vichara, even though we can loosely describe it as ahangara vichara:

- Atma vichara will lead to atma gyanam
- Atma Gyanam will lead to destruction of atma agyanam
- Atma agyanam is all the errors committed regarding atma; Destruction of these errors is technically called adhyasa nasa. These errors are called ahangara. The false I, born out of ignorance of real I, is ahangara.

When the rope in front of me is not clearly known, there is rope ignorance. Rope ignorance leads to snake. The rope is the subtractum of the snake. You tackle the snake by inquiry into rope adhishtanam. Never attack unreal always attack or inquire into the real adhishtanam. Rope inquiry will lead to rope knowledge. Rope knowledge will lead to rope ignorance destruction. Rope ignorance destruction will lead to the destruction of snake knowledge. In the place of rope, we have atma and in the place of snake we have ahangara. Once ahangara is destroyed, all forms of dualities (subject and



object) and thirupidies or triads (subject, object and instrument) are destroyed. Thirupudi and dwandams are unreal and require an adhistanam or substratum, which is atma vasthu.

All dwandas or pair or subject object pairs are born out of ahangara. All of them are supported by atma. If these unreal dwandam or triads are to be destroyed, don't attack the ahangara; attack the adhishtanam, the support which is atma. No dream activity will remove the dream; you must wake up to destroy dream. Similarly, to destroy ahangara, you need to get the knowledge of atma. When knowledge comes, ignorance go away; when ignorance go away, all the unreal dvida and triad get resolved. This results in the establishing the adhishtanam, atma.

In this instance, Ramana Maharishi only talks about the significance of atma vichara and not the procedure for atma vichara. Any pursuit requires employment of appropriate instrument for the pursuit of knowledge. For example, to know the color of crow you need eyes. Simple process of questioning will not generate knowledge. For atma vichara, the regular instruments (mind and sense organs) are incapable, insufficient and irrelevant. They are extrovert, turned outside. The instrument of atma vichara is guru sashtra upadesa. Inquiring to atma is exposing to traditional teaching or Vedanta vichara. The procedure for atma vichara is vedanta sravana manana nidhidhyasanam.

Verse 12

*If there is no ignorance, how does knowledge shine? Without knowledge, does ignorance shine? And whose are the two? Thus, having inquired, abidance in the original nature is the knowledge of the Truth.*

If darkness is the problem, light is the only solution. Similarly, to remove ignorance (internal darkness), gyanam is the only solution. Gyanam is a relative entity falling within

duality, opposing ignorance and therefore gyanam is also mithya. You can't conceive of gyanam without the concept of ignorance and therefore knowledge and ignorance also come under Dvaidam. Arrival of one displaces the other. Initially we should pursue gyanam and destroy ignorance and after gaining gyanam we should disown gyanam because claiming gyanam is also a form of ahangara. You should say I am the adhishtanam of gyanam and ignorance and different from both. If knowledge, vidhya is also a mithya, why should I pursue it? Vidhya mithya is required to remove avidhya mithya. Once avidya is removed, you should disown both. It is like using soap to remove dirt. You apply the soap to remove the dirt but after that you wash off the soap. Similarly, to remove ignorance, you obtain knowledge. But after removing the ignorance, you disown knowledge.

Both gyanam and agyanam are associated with ahangara and this is the real knowledge. Gyana nishta is the availability of this knowledge, effortlessly. We can recall our phone number, names etc. when needed, without any effort. Gyana Nisha is the availability of gyanam effortlessly.

Verse 13

*Can that be true knowledge when the knower does not know himself? To one who knows oneself, the support of knowledge and the object of knowledge, the two will vanish.*

Without understanding ourselves, we are trying to understand one anatma after another. Without knowing about oneself, knowing about everything else is a fruitless pursuit. Aparavidhya is as good as avidhya (ignorance). Aparavidhya, without paravidhya is mithya. Atma alone functions as a knower, without knowing that knower, all other knowledge is false.

Knowledge of anatma is not useful because:

1. It is knowledge of anatma and anatma being mithya and

- knowledge of a mithya will not be a great knowledge.
2. Anatama gyanam will not free the individual from the sense of limitation which is the problem of samsara.
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## Bagawat Geeta, Class 52

Arjuna's, asks in verse 32 what is the obstacle to the practice of Karma Yoga and ultimately Gyana Yoga? Why is that many people are not able to follow karma yoga? Lord Krishna's answers that it is because of raga dwesha kama krodha or moha and delusion. This is due to confusion regarding priority of life. Artha and kama becomes more important than dharma and moksha.

Goals of humans are Artha, Kama, Dharma and Moksha or Wealth, Entertainment, values and spiritual freedom. On one side, we have wealth and entertainment and the other side we have values and mokshas. One who has clarity that moksha and dharma is more important is a viveki. Kama is the main problem and krodha is only kama in a different form. Struggling to complete myself with wealth, family etc. is kama. Since obstructed kama is krodha, controlling kama is required.

Solution to Kama:

- Dhamaha: Discipline of sense organs; filtering what enters mind through sense organs at every level
- Samaha: Mental discipline; Discipline at mental level; unhealthy thoughts should be nipped in the bud, like how the enemies and diseases are nipped in the bud. Unhealthy thoughts are like a terrorist or internal enemy and should be controlled.
- Vivekaha: Discipline at intellectual level. I, the

finite thing, will remain a finite thing with the acquisition of any finite thing. Security and fullness must be found in myself. Mistaken I is the source of all sorrow.

Verse 42

*They declare the sense organs to be superior to the sense objects. The mind is superior to the intellect. The intellect is indeed superior to the mind. That which is superior to the intellect is indeed that Self.*

These three-fold solutions are temporary and not a permanent solution. Self-knowledge is the only permanent solution. Desire is a symptom or expression of incompleteness. It will go away only with poornatvam or the knowledge that I don't lack anything and I don't miss anything.

Dhayananda Saraswathi states that "converting everything around me into luxury is moksha". When things around me are necessities, it is samsara; when they luxury, it is moksha.

Paraha (superior) Atma signifies three:

1. Sukshma; subtle; a subtler thing is called superior.
2. Mohanthaha: Ever pervading
3. Prathyaha: Closer to you

A subtle thing (atma) controlling gross body etc.

- Sense organs are superior to sense object. Because of the existence of sense objects are revealed by sense organs.
- Superior to sense organs is the mind because sense organs can function only with mind. If the mind is not functioning properly, sense organs can't function.
- Superior to mind is intellect. Mind has two functions: doubting and emotions. Both can be controlled by knowledge or discriminating intellectual power. Gyani is

the one who is not under the grip of emotion because he can control it; note that he does have emotion, but he knows how to control it. This was very well explained in Katho Upanishad by comparing the body to a chariot, the sense organs to the horses, the mind to the charioteer.

- Atma is superior to intellect. Atma is the consciousness because of which I know the intellect. I the subject can't be questioned, because only the subject makes the object aware. That awareness is atma.

### Verse 43

*Oh Arjuna! This knowing the Self which is beyond the intellect, and steadying the mind with the mind, conquer the elusive enemy which is in the form of desire.*

The ultimate object is to know the chaithanyam or atma which is:

- Not a part or product of the body Atma
- Atma is independent of the body;
- Atma is limitless;
- Atma is eternal;
- Atma survives the fall of the body, but not available for transactions because there is no medium.

Atma is like light. When light pervades the hand, you see the hand but not the light; but the light is there. It is also there beyond the hand. Similarly, atma is not only in your body but also extends beyond your body. One should know this and own up to the fact that this formless consciousness is the real I. The real transformation is the transcending the form, that I am the formless consciousness. Body and mind are like the instruments I use to transact with the world. By claiming the new identity, we should change our orientation from physical body to formless consciousness. This new orientation is gyana nishta. The physical body is limited, but I am not

limited.

Gyana Nishta is internalizing this knowledge and ready availability of this knowledge at the time of difficulty. This comes by dwelling on the teaching in any form – by teaching, writing, thinking, sharing etc.

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## **Ten Commandments – Yamas, Niyamas and ways to Incorporate them in daily life**

Continuing the discussion from last week on the topic of how to put in practice the teachings of Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi and the Bhagawad Gita, Dr. Katta presented an excerpt of an audio recording of Swamiji delivered on New Year 2,000. After searching I found the text of this lecture that I have copied for your benefit. For those of you who like to listen, Ravi has posted Swamiji's recording in Advaidam website. For those who like to read, this information is presented below. Please try to practice these teachings.

**Ten Commandments of Hinduism and how to follow them:**

**New Year: 2000 – 10 commandments**

*Sadhaks* or spiritual seekers attend lectures, read books, and use other means such as participation in study groups to acquire spiritual knowledge. After some time, a stage is reached when many aspirants feel they have studied a lot and have a reasonably good understanding of the scriptures but are

not able to implement the knowledge gained. They have the “theory” but are unable to put it to “practice”. *Sadhaks* who face this problem can take up the following programme. Even others who do not have this problem can use this programme to reinforce the scriptural teaching.

This programme is a one-year project that can be renewed every year. The programme can be practiced as it is or modified to suit the needs or convenience of the individual. Since the project consists of 12 components with each component taking a month, the New Year is a good time to start this programme. This programme is essentially the practice of “ten commandments” of Hinduism – fivefold abstention (called ‘*yama*’) and fivefold discipline (‘*niyama*’). These are the do’s and don’ts of Hinduism.

The programme is presented in two parts. First, the *yamas* (don’ts) and *niyamas* (do’s) are defined and explained from the standpoint of practicing them. Of the two groups, our scriptures consider *yamas* to be more important than the *niyamas* and so the former is discussed first. Secondly, a method of implementation of the *yamas* and *niyamas* is presented.

The five *yamas* are *ahimsa*, *satyam*, *asteyam*, *brahmacharyam*, and *aparigraha*.

1) *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is the avoidance of violence and injury. *Ahimsa* has several aspects. The grossest form of *Himsa* is physical violence. Physical violence is not confined to beating people but includes actions such as throwing or banging things. When we begin practice on this programme, we must first pay attention to physical violence. If we feel we are already free from the weakness, we can concentrate on verbal violence – shouting or using abusive or indecent language.

2) *Satyam* (truthfulness) is primarily a verbal

discipline. We maintain harmony between knowledge, motives, and words. Our words must not hide our knowledge or motives. There must be harmony between thought and word. *Satyam* is a positive attribute and yet it is listed as a *yama*. So we have to redefine *satyam* as something to be given; that is the avoidance of a *satyam*. We must emphasize more on eschewing a *satyam*, by not telling lies or speaking untruths.

3) *Asteyam* (non-stealing) literally means non-stealing. We may wonder whether this value is required for us because we are not thieves. *Steyam* is not just breaking into a house and stealing. Any unfair transaction through which we derive some benefit is *steyam*. Not paying a person his due is a form of stealing because we keep what legitimately belongs to another person.

4) *Brahmacharyam* (chastity) means having the right attitude towards members of the opposite sex. Men must have a decent and appropriate attitude towards women and similarly women must have a decent and appropriate attitude towards men. Like *satyam*, *brahmacharyam* is a positive characteristic and yet finds a place among the *yamas*. So we must understand *brahmacharyam* as giving up all indecent and inappropriate attitudes towards the opposite sex.

5) *Aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) is the fifth *yama*. *Parigrapha* means possession. *Aparigraha* is literally non-possession and must be understood as leading a simple life. There are two aspects to *aparigraha* – owning less and having the right attitude towards what little we own. We give up luxury, pomp, and show. We draw a line and limit our possessions to what is necessary. A simple living is suitable for high thinking.

We should not develop possessiveness towards the limited possessions we have. This is even more important than owning less. We should remind ourselves that what we have belongs to the Lord and is given to us temporarily for us to grow. We use



our possessions with gratitude to the Lord who claim them at any time giving advance notice or not.

The five *niyamas* are *saucham*, *santosha*, *tapas*, *swadhyaya*, and *Ishwara pranidhanam*.

6) *Sacuham* (purity) means cleanliness or purity. We must first focus on gross or physical purity and later concentrate on subtle or inner purity. *Saucham* can be understood as keeping ourselves and everything around us clean. This includes our body, clothes, possessions and house. *Saucham* is not only cleanliness but also orderliness. Our house may be very clean but due to disorderliness we may have to search for anything and everything. A good maxim to follow is 'a place for everything and everything in its place.'

7) *Santosha* (contentment) means contentment or satisfaction. *Santosha* has to be developed at two levels because life is twofold pursuit – earning and owning. Initially we aspire to earn a lot of wealth and also own many possessions. The first stage of contentment is at the level of owning. We are satisfied with our possessions and stop earning for more. Earning continues but spending decreases. Such a person produces more, consumes less and creates wealth for the community, society and nation and is called a karma yogi.

The second stage of contentment focuses on earning. We stop craving for more and more. Such a person is *jnana* yogi. Contentment at both levels of earning and owning is called *santosha* or *trupti* and should be practiced as a *niyama* meaning with a positive attitude. We think of what we have rather than what we do not have and give up beggarliness of the mind. We tell our mind that we have plenty. This is the principle of abundance.

A contented person will readily share his wealth with others. Without *santosha*, *dhanam* (charity) cannot take place. Contentment is a prerequisite for a charitable disposition.

8) *Tapas* (austerity) means austerity and like *ahimsa* and *santosha* has many dimensions. The grossest form of *tapas* pertains to physical activity. Activity is important not only from the religious and spiritual angle but also from the aspect of health. In the olden days the very lifestyle ensured that people were physically fit. Today we can consider some form of exercise. An ideal exercise is the *surya namaskar*. It is common to hear people say that they do not have time for exercise. Those who cannot spare a few minutes a day for maintaining their health today may have to spend many months later for recovering (lost) health due to sickness.

9) *Swadhyaya* (spiritual study) is the study of our scriptures and is a very important commandment. Many years ago *swadhyaya* was done by every person. It was a daily ritual known as *Brahma yagna*. Today people do not give much importance to spiritual study. May think it is for intellectuals and those who want to take to monastic life. At the minimum we must study a few verses of the *Bhagavad Gita* everyday and reflect upon the teaching.

10) *Ishwara Pranidhanam* (surrender to God) is looking upon every experience in our lives, favourable or unfavourable, as God's will because every experience we undergo is the result of our past actions. This is called *karma phallam* and can be pleasure or pain. Behind every *karma phallam* is the law of karma and behind the law of karma is the Lord. The Lord is invisible, the law of karma is invisible but when the Lord and the law of karma function, the result is a tangible experience. So we accept every experience without resistance. And the mind is free of negative emotions and thoughts. This acceptance is called *Ishwara Pranidhanam* or *sarangati*. An inability or unwillingness to do so will produce unhealthy thoughts in the mind and lead to bitterness, anger, frustration, hatred, etc.

The ten *yamas* and *niyamas* should be practiced by all the *sadhaks*. We have no choice in the matter. Without these

attributes, the study of *Vedanta* will neither be meaningful nor beneficial.

How can a *sadhak* practice the ten commandments? Aspirants may consider the following method of implementation that is designed as a one-year project. Every month we should focus on one commandment beginning with the first and proceed in order. Each commandment is important and should be given attention. Practicing the *yamas* and *niyamas* can be made effective by following a five-fold strategy: *sankalpa*, *avadhanam*, *samyama*, *simha-avalokanam*, and *vicara*.

1) *Sankalpa* (resolve) means making a resolve every day. We begin the day with a resolve that we will practice the commandment chosen for the month. During the “*ahimsa*” month; we will resolve firmly: Today I will practice *ahimsa*. I will not shout at my family members, subordinates etc. We must maintain a notebook and soon after getting up we must write, ‘*I will practice ahimsa today*’ 24 times. We should write with a full heart, sincerity, and commitment.

2) *Avadhanam* (precaution) is especially important. The scriptures say that for a spiritual seeker, negligence is destruction. Many railway accidents occur due to negligence of simple precautionary measures. Precaution is within our capacity. We must be alert and avoid the contributory factors that make us violate the commandment. This applies even to our health. Maintaining health requires adherence to a few simple rules neglecting which we may have to face the consequences for a life time.

3) *Samyama* (restraint) comes into play when *avadhanam* fails. Violations (of the commandments) will occur, especially in the initial stages and we display the negative behavior we have been trying to avoid. The moment we realize we are using abusive language, we must strive to control ourselves. We practice restraint before the situation gets out of hand.

4) *Simha-avalokanam* (introspection) is the fourth strategy and should be done every day. At the end of the day, we look at our behaviours and determine to what extent we fulfilled our resolve to follow the chosen commandment. For every violation we must take out our notebook and write, ' *on sri gurubhyo namah*' 24 times. There are three benefits in doing so. First, it serves as a *prayaschitham* or repentance for violating the commandment. Secondly, we invoke the grace of the guru. Guru includes god because HE is the *adiguru*; the first guru is Bhagavan. Thirdly, by the grace of the guru, the circumstances or occasions that make us violate the commandment will become lesser and lesser.

Also there will be a change in our attitude. Presently we are likely to think that our violations are necessary and dictated by the circumstances. We consider them a necessary evil. But as we progress, by the grace of the guru, we will find that we do not violate the commandments even in situations where we once thought it was necessary. Thus by the grace of guru the number of occasions that are likely to provoke us becomes lesser and lesser. We no longer violate as before thus making real progress.

The above four strategies should be practiced every day.

5) *Vicara* (study) is a powerful and the most important strategy and this involves the study of the significance of each of the commandments. It is seeing the 'value of a value'. Each month we must focus on the commandment chosen for the month. During the "*ahimsa*" month we must collect as much information as possible on this commandment and study the literature for at least an hour a week and try to understand its significance. Why is *moksha* not possible without giving up *himsa*? Why do we resort to violence-physical or verbal? What precautionary measures can we take to avoid *himsa*? Our analysis will reveal that our violent behavior is always preceded by anger. We can further analyze, why do we get angry? Is it because of certain people? How can we change our

behavior (rather than expect others to change theirs) to avoid or minimize getting provoked?

*Vichara* can be done individually or collectively by forming and participating in study groups. Study groups meet periodically and members of the group get an opportunity to share with the other members as to how they are handling the commandments in their daily life. There can be discussions and healthy exchange of ideas that is beneficial to all the group members. Study groups inculcate seriousness and a sense of commitment towards practicing the commandment. Participation in study groups is highly efficacious and strongly recommended.

*Vicara* will reveal that each commandment has a gross aspect and a subtle aspect or many other dimensions. In the first year, *sadhaks* can focus on the grossest aspect of each commandment and in subsequent years turn their attention to the subtler aspects.

Since the ten commandments consume ten months, the question arises: what should a *sadhak* do during the remaining two months of the year? In the eleventh month, the aspirant must strive to give up one bad habit – be it smoking or losing one's temper. Again, we can start from gross, physical habits and proceed to subtle weaknesses. In the last month of the year, the *sadhak* must cultivate one good habit that the aspirant would like to have. If we have the habit of criticizing others, we may want to develop the practice of giving praise where it is due. In case we have a doubt regarding what habits or attributes to focus on the last two months of the programme, we can study the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita wherein Krishna discusses demoniacal traits (called *asuri sampath*) or negative qualities and divine traits (*daivi sampath*) or positive attributes.

I wish you a happy new year and a year where you practice these ten commandments and become a better person.