

**Bhagavad Gītā**  
with the Sārārtha Darśinī  
by Śrīla Viśvanāth Cakravari Ṭhakura

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## Chapter One

*gaurāṁśukaḥ sat-kumuda-pramodī  
svābhikhyayā gos-tamaso nihantā  
śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-sudha-nidhir me  
mano 'dhitiṣṭhan svaratim karotu*

*prācīna-vācaḥ suvicārya so 'ham  
ajño 'pi gītā mṛta-leśa-lipsuḥ  
yateḥ prabhor eva mate tad atra  
santaḥ kṣamadhvam śaraṇāgatasya*

May the ocean of nectar, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who emanates golden rays, giving joy to the white water lilies of saintly devotees, and who destroys the darkness of the earth by His splendid beauty, be present in my mind and bestow on me attraction for Himself.

Though I am ignorant, after carefully considering the previous commentaries, I desire to obtain a drop of the nectar of the *Gītā* (and have thus written this commentary). May you devotees please tolerate this work of a surrendered soul, which is written according to the views of my *sannyāsī* master, Śrī Caitanya

The son of Vasudeva, *para brahman* in human form, the original Bhagavān whose lotus feet are desired by all the scriptures in this world, descended directly in Mathurā, and, most inconceivably, became visible to the eyes of all people of the material world. Delivering the people of the universe who were drowning in the ocean of material life, He submerged them instead in the great ocean of His own *prema*, by bestowing on them a taste of the sweetness of His beauty.

Established in His great vow to protect the righteous and destroy the evil, on the pretext of relieving the earth of its burden of suffering, he gave the greatest protection--in the form of liberation--even to those who were devoured by the crocodile of material life--to the most evil persons, even to those who displayed great hatred towards Himself. In order to deliver the *jīvas* who would be afflicted after His disappearance by lamentation and illusion arising from the bondage of beginningless ignorance, and in order to

uphold His glorious reputation sung by the sages, the makers of scriptures, He singled out Arjuna, His dear friend. Arjuna then became afflicted by lamentation and illusion at the commencement of war by the Lord's own desire, in order to fulfill the Lord's purposes. The Lord thus manifested to Arjuna the highest goal of humanity, making it most real and attainable, in the form of the *Gītā*, with eighteen chapters containing eighteen types of knowledge, ornamented with the jewels of the ultimate import of the *Vedas* composed of three subjects.<sup>1</sup>

Through the first six chapters of the *Gītā* He presents *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, through the second six chapters He presents *bhakti-yoga*, and through the third six chapters He presents *jñāna-yoga*. *Bhakti-yoga* is placed between *karma* and *jñāna-yoga* because of its confidential nature,<sup>2</sup> because of its superiority by which it is able to give life to the other two,<sup>3</sup> and because of its being most rare.<sup>4</sup> And moreover, because these two are useless without *bhakti*, only by being mixed with *bhakti* do they become acceptable.

There are two types of *bhakti*: *kevalā bhakti* (pure *bhakti*) and *pradhānī bhūtā bhakti* (a process predominated by *bhakti*). The first is independent and strong. Without the mixture of *karma* and *jñāna*, it is pure and powerful. It is known by such terms as *ananyā bhakti* and *akiñcinā bhakti*.<sup>5</sup> The second type is mixed with *karma* and *jñāna*. All of this will be described later in the text.

*dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca*  
*dharma-kṣetre kuru-kṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ |*  
*māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāś caiva kim akurvata sañjaya ||1||*

1. Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: O Sañjaya, what did my sons and the sons of Pāṇḍu do, having gathered with the desire to fight at Kṛukṣetra, the place of dharma?

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase here is *kāṇḍa-trayātmika-sarva-veda*, referring to *karma*, *jñāna* and *upāsana kāṇḍas*.

<sup>2</sup> Being placed in the middle, it is not so obvious.

<sup>3</sup> Since it is in the middle, it touches the other two, giving them life. If the six chapters concerning *bhakti* were placed at the beginning or the end, they would only touch one of the other topics.

<sup>4</sup> Therefore it is protected by the other two topics on either side.

<sup>5</sup> Other names are *uttamā bhakti*, *śuddhā bhakti*, and *kevalā bhakti*.

How did Arjuna become bewildered and fall into ignorance? The speaker of the *Mahābhārata*, Vaiśampāyana, started explaining the topic to Janamejaya in the Bhīṣma Parvā, with the following words.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said, “Please tell me what my sons, headed by Duryodhana, and the sons of Pāṇḍu, headed by Yudhiṣṭhira were doing, having gathered together for fighting at Kurukṣetra?”

“But you yourself have said that they were desirous of fighting, so why are you asking what they did?”

“This place is a holy place (*dharma kṣetra*). *Śruti* says:

*kurukṣetraṁ deva yajanam*

Kurukṣetra is a place for worshipping the Lord. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Madhyāndinīya*, 14.1.1.2

It is famous as a place which produces *dharma*. Due to association with this great place, the evil Duryodhana and company may give up their anger and take to the path of *dharma*. The Pāṇḍavas are naturally following *dharma*. Then both sides would have intelligence to see that they should not kill their own relatives and friends, and would negotiate peace.”

Externally, he desired to show Sañjaya that he would be relieved if this were so. Internally, however, he found it hard to restrain his depression, for if there were a conciliation, then it would be difficult for his sons to claim the kingdom. “As Bhīṣma, who is on our side cannot be defeated by Arjuna, it is better that we fight. Let that happen!” It was not suitable however to show such desires externally.

There is a hidden meaning in the word *kṣetra* (field) in the phrase *dharma-kṣetra*. The field was a place for growing the grains of *dharma*, in the form of pious Yudhiṣṭhira, who was the very incarnation of *dharma*,<sup>6</sup> along with his supporters. The field, a place for exerting oneself in the work of cultivating, was the place in which Kṛṣṇa, the nourisher of *dharma*, would encourage

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<sup>6</sup> He was the son of Dharma or Yamarāja.

Yudhiṣṭhira. The field, a place for many projects like blocking irrigation dykes and watering, was the place where Kṛṣṇa would assist Yudhiṣṭhira in many ways to establish the grains of *dharma*. The same field is also a place for weeds to grow. The weeds, enemies of the grains, in the form of Duryodhana and others, also grew there, but would be destroyed by Kṛṣṇa.

*sañjaya uvāca*

*ḍṛṣṭvā tu pāṇḍavānikāṃ vyūḍhāṃ duryodhanas tadā |  
ācāryam upasaṅgamyā rājā vacanam abravīt ||2||  
paśyaitāṃ pāṇḍu-putrānām ācārya mahatīm camūṃ |  
vyūḍhām drupada-putreṇa tava śiṣyena dhimatā ||3||*

2. Sañjaya said: Seeing the array of the Pāṇḍavas' troops, Duryodhana approached his teacher Droṇa and spoke these words.

3. "O teacher, see this great army of the sons of Pāṇḍu, arranged for battle by your intelligent disciple, the son of Drupada."

Understanding that Dhṛtarāṣṭra wanted war, Sañjaya then spoke, to make him aware that there would be war, but that the results would be the opposite of the fulfillment of his desires.

Duryodhana, seeing the arrangement of troops (*vyūḍhām*) being prepared by the Pāṇḍavas, then speaks, revealing his inner fear in nine verses, starting from the third verse.

He criticizes Droṇācārya. He tells him that he is very foolish because Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the son of Drupada, was arranging the troops of the enemy. That person was Droṇa's student, having been taught by him, even knowing that he was born to kill him.<sup>7</sup> "Dhṛṣṭadyumna is very intelligent (*dhimatā*) because he has gained the knowledge of how to kill you from you yourself,

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<sup>7</sup> King Drupada was forced to give part of his kingdom to Droṇa. As he was less powerful, he performed a sacrifice to obtain a son who would kill Droṇa. Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Draupadī emerged from the fire. A celestial voice proclaimed that his son would kill Droṇa in the future. The news spread, but Droṇa did not mind. When Dhṛṣṭadyumna approached him to learn the art of weaponry, Droṇa taught him. During the war, Dhṛṣṭadyumna eventually beheaded Droṇa.

his enemy. See what will finally result from this greatly intelligent act in the future!”

*atra sūrā maheṣvāsā bhīmārjuna-samā yudhi |  
yuyudhāno virātaś ca drupadaś ca mahā-rathaḥ ||4||  
dhr̥ṣṭaketuś cekitānaḥ kāśirājaś ca vīryavān |  
purujiṭ kuntibhojaś ca śaibyaś ca nara-puṅgavaḥ ||5||  
yudhāmanyuś ca vikrānta uttamaujāś ca vīryavān |  
saubhadro draupadeyāś ca sarva eva mahā-rathāḥ ||6||*

4. Here are brave men, skillful with great bows, equal to Bhīma and Arjuna in battle: Sātyaki, Virāta, and Drupada, a *mahā-ratha*.

5. Here are Dhṛṣṭaketu, Cekitāna, the valorous king of Kāśī, Purujit, Kuntibhoja and Śaibya, the best of men.

6. Here are mighty Yudhāmanyu, valiant Uttamaujā, Abhimanyu, and the five sons of Draupadī, all *mahā-rathas*.

“The leaders of their troops, having great bows (*iṣvāsā*), will be impossible to cut down.” That is the suggestion by his mentioning the bows. *Yuyudhānaḥ* refers to Sātyaki. *Saubhadraḥ* refers to Abhimanyu. *Draupadeyāḥ* refers to the five sons of the Pāṇḍavas by Draupadī, such as Prativindhya.

*eko daśa sahasrāṇi yodhayed yas tu dhanvinām  
śastra-śāstra-pravīnaś ca mahā-ratha iti smṛtaḥ  
amitān yodhayed yas tu samprokto 'tirathas tu saḥ  
caikena yo yudhyet tan-nyūno'rdha-rathaḥ smṛtaḥ*<sup>8</sup>

A *mahā-ratha* is one who can fight alone with ten thousand archers, who is expert in both weapons and scripture. An *atiratha* is one who fights with unlimited troops (or less than ten thousand but more than a thousand). A *rathi* is one who fights with one. One who does less than that is called *ardha-ratha*.

*asmākaṁ tu viśiṣṭā ye tān nibodha dvijottama |  
nāyakā mama sainyasya samjñārthaṁ tān bravīmi te ||7||*

<sup>8</sup> This is quoted by Śrīdhara Svāmī and Baladeva, but the source is not given.

7. O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, understand who is on our side, the commanders of my army. I will list them so you can completely understand.

Understand (*nibodha*) who is on our side. I will tell you in order that you completely understand (*samjñārtham*). The word is analyzed as *samyak* (complete), *jñāna* (knowledge).

*bhavān bhīṣmaś ca karṇaś ca kṛpaś ca samitim-jayaḥ |*  
*aśvatthāmā vikarṇaś ca saumadattir tathaiva ca ||8||*

8. There are yourself, Bhīṣma, Karṇa, Kṛpa, winner of wars, Aśvatthāmā, Vikarṇa, and Bhūriśravā.

Saumadatti refers to Bhūriśravā, the son of Somadatta.

*anye ca bahavaḥ śūrā madarthe tyakta-jīvitāḥ |*  
*nānā-śastra-praharaṇāḥ sarve yuddha-viśāradaḥ ||9||*

9. There are also many other brave men who have given up their lives for my sake, skillful at fighting, armed with various missiles and weapons of close combat.

“They are willing to give up their lives in order to help me (*tyakta-jīvitāḥ*).” This is the intended meaning of Duryodhana, though the literal meaning is “They have given up their lives.” Actually however, Kṛṣṇa will later say:

*mayaiivate nihataḥ pūrvam eva nimitta-mātram bhava savyasācin*

These warriors have already been killed by Me before the war has started. You be My instrument, O Arjuna. BG 11.33

Thus, the literal meaning of Duryodhana’s words are thus completely true.

*aparyāptam tad asmākaṁ balaṁ bhīṣmābhirakṣitam |*  
*paryāptam tv idam eteṣāṁ balaṁ bhīmābhirakṣitam ||10||*

10. Our army protected by Bhīṣma is inadequate, but their army, protected by Bhīma is adequate.

Our troops are not up to standard (*aparyāptam*): we cannot fight against the Pāṇḍavas.

Even though protected all around by Bhīṣma, who has fine intelligence and is experienced in fighting and theory, Bhīṣma has sympathy for both parties. The Pāṇḍavas are very well protected (*paryāptam abhirakṣitam*) by Bhīma, though he has gross intelligence and is not thoroughly conversant with fighting and theory. In other words, they are well equipped to fight against us.

*ayaneṣu ca sarveṣu yathā-bhāgam avasthitāḥ |*  
*bhīṣmam evābhirakṣantu bhavantaḥ sarva eva hi ||11||*

11. Situated in your positions for attack, you should protect Bhīṣma on all sides.

Therefore you should be very careful. Though you are divided into different groups (*yathā-bhāgam*) for the purpose of entering into the enemy lines (*ayaneṣu*), you should not give up your designated positions on the battlefield. Being fixed in your respective positions, protect Bhīṣma on all sides, so that he will not be attacked from behind while engaged in fighting with others. The implication here is “Only by the strength of Bhīṣma will we survive.”

*tasya sañjanayan harṣam kuru-vṛddhaḥ pitāmahaḥ |*  
*simha-nādam vinadyoccaiḥ śankham dadhmau pratāpavān ||12||*

12. Then the majestic elder among the Kurus, the grandfather, in order to bring joy to Duryodhana, making the sound of lion, blew his conch loudly.

Bhīṣma, the elder of the Kurus, joyful on hearing respect given to him, and to produce joy in Duryodhana by driving away his fears, roaring like lion, blew his conch shell. The phrase *simha-nādam vinadya* uses the same root *nad* twice. The literal meaning is “roaring the roar of a lion.” The intended meaning is “roaring like a lion,” according to the *sūtra upamāne karmaṇi*. (*Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Pāṇini 3.4.45)

*tataḥ śaṅkhāś ca bheryāś ca paṇavānaka-gomukhāḥ |  
sahasāivābhyahanyanta sa śabdāś tumulo 'bhavat ||13||*

13. Then conches, kettle drums, small drums, and larger drums were suddenly sounded, making a tumultuous roar.

Both sides became eager to fight. This is described in this verse. *Paṇava* is a type of drum. *Ānaka* is a kettle drum. *Gomukha* is a type of trumpet.

*tataḥ śvetair hayair yukte mahati syandane sthitau |  
mādhavaḥ pāṇḍavaś caiva divyau śaṅkhau pradadhmatuḥ ||14||*

14. Then Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, standing in a large chariot yoked with white horses, blew their divine conches.

*pāñcajanyaṁ hṛṣīkeśo devadattaṁ dhanañjayaḥ |  
paṇḍraṁ dadhmau mahāśaṅkhaṁ bhīma-karmā vṛkodaraḥ ||15||  
anantavijayaṁ rājā kuntī-putro yudhiṣṭhiraḥ |  
nakulaḥ sahadevaś ca sughoṣa-maṇipuṣpakau ||16||*

15-16. Kṛṣṇa blew Pāñcajanya, Arjuna blew Devadatta, and Bhīma of fearful deeds blew the great conch Paṇḍra. Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Kuntī, blew Anantavijaya, and Nakula and Sahadeva blew their conches Sughoṣa and Manipuṣpaka.

The names of the conch shells are listed here, starting with Kṛṣṇa's Pāñcajanya.

*kāśyāś ca parameśvāsaḥ śikhaṇḍī ca mahā-rathaḥ |  
dhṛṣṭadyumno virāṭaś ca sātyakiś cāparājitaḥ ||17||  
drupado draupadeyāś ca sarvaśaḥ pṛthivī-pate |  
saubhadraś ca mahā-bāhuḥ śaṅkhān dadhmau pṛthak pṛthak ||18||*

17-18. Then the king of Kāśī, the greatest archer, Śikhaṇḍī, a *mahā-ratha*, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Virāṭa and Sātyaki, who could not be defeated, Drupada, the

sons of Draupadī, and mighty-armed Abhimanyu blew their conches one after the other.

The word *aparājitaḥ* means unconquerable. However, it can be read *cāpa rājitaḥ*, by including the previous *ca* as part of the word instead a separate word meaning “and”, in which case it means “equipped with a bow.”

*sa ghoṣo dhārtarāṣṭrāṇām hṛdayāni vyadārayat |*  
*nabhaś ca pṛthivīm caiva tumulo 'bhyanunādayan ||19||*

19. That tumultuous sound, filling the sky and earth, split the hearts of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

*atha vyavasthitān dr̥ṣṭvā dhārtarāṣṭrān kapi-dhvajah |*  
*pravṛtte śāstra-sampāte dhanur udyamya pāṇḍavaḥ ||20||*  
*hṛṣīkeśam tadā vākyam idam āha mahīpate |*  
*senayor ubhayor madhye ratham sthāpaya me 'cyuta ||21||*  
*yāvad etān nirīkṣe 'ham yoddhu-kāmān avasthitān |*  
*kair mayā saha yoddhavyam asmin raṇa-samudyame ||22||*  
*yotsyamānān avekṣe 'ham ya ete 'tra samāgatāḥ |*  
*dhārtarāṣṭrasya durbuddher yuddhe priya-cikīrṣavaḥ ||23||*

20-23. O King, then, as the armies prepared to fight, Arjuna with Hanumān's insignia on his flag, seeing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra standing there, taking his bow in hand, spoke to Hṛṣīkeśa: O Acyuta please station my chariot between the two armies, so I can view at the commencement of the war those situated with a desire to fight, and those with whom I should fight. I see that those who have gathered here, desiring to please the foolish sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, are intent on fighting.

*evam ukto hṛṣīkeśo guḍākeśena bhārata |*  
*senayor ubhayor madhye sthāpayitvā rathottamam ||24||*  
*bhīṣma-droṇa-pramukhataḥ sarveṣāṃ ca mahī-kṣitām |*  
*uvāca pārtha paśyaitān samavetān kurūn iti ||25||*

24-25. When Arjuna spoke to him thus, Hṛṣīkeśa, stationing the best of chariots between the two armies, in front of Bhīṣma, Droṇa and all the princes, spoke: See these Kurus gathered here.

The Lord, Hṛṣīkeśa, though Himself the controller of everyone’s senses, was thus ordered by Arjuna, controlled just by his words. See how the Lord is controlled by *prema*! This is the implication of calling the Lord Hṛṣīkeśa.

Here is the significance of the word Guḍākeśa. Ākeśa means Viṣṇu (*ā*), Brahmā (*ka*) and Śiva (*īśa*). Guḍākeśa means Arjuna who gives them (*ākeśa*) the experience of the sweetness of the Lord’s affection just as sugar (*guḍā*) gives the experience of sweetness.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, Guḍākeśa refers to he who, by bringing Kṛṣṇa under his control, gave Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Śiva the opportunity to experience Kṛṣṇa’s sweetness. Where the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, the crown jewel, source of all *avatāras*, being controlled by *prema*, followed the orders of His servant Arjuna, how could Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva, His mere expansions as *guṇa avatāras*, show off any of their powers? Instead, they felt they had reached the pinnacle of perfection by manifesting affectionate feelings for the Lord themselves (inspired by Arjuna).

The lord of the spiritual sky (Mahāviṣṇu) said:

*dvijātmamajā me yuvayor didṛkṣuṇā*

I brought the *brāhmaṇa*’s sons here because I wanted to see the two of you.

SB 10.89.58

Guḍākeśa can also mean the lord (*īśa*) of sleep (*guḍākā*), the controller of the senses. Even Kṛṣṇa, who is the direct controller of *bhakti*, became controlled by Arjuna’s *prema*. Thus Arjuna was able to conquer despicable *māyā* or sleep. He spoke in front of Bhīṣma, Droṇa and all the kings.

Though the word *pramukhataḥ* is compounded only with Bhīṣma and Droṇa, it refers to everyone. Thus the meaning is “putting his chariot in front of Bhīṣma, Droṇa and all the other kings.”

*tatrāpaśyat sthitān pārthaḥ pitṛn atha pitāmahān |*  
*ācāryān mātulān bhrātṛn putrān pautrān sakhīms tathā ||*

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<sup>9</sup> Literally the word would mean “He who is the sugar for Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.”

*śvaśurān suhṛdaś caiva senayor ubhayor api ||26||*

26. Arjuna saw standing there fathers, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, friends, fathers-in-law and well-wishers on both sides.

*Putra* and *pautra* refer to the sons and grandsons of Duryodhana and others on the opposing side.

*tān samīkṣya sa kaunteyaḥ sarvān bandhūn avasthitān |  
kṛpayā parayāviṣṭo viśīdann idam abravīt ||27||*

27. The son of Kuntī, seeing all his relatives situated there, overcome with compassion and depressed, spoke as follows.

*dṛṣṭvemān svajanān kṛṣṇa yuyutsuṁ samupasthitam |  
sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukham ca pariśuṣyati ||28||  
vepathuś ca śarīre me roma-harṣaś ca jāyate |  
gāṇḍīvam sramsate hastāt tvak caiva paridahyate ||29||*

28-29. O Kṛṣṇa, seeing all my relatives and friends gathered to fight, my limbs are weakening, my mouth is drying up, my body is trembling and my hairs are standing on end. My bow is falling from my hand and my skin is burning.

Seeing all these known people, my mouth has dried up. The phrase “As I stand here” should be added at the beginning of the sentence. “As I stand here seeing this, my limbs become weak.”

*na ca śaknomy avasthātum bhramatīva ca me manaḥ |  
nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni keśava ||30||*

30. I cannot stay fixed and my mind seems to whirl about. I see contrary results in this battle, O Keśava.

*Nimitta* is used in the sense of “end result”, just as the goal of money is a good residence. I will not get happiness by attaining the kingdom if I win the war, but rather will suffer sorrow, the opposite result.

*na ca śreyo 'nupaśyāmi hatvā svajanam āhave |  
na kāṅkṣe vijayam kṛṣṇa na ca rājyaṃ sukhāni ca ||31||*

31. I do not see any good result, after killing my own people in war. I do not desire victory, kingdom or happiness, O Kṛṣṇa.

“I do not see any benefit in killing in this manner (*na śreyo paśyāmi*). The scriptures state beneficial results for the person killed:

*dvāv imau puruṣau loke sūrya-maṇḍala-bhedinau  
parivrāḍ yoga-yuktaś ca raṇe cābhimukhe hataḥ*

The *sannyāsī* engaged in *yoga* and the warrior who dies facing the enemy attain the sun planet. *Parāśara Smṛti* 3.30

However, there is no piety for the person engaged in the killing. (Thus it is better that I die rather than kill them.) ”

“But by fighting you gain tangible results in the form of kingdom and fame.”

“But I do not desire victory, kingdom or happiness.”

*kiṃ no rājyena govinda kiṃ bhogair jīvitena vā |  
yeṣāṃ arthe kāṅkṣitaṃ no rājyaṃ bhogaḥ sukhāni ca ||32||  
ta ime 'vasthitā yuddhe prāṇāṃś tyaktvā dhanāni ca |  
ācāryāḥ pitarāḥ putrās tathaiva ca pitāmahāḥ ||33||  
mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ pautrāḥ śyālāḥ sambandhinas tathā |  
etān na hantum icchāmi ghnato 'pi madhusūdana ||34||  
api trailokya-rājyasya hetoḥ kiṃ nu mahīkṛte |  
nihatya dhārtarāṣṭrān naḥ kā prītiḥ syāj janārdana ||35||*

32-35. What is the use of kingdom, enjoyment or even living? Those for whom we desire kingdom, enjoyment and happiness--teachers, fathers, sons and grandfathers, maternaluncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and relatives-- are standing on the battlefiled, risking their lives and wealth. I do not desire to kill them, even if I were to be killed by them, O Madhusūdana, even for sovereignty over the three worlds, what to speak of

this earth. O Janārdana, what happiness will we achieve, having killed the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra?

*pāpam evāśrayed asmān hatvaitān ātatāyinaḥ |  
tasmān nārḥā vyaṁ hantum dhārtarāṣṭrān svabāndhavān |  
svajanaṁ hi kathāṁ hatvā sukhinaḥ syāma mādḥava ||36||*

36. In killing these aggressors we will only incur sin. Therefore we should not kill the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra with their relatives. O Mādḥava, how can we live happily, having killed our own relatives?

But it is said:

*agnido garadaś caiva śastra-pāṇir dhanāpahāḥ  
kṣetra-dārāpahārī ca ṣaḍ ete hy ātatāyinaḥ*

The arsonist, one who poisons, one who attacks with weapons, the thief, the stealer of property and the stealer of ones wife are considered aggressors. *Vasiṣṭha Smṛti* 3.19

And also it is said:

*ātatāyinaṁ āyāntaṁ hanyād evāvicārayan  
nātātāyi-vadhe doṣo hantur bhavati kaścana*

Without consideration, one should kill the aggressors, as there is no fault in killing them. *Manu Smṛti* 8.350

Thus the scriptures prescribe killing in the case of aggressors.

Arjuna answers with this verse. Killing them, we will remain living, but we will be sinful. The above instructions are from *artha-śāstra*, but those instructions are weaker than those from *dharma-śāstra*. Yajñavalkya says:

*smṛtyor virodhe nyāyas tu balavān vyavahārataḥ  
artha -śāstrāt tu balavān dharma-śāstram iti sthitiḥ*

It is established that where there is conflict of rules in two *smṛti* statements, reasoning must prevail in choosing the correct rule. However, in reasoning, the rules of *dharmā śāstra* are stronger than those of *artha-śāstra*. *Yajñavalkya Smṛti* 2.21

Thus, though they are aggressors, they are also *ācāryas*. In killing *ācāryas*, we will incur sin. We cannot also be happy in this life. Thus he says “How can we be happy in this life, having killed our own people?”

*yady apy ete na paśyanti lobhopahata-cetasah |*  
*kula-kṣaya-kṛtaṁ doṣaṁ mitra-drohe ca pātakam ||37||*  
*kathaṁ na jñeyam asmābhiḥ pāpād asmān nivartitum |*  
*kula-kṣaya-kṛtaṁ doṣaṁ prapaśyadbhir janārdana ||38||*

37-38. Even if they, overcome by greed, do not see the fault of destroying the family and the sin in killing friends, should not we, who see the fault in destroying the family, know how to withdraw from this sin, O Janārdana?

“Why does the opposing side want to fight then?” He answers with this verse.

“They, overcome by greed, do not see any fault in destroying the family, or any sin in killing friends.”

*kula-kṣaye praṇaśyanti kula-dharmāḥ sanātanāḥ |*  
*dharme naṣṭe kulaṁ kṛtsnam adharmo 'bhibhavaty uta ||39||*

39. With the destruction of the family, the eternal proper conduct of the family is destroyed. When that *dharma* is destroyed, the family is completely filled with *adharma*.

The right conduct maintained by the family, which has been passed down from many generations (*sanātanāḥ kula-dharmāḥ*), will be destroyed with the destruction of the family (*kula-kṣaye*).

*adharmābhibhavāt kṛṣṇa praduśyanti kula-striyaḥ |*  
*strīṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya jāyate varṇa-saṅkaraḥ ||40||*

40. From prevalence of *adharmā*, the women of the family become contaminated. O Kṛṣṇa, when the women are spoiled, mixed *varṇas* arise.

When *adharmā* is prevalent, the women of the family will become spoiled (*praduṣyanti*), by becoming adulterous.

*saṅkaro narakāyaiva kula-ghnānām kulasya ca |  
patanti pitaro hy eṣām luṭṭa-piṇḍodaka-kriyāḥ ||41||*

41. Mixed caste in the family brings hell for those who have destroyed their family members. The forefathers fall, being deprived of *piṇḍa* and water offerings.

*doṣair etaiḥ kula-ghnānām varṇa-saṅkara-kārakaiḥ |  
utsādyante jāti-dharmāḥ kula-dharmās ca śāsvatāḥ ||42||*

42. Both caste and family rules are destroyed by this fault of mixed *varṇas* caused by the killers of family members.

By the faults of mixture of castes, both the caste rules and the family rules will be destroyed (*utsādyate*).

*utsanna-kula-dharmāṇām manuṣyāṇām janārdana |  
narake niyataṁ vāso bhavatīty anuśuśrūma ||43||*

43. O Janārdana, we have heard that those men whose family rules are destroyed live in hell permanently.

*aho bata mahat pāpam kartum vyavasitā vayam |  
yad rājya-sukha-lobhena hantum sva-janam udyatāḥ ||44||*

44. We are intent on committing great sin, since we are ready to kill our own people for gain of happiness of a kingdom.

*yadi mām apratikāram aśastraṁ śastra-pāṇayaḥ |  
dhārtarāṣṭrā raṇe hanyus tan me kṣemataraṁ bhavet ||45||*

45. It would be better for me if the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, weapons in hand, were to kill me without weapons and without opposition.

*sañjaya uvāca  
evam uktvārjunah sañkhye rathopastha upāviśat |  
viśrjya saśaram cāpaṁ śoka-saṁvigna-mānasaḥ ||46||*

46. Speaking in this manner, Arjuna, giving up his bow and arrows, mind disturbed with lamentation, sat down on his chariot amidst the warriors assembled for battle.

Sitting on his chariot (*rathopasthe*) amidst the assembly of warriors (*sañkhye*), Arjuna gave up his weapons.

Thus the commentaries on the first chapter of the *Gītā*, *Sārārtha Varṣiṇī*, has been completed for giving joy to the hearts of devotees, following after the tradition of our *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Two

*sañjaya uvāca  
taṁ tathā kṛpayāviṣṭam aśru-pūrṇākulekṣaṇam |  
viśīdantam idaṁ vākyam uvāca madhusūdanaḥ ||1||*

1. Sañjaya said: Madhusūdana spoke these words to Arjuna, whose eyes were filled with tears, and who was overcome with compassion.

In this second chapter, after destroying the darkness of bewilderment and lamentation of Arjuna by distinguishing the soul from the body, Kṛṣṇa speaks about the characteristics of the liberated soul.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
kutas tvā kaśmalam idaṁ viśame samupasthitam |*

*anārya-juṣṭam asvargyam akīrti-karam arjuna ||2||*

2. The Lord said: How has this bewilderment come upon you at the time of battle? It is against *dharma*, precluding Svarga in next life and fame in this life.

Why (*kutaḥ*) has this bewilderment (*kaśmalam*) at this critical juncture of the war (*viṣame*) come upon you (*upasthitam*)? This bewilderment is not to be experienced by persons of good reputation (*anārya-juṣṭam*), and is against both happiness in next life (*asvargyam*) and this life (*akīrt-karam*)?

*klaibyaṁ mā sma gamaḥ pārtha naitat tvayy upapadyate |  
kṣudraṁ hṛdaya-daurbalyaṁ tyaktvottiṣṭha parantapa ||3||*

3. Do not become a coward. This is not suitable to you. Give up this low weakness of mind and rise, O afflicter of enemies!

“Do not become cowardly (*klaibyam*); do not become impotent. O Pārtha, though you are the son of Pṛthā, you have acted like this! Do not yield to this. This may occur among other inferior *kṣatriyas*, but in you, My friend, it is not proper at all!”

“Do not worry about my lack of bravery. Do not think I am a coward. One must consider the precepts of *dharma* in regards to Bhīṣma, Droṇa and other elders, and also consider the aspect of compassion in regard to the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who, being weaker than I, being afflicted by my weapons, are about to die.”

“This is not discretion from principles of *dharma* nor is it mercy. It is bewilderment and lamentation, which are indications of a weak mind (*kṣudraṁ hṛdaya-daurbalyam*). Therefore give up this weakness of mind and rise up. O conqueror of enemies (*parantapa*), you, who afflict enemies, fight!”

*arjuna uvāca  
kathaṁ bhīṣmam ahaṁ saṅkhyedroṇaṁ ca madhusūdana |  
iṣubhiḥ pratyotsyāmi pūjārḥāv ari-sūdana ||4||*

4. Arjuna said, “O Madhusūdana, killer of enemies, how will I fight in the battle with arrows against Bhīṣma and Droṇa, who are worthy of worship?”

“According to scriptures of *dharma*, not respecting those worthy of worship is a cause of bondage: *pratibadhnāti hi śreyaḥ pūjya-pūjā-vyatikramah*.<sup>10</sup> Therefore I withdraw from fighting. How can I kill them?” The form *prati yotsyāmi* (*parasmaipada*) is used instead of the form *prati yotsye* (*ātmanepada*, for oneself).

“But those two elders are fighting against you. Why are you not able to fight against them?”

“No, I cannot do so, for they are worthy of worship (*pūjārḥau*): I should offer flowers to their feet in devotion rather than sharp arrows in anger. O friend Kṛṣṇa! Even You injure only the enemies in battle, and not Your own *guru* Sāndīpani Muni or your friends the Yadus, O Madhusūdana, killer of Madhu!”

“But I am a descendent of Madhu,<sup>11</sup> in the ancient lineage of the Yadu dynasty. Therefore I am called Mādḥava. How could I have killed Madhu?”

“No, I do not mean that Madhu. I am speaking about the demon named Madhu who was Your enemy (*ari-sūdana*).”

*gurūn ahatvā hi mahānubhāvān  
śreyo bhoktuṁ bhaiḥṣyam apīha loke |  
hatvārtha-kāmāns tu gurūn ihaiva  
bhuñjīya bhogān rudhira-pradigdhān ||5||*

5. It is better to eat by begging in this life, not killing such great elders. Having killed elders who were desiring wealth, I will enjoy objects contaminated with their blood.

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<sup>10</sup> Source is unknown. It is also quoted by Baladeva.

<sup>11</sup> Madhu was the father of Vṛṣṇi, whose later descendents included Vasudeva and Devakī. The demon Madhu along with his brother Kaitabha appeared after Brahmā appeared from the lotus of Viṣṇu’s navel, and stole the *Vedas* from him. Viṣṇu consequently killed them.

“If you don’t want the kingdom, then how will you live?”

“Not killing my elders, I will live by begging, though it is condemned for the *kṣatriya* to do so. It is better to eat the food got from begging. Though it will bring infamy in this life, it will not be inauspicious for future lives. One should not say that these *gurus*, being obedient to Duryodhana, should be rejected because they have become proud, and do not know right from wrong, by citing the scriptures:

*guror apy avaliptasya kāryākāryam ajānataḥ  
utpathapratipannasya parityāgo vidhīyate*

One should reject the *guru* who is proud, does not know proper behavior, who becomes engaged in sinful life. *Mahābhārata*  
5.178.24

They, on the contrary, are great souls (*mahānubhāvān*). What fault is there in Bhīṣma and others who have control over time<sup>12</sup> and lust?”

“But Bhīṣma said to Yudhiṣṭhira,

*artha sya puruṣo dāso dāsas tv artho na kasyacit  
iti satyam mahārāja baddho ’smy arthena kauravaiḥ*

Man is a servant of wealth. Wealth is not a servant of anyone. O king, I have been bound by wealth to the Kauravas. *Mahābhārata*  
6.41.36

Therefore, has not their great character been destroyed by such desire for wealth?”

“That is true, but if I kill them, I will be unhappy. Even in killing those Kurus who are greedy for wealth (*artha-kāmān*), if I should enjoy the wealth, it will be contaminated with their blood. The meaning is this: though they have desire for wealth, they are still my *gurus*. Therefore in

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<sup>12</sup> Bhīṣma could die when he chose, and made a vow to remain unmarried for life.

killing them, because I commit the sin of killing *guru*, my enjoyment will be mixed with that sin.”

*na caĩtad vidmaḥ kataran no garīyo  
yad vā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuḥ |  
yān eva hatvā na jījīviṣāmas  
te ’vasthitāḥ pramukhe dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ ||6||*

6. We do not know which is better--whether we should conquer them or whether they should conquer us. These sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, by killing whom we do not wish to live, are situated facing us.

Moreover I do not know if I shall be victorious or defeated even if I am prepared to kill them. And I do not know which will be better, victory or defeat: if I conquer them or they conquer me. And even if I am victorious, that also is defeat, for I will not want to live.

*kārpanya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ  
pṛcchāmi tvām dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ |  
yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṁ brūhi tan me  
śiṣyas te’haṁ śādhi mām tvām prapannam ||7||*

7. My nature has been overcome by weakness. My mind is bewildered about dharma. I ask You what is best. Please tell me with certainty. I am Your student. Please instruct me, who have surrendered to You.

“Indeed, while speaking the meaning of scripture to bring out a conclusion, though you are a *kṣatriya*, you have decided to become a beggar! What is the use of My speaking?”

“Giving up my natural courage as *kṣatriya* is my weakness (*kārpanyam*). My intelligence has become bewildered in trying to understand the implementation of *dharma*, as the path of *dharma* is very subtle: *dharmasya sūkṣmā gatiḥ*. (*Mahābhārata* 3.198.2, 1.188.11) Therefore it is better that You decide and tell me.”

“But if you defeat My words by posing yourself as learned, how can I speak?”

“I am Your student, and will no longer uselessly oppose You.”

*na hi prapaśyāmi mamāpanudyād  
yac chokam ucchoṣaṇam indriyāṇām |  
avāpya bhūmāv asapatnam rddham  
rājyaṁ surāṇām api cādhipatyam ||8||*

8. I do not see who can remove this sorrow which is drying up my senses, even if I attain an unrivalled prosperous kingdom on earth and even sovereignty over *devas*.

“But you have a friendly relationship with Me, not one of respect. Therefore how can I make you a student? You should thus surrender to someone like Veda Vyāsa, whom you greatly revere.” Arjuna answers with this verse.

“I do not see even one person at all (*pra paśyāmi*: *pra* indicates “to a high degree”) in all three worlds except You who can remove (*apanudyāt*) my sorrow. I do not know anyone more intelligent than Yourself—even Bṛhaspati. Therefore, to whom else should one who is full of sorrow surrender? Due to that sorrow (*yad*) my senses have dried up completely, just as intense summer heat dries up completely (*utśoṣa* means *utkarṣeṇa śoṣa*) a small pond.”

“Now you are full of grief, but if you fight, by conquering the enemy you will attain a kingdom. Absorbing yourself in the enjoyment of that kingdom, your grief will disappear.”

“Even if I attain a kingdom over the whole earth, or sovereignty in Svarga, controlling all the *devatās*, my senses will still be dried up.”

*sañjaya uvāca  
evam uktvā hr̥ṣīkeśam guḍākeśaḥ parantapaḥ |  
na yotsya iti govindam uktvā tūṣṇīm babhūva ha ||9||*

9. Sañjaya said: Having thus spoken to Hṛṣīkeṣa, Guḍākeṣa, afflicter of enemies, telling Govinda “I will not fight,” became silent.

*tam uvāca hṛṣīkeṣaḥ prahasann iva bhārata |  
senayor ubhayor madhye viṣḍantam idaṁ vacaḥ ||10||*

10. Hṛṣīkeṣa, smiling slightly, spoke these words to the depressed Arjuna, in the midst of the two armies.

“You have shown such lack of judgment!” Laughing at him as a friend, Kṛṣṇa could put Arjuna in an ocean of embarrassment for his unworthy actions. However, because now Arjuna took the position of student, laughing would be improper. Thus Kṛṣṇa suppressed that laugh by closing His lips. Instead He slightly smiled (*prahasann iva*). The Lord of the senses (*hṛṣīkeṣa*) was previously controlled by the words of Arjuna out of love for him (BG 1.24), and now He became the controller of Arjuna’s mind, again out of love, for the benefit of Arjuna. Arjuna’s dejection and Kṛṣṇa’s offering consolation to him were seen directly by both armies (*senayor ubhayor madhye*).

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
aśocyān anvaśocas tvam prajñā-vādāmś ca bhāṣase |  
gatāsūn agatāsūmś ca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ ||11||*

11. The Lord said: You, while lamenting for what is not worthy of lamentation, are speaking words of wisdom. The wise men do not lament for the gross body or the subtle body.

“O Arjuna, this lamentation of yours caused by attachment to friends and relatives is the cause of bewilderment. Your power of discernment arising from your concerns starting in verse four with ‘How can I fight against Bhīṣma and Droṇa?’ are the cause of lack of wisdom.” That is stated in this verse.

“You are continually lamenting (*anu śocaḥ*) for what is not worthy of grief (*aśocyān*). Thus you are uttering words of wisdom to Me, who am trying to enlighten you. You speak words (*vādān*) of wisdom (*prajñā*) as in verse

four.” The intention behind the Lord’s words is the opposite: “Actually you have no wisdom.”

“This is because those who are wise (*paṇḍitāḥ*) do not lament for the gross bodies from which life has passed (*gata asūn*)--since the bodies are destructible by their very nature. Neither do they lament for the subtle bodies from which the life airs have not passed (*agata asūn*),<sup>13</sup> for those subtle bodies will certainly be destroyed before liberation. They do not lament because they accept the inherent natures of all of the gross and subtle bodies. But fools lament when life airs pass from the gross bodies of fathers and others, and do not generally understand about the subtle bodies. Enough of such fools! All these, including Bhīṣma, are souls equipped with gross and subtle bodies. Because of the eternal nature of their souls, there is no cause for lamentation. Previously you said that *dharma-śāstra* was stronger than *artha-śāstra*. But I say here that *jñāna-śāstra* (teaching about *ātmā*) is stronger than *dharma-śāstra*.”

*na tv evāhaṁ jātu nāsaṁ na tvaṁ neme janādhipāḥ |  
na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayam ataḥ param ||12||*

12. It is not that I, you and these kings did not exist, and nor in the future will we not exist.

“Now, O friend, I will ask you a question. When you see the death of a person you love, you lament. But is the object of affection while the person is in this world the soul or the body? Śukadeva says that the soul is most dear in all living beings:

*sarveṣāṁ eva bhūtānāṁ nṛpa svātmaiva vallabhaḥ.* (SB 10.14.50) If the soul is the object of affection, the soul should not be the object of lamentation, because it cannot suffer death, since both types of *ātmā*, the *jīva* and *īśvara* are eternal.” With this intention, He speaks this verse.

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<sup>13</sup> The life airs go with the subtle body after death, and enter a new body along with the subtle body at birth. Viśvanātha has taken as *asu* literally as the life air, and *agatāsūn* as those bodies from which the life airs do not depart, the subtle bodies. If we were to take *agatāsūn* as meaning the gross body from which the life air has not yet departed, then there would be no reason for even the fool to lament for it.

It is not that I, the Paramātmā, have ever not been in existence, but rather I have always existed. You also, a *jīvātmā*, have also always existed. These kings also, *jīvātmās*, have always existed. Here the Lord shows that previous non-existence (*prāg-abhāva*) is absent for all souls. And it is not that I, you, and all these kings (*sarve vayam*) will not exist in the future. Rather we will certainly exist. Here he shows that the soul is devoid of destruction (*dhvaṃsa abhāva*). By this he concludes that since the Paramātmā and the *jīva* are both eternal, there is no cause for lamentation. The *śruti* says:

*nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*

He is the chief eternal among all eternal. He is the chief conscious entity among all conscious entities, the one fulfills the needs of all others. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.13

*dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṃ yauvanaṃ jarā |  
tathā dehāntara-prāptir dhīras tatra na muhyati ||13||*

13. As the soul passes through boyhood, youth and old age, so it attains another body after death. The wise are not bewildered by this.

“One’s body becomes the object of affection as it is related to the soul (which is most dear to the self.) By relation with that body, one’s sons, brothers or other relatives become objects of affection. And by relationship to them, even their sons also become objects of affection. So when their bodies perish, there will certainly be lamentation.”

In answer to this, He speaks this verse. “In the body belonging to the *jīva* (*dehinah*) one attains stages such as boyhood. After boyhood is destroyed one attains youth. When youth is destroyed one attains old age. In the same manner, one attains another body (after death). Just as (*yathā*) one does not lament for the destruction of the objects of affection in the form of boyhood and youth of the body which are related to the soul (and therefore dear), so (*tathā*) one should also not lament for the destruction of the object of affection, the body, which is also related to the soul.”

“But with the destruction of youth and attaining old age, one does lament.”

“But then again, with the destruction of boyhood and attainment of youth one rejoices. And with the destruction of worn out bodies of Bhīṣma and Droṇa, they will attain new bodies and will also become joyful.”

Another meaning is: Just as in one body a *jīva* attains various states such as boyhood, the same *jīva* attains various bodies life after life (and therefore one should not lament).<sup>14</sup>

*mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāh |*  
*āgamāpāyino ’nityās tāms titikṣasva bhārata ||14||*

14. O son of Kuntī, the experience of the sense objects gives sensations of cold and heat, happiness and distress, always temporary, appearing and disappearing. O Bhārata, tolerate these.

“Yes this is indeed true. I have shown such indiscretion. My mind, producing nonsense, uselessly covered with lamentation and bewilderment, causes me suffering.”

“It is not the mind alone. The various functions of the mind, in the form of all the senses such as skin, experiencing their sense objects, produce this problem (*anartha*). One has the experience (*sparśa*) of the sense objects (*mātrā*). In the hot season, cold water is pleasant, and in the cold season, it is painful. This happens in an uncontrolled manner, appearing and disappearing (*āgama apāyinaḥ*). Therefore you must tolerate these experiences of the sense objects. Tolerating them is part of *dharma* prescribed in the scriptures. One should not give up the bath in the month of Māgha because it gives pain, since it is prescribed in the scriptures. Following *dharma* gradually rids one of all low qualities. You must tolerate that sons give joy when they are born or earn money, and give sorrow when they die, by their temporary appearance and disappearance. One should not give up one’s scripturally prescribed duty to fight by that consideration. Not performing the prescribed duty eventually brings about great problems.”

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<sup>14</sup> In the first interpretation one should not lament because changes from boyhood to youth and change of body are all incidental to the *ātma* which remains most dear. In the second interpretation one should not lament for the dead body because a person will get another body after death.

*yam hi na vyathayanty ete puruṣam puruṣarṣabha |  
sama-duḥkha-sukham dhīram so 'mṛtatvāya kalpate ||15||*

15. O best of men, the intelligent person, equal in happiness and distress, who is not pained by these sense objects, attains liberation.

Practicing tolerance with this discernment, the experience of the sense objects will, with passage of time, not give distress at all. When a person reaches this state where there is no distress from the objects of the senses, liberation of the *ātmā* is close at hand; he is qualified for liberation (*amṛtatvāya*).

*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ |  
ubhayor api dṛṣṭo 'ntas tv anayoḥ tattva-darśibhiḥ ||16||*

16. There is no permanent existence for the body, and no cessation of existence for the soul. Those who see things in truth see this conclusion about both of these.

The previous verse described the results for those who have attained the level of discrimination. Actually as *śruti* says, the soul is not attached to matter: *asaṅgo hy ayam puruṣaḥ*. (*Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.3.15) Thus, the *jīva* does not have a relationship with the subtle or gross bodies and their products such as lamentation and bewilderment. This relationship is caused by ignorance. This is explained in this verse.

For the soul, there is no existence (*bhāvaḥ*) of lamentation and bewilderment for their shelter, the body (*asataḥ*), since they have qualities opposed to the qualities of the soul. And there is no non-existence (*abhāvaḥ*) of the *jīva* with its eternal form (*sataḥ*). The conclusion (*antaḥ*) about these two--the body and the soul--has been seen by the seers of truth.

By this conclusion, there will be no lamentation or bewilderment arising from seeing the body and things related to the body, because Bhīṣma and others of the opposing party as well as you and your allies are indestructible, being eternal. How can Bhīṣma and others be destroyed, and why do you lament for them? That is the meaning of this verse.

*avināśi tu tad viddhi yena sarvam idam tatam |  
vināśam avyayasyāsyā na kaścit kartum arhati ||17||*

17. Know that the soul by which the body is pervaded is indestructible. No one can destroy that which is indestructible.

This verse clarifies the meaning of the previous verse. “Know this *jīva* (*tat*) which is spread throughout the body (*sarvam idam tatam*) is indestructible.”

“But, being spread throughout the body by its consciousness, this soul would be impermanent because it is of medium size only (being the size of the body).<sup>15</sup>”

This is not so, for the Lord says, *sūkṣmānām apy ahaṁ jīvaḥ*: of small things I am the *jīva*”. (SB 11.16.11) As well, *śruti* says:

*eṣo ’nur ātmā cetasā veditavyo yasmin prāṇaḥ pañcadhā saṁviveśa*

One should know by the pure consciousness the small *ātmā* near which the five life airs rest. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 3.1.9

*bālāgra-śata-bhāgasya śatadhā kalpitasya ca bhāgo jīvaḥ sa vijñeyah*

One should know that the *jīva* is the size of one ten thousandth of the tip of the hair. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 5.9

*ārāgra-mātro hy aparo ’pi dṛṣṭah*

The inferior soul is seen to be the size of the tip of a spoke. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 5.8

By these statements of *śruti* we understand that the *jīva* is very small. It has the power to spread itself throughout the whole body, just as pulverized

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<sup>15</sup> In Nyāya philosophy there are three sizes: minute (*paramāṇu* or atoms), medium size (combination of atoms), and all pervading. A medium size object, being made of the combination of atoms, is subject to destruction and therefore cannot be eternal.

gems or herbs when applied to the head have the power to spread their nourishing influence throughout the whole body. There is nothing contradictory in being small and pervading the body.

Because of its dependence on *upādhis* (mistaken identity), the soul goes to various bodies in heaven and hell. In this way the soul is *sarva-gataḥ*, going everywhere (pervading everywhere).<sup>16</sup> Dattātreyā (in the form of the *avadhūta brāhmana*) says how the *jīva*, taking shelter of the *mahat-tattva* at the beginning of creation, goes to different bodies:

*tām āhus tri-guṇa-vyaktim srjantīm viśvato-mukham  
yasmin protam idam viśvam yena samsarate pumān*

According to great sages, that which is the basis of the three modes of material nature and which manifests the variegated universe is called the *sūtra* or *mahat-tattva*. Indeed, this universe is resting within that *mahat-tattva*, and due to its potency the living entity undergoes material existence. *SB 11.9.20*

Thus the soul's pervasion of the body (and still being minute) is not contrary to its eternal nature stated in the previous verse. Therefore the word *avyayasya* is used in this verse also. It refers to the soul being eternal or *nitya*. No one can destroy the eternal soul. As the *śruti* says:

*nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*

The Lord is the chief eternal among all eternal (souls). He is the chief conscious entity among all conscious entities. He is the one person who fulfills the needs of all others. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.13*

Or the meaning of the verse can be as follows.

The body, the *jīva* and the *Paramātmā* are all seen everywhere in all forms such as human and animal. The first two, the body and *jīva*, were mentioned in the previous verse. The third, *Paramātmā* is mentioned in this verse. It is

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<sup>16</sup> This is another meaning of *sarvam idam tatam*. The *jīvas* are spread throughout the universe in different bodies.

indestructible and spread everywhere in the universe (*idam*)<sup>17</sup>. The word *tu* serves to distinguish Paramātmā from the body and *jīva*. The Paramātmā is by its very nature different from matter and the *jīva*.

*antavanta ime dehā nityasyoktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ |  
anāśino 'prameyasya tasmād yudhyasva bhārata ||18||*

18. The bodies belonging to the eternal, indestructible, small soul are said to be temporary. Therefore, fight, O Bhārata.

This verse also clarifies verse 16. The possessor of the body (*śarīriṇaḥ*), the *jīva*, is beyond measurement, or difficult to understand, because it is very, very small (*aprameyasya*). Therefore you should fight. This means that you should not give up your *dharma* as prescribed in scripture.

*ya enam vetti hantāraṁ yaś cainaṁ manyate hatam |  
ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate ||19||*

19. Those who think that the soul kills and those who think that the soul is killed do not know that the soul does not kill or get killed.

“O friend Arjuna! You, a soul as well, are neither the performer of killing nor the object of killing.” That is expressed in this verse.

He who thinks the *jīva* (*enam*) is the killer--that Arjuna is the killer of Bhīṣma and others, and he who thinks that the *jīva* is killed--that Arjuna is killed by Bhīṣma, are both ignorant. Therefore, what is your fear of infamy from the words of ignorant people who say that Arjuna killed his *guru*?

*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin  
nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ |  
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo  
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre ||20||*

20. The soul is never born, nor does it ever die. Neither was it born in the past, nor will it be born in the future. It has no creation in the past, present

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<sup>17</sup> In the first interpretation *idam* referred to the body. Here it refers to the universe.

or future, and no destruction in past, present or future, and is therefore eternal. It is most ancient but not subject to ageing. It is not killed when the body is killed.

The eternal nature of the *jīva* is here clearly proven. The first line negates the possibility of birth and death for the *jīva* at the present time. The second line negates birth and death in the past and the future. Therefore it is unborn (*ajā*): in past, present and future. Because of no birth, it has no previous non-existence (*prag-abhāva*). It exists at all times (*śāśvataḥ*), meaning that at no time in past, present or future, will it be destroyed (*dhvaṁsa*). Therefore it is eternal (*nityaḥ*).

“But because the soul exists for a long time, it can grow old.”

“No, though it is old (*purā*), it is as if new (*na* for *nava*)<sup>18</sup>, because of absence of the six states of transformations.<sup>19</sup>”

“With the death of the body, will it not die along with the body?”

“It does not die when the body dies. Because it is not joined permanently with the body, the soul is not subservient to it.”

*vedāvināśinam nityam ya enam ajam avyayam |  
katham sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kam ghātayati hanti kam ||21||*

21. He who knows constantly, that this soul is indestructible, unborn, and eternal, kills whom and how? Whom does he cause others to kill and how?

With this knowledge, neither you who are fighting nor I who am urging you to fight have any fault. Here *nityam* is used as an adverb: "He who knows *constantly* that the soul is indestructible, unborn, and eternal....."

The words describing the soul are used to negate the objections of Arjuna about destruction. "Whom do I (*sa puruṣaḥ*), the Lord, cause to be killed (by

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<sup>18</sup> This is the interpretation of the word “*purāṇa*” by Śrīdhara and Baladeva as well.

<sup>19</sup> These are birth, maintenance, growth, maturity, decay and death.

advising you to fight)? And how do I cause anyone to be killed? And whom do you kill? And how do you kill?"

*vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya  
navāni gṛhṇāti naro 'parāṇi |  
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāny  
anyāni samyāti navāni dehī ||22||*

22. As a man gives up old clothes and accepts new ones, so the soul gives up the old bodies and attains new ones.

“But by my fighting, a *jīva* will give up the body known as *Bhīṣma*. Then you and I will be the cause of that.”

“What fault is there in a person giving up old worn cloth to put on new cloth? In a similar way, *Bhīṣma* will give up an old body and attain a new divine body. What fault is there for Me or you in that?”

*nainam chindanti śastrāṇi nainam dahati pāvakaḥ |  
na cainam kledayanti āpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ ||23||*

23. Weapons do not cut the soul. Fire does not burn it. Water does not wet it. Wind does not dry it.

Also, it is not possible to injure the soul at all by the weapons used by you in the battle. That is explained in this verse. Weapons such as swords cannot cut it. The fire weapon cannot burn it. The rain weapon cannot wet it, nor can the wind weapon dry it out.

*acchedyo 'yam adāhyo 'yam akledyo 'soṣya eva ca |  
nityaḥ sarva-gataḥ sthānur acalo 'yam sanātanaḥ ||24||*

*avyakto 'yam acintyo 'yam avikāryo 'yam ucyate |  
tasmād evaṁ viditvainaṁ nānuśocitum arhasi ||25||*

24. The soul cannot be cut, cannot be burned, cannot be moistened or dried. It is eternal, traveling in all bodies, and stable.<sup>20</sup>

25. It is imperceptibly small, pervading the body inconceivably, and without changes. Knowing it thus, you should not lament.

Therefore the *ātmā* is described in this way (taking the descriptions of the previous verse): it cannot be cut, burned, dried or moistened. The repetition of the words signifying the eternal nature of the soul in this section (such as the use of the words *nitya* and *sanātanaḥ* in this verse, and statements of previous verses) is for the purpose of precisely defining the soul for those of confused intellect, just as one will repeat several times in order to make certain that everyone understands, “This is the *dharma* of Kali-yuga, this is the *dharma* of Kali-yuga.”

*Sarva-gataḥ* (gone everywhere) means that the soul goes into all sorts of bodies such as human, animal and *deva* by its *karma*.<sup>21</sup> *Sthāṇu* and *acala* have the same meaning, “having stability,”<sup>22</sup> and the repetition makes the meaning clear.

Because it is very fine, it is called *avyakta*. Because it pervades the body with consciousness, it is called *acintya*, beyond conception. Being devoid of the six changes such as birth, it is called *avikārya*.

*atha cainaṁ nitya-jātaṁ nityaṁ vā manyase mṛtam |*  
*tathāpi tvaṁ mahābāho nainaṁ śocitum arhasi ||26||*

26. Even if you think the soul is always born and always dies, still you should not lament, O Mighty-armed one!

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<sup>20</sup> This translation and others as well is according to the explanation of the words given by Viśvanātha in his commentary. Each *ācārya* may have differing opinion on the meaning of particular words.

<sup>21</sup> The other meaning is pervading everywhere, but this meaning is not taken since the subject is the *jīva*, who pervades only his own body.

<sup>22</sup> Baladeva explains *sthānu* as “having a stable *svarūpa*.”

“I have presented to you the conclusive truth according to the scripture. Now I will present the truth according to material vision. Please understand it.” Then He speaks this verse.

If you think that the soul is always born (*nitya-jātam*) when the body is born, and always dies (*nityam mṛtam*) with the death of the body, you should not lament for it. O mighty-armed Arjuna, being a brave *kṣatriya*, this war is your *dharma*.

As *Bhāgavatam* says:

*kṣatriyāṇām ayam dharmah prajāpati-vinirmitaḥ  
bhrātāpi bhrātaram hanyād yena ghoratamas tataḥ*

The code of sacred duty for warriors established by Lord Brahmā enjoins that one may have to kill even his own brother. That indeed is the most dreadful law.” SB 10.54.40

*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvam janma mṛtasya ca |  
tasmād aparihārye 'rthe na tvam śocitum arhasi ||27||*

27. For what is born, death is certain. For what is dead, birth is certain. Therefore, since both are unavoidable, you should not lament.

Since (*hi*) death is certain (*dhruvaḥ*) with the depletion of *karmas* meant for this life, and birth is also certain because of the *karma* accrued by that body which just died-- since both death and birth are unavoidable (*aparihārye arthe*)--do not lament.

*avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyakta-madhyāni-bhārata |  
avyakta-nidhanāny eva tatra kā paridevanā ||28||*

28. Living entities are invisible in the beginning, manifest in the middle, and invisible at the end. What is there to lament in this?

Thus from the point of view of the soul, having no birth and death (verse 20), and from the point of view of the body, for which birth and death are certain (verse 27), the causes for lamentation have been eliminated. In this

verse the Lord argues against lamentation using both ideas—being eternal and having certain birth and death (but with a purely materialistic argument).

*Devas*, humans and animals are not visible before their birth. However, their subtle and gross bodies do exist invisibly in a potential form, from the existence of the causal ingredients such as earth. They become visible in the middle period, and invisible after death. Even at the time of *mahāpralaya* these bodies exist in a subtle form through the continued existence in subtle form of *karmas* and other elements. Thus all living entities bodies are invisible before birth and after death, and are visible in the interval.

This is stated by the personified *Vedas* in the *Bhāgavatam*:

*sthira-cara-jātayaḥ syur ajayottha-nimitta-yujah*

O eternally liberated, transcendental Lord, Your material energy causes the various moving and nonmoving species of life to appear by activating their material desires, but only when and if You sport with her by briefly glancing at her. *SB* 10.87.29

What cause is there for lamentation (*paridevanā*)?

As Nārada says:

*yan manyase dhruvaṁ lokam adhruvaṁ vā na cobhayam  
sarvathā na hi śocyās te snehād anyatra mohajāt*

O King, in all circumstances, whether you consider the soul to be an eternal principle, or the material body to be perishable, or everything to exist in the impersonal Absolute Truth, or everything to be an inexplicable combination of matter and spirit, feelings of separation are due only to illusory affection and nothing more. *SB* 1.13.44.

*āścarya-vat paśyati kaścīd enam  
āścarya-vad vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ |  
āścarya-vac cainam anyāḥ śṛṇoti*

29. Some see the soul with amazement. Others speak of it in amazement. Others hear about it with amazement. Hearing about it, speaking about it or seeing it--still, no one knows it at all.

“What an astonishing thing you are describing! And it is so astonishing that though I am being enlightened by You, my lack of discernment does not go away.”

“Yes, the *ātmā* is truly astonishing.” With this intention the Lord then speaks this verse.

The word *enam* in this verse stands for the soul and the body, the combination of both, which constitutes the whole world. (The meaning would be: Yes, people see this combination of soul and body, which constitutes all living beings, as amazing.)<sup>23</sup>

*dehī nityam avadhyo ’yam dehe sarvasya bhārata |  
tasmāt sarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvam śocitum arhasi ||30||*

30. O Bhārata, the soul in the body of all entities can never be killed. Therefore you should not lament for any being.

“Therefore speak clearly. What should I do and not do?”

“Do not lament, but rather fight.” In two verses, Kṛṣṇa explains this.

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<sup>23</sup> The *sanskṛt* for this rather cryptic statement is *enam ātmānam deham ca tad ubhaya rūpam sarva lokam*. The meaning as taken by Bhaktivinoda in his translation of the verse is: the soul is amazing since people understand this soul in completely different ways: this *jīva tattva* is seen as a material entity or body, devoid of conscious substance (*deham*); as a conscious entity which is not eternal (*tad ubhaya-rupam*); and as one soul only, as in Advaita philosophy (*sarva-lokam*). In Viśvanātha’s commentary he takes the meaning of *āścārya* as “astonishing” in the sense of “hard to understand,” modifying *enam*, the *ātmā*. Thus they misunderstand it as a material object, as a temporary spiritual element, or as one all- pervading soul.

*sva-dharmam api cāveksya na vikampitum arhasi |  
dharmyād dhi yuddhāc chreyo 'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate ||31||*

31. Considering your own duties, you should not be fearful. There is nothing better for the warrior than to fight for the right cause.

Because the soul cannot be destroyed, you should not fear killing (stated in the previous verse). And considering from the point of view of your particular duties (since there is nothing better than fighting for *dharmā*), you should not fear killing. That is the relation of the two verses.

*yadṛcchayā copapannam svarga-dvāram apāvṛtam |  
sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddham iḍṣam ||32||*

32. Warriors are the happy who obtain such a battle which comes by chance and which opens the doors to heaven.

Moreover, more than even the victors, those who die in a just battle attain happiness. By killing Bhīṣma and others, you make them happier. Even without doing *karma-yoga*, one can attain Svarga through the battle, without any obstructions (*apāvṛtam*).

*atha cet tvam imaṁ dharmyaṁ saṁgrāmaṁ na kariṣyasi |  
tataḥ sva-dharmam kīrtim ca hitvā pāpam avāpsyasi ||33||*

33. If you do not take part in this righteous war, giving up your duty and fame, you will instead reap sin.

In four verses he describes the fault in doing the opposite.

*akīrtim cāpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti te 'vyayām |  
saṁbhāvitasya cakīrtir maraṇād atiricyate ||34||*

34. They will speak incessantly of your infamy. For one who has great position, dishonor is worse than death.

*Avayayam* means “continually.” *Sambhāvitasya* means “of great position.”

*bhayād raṇād uparatam maṁsyante tvām mahā-rathāḥ |  
yeṣām ca tvām bahu-mato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam ||35||*

35. The great warriors, by whom you were regarded highly, and will now be regarded with contempt, will think that you have abandoned the battlefield out of fear.

Those who have high regard for you as a warrior, even though you are an enemy, will no longer give you respect if you give up the battle. The *mahā-rathas* like Duryodhana will think that you have fled in fear from the battlefield. They will not think of any other reason for the *kṣatriya* to leave the field than fear. Strong bonds of friendship will not be considered.

*avācya-vādāmś ca bahūn vadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ |  
nindantas tava sāmartyam tato duḥkhataram nu kim ||36||*

36. They will speak many unspeakable words about you, criticizing your abilities. What could be more painful?

They will speak of you in ill terms (*avācya-vādān*) such as “coward.”

*hato vā prāpsyasi svargam jtvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm |  
tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛta-niścayaḥ ||37||*

37. Being killed, you will attain heaven. Being defeated, you will enjoy the earth. Therefore, rise, O son of Kuntī, and fight with determination.

“In this battle, my victory is not even certain. Therefore, why should you encourage this war?” He answers in this verse.

*sukha-duḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau |  
tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpam avāpsyasi ||38||*

38. Being equal in happiness and distress, in gain or loss, in victory or defeat, engage in the battle. You will not incur any sin.

In all ways, your fighting is an act of *dharma*. If you fear that it will produce sin, I have shown you that it will not be a cause of sin. Therefore fight. The Lord gives this instruction in this verse.

Being equal in happiness and distress, which are caused by gain and loss--such as gain and loss of a kingdom, which are in turn caused by victory and defeat in the war; understanding that both results are equal through a discerning mind--equipped with that knowledge, you will not incur sin at all. It will also be stated later:

*lipyate na sa pāpena padma-patram ivāmbhasā*

One is not touched by sin, as a lotus leaf is not touched by water.  
BG 5.10

*eṣā te 'bhihitā sāṅkhye buddhir yoge tv imām śṛṇu |  
buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karma-bandham prahāsyasi ||39||*

39. I have taught you understanding necessary for the process of *jñāna*. Now hear about understanding necessary for the process of *bhakti*. By engaging your intelligence in this *yoga*, O son of Pṛthā, you will become free from the bondage of *karma*.

In this verse, Kṛṣṇa concludes the topic of *jñāna-yoga* which he has just taught. *Sāṅkhya* means “that by which true knowledge of things (*vastu-tattvam*) is perfectly (*samak*) revealed (*khyāyate*).” In other words, *sāṅkhya* means a perfect process of knowing. The intelligence (*eṣā*) to be implemented in that process has been explained. Now hear about the intelligence necessary to implement *bhakti-yoga* (*yoge*) which will now be explained. Endowed with this understanding concerning the subject of *bhakti-yoga*, you will give up *saṁsāra*<sup>24</sup> (*karma-bandham*).

*nehābhikrama-nāśo 'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate |  
svalpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt ||40||*

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<sup>24</sup> *Saṁsāra* refers to repeated birth and death in this world.

40. In this process, there is no loss by stopping without completion, and no sin incurred by doing so. One is delivered from birth and death even by practicing a little of this process.

There are two types of *yoga* explained in this section of the chapter: activities of *bhakti*, including hearing chanting and other such activities; and prescribed duties offered to the Lord without personal desire (*niṣkāma-karma-yoga*), which is expressed later starting with the verse *karmany evādhikāras te* (BG 2.47). Before that, however, *bhakti* is discussed. Because *bhakti* alone, and no other process, is beyond the three modes, a person transcends the modes only by performing *bhakti-yoga*. Thus the statement *nistraiguṇyo bhava* to Arjuna (BG 2.45) indicates that this section is about *bhakti*. The *nirguṇa* nature of *bhakti* is also well supported by the statements of the Eleventh Canto of *Bhāgavatam*.<sup>25</sup> *Jñāna* and *karma* cannot be said to be *nistraiguṇya* because of the presence of *sattva* in *jñāna*, and *rajas* in *karma*.

And the *bhakti* found in *karma-yoga* in the form of offering ones prescribed actions to the Lord is present there just makes *karma* lose its uselessness and bear material fruits. This process of *karma-yoga* does not have the designation of *bhakti* proper because predominance of *bhakti* is absent. If one considers *karma* offered to the Lord to be *bhakti*, then what would the designation *karma* refer to? If one says that it refers to prescribed *karma* not offered to the Lord, that cannot be, for Nārada says,

*naiṣkarmyam apy acyuta-bhāva-varjitam  
na śobhate jñānam alaṁ nirañjanam  
kutaḥ punaḥ śaśvad abhadram īsvare  
na cārpitaṁ karma yad apy akāraṇam*

Knowledge of self-realization, even though free from all material affinity, does not look well if devoid of a conception of the Infallible [God]. What, then, is the use of fruitive activities, which are naturally painful from the very beginning and transient by nature, if

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<sup>25</sup> The twenty-fifth chapter of the Eleventh Canto explains in many verses how *bhakti* and things related to *bhakti* are beyond the *guṇas*. Many of these verses are quoted in Viśvanātha's commentaries on verse 45 of this chapter and verse 28 of the eighteenth chapter.

they are not utilized for the devotional service of the Lord? SB  
1.5.12

This statement indicates that *karma* devoid of the Lord is completely useless.

Therefore, in this verse and in the verses till verse 45, *bhakti*, characterized only by hearing, chanting, and other devotional acts, practiced only to attain the sweetness of the Lord's lotus feet, is being described. *Niṣkāma-karma-yoga* will also be described. Both of these are indicated by the word *buddhi-yoga* mentioned in verse 39. In the phrase *dadāmi buddhi-yogam tam yena mām upayānti te* (BG 10.10), the word *buddhi-yoga* indicates *bhakti-yoga*. In the phrase *durena hy avaram karma buddhi-yogād dhanañjaya* (BG 2.49), the word *buddhi-yoga* indicates *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*.

Thus, this present verse is a glorification of the process of *bhakti* with hearing and chanting, which is beyond the modes of nature. In *bhakti-yoga* (*iha*) there is no destruction (*nāśaḥ*), and there is also no sin incurred (*pratyavāya*), if the practice has just begun (*abhikrama*) and then stopped. If *karma-yoga*, however, is begun and then stopped, there is both destruction of the fruits of *karma-yoga* and sinful reaction as well for the performer.<sup>26</sup>

“But then, by non-performance of *bhakti* which he is supposed to do, the aspiring practitioner also should not get any results.”

“Whatever little *bhakti* was there by the initial practice (*svalpam apy asya dharmasya*), even that small amount, will certainly deliver him from the bondage of *samsāra* (*mahato bhayat*).”

This is understood from such verses as the following:

*yan-nāma sakṛcchravaṇāt pukkaśo 'pi vimucyate samsārād*

Merely by hearing the holy name of Your Lordship only once, even *caṇḍālas* men of the lowest class, are freed from all material contamination. SB 6.16.44

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<sup>26</sup> The Mīmāṃsakas say that if the actions are not completed they bear no result. Further, sin is incurred by not completing the act.

And it is also seen in the example of Ajāmila and others.

One can see that the following statement by the Lord has the same meaning:

*hy aṅgopakrame dhvaṁso mad-dharmasyoddhavāṅv api  
mayā vyavasitaḥ samyañ nirguṇatvād anāśiṣaḥ*

My dear Uddhava, because I have personally established it, this process of devotional service unto Me is transcendental and free from any material motivation. Certainly a devotee never suffers even the slightest loss by adopting this process. *SB 11.29.20*

In the *Bhāgavatam* verse quoted above, Kṛṣṇa also shows the cause of indestructibility of *bhakti*. As it is beyond the *guṇas*, it never can be destroyed. The same reasoning should also be applied to the present *Gītā* verse. One cannot say however that *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, even by being offered to the Lord, is beyond the modes of nature, for it is said:

*mad-arpaṇaṁ niṣphalaṁ vā sattvicṁ nija-karma tat*

Work performed as an offering to Me, without consideration of the fruit, is considered to be in the mode of goodness. *SB 11.25.23*

This verse indicates that *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, even by the power of being offered to the Lord, is in the material mode of *sattva* (and therefore subject to destruction).

*vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana |  
bahu-śākhā hy anantās ca buddhayo 'vyavasāyinām ||41||*

41. Resolute intelligence is only one in this process, O son of the Kurus. The intelligence of those who are irresolute has many branches of action and unlimited desires.

Moreover among all types of intelligence, that intelligence concentrated on *bhakti-yoga* is the best. Resolute intelligence fixed in *bhakti-yoga* is only one. The meaning of this is illustrated as follows.

“My *sādhana* is to serve the lotus feet of the Lord, to remember and glorify Him as instructed by my *guru*. That is also my goal (*sādhya*). It is my life sustaining medicine, for I cannot give up the *sādhana* and the *sādhya*. This is my most desirable object, my duty, and nothing else is my duty; nothing else is desired, even in dreams. There may be happiness or sorrow. *Samsāra* may be destroyed, or may not be destroyed. That is no loss for me. Let there only be resolute intelligence fixed in pure *bhakti*.”

It is said:

*tato bhajeta mām bhaktyā śraddhālur dṛḍha-niścayaḥ*

My devotee should remain happy and worship Me with *great faith and conviction*. SB 11.20.28

The intelligence of others however is not *ekā*. Those intellects have many branches, and thus the intellects are unlimited (*anantāḥ*) rather than one, because of the unlimited desires to fulfill in *karma-yoga*. For instance, in *jñāna-yoga*, in order to purify the mind, one must first fix the intelligence on *niškāma-karma*. When the mind is purified, the intelligence then concentrates on giving up action (*karma-sannyāsa*). Next, the intelligence concentrates on *jñāna*, knowledge. But the intelligence at that time must also concentrate on *bhakti* so that *jñāna* does not become devoid of results. The intelligence then concentrates on giving up *jñāna*, as the Lord says, *jñānam ca mayi sannyaset* one should surrender such knowledge in order to attain me. (SB 11.19.1) Thus the intelligences or minds, concentrating on different objects, are said to be infinite or many. And the types of differing *sādhana*s are also many, since *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* must all be performed.

*yām imām puṣpitaṁ vācam pravadyanti avipaścitaḥ |  
veda-vāda-ratāḥ pārtha nānyad astīti vādinaḥ ||42||*

42. The unintelligent people, absorbed in discussing the *Vedas*, who propound the theory that matter is everything, attractively speak flowery words.

This verse speaks of the persons with wavering intelligence, involved in *sakāma-karma*, who are very dull witted. They speak excellently (*pravadanti*)<sup>27</sup> pleasant words of the *Vedas* which are like a poisonous but attractive flowering plant. Since their consciousness has been deluded by those words, they are not endowed with fixed intelligence, (*tayā apahrta cetasām vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate*). The sentence is completed in verse 44. Because of the impossibility for them to accept, that fixed intelligence is not taught to them. Why do they speak in this way? They speak in this way because they are fools (*avipaścītāḥ*), because they interpret the words of the *Vedas* (*veda-vāda-ratāḥ*) such as the following:

*akṣayyaṁ ha vai cāturmāsya-yājinaḥ sukr̥tam bhavati*

One who has worshiped by means of the vows of *cāturmāsya* attains pious credits which never become depleted. *Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra, Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda 8.1.1*

*apāma somam amṛtā abhūma*

We drank *soma* and became immortal. *Rg Veda 8.48.3*

They say that there is no God other than this (*na anyat asti*).

*kāmātmānaḥ svarga-parā janma-karma-phala-pradām |  
kriyā-viśeṣa-bahulām bhogaśvarya-gatiṁ prati ||43||*

43. Filled with desire, anxious for heaven, they speak many words concerning rituals for attaining power and enjoyment, words for giving the fruits of their action in the form of higher birth.

What type of words do they speak? They speak words about various rites giving many results<sup>28</sup> for attaining power and enjoyment, words which give good *karma* in terms of birth.

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<sup>27</sup> *Pra* here stands for *prakṛṣṭa*, which means “attractively.”

*bhogaiśvarya-prasaktānām tayāpahṛta-cetasām |  
vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate ||44||*

44. For those people, who are attached to enjoyment and power, whose consciousness has been deluded by that talk, the resolute intelligence, fixed on one point, does not take place.

Those whose minds are attracted by the flowery words, who are attached to power and enjoyment, do not have the determined intelligence fixed firmly on one point (*samādhau*), fixed only on the Supreme Lord. The form of the verb *na vidhīyate* is reflexive passive (*karma-kartari*), meaning in this case “is not attained.” This commentary is Śrīdhara Svāmī’s version.

*traiguṇya-viśayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhavārjuna |  
nirdvandvo nitya-sattva-stho niryoḡa-kṣema ātmavān ||45||*

45. The subject of the *Vedas* is the three modes. Rise above the three modes, Arjuna, and be free of dualities, situated with the eternal devotees, devoid of desire for gain or preservation, and be engaged in the intelligence given by Me.

Give up all *sādhanas* of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*, and just take shelter of *bhakti-yoga*. That is the intention of this verse.

The *Vedas* have the ability to reveal only *karma* and *jñāna* and other topics composed of the three modes (*traiguṇya viśaya*) for personal gratification. The suffix *ya* in *traiguṇya viśaya* here denotes self-interest. This statement of course means that the majority of texts deal with material subjects. However the *śrutis* (*Vedas*) do say:

*bhaktir evainam nayati*

*Bhakti* alone leads to the Lord.     *Māṭhara Śruti*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> He analyzes the word *bahula* as “giving much” from the root *lā*, meaning “to give” combined with *bahu*, many.

<sup>29</sup> This quotation is given in *Prīti Sandarbha* and attributed to the *Māṭhara Śruti*.

*yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau*

One should have as much devotion in *guru* as one does in the Lord.  
*Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad* 6.23

As well, the *pañcarātra* and *smṛti* scriptures, and other *Upaniṣads* like the *Gītā Upaniṣad* and *Gopāla Tāpani Upaniṣad* make *nirguṇa-bhakti* the subject of discussion. If the *Vedas* did not speak of *bhakti* at all, then *bhakti* could not be substantiated.

Do not involve yourself with those statements of the *Vedas* dealing with *jñāna* and *karma* affected by the three *guṇas* (*nistraiguṇya bhava*). But you should always follow the Vedic statements dealing with *bhakti*. By following those injunctions, you are free from fault:

*śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-pañcarātra-vidhiṃ vinā  
aikāntikī harer bhaktir utpātāyaiva kalpyate*

Without following the rules of *śruti*, *smṛti*, *purāṇas* and *pañcarātra*, pure *bhakti* to the Lord creates disaster. *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu*, 1.2.101 quoted from *Brahma-yāmala*

By this, one can understand that the *Vedas* deal with both material and spiritual topics, topics involving the three *guṇas* and topics beyond the *guṇas*. But you should be devoid of the *guṇas* (*nistraiguṇya bhava*). By following the path of *nirguṇa bhakti* offered to Me, cross over the paths dealing with the three *guṇas*.

Then, such a person will be free of the dualities (*nirdvandah*) within the *guṇas*, such as respect and disrespect, and will remain with the eternal living entities (*nitya sattva*), My devotees. If one were to say that *nitya sattva sthaḥ* means to be situated in *sattva guṇa*, that would be a contradiction to the statement *nistraiguṇya bhava*.

You will be free from the desire to acquire what you lack (*yoga*) and to protect what you have attained (*kṣema*), because of your taste for My *bhakti-rasa*. This is because I, out of affection for My devotee, carry the

responsibility: *yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham.* (BG 9.22) You will be fixed in the intelligence given by Me (*ātmavān*).

Here there will be an examination of the meaning of *nistraigunya* and *traigunya*. It is said in the Eleventh Canto of *Bhāgavatam*:

*mad-arpaṇaṁ niṣphalaṁ vā sattvicṁ nija-karma yat  
rājasam phala-saṅkalpaṁ hiṁsā-prāyādi tāmasam*

Work performed as an offering to Me, (occasionally) without consideration of the fruit, is considered to be in the mode of goodness. Work performed with a desire to enjoy the results is in the mode of passion. And work impelled by violence and envy is in the mode of ignorance. SB 11.25.23

In this statement *niṣphalam vā* means “occasionally devoid of desires for the results of execution of duties.”

*kaivalyaṁ sattvicṁ jñānaṁ rajo vaikalpikaṁ ca yat  
prākṛtaṁ tāmasaṁ jñānaṁ man-niṣṭhaṁ nirguṇaṁ smṛtam*

Absolute knowledge is in the mode of goodness, knowledge based on duality is in the mode of passion, and foolish, materialistic knowledge is in the mode of ignorance. Knowledge based upon Me, however, is understood to be transcendental. SB 11.25.24

*vanam tu sāttviko vāso grāmo rājasa ucyate  
tāmasaṁ dyuta-sadanaṁ man-niketaṁ tu nirguṇam*

Residence in the forest is in the mode of goodness, residence in a town is in the mode of passion, residence in a gambling house displays the quality of ignorance, and residence in a place where I reside is transcendental.

SB 11.25.25

*sattvicḥ kārako 'saṅgī rāgāndho rājasaḥ smṛtaḥ  
tāmasaḥ smṛti-vibhraṣṭo nirguṇo mad-apāśrayaḥ*

A worker free of attachment is in the mode of goodness; a worker blinded by personal desire is in the mode of passion, and a worker who has completely forgotten how to tell right from wrong is in the mode of ignorance. But a worker who has taken shelter of Me is understood to be transcendental to the modes of nature. SB 11.25.26

*sāttvikyādhyātmikī śraddhā karma-śraddhā tu rājasī  
tāmasy adharṃ yā śraddhā mat-sevāyām tu nirguṇā*

Faith directed toward spiritual life is in the mode of goodness, faith rooted in fruitive work is in the mode of passion, faith residing in irreligious activities is in the mode of ignorance, but faith in My devotional service is purely transcendental. SB 11.25.27

*pathyaṃ pūtam anāyastam āhāryaṃ sattvicṃ smṛtam  
rājasaṃ cendriya-preṣṭhaṃ tāmasaṃ cārti-dāśuci*

Food that is wholesome, pure and obtained without difficulty is in the mode of goodness, food that gives immediate pleasure to the senses is in the mode of passion, and food that is unclean and causes distress is in the mode of ignorance. (According to Śrīdhara Svāmī the word *ca* indicates “But food offered to Me is beyond the modes.”) SB 11.25.28

*sattvicṃ sukham ātmotthaṃ viṣayotthaṃ tu rājasam  
tāmasaṃ moha-dainyotthaṃ nirguṇaṃ mad-apāśrayam*

Happiness derived from the self is in the mode of goodness, happiness based on sense gratification is in the mode of passion, and happiness based on delusion and degradation is in the mode of ignorance. But that happiness found within Me is transcendental. SB 11.25.29

The last verses, after showing the objects in the three modes of nature, explain the conquest of the three modes situated to some degree within oneself, by the process of *nirguṇa-bhakti*, in order to reach complete transcendence of the modes.

*dravyam deśas tathā kālo jñānam karma ca kārakah  
śraddhāvasthā-kr̥tir niṣṭhā traigunyaḥ sarva eva hi*

Therefore material substance, place, result of activity, time, knowledge, work, the performer of work, faith, state of consciousness, species of life and destination after death are all based on the three modes of material nature.  
SB 11.25.30

*sarve guṇamayā bhāvāḥ puruṣāvyakta-dhiṣṭhitāḥ  
dṛṣṭam śrutam anudhyātam buddhyā vā puruṣarṣabha*

O best of human beings, all states of material being are related to the interaction of the enjoying soul and material nature. Whether seen, heard of or only conceived within the mind, they are without exception constituted of the modes of nature. SB 11.25.31

*etāḥ saṁsṛtayaḥ puṁso guṇa-karma-nibandhanāḥ  
yeneme nirjitāḥ saumya guṇājīvena cittajāḥ  
bhakti-yogena man-niṣṭho mad-bhāvāya prapadyate*

O gentle Uddhava, all these different phases of conditioned life arise from work born of the modes of material nature. The living entity who conquers these modes, manifested from the mind by the process of devotional service, can dedicate himself to Me and thus attain pure love for Me. SB 11.25.32

Thus, only by the process of *bhakti* can one conquer over the three modes. There is no other way. Later, in answer to the question, “How can one surpass the three modes of nature?” the Lord says:

*mām ca yo ’vyabhicāreṇa bhakti-yogena sevate  
sa guṇān samatīyātān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate* BG 14.26

Śrīdhara Svāmī explains that verse as follows: the *ca* word indicates exclusiveness. “He who serves only Me, the Supreme Lord, through undeviating *bhakti-yoga*, surpasses the *guṇas*.”

*yāvān artha udapāne sarvataḥ saṃplutodake |  
tāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ ||46||*

46. As the purposes of all wells are fulfilled by a large water body, so all the results of all types of worship mentioned in the *Vedas* are fulfilled just by knowing and worshipping the one Supreme God.

The glory of *bhakti-yoga*, being *niṣkāma* and *nirguṇa*, is such that it goes without saying that it is without loss or sin, even if started and discontinued. That even a little performance of *bhakti* makes one successful is stated by Uddhava in the Eleventh Canto.

*na hy aṅgopakrame dhvaṁso mad-dharmasyoddhavāṅv api  
mayā vyavasitaḥ samyaṅ nirguṇatvād anāśiṣaḥ*

My dear Uddhava, because I have personally established it, this process of devotional service unto Me is transcendental and free from any material motivation. Certainly a devotee never suffers even the slightest loss by adopting this process. *SB 11.29.20*

However, even *bhakti* with material desire (*sakāma-bhakti*) is known by the term *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi* (since there is worship of only one person). This is shown through an example.

The singular case is used to indicate a whole class of wells. “Whatever purposes the wells serve” is the meaning of *yāvān artha udapāne*. Some wells are used for cleaning the body after passing nature. Some others are used for brushing teeth. Others are used for washing clothing. Others are used for washing hair. Others are used for bathing. Others are used for drinking water. All the purposes of all the different wells are served by a large body of water like a lake. In that one lake, one can perform all the activities such as cleaning the body or brushing the teeth. Whereas by using different wells for different purposes, one becomes tired of wandering around, that is not the case in using the lake. The outstanding quality of the lake water however is its sweet taste, whereas that of the well is not tasty.

Thus, whatever purposes are served by worship of all the *devatās* mentioned in all the *Vedas* are achieved through worship of the one Supreme Lord, by the person in knowledge, one who knows the *Vedas* (*brāhmaṇasya*). He who knows the *Veda* (*brahma*), is called *brāhmaṇa*. One may know the *Vedas*, but one who knows the import of the *Vedas*, *bhakti*, is a special knower (*viśeṣato jānataḥ = vijānataḥ*).

It is said in the Second Canto of *Bhāgavatam*:

*brahma-varcasa-kāmas tu yajeta brahmaṇaḥ patim  
indram indriya-kāmas tu prajā-kāmaḥ prajāpatim*

One who desires to be absorbed in the impersonal *brahmajyoti* effulgence should worship the master of the *Vedas*, one who desires powerful sex should worship the heavenly King, Indra, and one who desires good progeny should worship the great progenitors called the Prajāpatis. SB 2.3.3

But then it is said:

*akāmaḥ sarva-kāmo vā mokṣa-kāma udāra-dhīḥ  
tīvreṇa bhakti-yogena yajeta puruṣam param*

A person who has broader intelligence, whether he be full of all material desire, without any material desire, or desiring liberation, must by all means worship the supreme whole, the Personality of Godhead. SB 2.3.10

Just as the sunshine, unmixed with clouds or other obstructions, is intense, *bhakti-yoga*, unmixed with *jñāna*, *karma* or other pollutants, is intense (*tīvreṇa bhakti-yogena*). One attains fulfillment of many desires by worshipping many *devatās*. This requires many types of mental concentration. But one can attain all those desires from the one Supreme Lord, from just one portion of ones concentration on the one Lord. One should understand that this concentration on one personality (and attaining many goals) arises from the excellent qualities possessed by the object of concentration, the Lord.

*karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana |  
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmaṇi ||47||*

47. You have qualification for prescribed work, but not the results of the work. Do not be the cause of results of work. Do not be attached to not doing work, or doing sinful work.

The Lord wanted to speak about the processes of *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *karma-yoga* to Arjuna, who was his dear friend. Having spoken of *jñāna* and *bhakti-yoga*, the Lord then considered that these two were not suitable for Arjuna. Thus He now speaks of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*.

“You are qualified for works. But those who crave the results are very impure in consciousness. But you have an almost pure heart. I can say this about you since I know you.”

“But in doing actions, a result must come.”

“By doing an action with a desire for a certain result, a person becomes the cause of that result. But you should not act in that manner. I give you that blessing. And do not become attracted to non-performance of your duty, or in doing sin (*akarmaṇi*), rather you should hate doing that. I give you that blessing also.”

However, in the next chapter, Arjuna says, “My intelligence is bewildered by these equivocal words.” This apparent lack of connection between the previous and later statements should be understood to be intentional, having a purpose. “Just as I stand as your charioteer awaiting your order, you also await My order.” One should see that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna actually had real agreement of mind.

*yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya |  
siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate ||48||*

48. Being situated in this *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, perform your duties, giving up attachment, and being equal to success and failure, O conqueror of wealth! Such equal mindedness is called *yoga*.

With this verse, Kṛṣṇa starts teaching the method of *niṣkāma-karma*. Acting in this way, seeing victory and defeat as equal, O Arjuna, you should perform your duty of fighting. This performance of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* transforms into *jñāna-yoga*. *Jñāna-yoga* should be understood from the previous and latter portions of the work.

*dūreṇa hy avaraṁ karma buddhi-yogād dhanan̄jaya |  
buddhau śaraṇam anviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phala-hetavaḥ ||49||*

49. O conqueror of wealth, actions with desire are far inferior to *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*. Surrender to this *buddhi-yoga* or *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*. Those who seek results from their work are wretched (and receive bondage).

Kṛṣṇa here criticizes *karma* done with material desires (*sakāma-karma*). The actions done with material desire (*avaraṁ karma*) are far inferior to *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* offered to the Supreme Lord (*buddhi-yogāt*). Take shelter of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* (*buddhau*). In this verse *buddhi-yoga* refers to *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* rather than *bhakti-yoga*.

*buddhi-yukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛta-duṣkṛte |  
tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam ||50||*

50. He who is engaged in *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* gives up both pious and impious reactions. Therefore engage in this *yoga*. Among all types of action, this performance without attachment is a skill.

Therefore be engaged in the *yoga* as described here (*yogāya yujyasva*). Among all actions done with or without desire (*karmaṣu*), action performed with indifference to results (*yogaḥ*) is a skill (*kauśalam*).<sup>30</sup>

*karmajam buddhi-yuktā hi phalaṁ tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ |  
janma-bandha-vinirmuktāḥ padam gacchanty anāmayaṁ ||51||*

51. Being engaged in this *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, having given up the results of work, the intelligent people, freed from the bondage of birth, attain the place of no suffering.

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<sup>30</sup> Skill means here that action is performed but does not accrue reactions.

*yadā te mohakalilam buddhir vyatitariṣyati |  
tadā gantāsi nirvedam śrotavyasya śrutasya ca ||52||*

52. When your intelligence has completely crossed the denseness of illusion, you will be indifferent to all that has been heard and all that will be heard.

From the performance of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* offered to the Supreme Lord, you will develop this neutrality (*yoga*). When your intelligence has surpassed particularly (*vi*) and completely (*ati*) the denseness of illusion, at that time you will become indifferent to all the subjects about which you will hear, and have already heard. This you will achieve by destruction of doubts and misconceptions, through hearing instructions of scripture from Me. You will think “At the present, I must practice my *sādhanas* continuously.”

*śruti-vipratipannā te yadā sthāsyati niṣcalā |  
samādhāv acalā buddhis tadā yogam avāpsyasi ||53||*

53. When your intelligence is indifferent to the *Vedas* because of being fixed, and you are situated in *samādhi*, then you will attain the status of *jīvan-mukta*.<sup>31</sup>

At that time, you will become detached from hearing about all sorts of material and Vedic subjects, because of being averse to the agitation created by these subjects (*niṣcalā*). And your intelligence will be fixed in *samādhi* (*samādhau acalā*), as described in the sixth chapter. At that time, by achieving direct realization, you will achieve the status of *jīvan-mukta* (*yogam avāpsyasi*).

*arjuna uvāca  
sthita-prajñasya kā bhāṣā samādhi-sthasya keśava |  
sthita-dhīḥ kim prabhāṣeta kim āsita vrajeta kim ||54||*

54. Arjuna said: O Keśava, what is the description of this person situated in *samādhi*, the *sthita-prajña*? What does he speak, how does he sit, how does he move?

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<sup>31</sup> With discussion of *samādhi* the topic now switches to *jñāna-yoga*. This will be made clear in the next chapter.

Hearing about intelligence fixed in *samādhi* (*samādhav acalā buddhiḥ*), Arjuna asks about the characteristics of that *yogī*. *Sthita-prajña* in this verse has the same meaning as *acalā buddhi* in the previous verse: fixed intelligence. What qualities can describe the *sthita-prajña* (*kā bhāsā*)? What are the qualities of the person situated in *samādhi*, *samādhi stha*? Actually the terms *sthita-prajña* and *samādhi-stha* both refer to the *jīvan-mukta*. What will that person say in the face of happiness and distress, respect and disrespect, praise and condemnation (*kim prabhāseta*)? What will he say, either loudly or to himself? In what way will his senses remain unresponsive to the external objects (*kim āsīta*)? In what way will his senses respond to the objects (*vrajeta kim*)?

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha mano-gatān |*  
*ātmanā evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthita-prajñas tadocyate ||55||*

55. The Lord said: When he completely gives up all desires which arise from the mind alone, and is satisfied with the soul alone by that mind, he is called *sthita-prajña*.

Step by step, Kṛṣṇa answers each of the four questions, from this verse until the end of the chapter. (This verse answers the first question: What is the nature of the *jīvan-mukta*?)

He gives up all desires, so that not even one desire remains for any object. He is able to give up these desires because they belong to the mind (*manogatān*); they are not the intrinsic quality of the soul. If they were the intrinsic quality of the soul, they could not be given up, just as fire never gives up heat. The cause for this is stated. He is satisfied by the soul whose very nature is bliss (*ātmanā tuṣṭaḥ*), in the mind (*ātmani*) which has withdrawn from sense objects. The *śruti* says:

*yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye 'sya hr̥di śrītāḥ*  
*atha martyo 'mṛto bhavaty atra brahma samaśnute*

When all the desires situated in the heart are cleared away, the mortal becomes immortal and enjoys Brahman. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 6.14

*duḥkheṣv anudvigna-manāḥ sukheṣu vigata-spr̥haḥ |  
vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhaḥ sthita-dhīr munir ucyate ||56||*

56. The sage whose mind is not disturbed by the appearance of suffering, who has given up all desire during opportunities for happiness, who is devoid of attachment, fear and anger, is called a *sthita-prajña*.

This verse and the next verse, the Lord answers the question “How does he speak?”

His mind is not disturbed by *adhyātmika* suffering in the form of hunger, thirst, fever, or headache, by the *adhibhautika* suffering coming from snakes or tigers, or by the *adhidaivika* suffering arising from extremes in wind or rain. When someone asks about his welfare, he says<sup>32</sup> simply that this suffering is his *prārabdha-karma* which he must unavoidably endure. He is not agitated with suffering (*duḥkheṣv anudvigna-manāḥ*). Otherwise, internally he will think in this way if not asked. This absence of disgust at his situation is understood by the intelligent person to be the symptom of an undisturbed person. False indifference to suffering, the mark of the imposter, however, is detected as such by the wise man. Such a pretender is called fallen or depraved.

In the face of opportunities for happiness, he is without desire and says to himself or others that it is simply his *prārabdha-karma* which he must tolerate. And the intelligent person recognizes by this his quality of being devoid of desire for happiness.

These qualities are made clearer. He is devoid of attachment to enjoyment (*vīta-rāga*), and devoid of fear from such things as tigers that want to eat him. He is devoid of anger towards friends who have attacked him. As an example, Jaḍa Bharata in front of the Goddess Durgā, did not show fear or anger towards the *caṇḍāla* leader who wanted to kill him.

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<sup>32</sup> The commentary mentions what the person says in order explain that this verse illustrates the answer to the question “How does he speak?”

*yaḥ sarvatrānabhisnehas tat tat prāpya śubhāśubham |  
nābhinandati na dveṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā ||57||*

57. He who has no motivated affections at all, who does not rejoice on attaining good fortune or curse on attaining misfortune, is situated in *prajñā*.

That person is without affections which are subject to material conditions (*anabhisneha*). Unconditional affection out of mercifulness however should remain to some degree. He is fixed in those qualities. On receiving something favorable to himself (*śubham*), through respect or feeding for instance, he does not approve, and receiving disrespect (*aśubham*), such as a punch from someone's fist, he does not disapprove. He does not say, "Oh, you are so religious, serving a great devotee. I bless you with happiness." Nor does he curse the disrespectful person saying, "Go to hell, you sinful creature." He is *prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*, situated in *samādhi* (*samādhim pratiṣṭhita*), or well situated in *prajñā or samādhi*.

*yadā saṁharate cāyaṁ kūrmo 'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ |  
indriyāṅindriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā ||58||*

58. When he draws his senses away completely from sense objects like a turtle withdrawing its limbs, he is situated in *prajñā*.

This verse answers the question, "How does he sit?" (*kim āsīta*)

He withdraws his senses such as the ear from the objects of the senses such as sound. Stopping the movement of the independent senses towards the external objects, he establishes them without movement internally. This is the "sitting" of the person situated in *prajñā*. An example is given. He does so, just as the turtle fixes his senses such as mouth and eyes within itself by its will.

*viśayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ |  
rasa-varjaṁ raso 'py asya paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate ||59||*

59. One who refrains from eating also stops the sense objects from functioning, but the desire for enjoyment remains. Having seen the Paramātmā, one can stop the desire as well.

“But even the fool who is fasting because of sickness is able to stop the movement of his senses.”

For one who stops eating (*nirāhārasya*), the objects of the senses disappear, but not the desire for objects (*rasa-varjam*). The desire (*rasa*) for objects does not disappear. For the person situated in *prajñā* however, having seen the Paramātmā, the desire for objects does disappear. This is not a deviation from the qualities of the *sthita-prajña*. The ability to realize the soul directly is something that has to be attained through practice, not something that is naturally possible for everyone (such as the ignorant person fasting.)

*yatato hy api kaunteya puruṣasya vipaścitaḥ |  
indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabham manah ||60||*

60. Even for the wise man who endeavors, O son of Kuntī, the agitating senses take away the mind by force.

The effort at the stage of *sādhana* is very great, without power to turn back the senses completely at all times. *Pramāthīni* means “causing agitation.”

*tāni sarvāṇi saṁyamya yukta āsīta mat-parah |  
vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā ||61||*

61. The *yogī* who is devoted to Me, after restraining all the senses, will remain seated, unresponsive to sense objects. He whose senses have thus been brought under control is *sthita-prajña*.

*Mat-parah* means My devotee. Without devotion to Me, one cannot conquer the senses. This will be seen everywhere in later verses of the *Gītā*. Uddhava has also said:

*prāyaśaḥ puṇḍarīkākṣa yuñjanto yogino manah  
viśīdanty asamādhānān mano-nigraha-karṣitāḥ  
athāta ānanda-dugham padāmbujam hamsāḥ śrayeran*

O lotus-eyed Lord, generally those *yogīs* who try to steady the mind experience frustration because of their inability to perfect the state of trance. Thus they weary in their attempt to bring the mind under control. Therefore, O lotus-eyed Lord of the universe, swanlike men happily take shelter of Your lotus feet, the source of all transcendental ecstasy. *SB 11.29.2-3*

The person whose senses have been brought under control (*vase hi*) is the *sthita-prajña*. This distinguishes him from the *sādhaka*, the person attempting to do so.

*dhyāyato viṣayān pumsaḥ saṅgas teṣūpajāyate |  
saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmāḥ kāmāt krodho 'bhijāyate ||62||*

62. For the person who meditates on the sense objects, attachment arises. From attachment arises desire. From desire arises anger.

The *sthita-prajña* controls also the mind. That indeed is the cause of control of the senses. If one does not have control of the mind at all, please hear the result.

A person who thinks of the sense objects develops attachment (*saṅga*) to them. And by that attachment, he develops strong desire (*kāma*) for those objects. From desire, anger develops due to obstruction to fulfilling his desire, caused by someone or something.

*krodhād bhavati saṁmohaḥ saṁmohāt smṛti-vibhramaḥ |  
smṛti-bhraṁśād buddhi-nāśo buddhi-nāśāt praṇāśyati ||63||*

63. From anger arises bewilderment. From bewilderment comes loss of memory. From loss of memory comes loss of intelligence. From loss of intelligence one becomes completely destroyed.

From anger develops absence of discrimination of what should be done and what should not be done (*saṁmohaḥ*). From bewilderment develops loss of remembrance of ones own benefit derived from the instructions of scriptures

(*smṛti-vibhramah*). From that comes a destruction of resolve for spiritual practices (*buddhi-nāśa*). Then one falls into the hole of *samsāra*.

*rāga-dveṣa-vimuktais tu viṣayān indriyaiś caran |  
ātma-vaśyair vidheyātmā prasādam adhigacchati ||64||*

64. One whose mind is submissive, who engages in the sense objects with the senses freed of attachment and repulsion, under the control of the mind, attains peace.

This verse answers the question, “How does the *sthita-prajña* go?” (*vrajeta kim*) The Lord explains that it is not a fault to accept the objects of the senses, if it is done with controlled senses, with absence of attachment of the objects in the mind.

According to *Amara Kośa*, *vidheya* means “submissive, situated in words, compliant, controlled, well behaved, polite, and equal.”

One whose mind (*ātmā*) is submissive to instructions (*vidheya ātmā*), (who contacts objects with senses controlled by the mind, senses devoid of attachment and repulsion), attains peace (*prasādam*). Contacting the sense objects is not a fault. Rather it is a good quality for one who does so with control.

In other words, for the *sthita-prajña*, accepting the renunciation of enjoyment of objects, either by withdrawal of the senses (*āsana*) or by engaging the senses (*vrajana*), is beneficial.

*prasāde sarva-duḥkhānām hānir asyopajāyate |  
prasanna-cetaso hy āśu buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate ||65||*

65. From this peace arises destruction of all distress. Quickly the intelligence of the peaceful-minded person becomes completely fixed.

The intelligence is fixed in its desired goal completely (*pari avatisthati*). All distress is destroyed, but because of no desire for enjoying the objects, the person, accepting necessary objects of the senses for his survival, has

tranquility. He has a peaceful consciousness (*prasanna-cetasah*), just because of *bhakti*.

The First Canto of *Bhāgavatam* states that, without *bhakti*, one cannot have a peaceful mind.<sup>33</sup> Vyāsadeva, even though writing the *Vedānta-sūtras*, did not have happiness of mind, but he gained peace of heart through *bhakti* taught by Nārada.

*nāsti buddhir ayuktasya na cāyuktasya bhāvanā |  
na cābhāvayataḥ śāntir aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham ||66||*

66. For the person with uncontrolled mind, there is no intelligence fixed on the soul, and no meditation on the Paramātmā. Without meditation he has no peace. Without peace, where is bliss?

Kṛṣṇa makes his statement clear by stating the effects of the opposite condition.

For one who has not controlled the mind (*ayuktasya*), there is no intelligence, no *prajñā*, fixed on the soul. For one who not having such *prajñā* arising from controlled mind, meditation on the Supreme Lord (*bhāvanā*) also is not possible. Not performing meditation (*abhāvayataḥ*), he does not have peace, the cessation of agitation from sense objects. This person without peace does not have bliss (*sukham*) from the soul.

*indriyāṇām hi caratām yan mano ’nuvidhīyate |  
tad asya harati prajñām vāyur nāvam ivāmbhasi ||67||*

67. The mind which follows one of the moving senses steals away the intelligence, as wind moves a boat on the water.

This verse examines the person with no intelligence due to lack of control of the mind (*ayuktasya buddhiḥ na asti* described in the previous verse).

Among all the senses moving towards their respective sense objects, the mind follows after one sense. In this way a person follows each of the senses. Such a mind takes away the intelligence or *prajñā* of the person, just

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<sup>33</sup> This is probably *Bhāgavatam* 1.2.20

as unfavorable wind takes a boat off course which is being steered somewhere on the water.

*tasmād yasya mahā-bāho nigrhitāni sarvaśah |  
indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā ||68||*

68. He who completely restricts the senses from the sense objects, O mighty-armed one, is fixed in *prajña*.

He who controls his mind restricts his senses from sense objects. He is fixed in intelligence. O might-armed one (*mahā-bāho*), just as you control your enemies with your strength, you should also control your mind.

*yā niśā sarva-bhūtānām tasyām jāgarti saṃyamī |  
yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneh ||69||*

69. The *sthita-prajña* is awake in the night when all other living entities sleep. The night of the observant *sthita-prajña* is the time during which the all living entities are awake.

The *sthita-prajña* is able to control his senses very naturally. There are two types of intelligence: that directed towards soul and that directed towards matter.

The intelligence directed towards the soul is night for all other entities. Just as in the night, people sleeping do not know what is happening at that time, so all living entities do not know the things which are being perceived by the intelligence directed towards the soul. But during that night, the *sthita-prajña* or *saṃyamī*, controlling his senses, is awake, not sleeping. In other words he directly realizes the bliss from fixing his intelligence on the soul. When the living entities are awake, with intelligence directed towards material sense objects, they realize directly the happiness, lamentation and bewilderment of those sense objects upon which their intelligence is fixed. They are not sleeping. But that is night for the *muni*, the *sthita-prajña*, who does not experience fixing his intellect on those objects at all. But he does see those objects. He looks upon (*paśyataḥ*) all those sense objects which give happiness and distress to the people bound in *samsāra* with disinterest.

This means that he accepts the required sense objects for his survival without being affected.

*āpūryamāṇam acalā-pratiṣṭham  
samudram āpaḥ praviśanti yadvat |  
tadvat kāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve  
sa śāntim āpnoti na kāma-kāmī ||70||*

70. Just as the rivers enter the ocean which has fixed shores and is never quite full, so the objects of enjoyment enter into the *sthita-prajña*, but he remains peaceful. This is not so for the desirer of those objects.

This verse describes the *sthita-prajña*'s condition of not being affected or agitated when he accepts the sense objects. Just as in the rainy season, rivers (*āpaḥ*) here and there enter into the ocean, almost filling it up (*ā*--almost, *pūryamāṇam*--filled), but not being able to completely fill it up, not being able to go beyond the shore (*acalā-pratiṣṭham*), in a similar manner the objects of sense enjoyment (*kāmāḥ*) come to the *sthita-prajña* for his enjoyment (but cannot disturb him). Just as, whether the rivers enter or do not enter the ocean, the ocean is not disturbed at all, the *sthita-prajña* (*saḥ*) remains undisturbed whether he gets objects of enjoyment or not. He attains the stage of *jñāna* (*śāntim*).

*vihāya kāmān yaḥ sarvān pumāṁś carati niḥspṛhaḥ |  
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sa śāntim adhicchatī ||71||*

71. He who gives up all objects of enjoyment but carries out action without desires for them, being devoid of possessiveness and ego, attains peace (*jñāna*).

This verse describes the person who, , does not enjoy the sense objects at all because he has no faith in them. He is devoid of possessiveness and ego regarding his body and objects related to the body (*nirmamaḥ nirahaṅkāraḥ*).

*eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha nainām prāpya vimuhyati |  
sthitvāsyām anta-kāle 'pi brahma-nirvāṇam ṛcchati ||72||*

72. O son of Pṛthā, this is the situation for attaining Brahman. Attaining that state, one is not bewildered, and attains *brahma-nirvāṇa* even at the time of death.

This verse concludes the topic.

*Brahmī* means “that which gives attainment of Brahman.” Even one at the point of death (*anta-kāle*), what to speak of one of young age, by this practice, attains *brahma-nirvāṇa*.<sup>34</sup>

Having presented very clearly *jñāna* and *karma* and indirectly *bhakti*, this chapter is called the *sūtra* (abbreviated form) of the *Gītā*.

This is commentary on the second chapter of the *Gītā* for the joy of the devotees’ minds, following after the great devotees.

### Chapter Three

*arjuna uvāca*  
*jyāyasī cet karmaṇas te matā buddhir janārdana |*  
*tat kim karmaṇi ghore mām niyojayasi keśava || 1 ||*

1. Arjuna said: If it is Your opinion that intelligence is superior to action, O Janārdana, then why do You engage me in this terrible action. O Keśava?

In the third chapter, action offered to the Lord without personal desire is described. The discrimination necessary for a person desiring to conquer over lust and anger is shown.

Having accepted the superiority of *bhakti* which is transcendental to the *guṇas*, over *jñāna-yoga* and *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* in previous statements, now, manifesting his own eagerness (for knowledge), Arjuna in a friendly manner censures the Lord who is encouraging him to fight according to his *dharma*.

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<sup>34</sup> Later indications show that this *brahma-nirvāṇa* is merely *mokṣa*.

“If fixed intelligence (*buddhi*), *bhakti*, transcending the *guṇas*, is superior (*vyāyasī*), then why do You engage me in this terrible action in the form of war? O Janārdana, by Your order You are causing pain (*ardana*) to Your own associate (*jana*). It is also not possible to avoid following Your order, O Keśava, controller of even Brahmā and Śiva!” *Ka* means Brahmā, *īsa* means Śiva, and *va* means *vayase*, “You control.”

*vyāmiśreṇaiva vākyena buddhiṃ mohayasīva me |  
tad ekam vada niścītya yena śreyo ’ham āpnuyām ||2||*

2. You bewilder me with Your mixture of words. Now speak clearly so that I may attain the highest benefit.

“O My friend Arjuna, it is true that *bhakti*, beyond the *guṇas* is supreme. But since that is obtained only by the mercy of My great pure devotees in an unexpected manner, it is not attained by the efforts of the individual. Therefore, I have given a blessing to you: be transcendental to the *guṇas* (*nīstraiguṇya bhava*): be transcendental to the *guṇas* by transcendental *bhakti*. When this blessing matures, you will attain *bhakti* by such unexpected mercy of the pure devotee. As it is fitting to the present circumstances, directing you to engage in activity is also valid, using the words *karmaṇy evādhikāras te*: you are qualified for action.”

“Then why do You not clearly tell me to engage in activity? You throw me into an ocean of doubt. You bewilder my intelligence by those words which are mixture of various meanings (*vyāmiśreṇa*).<sup>35</sup> Though you have mentioned about action (*karmaṇy evādhikāras te*), you also speak of *jñāna* using the word *yoga* in such statements as the following:

*yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya  
siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṃ yoga ucyate*

Being situated in this *nişkāma-karma-yoga*, perform your duties, giving up attachment, being equal to success and failure, O conqueror of wealth! Such equal mindedness is called *yoga*. BG 2.48

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<sup>35</sup> The analysis of *vyāmiśreṇa* is *vi* for *viśeṣataḥ*, “particularly”; *ā* for “completely”; *miśra*, meaning mixture.

*buddhi-yukto jahātīha ubhe sukr̥ta-duṣkr̥te  
tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*

He who is engaged in *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* gives up both pious and impious reactions. Therefore engage in this *yoga*. Among all types of action, this performance without attachment is a skill. BG 2.50

And you speak only of knowledge in such statements as *yadā te mohakalilam buddhir vyatitariṣyati*: when your intelligence has completely crossed the denseness of illusion... (BG 2.52).<sup>36</sup>

The word *iva* indicates that “Your words are not *actually* filled with many meanings, and it is not Your desire to bewilder me, as You are merciful. Nor is it that I do not know the meaning, but you should speak this clearly.”

The deep sense is this: compared to *karma* in the mode of passion, *karma* in the mode of goodness is superior.<sup>37</sup> Superior to that is *jñāna*, which is also sattvic. And *bhakti*, beyond the modes, is superior to that. If You say that *bhakti* is not possible for me, then instruct me on *jñāna* alone. Then I will be free from the bondage of *samsāra* and misery.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
loke ’smin dvi-vidhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha |  
jñāna-yogena sāṅkhyānām karma-yogena yoginām ||3||*

3. The Lord said: I have spoken in the last chapter of two types of qualification for people of this world. Those qualified for *jñāna* are known as practitioners of *jñāna-yoga*, and those qualified for *niṣkāma-karma* are known as practitioners of *karma-yoga*.

Here the Lord answers. You have asked Me to indicate clearly one of either *karma-yoga* or *jñāna-yoga*, since I have explained both in an impartial way.

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<sup>36</sup> Confusion arises in Arjuna’s mind because of the use of the word “*buddhi*” and “*śama*” which are associated with *jñāna*. In *karmaṇy evādhikāras te* the Lord also speaks about complete renunciation of the fruits. And by the end of chapter two Kṛṣṇa shows that *niṣkāma-karma* matures into *jñāna*.

<sup>37</sup> This is *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, in its mature stage.

The two processes that I have explained are for persons qualified for *karma* and *jñāna*, according to different circumstances. It is not that these people are equally suitable for liberation. This is now explained in two verses.

I have explained in the previous chapter (*purā proktā*) two types of qualification. For those engaged in knowledge (*sāṅkhyānām*), who have risen to the state of knowledge by purity of the heart, there is steadiness in *jñāna-yoga*. That is their limited field. They are known in this world for cultivation of knowledge. This is shown in verses such as the following:

*tāni sarvāṇi samyamya yukta āsīta mat-paraḥ  
vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*

The *yogī* who is devoted to Me, after restraining all the senses, will remain seated, unresponsive to sense objects. He whose senses have thus been brought under control is *sthita-prajña*. BG 2.61

For those who are not able to ascend to the platform of knowledge because of impurities of the heart, there is a means to ascend to that platform. They become fixed in *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, activities without desire, offered to Me. They are known as those engaged in *karma*. Verses such as the following illustrate this *yoga*.

*sva-dharmam api cāvekṣa na vikampitum arhasi  
dharmyād dhi yuddhāc chreyo 'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate*

Considering your own duties, you should not be fearful. There is nothing better for the warrior than to fight for the right cause. BG 2.31

The *karmī* and *jñānī* are different in name only. Actually the persons engaged in *karma* become pure hearted *jñānīs* by their actions. And the *jñānīs* become liberated by *bhakti*. This is the meaning of all My words.

*na karmanām anārambhān naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣo 'śnute |  
na ca sanniyasanād eva siddhiṁ samadhigacchati || 4 ||*

4. Without performance of prescribed *karmas*, a person cannot attain purity. Just by renunciation of activities, an impure person cannot attain perfection.

This verse explains that without purity of heart, *jñāna* does not arise. By not engaging in activities recommended in the scriptures, one cannot attain *jñāna* (*naiṣkarmyam*). One with an impure heart cannot attain *jñāna* by renunciation of activities recommended in the scriptures (*sannyasāt*).

*na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma-kṛt |  
kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛti-jair guṇaiḥ || 5 ||*

5. No one can remain without doing activity even for a moment. All are forced to engage in action by the *guṇas* arising from *prakṛti*.

Rather, the person of impure heart who gives up scriptural activities becomes engrossed in material actions. That is explained in this verse.

“But *sannyāsa*, renunciation of activities, means a negation of all tendencies for both Vedic and material activities, does it not?”

“Beyond one’s will (*avaśaḥ*), one will engage in action anyway.”

*karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya ya āste manasā smaran |  
indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate ||6||*

6. He who, controlling the action of senses, remains remembering those objects of the senses in his mind, is bewildered, and is called a pretender.

“But we see some such *sannyāsīs*, devoid of actions of the senses, with closed eyes.” This verse answers.

He who controls the senses of action such as speech or hands (*karmendriyāṇi*)<sup>38</sup> but remains remembering the objects of the senses, under the pretense of meditating, is a cheater (*mithyācāraḥ*).

*yas tv indriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhate ’rjuna |*

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<sup>38</sup> The five senses of action are the hands, feet, voice, anus, and genital.

*karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate* ||7||

7. He who, free from attachment, controlling the senses by the mind, begins *karma-yoga* with his active senses, is superior.

In contrast to this, the householder (not the *sannyāsī*), who performs scriptural actions (*karma-yogam*) without longing for fruits of his actions (*asaktaḥ*) is superior. Rāmānujācārya says in this regard that he is superior to the person practicing *jñāna* because of the impossibility of going astray by this method.

*niyatam kuru karma tvam karma jyāyo hy akarmaṇaḥ |*  
*śarīra-yātrāpi ca te na prasidhyed akarmaṇaḥ* ||8||

8. Perform your daily scriptural duties. This is better than not acting. You cannot even maintain your body by non-action.

Therefore you should engage in daily obligatory activities such as *sandhya-vandana* (*niyatam karma*). This is better than renunciation of these actions (*karma-sannyāsa*). By renunciation of all actions you will not even be able to maintain your body.

*yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra loko 'yam karma-bandhanaḥ |*  
*tad-artham karma kaunteya mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara* ||9||

9. Without performing actions for the purpose of sacrifice, the people of the world are bound by their actions. O son of Kuntī, perform actions for that purpose, freed from attachment to results.

“The *smṛti* scriptures say that one is bound by actions: *karmanā badhyate jantuh*. ( *Mahābhārata* 12.241.7) Therefore, I will become bound by performing actions.”

“No, action offered to the Supreme Lord does not bind one.” That is explained in this verse.

“*Dharma* (scriptural duties) offered to Viṣṇu without personal desire is called *yajña*. Persons become bound by *karma* by any other actions for any

other purpose. Therefore you should perform actions (*karma -amācara*) for the accomplishing such duties (*tad-artham*).”

“But even if I perform actions which are offered to Viṣṇu, if I perform them with desires, then I will still become bound.”

“One should become devoid of the desire for results (*mukta-saṅgaḥ*).”

Thus the Lord spoke to Uddhava:

*sva-dharma-stho yajan yajñair anāśīḥ-kāma uddhava  
na yāti svarga-narakau yady anyan na samācaret*

*asmil loke vartamānaḥ sva-dharma-stho 'naghaḥ śuciḥ  
jñānaṁ viśuddham āpnoti mad-bhaktim vā yadr̥cchayā*

My dear Uddhava, a person who is situated in his prescribed duty, properly worshiping by Vedic sacrifices but not desiring the fruitive result of such worship, will not go to the heavenly planets; similarly, by not performing forbidden activities he will not go to hell.

One who is situated in his prescribed duty, free from sinful activities and cleansed of material contamination, in this very life obtains transcendental knowledge or, by fortune, devotional service unto Me. SB 11.20.10-11

*saha-yajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ |  
anena prasaviśyadhvam eṣa vo 'stv iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk ||10||*

10. Brahmā, having created the population along with sacrifice, long ago spoke: May you prosper by this sacrifice. May it fulfill all your material desires.

Therefore, one with an impure heart should perform actions without desire, rather than give up action. Now, if you cannot be without desire in the actions, then you should still perform actions offered to Viṣṇu *with* desire, rather than give up actions completely. This is explained in seven verses.

Long ago, along with *yajña*, Brahmā created the creatures qualified for offering to Viṣṇu and said, “Increase more and more the population by this *dharma* or *yajña*. May this *yajña* bestow all desired enjoyment (*iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk*).” By this he indicated that they had material desires.

The compound *saha-yajñā* is formed by the rule *vopasarjanasya* (*Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Pāṇini 6.3.82). The compound *saha-yajña* is used instead of *sa-yajña*.

*devān bhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ |  
parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyasḥ param avāpsyatha ||11||*

11. “By that sacrifice, please the *devatās* and the *devatās* will please you. Being mutually pleased, you will all attain the highest benefit.”

This verse explains how the *yajña* yields all desires. “By this *yajña* (*anena*), please the *devatās*. You make them pleased by the sacrifice. The *devatās* also will please all of you.” *Bhāva* indicates affection in this verse.

*iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā dāsyante yajña-bhāvitāḥ |  
tair dattān apradāyaibhyo yo bhun̄kte stena eva saḥ ||12||*

12. The *devatās*, pleased with the sacrifice, will bestow on you desired enjoyment. He who enjoys what is given by the *devatās* without offering to them is indeed a thief.

To make this point clearer, he speaks of the fault of not performing this activity. He who enjoys what is given by the *devatās*, such as food through the rain, without giving anything to them through performance of the *pañca-mahā-yajña*<sup>39</sup> and other rites, is a thief.

*yajña-śiṣṭāśinaḥ santo mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ |  
bhun̄jate te tv aghaṁ pāpā ye pacanty ātma-kāraṇāt ||13||*

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<sup>39</sup> The five great sacrifices consist of sacrifice to Pitṛs, worship of *devas*, recitation of the *Vedas*, feeding humans, and feeding other living entities.

13. Those respectable people who eat the remnants of sacrifice are free from all sins. Those sinful persons who cook for themselves suffer from sin.

Those who eat the food remnants of *yajñas* such as the *vaiśvadeva-yajña*<sup>40</sup> become freed from all sins caused by the five types of violence to living entities. The five violent actions (*pañca-sūnā*) are described in the *smṛti*:

*kaṇḍanī peṣaṇī cullī udakumbhī ca mārjanī  
pañca-sūnā grhasthasya tābhiḥ svargaṁ na vindati*

The *grhastha* does not enjoy Svarga by commission of the five violent actions towards other living entities caused by using the mortar, grinding stone, the stove, the broom and water pot. *Viṣṇu Smṛti* 59. 19-20<sup>41</sup>

*annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaḍ anna-sambhavaḥ |  
yajñād bhavati parjanyaḍ yajñāḥ karma-samudbhavaḥ ||14||*

14. All creatures arise from food. Food arises from rain. Rain arises from sacrifice. Sacrifice arises from prescribed actions.

One should perform the *yajña* because it causes the cyclic movement in the universe. From food living entities exist. Food is the cause of the bodies of the entities, and from food arises the health of the bodies of the living entities with transformation into semen and blood. The cause of food is rain. By the rain, food is produced. The cause of rain is the *yajña*. By people performing *yajña* the clouds produce sufficient rain. The cause of *yajña* is *karma*, prescribed action. The *yajña* is produced from the actions of the priest and the patron.

*karma brahmodbhavaṁ viddhi brahmākṣara-samudbhavam  
tasmāt sarva-gataṁ brahma nityaṁ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam ||15||*

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<sup>40</sup> Usually at noon time small qualities of food are supposed to be offered to various *devatās* and to Agni.

<sup>41</sup> The items are mentioned there, but with slight variation in the text. Also found in *Manu Smṛti*, and *Saṅkha Smṛti*.

15. Action arises from the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* arise from the Brahman. Therefore this all-pervading Brahman is eternally situated in the sacrifice.

The cause of this action is the Veda (*brahma*). The actions related to the *yajña* arise from hearing the statements of the rules enunciated in the *Vedas*. The cause of the *Vedas* is Brahman (*akṣaram*), as the *Vedas* arise from the Lord. The *śruti* says:

*asya mahato bhūtasya niḥśvasitam etad ṛg-vedo yajur-vedaḥ sāmavedo' thāngīrasaḥ*

The *Ṛg*, *Yajur*, *Sāma* and *Atharva Vedas* are the breathing of the Supreme Lord.  
*Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.10

Therefore the all pervading (*sarva-gatam*) Lord is present in the *yajña*. This means that by performance of the *yajña* one attains the Lord. Though, by cause and effect, from food to the Lord, many items have been mentioned, among them all, the *yajña* is mentioned by the scriptures as an necessary performance for the human being.

This process is mentioned in the *smṛti* as well.

*agnau prāstāhutīḥ samyag ādityam upatiṣṭhate  
ādityāj jāyate vṛṣṭir vṛṣṭer annaṁ tataḥ prajāḥ*

The offering to the fire goes to the sun. From the sun arise rain, food and bodies of the living entities. *Manu Smṛti* 3.76

*evam pravartitaṁ cakram nānuvartayatīha yaḥ |  
aghāyur indriyārāmo moghaṁ pārtha sa jīvati ||16||*

16. He who does not follow the movements of this cycle, and instead leads a life of sin, enjoying his senses, lives in vain.

This verse speaks of the sin involved in not performing the sacrifice. He who does not partake of the instituted cycle moving from beginning to end—

from *yajña* to rain; from rain to food; from food to nourishment of men; from men to performance of *yajña*; from *yajña* to rain—he who does not institute the cycle by performance of *yajña*--leads a life full of sin.<sup>42</sup> Who will not sink to hell?

*yas tv ātma-ratir eva syād ātma-tr̥ptaś ca mānavaḥ  
ātmany eva ca santuṣṭas tasya kāryam na vidyate || 17 ||*

17. The human who is attracted to the *ātmā*, satisfied in the *ātmā*, and completely satisfied with *ātmā* alone, has nothing to do in regard to fulfilling desires.

It has now been stated that if you cannot be without desires, you can perform actions with desires. But he who reaches the stage of *jñāna* because of purity of heart never performs actions out of desire. That is expressed in two verses.

Because he is enjoying in the self, is blissful by realization of the bliss of the *ātmā*, he does not engage at all in the pleasure of material objects. Being engaged only in the *ātmā* (*ātmāny eva*), he does not perform any actions related to the external objects (*tasya kāryam na vidyate*).

*naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana |  
na cāsya sarva-bhūteṣu kaś cid artha-vyapāśrayaḥ || 18 ||*

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<sup>42</sup> The cycle is as follows: Supreme Lord, *Vedas*, action, sacrifice, rain, food, and production of living entities. The new living entities then study the *Vedas* arising from the Lord, perform action, and sacrifice (with the Lord present within) again. At the same time as fulfilling ones material needs by sacrifice one can attain the Lord. Rāmānuja takes *brahman* as the body and *akṣara* as the soul, which is necessary for the body to function. Then the cycle is: soul in the body, action, sacrifice, rain, food, nourishment of the body with a soul (*bhūtāni*); then action, sacrifice etc. Madhva takes *brahman* as the Lord and *akṣara* as the *Vedas*. *Vedas* reveal the Lord, the Lord inspires prescribed action, then sacrifice, rain, food, nourishment of bodies, study of *Vedas*, revelation of the Lord, inspiration to action etc.

18. He does not gain by performance of action, nor lose by not performing action. For him, nothing in this world is worthy of pursuing for fulfilling his desires.

By performance of action there is no accrual of desired results. And by not performing the action there is no loss, because nothing in the whole universe, from Brahmā down to the inanimate objects, is a worthy object of shelter for fulfilling his goals.

The word *vyapāśraya* is used similarly in the *Purānas* as follows:

*vāsudeve bhagavati bhaktim udvahatām nṛṇām  
jñāna-vairāgya-vīryāṇām neha kaścīd vyapāśrayaḥ*

Persons engaged in devotional service to Lord Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa, have naturally perfect knowledge and detachment from this material world. Therefore such devotees are not interested in the so-called happiness or so-called distress of this world. SB 6.17.31

*kirāta-hūṇāndhra-pulinda-pulkaśā  
ābhīra-śumbhā yavanāḥ khasādayaḥ  
ye 'nye ca pāpā yad-apāśrayāśrayāḥ  
śudhyanti tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ*

Kirāta, Hūṇa, Āndhra, Pulinda, Pulkaśa, Ābhīra, Śumbha, Yavana, members of the Khasa races and even others addicted to sinful acts can be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord, due to His being the supreme power. I beg to offer my respectful obeisances unto Him. SB 2.4.18

*argo 'syātha visargaś ca vṛtti-rakṣāntarāṇi ca  
vaṁśo vaṁśānucarītaṁ samsthā hetur apāśrayaḥ*

O *brāhmaṇa*, authorities on the matter understand a *Purāna* to contain ten characteristic topics: the creation of this universe, the subsequent creation of worlds and beings, the maintenance of all living beings, their sustenance, the rule of various Manus, the

dynasties of great kings, the activities of such kings, annihilation, motivation and the supreme shelter. SB 12.7.9

From these statements it is seen that the addition of *apa* to *āśraya* has the meaning of “perfect shelter.”

*tasmād asaktaḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samācara  
asakto hy ācāraṁ karma param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ ||19||*

19. Therefore always perform prescribed actions without attachment. Performing action without attachment, a person attains liberation.

Therefore (*tasmād*) since you do not have qualification for rising to the platform of *jñāna*, and performing actions with desires is not suitable for you since you have spiritual intelligence, you should perform action without desire. That is explained in this verse. Therefore you should perform obligatory prescribed actions without attachment. By doing this you will attain liberation (*param*).

*karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ  
loka-saṅgraham evāpi sampaśyan kartum arhasi ||20||*

20. Just by performance of prescribed actions, Janaka and others attained success. And just with the consideration of setting example for others, you should perform prescribed work.

He gives proof of such actions in the first part of the verse. In the second part of the verse he says that if you think that you are qualified for *jñāna*, even then, you should perform action in order to teach the people.

*yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janaḥ |  
sa yat pramāṇaṁ kurute lokas tad anuvartate ||21||*

21. Whatever actions the superior performs, other persons will also perform. What you do according to scriptural authority, others follow.

In this verse he explains how the people are taught: by following example.

*na me pārthāsti kartavyam triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana |  
nānavāptam avāptavyam varta eva ca karmaṇi ||22||*

22. For Me, O son of Pṛthā, there is nothing in the three worlds that has to be done, that has not been attained, or which must be attained. But I also perform duties.

In three verses the Lord uses Himself as an example.

*yadi hy aham na varteyam jātu karmaṇy atandritaḥ |  
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ ||23||*

23. If I were not to engage in work attentively at any time, men would follow My example in all respects.

*Anuvartante* (they do follow) is used with the meaning *anuvarteran* (they would follow).

*utsīdeyur ime lokā na kuryām karma ced aham |  
saṅkarasya ca kartā syām upahanyām imāḥ prajāḥ ||24||*

24. If I were not to work, all people would be destroyed. I would be the cause of mixed castes, and would pollute the descendants.

Taking Me as an example, the people, not performing *dharma*, would be contaminated. Mixed castes would result. I would be the cause of this. I would pollute the progeny.

*saktāḥ karmaṇy avidvāṃso yathā kurvanti bhārata |  
kuryād vidvāṃs tathāsaktāś cikīrṣur loka-saṅgraham ||25||*

25. Just as the ignorant work with attachment, O Bhārata, the wise, desirous to teach the people, should perform work without attachment.

He summarizes here that action should be done even by a person established in *jñāna*.

*na buddhi-bhedam janayed ajñānām karma-saṅginām |  
joṣayet sarva-karmāṇi vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran ||26||*

26. The wise man should not disturb the intelligence of the ignorant attached to results of work. Engaging in all work himself with detachment, he should engage them in activity.

You should not disturb the minds of those attached to action because of their impure hearts by saying “This *karma* is despicable! Give up action and become successful like me by the practice of *jñāna*.” Instead you should engage them in action (*joṣayet*) by saying “Perform action without desire and become successful.” Doing those actions, you set an example for others.

“But according to the *Bhāgavatam*, this is contrary to the statement of the Lord:

*svayam niḥśreyasam vidvān na vakty ajñāya karma hi  
na rāti rogiṇo 'pathyam vāñchato 'pi bhiṣaktamaḥ*

A pure devotee who is fully accomplished in the science of devotional service will never instruct a foolish person to engage in fruitive activities for material enjoyment, not to speak of helping him in such activities. Such a devotee is like an experienced physician, who never encourages a patient to eat food injurious to his health, even if the patient desires it.” SB 6.9.50

True, but this is in relation to instructions given about *bhakti*. It is not contradictory to giving instructions in this way about *jñāna*. *Jñāna* is dependent on purity of the heart, and purity of the heart is dependent on action without desire. But *bhakti* is by nature very strong, and is not dependent even on the purity of the heart. If it is possible for you to produce faith in *bhakti* in other person, then you may disturb the minds of those attached to action, for those who have faith in *bhakti* have no obligation for performing *karma*. This should be understood from such statements as the following:

*tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvata*

*mat-kathā-śravaṇāḍau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate*

One should continue to perform the Vedic ritualistic activities until one actually becomes detached from material sense gratification and develops faith for hearing and chanting about Me. *SB 11.20.9*

*dharmān santyajya yaḥ sarvān mām bhajet sa tu sattamaḥ*

Having taken complete shelter at My lotus feet, however, a saintly person ultimately renounces such ordinary religious duties and worships Me alone. He is thus considered to be the best among all living entities. *SB 11.11.32*

*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*

Give up all *dharmas* and surrender to Me alone. *BG 18.66*

*tyaktvā sva-dharmaṁ caraṇāmbujam harer  
bhajann apakvo 'tha patet tato yadi*

If someone gives up his occupational duties and works in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and then falls down on account of not completing his work, what loss is there on his part? And what can one gain if one performs his material activities perfectly? *SB 1.5.17*

*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ |  
ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate ||27||*

27. The person bewildered by pride thinks that he is the doer of actions which are being done completely by the senses made of *prakṛti*.

The doubt may arise: how to distinguish the person in knowledge (*vidvān*) from the ignorant person, if the man in knowledge also performs actions. Two verses explain the difference. The ignorant person thinks that he is the performer of all the actions, which are actually performed completely by the material senses, which in turn are the products of the *guṇas* (*prakṛteḥ guṇaiḥ*).

*tattvavit tu mahā-bāho guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ |  
guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate ||28||*

28. But the wise person, who knows the divisions of the *guṇas* and the factors of action, O Mighty-armed, is not contaminated, understanding that only the senses are engaged with the sense objects

The intelligent person, however, knows the truth (*tattva-vit*) about the divisions of *guṇas* and actions (*guṇa-karma-vibhāgayoḥ*). The divisions of the *guṇas* are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The divisions of action are according to the effects of the *guṇas*: *devatā* (*sattva*), senses (*rajas*), and sense objects (*tamas*). One who knows the nature of these two is called *tattva vit*. The senses such as the eye (*guṇāḥ*) administered by their *devatās* are engaged with the sense objects such as form (*guṇeṣu*). The intelligent person is not attached, knowing this. He thinks, “I am not at all the senses, nor the sense objects. There is no relation between me and the senses or the sense objects at all.”

*prakṛter guṇa-saṁmūdhāḥ sajjante guṇa-karmasu |  
tān akṛtsna-vido mandān kṛtsna-vin na vicālayet ||29||*

29. Those bewildered by the senses made of *prakṛti* are attached to the sense objects.

One who knows everything does not disturb those foolish persons who do not know.

If the *jīvas* are separate from the senses and the sense objects, without relationship to them, then why is it seen that people are attached to the sense objects? This verse answers.

By absorption in the senses made of matter, *jīvas* become bewildered. Just like a man possessed by a ghost thinks himself a ghost, the *jīvas* absorbed in the senses made of matter think themselves to be the senses. Then they become attached to the sense objects (*guṇa-karmaṣu*). The man who knows all (*kṛtsnavit*) does not disturb those who are ignorant. He does not attempt to make them realize that they, as *jīvas*, are different from the senses, that they are not the senses. Instead he engages them in action without desire,

which will remove the absorption in the senses. One does not cure a man possessed of a ghost even by instructing him even a hundred times, “You are a man, not a ghost!” Instead one cures him by use of *mantras*, jewels and medicines which will remove that affliction.

*mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasyādhyātma-cetasā |  
nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigata-jvaraḥ ||30||*

30. Offering all activities to Me, being fixed in the soul, being without possessiveness or desire, devoid of fever, fight.

The word *adhyātma* is here taken as an *avyayībhāva* compound, meaning “in (*adhi*) the *ātmā*.” The phrase *adhyātmam-cetasā* therefore means “with consciousness fixed in the *ātmā*.”

Therefore, offering (*sannyasya*) all works to Me, by consciousness fixed in the *ātmā* rather than in material objects, being without desires for the results, being *niškāma* (*nirāśīh*), devoid of possessiveness in all respects (*nirmamaḥ*), fight.

*ye me matam idaṁ nityam anuṭiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ |  
śraddhāvanto ’nasūyanto mucyante te ’pi karmabhiḥ ||31||*

31. Those who always follow My teaching with faith and without envy are free from the bondage of actions.

In this verse the Lord speaks to encourage people to take up His teaching.

*ye tv etad abhyasūyanto nānuṭiṣṭhanti me matam |  
sarva-jñāna-vimūdhāms tān viddhi naṣṭān acetasaḥ ||32||*

32. But know that those who, devoid of all knowledge, devoid of proper consciousness, and hostile to this teaching, do not follow it, are lost.

In this verse the Lord speaks of the bad effects of doing the opposite.

*sadr̥ṣaṁ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛter jñānavān api |  
prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati ||33||*

33. Even the man of knowledge acts according to his nature. All living entities act according to their natures. What can instructions of *karma* and *jñāna* do for the most fallen?

“Would they not be afraid of not following Your instructions, the instructions of the Supreme Lord, or the instructions of a king?”

“No, they are not afraid.”

“Those who engage their senses for enjoyment, even if they are intelligent, cannot consider the orders of the king, the Supreme Lord. This is because of their nature.” The Lord explains this in this verse.

If the person of knowledge engages in sin, he will receive hellish punishment, just as a king punishes. And he will also bear infamy. Still, even the person of discrimination performs actions which yield a burden of suffering, following his previous sinful habits.

Therefore all follow after their natures. The instructions of scripture (*nigrahaḥ*) made by Me or the king, in the form of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, are able to purify and enlighten the impure hearted, and in the form of *jñāna-yoga*, are able to purify and enlighten the pure hearted. But neither can purify the extremely impure (*nigrahaḥ kim kariṣyati*).

However, *bhakti-yoga* arising from My unpredictable mercy can deliver even those most sinful persons. As the *Skanda Purāna* says:

*aho dhanyo 'si devarṣe kṛpayā yasya te kṣaṇāt  
nīco 'py utpulako lebhe lubdhako ratim ucyate*

My dear friend Nārada Muni, you are glorified as the sage among the demigods. By your mercy, even a lowborn person like this hunter immediately became ecstatic. This is called *bhāva* or *rati*.

*indriyasyendriyasyārthe rāga-dveṣau vyavasthitau |  
tayo na vaśam āgacchet tau hy asya paripanthinau ||34||*

34. Attachment and repulsion are firmly fixed in each of the sense objects. One should not come under control of attachment and repulsion. They are the two obstacles.

Since the rules and restrictions of scripture do not have effect upon those of evil nature, one should limit the senses, if one is not under the influence of sinful nature arising from past sinful habits. That is described in this verse.

The word *indriya* is repeated to indicate each of the sense objects of each of the senses. Attachment (*rāga*) for what is forbidden by scripture, such as giving gifts to other's wives, or seeing or touching their bodies; or repulsion (*dveṣa*) for what is prescribed by scripture, such as distributing gifts to, serving, seeing and touching the *guru*, the *brāhmaṇa*, the holy places and visitors, are firmly fixed (*viśeṣena avasthitau*) in all the sense objects (form, smell, taste, touch and sound). One should not be under the control (*vaśam*) of attachment and repulsion.

Another meaning is this. Attachment means seeing a woman (object of the eye) and hatred for those that obstruct that enjoyment. Therefore, the mind is attracted to what helps one attain one's goals. The mind is attracted to tasty, tender rice as it is favorable for one's goals, and the mind has dislike of tasteless hard rice, as it is against one's goals. One has attachment to hearing and seeing one's own sons, but dislikes seeing or hearing the sons of one's enemies. One should not fall under the control of such attachment and repulsion.

*śreyān sva-dharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt |  
sva-dharme nidhanam śreyah para-dharmo bhayāvahaḥ ||35||*

35. It is better to perform ones own duties even if in a faulty way, than to perform others' duties albeit very well. Destruction in the course one's duties is beneficial. Performing others' duties is full of danger.

In this verse the Lord answers those who desire to perform the duties of others such as non-violence, because it is easy to execute and also not independent of *dharma*, and because of inability to fight the battle due to attachment and repulsion.

One should boldly perform one's duties, even though they may have some slight fault. This is better than performing others' duties even if those duties are executed well and are full of good qualities. The reason is given. Destruction in the course of performing one's duties is better. Performing others' duties is dangerous. The Seventh Canto of *Bhāgavatam* speaks of performing others' duties, *para dharma*, as irreligion:

*vidharmaḥ para-dharmaś ca ābhāsa upamā chalaḥ  
adharmā-sākhāḥ pañcemā dharma-jño 'dharmavat tyajet*

There are five branches of irreligion, appropriately known as irreligion, religious principles for which one is unfit, pretentious religion, analogical religion and cheating religion. One who is aware of real religious life must abandon these five as irreligious. *SB* 7.15.12

*arjuna uvāca  
atha kena prayukto 'yam pāpam carati pūruṣaḥ |  
anicchann api vārṣṇeya balād iva niyojitaḥ ||36||*

36. Arjuna said: O descendent of the Vṛṣṇis, by what does man engage in sin, though unwilling, as if by force?

Referring to verse 34 about *rāga* and *dveṣa*, in this verse Arjuna asks about the attachment to the objects of the senses such as enjoyment with others' wives, even though it is forbidden by scripture.

Though without desire to engage in sin because of knowledge of the rules and prohibitions of the scriptures (*anicchan*), by what influence (*kena prayuktah*) does one engage in the act as if by force? This means that the desire for the object strongly arises under the influence of the object's stimuli.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ |  
mahāśano mahā-pāpmā viddhy enam iha vairiṇam ||37||*

37. The Lord said: It is lust and then anger, arising from the mode of passion. Know this as the great devourer, the great ferocious one, the enemy.

Lust, composed of the desire for the sense objects, impels a man to sin. A man, being urged by lust, engages in sin. This lust, appearing in a different form, becomes visible as anger. This means that lust, being obstructed by someone, transforms into anger. Lust arises from the mode of passion, and from lust in mode of passion arises anger in the mode of ignorance.

“But after the fulfillment of desire, the desire should be finished.”

“No, this lust is a great devourer. It is impossible to satisfy the expectations of desire.”

As the *smṛti* says,

*yat pṛthivyām vṛhi-yavaṁ hiraṇyam paśavaḥ striyaḥ  
nālam ekasya tat sarvaṁ iti matvā śamaṁ vrajet*

Understanding that all that is available on earth in the form of food, gold, animals and women is not enough for one person, one should go about with peaceful mind. *Mahābhārata, Anuśāsana Parvā, Ch.13*<sup>43</sup>

“If it is not possible to make an alliance with lust by giving (*dāna*), then is it possible to bring under control by *sāma* and *bheda*?”

“No, lust is a very great demon (*mahā-pāpmā*).”

*dhūmenāvriyate vahnir yathā-darśo malena ca |  
yatholbenāvṛto garbhas tathā tenedam āvṛtam ||38||*

38. As fire is covered by smoke, the mirror by dust, or embryo by the womb, so the universe is covered by lust.

Lust is not just an enemy for some, but an enemy for all. This is explained with examples. The examples illustrate various degrees of lust: shallow, deep

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<sup>43</sup> There is a similar verse in *Bhāgavatam* 9.19.13

and very deep. The fire, though covered by smoke, still performs its function of burning. Because of the disappearance of its natural clarity, the mirror covered by dust does not carry out its function of reflecting images properly, though it is known as a mirror by its form (in spite of the dust covering it). The fetus covered by the womb cannot perform its functions of stretching its hands and feet. Its true form cannot be understood within that covering. When lust is shallow, it is possible to remember the spiritual goals. When lust is deep, it is not possible. When it is very deep, one becomes unconscious.

In this way, the universe (*idam*) is covered by lust.

*āvṛtam jñānam etena jñānino nitya-vairiṇā |  
kāma-rūpeṇa kaunteya duṣpūreṇānalena ca ||39||*

39. The knowledge of the knower is covered by this eternal enemy in the form of lust, which is like an unsatisfied fire.

This verse explains that lust is indeed ignorance of the *jīva*, for it covers the knowledge of the *jīva*. The phrase “eternal enemy” indicates that lust must by all means be killed. By this ignorance in the form of lust, compared to an unsatisfied fire, knowledge is covered. *Ca* means *like* in this sentence. It is said:

*na jātu kāmāḥ kāmānām upabhogena śāmyati  
haviṣā kṛṣṇa-vartmeva bhūya evābhivardhate*

As supplying butter to a fire does not diminish the fire but instead increases it more and more, the endeavor to stop lusty desires by continual enjoyment can never be successful. *SB 9.19.14*

*indriyāṇi mano buddhir asyādhiṣṭhānam ucyate |  
etair vimohayaty eṣa jñānam āvṛtya dehinam ||40||*

40. The senses, mind and intelligence are the seats of this lust. By these, lust, covering the knowledge of the soul, bewilders the soul.

Where is this lust situated? This verse explains. The great fortresses and cities of this enemy lust (*adhiṣṭhānam*) are the senses, mind and intelligence. And the sense objects starting with sound<sup>44</sup> are the provinces<sup>45</sup> ruled by the king called lust. Lust bewilders the *jīva* (*dehinam*), by covering knowledge, using the senses, mind and intelligence.

*tasmāt tvam indriyāṅy ādau niyamyā bharatarṣabha |*  
*pāpmānaṁ prajahi hy enaṁ jñāna-vijñāna-nāśanam ||41||*

41. Therefore, as a first step, by controlling the senses, O best of the Bharata lineage, kill this demon, which destroys knowledge and intelligence.

The rule is that, by conquering the shelters of enemy, the enemy can be conquered. The shelters of lust are the senses, the mind and intelligence, which are respectively increasing difficult to conquer. The senses may be difficult to control, but they are easier to conquer than the other items. Therefore, first the senses should be conquered; you should control the senses. Though the uncontrollable mind wants to steal others' wives or properties, one should not engage the senses, by carefully considering the situation of the functioning of the senses such as eyes, ear, hands or feet. Kill this ferocious lust (*pāpmānam*). This means that by restricting the senses, after some time the mind will become freed of lust.<sup>46</sup>

*indriyāṅi parāṅy āhur indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ |*  
*manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ ||42||*

42. It is said that the senses are supreme. But superior to the senses is the mind. Superior to the mind is the intelligence. What is superior to the intelligence is the soul.

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<sup>44</sup> The sense objects or *viṣaya*, are sound, touch, form, taste and smell.

<sup>45</sup> The provinces nourish to the cities.

<sup>46</sup> Previously stopping the senses was not recommended, since the mind still will dwell on sense objects. Here Kṛṣṇa is stating that the senses should be controlled by proper engagement, but not stopped, and this will help control the mind from dwelling on enjoyment. Mind and intelligence should also be controlled by suitable engagement, but ultimately, if effort is not made to understand the *ātmā* and develop taste in the *ātmā*, all endeavors to control senses, mind and intellect will be futile.

One should not try to conquer over the mind and intelligence first, because of the impossibility. That is conveyed in this verse.

The senses are considered superior, for they cannot be conquered even by warriors who conquer the ten directions. But the mind is superior to the senses as it is even stronger, not being destroyed during dreams when the senses do not function. But compared to the mind, the intelligence, with the form of *viññāna*, is stronger. During deep sleep, even the mind does not function, but the intelligence remains undestroyed, being present in general form. But compared to the intelligence, that which is superior in strength, because it exists in you even when intelligence is destroyed by the practice of *jñāna*, is the famous *jivātmā*, which is the conqueror of lust. After conquering the senses, mind and intelligence, the *jivātmā*, which is the most powerful than all of them, can conquer lust. It is thus understood that is not an impossible task to conquer lust.

*evam buddheḥ paraṁ buddhvā saṁstabhyātmānam ātmanā |  
jahi śatruṁ mahā-bāho kāma-rūpaṁ durāsadam ||43||*

43. Thus, understanding that the soul is superior to the intelligence, being established in the self by the self, destroy the enemy in the form of lust, which is difficult to conquer.

This verse concludes the topic. Understanding that the *jivātmā* is superior to the intelligence, understanding that it is separate from all coverings, destroy the unconquerable lust by being firm in the self by the self.<sup>47</sup>

This chapter chiefly speaks of *niṣkāma-karma* as a *sādhana*, and also speaks of *jñāna*, its goal, in a secondary way.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Baladeva, Rāmānuja, Madhva and Śrīdhara all take the verse as “fixing the mind by the intelligence.” The justification for Viśvanātha’s version (Śaṅkāra holds the same view) could be that the self is the strongest, and therefore should be established in its position first. But that can only be done by itself, not by something inferior. When the soul is firm, then it controls senses, mind, intelligence and lust.

<sup>48</sup> This refers to the verses starting from verse 39.

This is the commentary on the third chapter of the *Gītā*, for the joy of the devotees' minds, following the line of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Four

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*imaṁ vivasvate yogam proktavān aham avyayam |*  
*vivasvān manave prāha manur ikṣvākave 'bravīt ||1||*

1. I spoke this indestructible knowledge to Vivasvān. He spoke it to Manu, and Manu spoke it to Ikṣvāku.

In the fourth chapter, the Lord speaks about the reasons for His appearance, the eternal nature of His appearance and activities, and also speaks of the excellence of *jñāna* in such things as the *brahma-yajña*.

In this verse, the Lord praises *jñāna-yoga* (*imaṁ yogam*), the goal of *niṣkāma-karma*, which He had already mentioned in the two previous chapters.

*evaṁ paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ |*  
*sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa ||2||*

2. The saintly kings understood this knowledge received in this disciplic succession. By the powerful influence of time, this *jñāna-yoga* was lost, O afflicter of enemies.

*sa evāyaṁ mayā te 'dya yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ |*  
*bhakto 'si me sakhā ceti rahasyaṁ hy etad uttamam ||3||*

3. As you are My devotee and friend, I have spoken this *yoga*, the ultimate secret, unto you today.

In this verse, the Lord gives the reason for speaking this *yoga* to Arjuna. You are My devotee and My friend. Apart from these two reasons, He gives another reason for not speaking this to inferior persons: it is most secret.

*arjuna uvāca*  
*aparam bhavato janma param janma vivasvataḥ |*  
*katham etad vijānīyām tvam ādau proktavān iti ||4||*

4. Arjuna said: You have appeared after Vivasvān. He was born previous to You. How can I understand that You spoke this *yoga* in the beginning?

In this verse, Arjuna asks about the impossibility of what Kṛṣṇa has just spoken. “Your birth is recent (*aparam*) and Vivasvān’s birth is ancient (*param*). How can I understand that You spoke it to him?”

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna |*  
*tāny ahaṁ veda sarvāni na tvam vettha parantapa ||5||*

5. The Lord said: You and I have gone through many births. I know all of these, but you do not, O afflicter of enemies.

In this verse, the Lord explains that He instructs through the agency of His *avatāras*.

I appear as various *avatāras*, and you also appear as My companion at that time. I know, since I am omniscient, being the Supreme lord. You do not know, since I cover your knowledge for fulfilling the purpose of My pastimes.<sup>49</sup> With knowledge covered, O afflicter of the enemy, you afflict (*tapa*) the enemies (*param*) by thinking of yourself as the son of Kuntī, a *kṣatriya*, during in this life.

*ajo 'pi sann avyayātmā bhūtānām īśvaro 'pi san |*  
*prakṛtiṁ svām adhiṣṭhāya sambhavāmy ātma-māyayā ||6||*

6. Though I am unborn and the lord of all entities, having an imperishable body, I appear with My own body by My own energy.

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<sup>49</sup> This is the influence of *yoga-māyā*.

In this verse, He describes the manner of His appearance.

“Though I am without birth, I appear. I descend in the forms of *devas*, humans and crawling animals and other forms.”

“But what is remarkable about that? The *jīva* is also actually without birth, and is born again after the destruction of the gross body.”

The Lord answers: “I have an indestructible body (*avyaya ātmā*). The *jīva* is without birth in the sense that he is a soul apart from his body. He takes birth just because of his relationship with the body which produces ignorance. But My being without birth and My taking birth are not separate from My body, since I am the Lord. Both My birth and My not being born are integral to My *svarūpa*. As such a condition is difficult to occur, it is certainly astounding and inconceivable. And there is no worry that I will take birth in all sorts of wombs like the *jīva* who is under the influence of *pāpa* and *puṇya*, for I am the lord of all the living entities (*bhūtānām īśvaraḥ*), not under the control of *karma*.”

“But the *jīva* receives bodies of *deva*, human and animal according to *karma* by his subtle body which causes his bondage. You, the Supreme Lord, are without a subtle body, and you are all pervading and control *karma*, time and all other elements. The *śruti* says *bahu syām*: may I become many. (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.3) From that, it is understood that you are the form of the whole universe. When you say ‘I appear in this particular way,’ I think that must mean that Your birth means simply that You are revealing to people the multitude of bodily forms throughout the universe, which are also eternal as types.”

“But how can that be? I make My appearance, situated in My own form (*prakṛtiṁ svām adhiṣṭhāya*).”

If the word *prakṛti* meant the external material energy, then its controller, the Supreme Lord, becomes, by inference, a material form, not a special object of realization. Therefore, in conformity to the *Amara Kośa* dictionary meaning (*saṁsiddhi-prakṛtī tv ime svarūpaṁ ca svabhāvaś ca*), the word *prakṛti* means *svarūpa* in this verse. It does not refer to the material energy

which arises from His *svarūpa*. The Lord's *svarūpa* is *sac-cid-ānanda*, full of eternal spiritual knowledge and bliss.

Concerning the word *prakṛti*, Śrīdhara Svāmī says, “Accepting a form (*prakṛti*) which is composed of *śuddha-sattva* (*svām*).” Rāmānujācārya says, “*Prakṛti* means ones own nature (*svabhāva*). Thus the phrase means ‘Being situated in My nature, I appear with My *svarūpa* (*svam*) by My own will.’” In this case, *prakṛti* means the Lord's nature, which is condensed *sac-cid-ānanda-rasa*, which is distinct from material energy. The word *svam* along with *prakṛti* thus indicates “My own *svarūpa*, My true form.”

For the *śruti* says:

*sa bhagavaḥ kasmin pratiṣṭhitaḥ sva mahimni*

Dear sir, in what is the supreme situated? It is situated in its own glory. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 7.24.1

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī gives the following meaning. “I appear, situated in My *svarūpa*. Being situated spiritually, I act without duality of soul and body.”

“But if You have indestructible bodies such as Matsya or Kūrma, then why do Your present form and the previous forms not appear all at once?”

“I appear through My *māyā* coming from My self (*ātmā* means self, thus *ātmā-māyā* means My own *māyā*), through My *yoga-māyā*, the function of the *cit-śakti*, which both covers and reveals My *svarūpas*. I appear revealing My present form, having covered the previous forms.”

Śrīdhara Svāmī says *sambhāvami ātmā-māyayā* means, “I appear by My energy of *jñāna*, *bala* and *vīrya* which strongly manifest.”

According to Rāmānuja, *ātmā-māyayā* can also mean “By My own knowledge,” since *māya* can mean knowledge in this context: *māyā vayanam jñānam*. The usage is stated: “He continually knows the sin and piety of all entities by knowledge (*māyayā*).” Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says:

“Māyā means the awareness through that body (*ātmā*) that I am the Lord, Vāsudeva, devoid of difference between body and soul.”

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata |  
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmy aham ||7||*

7. Whenever there is destruction in dharma, O Bhārata, and a rise in *adharmā*, I manifest My own body.

“When do I appear?” This verse answers.

I appear when I cannot tolerate both the destruction (*glāni*) of *dharmā* and the increase (*abhyutthānam*) of *adharmā*, in order to reverse the situation. I manifest My body (*ātmānam*). Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says, “I show that body which exists eternally, as if it were created by My energy.”

*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām |  
dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya saṁbhavāmi yuge yuge ||8||*

8. In every age I appear in order to protect the devotees, to destroy the demons and to establish *dharmā*.

“But Your devotees, the *rājarṣis* and *brahmarṣis* can rectify the destruction of *dharmā* and the increase of *adharmā*. Then why is it necessary that You make an appearance?”

“That is true. But I come and perform feats which are very difficult for others to do.” That is expressed in this verse.

I appear for delivering (*trāṇāya*) My dedicated devotees (*sādḥūnām*) whose hearts are bursting with longing for Me, who are suffering due to their devotion; for destroying the evil-minded persons like Rāvaṇa, Kamsa and Keśī, who give suffering to My devotees, and who cannot be killed by anyone except Me; and for establishing in a firm way, the supreme *dharmā* of meditating on Me, worshipping, serving Me and singing about Me, which cannot be instituted by anyone but Me (*saṁsthāpanārthāya*<sup>50</sup>).

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<sup>50</sup> The prefix *saṁ* stands for *samyak*, correctly. The meaning of *saṁsthāpanārthāya* therefore is “for correctly establishing *dharmā*” which others

I do this in every *yuga* in the day of Brahmā, or in every *kalpa* (day of Brahmā). In this act, one should not worry that the Lord is being prejudiced in punishing the evil-minded. By killing them, the Lord delivers even those most sinful *asuras* from *samsāra* and from receiving hellish punishment due to their various sinful actions. The Lord’s punishment in the form of killing should thus be seen as His mercy.

*janma karma ca me divyam evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ |  
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so ’rjuna ||9||*

9. He who understands in truth My spiritual birth and activities, attains Me on giving up his body, and does not take birth again.

You will be successful just by knowing in truth about My birth which was previously described, and after My birth, My activities. That is expressed in this verse.

Rāmānujācārya and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī say that *divya* means “non material, spiritual.” Śrīdhara Svāmī says *divya* means “uncommon.” As this means that it is not related to this material world, it also means “spiritual.” Being spiritual, beyond the *guṇas*, means that the Lord’s birth and activities are eternal. Jīva Gosvāmī also explains, quoting from *Bhāgavatam* in the *Bhagavat Sandarbha* that the Lord has no material birth or activities:

*na vidyate yasya ca janma karma vā  
na nāma-rūpe guṇa-doṣa eva vā  
tathāpi lokāpyaya-sambhavāya yaḥ  
sva-māyayā tāny anukālam ṛcchati*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead has no material birth, activities, name, form, qualities or faults. To fulfill the purpose for which this material world is created and destroyed, He comes in the form of a human being like Lord Rāma or Lord Kṛṣṇa by His original internal potency. He has immense potency, and in various forms, all free from material contamination, He acts wonderfully. He

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cannot do properly.

is therefore the Supreme Brahman. I offer my respects to Him. SB  
8.3.8

Or the word *divya* can mean “not approachable by logic,” or “inconceivable,” on the strength of the words of *śruti* and *smṛti*. The *Puruṣa Bodhinī Śruti* (4.3) of the Pippalādi branch of the *Vedas* says:

*eko devo nitya-līlānurakto bhakta-vyāpī bhakta-hṛdayāntarātmā*

The one Lord, who is inconceivable (*deva*), engaged in eternal pastimes, is spread in the devotees and resides in the devotee’s heart.<sup>51</sup>

The eternal nature of the Lord’s birth and activities is mentioned frequently in the *Bhāgavatam* as well.

*Yo veti tattvataḥ* means “he who knows that My birth and activities are *truly* eternal,” based on My statements that I am unborn and with indestructible body (*ajo ’pi san avyayātmā*) and that My birth and activities are non material (*janma karma ca me divyam*), and not just an appearance of being eternal, dependent on some sort of trick.

*Yo veti tattvataḥ* can also mean “one who knows Me as the very form of Brahman.” This is because later Kṛṣṇa will say *om tat sad iti nirdeṣo brahmaṇas trividhaḥ smṛtaḥ*: the three words *om tat sat* all indicate Brahman. (BG 17.18) Therefore *tattva* means the state of being Brahman (*tat*). *Yo veti tattvataḥ* means “one who know Me as the form of Brahman.”

That person does not take birth again, but rather, attains Me. The words *tyaktvā deham* only indicate the last condition of life, for, not only on giving up the body one does not take birth again, but even while not giving up the body, before that, one attains Me.

Rāmānujācārya says, “Destroying all sins which are unfavorable for surrender to Me by true knowledge of My spiritual birth and activities,

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<sup>51</sup> The idea of this quotation is that something which pervades everywhere is inconceivable (*deva* or *divya*), according to the definition given to the word *acintya* in chapter 2.

taking shelter of Me in this life in the prescribed way, that person who holds Me alone as dear, constantly thinking of Me, attains Me.”

*vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhā man-mayā mām upāsritāḥ |  
bahavo jñāna-tapasā pūtā mad-bhāvam āgatāḥ ||10||*

10. Having given up attachment, fear and anger towards the demons, absorbed in Me with hearing and chanting, having taken shelter of Me, many persons, purified by the austerity (tolerating opposition) of that true knowledge of My birth and activities, attained love for Me.

Not only at the present time can one attain Me just by knowing about the nature of My present birth and activities, but in ancient times also, in previous *kalpas* when I appeared, people attained Me by knowing the nature of My birth and activities. That is the purport of this verse.

Regarding the meaning of *jñāna-tapasā*, Rāmānujācārya says, “They became purified by the austerity of realization about the nature of My birth and activities as previously stated.”

Or the meaning can be: “They, having attained realization of the eternal nature of My birth and activities, became purified by austerity in the form of tolerating the burning poison of wrong ideas, wrong logic and wrong arguments.”

Rāmānujācārya quotes the following *śruti* in this regard.

*tasya dhīrāḥ parijānanti yonim*

The wise men know about the Lord’s method of birth. *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 3.13.1

Such wise persons have given up attachment to or affection for persons who speak nonsense ideas (*vīta-rāgaḥ*). My devotees have no fear of them, nor anger towards them. Why? Because they are preoccupied with meditating on, thinking of, hearing and singing about My birth and activities (*man-mayā*). They attained *prema* for Me (*mad-bhāvam*).

*ye yathā mām prapadyante tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham |  
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ ||11||*

11. I respond to persons according to the amount that they surrender to Me. All men follow My path, O son of Pṛthā.

”Your dedicated devotees consider Your birth and activities to be eternal, but others such as *jñānīs*, surrendering to You for the purpose of perfecting *jñāna* or other goals, do not consider Your birth and activities to be eternal.”

“In whatever way they worship Me (*prapadyante*), I also give them the fruits of their worship (*bhajāmi*) in an appropriate manner.”

The meaning is this. Those who think that My birth and activities are eternal and, having a particular desire for those pastimes, worship and please Me. And I, because I am the Lord, can respond, or not respond, or respond in a different way than they expect. But, making them My associates, I appear and disappear with them in this world at the appropriate time, in order to give My birth and pastimes their eternal nature. Favoring them at every moment, I bestow upon them the fruit of their worship.

The *jñānīs* and others who surrender unto Me while thinking of My birth and activities as temporary, and thinking of My deity forms as material--I throw those *jñānīs* again and again into the noose of *māyā* with its temporary births and action, and bestow upon them the sorrows of birth and death. This is the appropriate fruit of their worship (They receive temporary bodies because they think My body is temporary.)

But those *jñānīs* who accept the eternal nature of My birth and activities, consider My deity form to be *sac-cid-ānanda*, and surrender to Me for perfection of their *jñāna*-- I liberate those *jñānīs*, since they desire the destruction of their gross and subtle bodies, and I give them the bliss of Brahman. I bestow upon them the desired result of their worship: the destruction of birth and death born from ignorance.

Therefore, not only devotees surrender to Me, but rather everyone (*sarvaśaḥ*), all men, *jñānīs*, *karmīs*, *yogīs*, and worshippers of the *devatās*, follow My path (they surrender either directly or indirectly). *Jñāna*, *karma*

and other processes are all My path, since I am the essence of all those paths.

*kāṅkṣantaḥ karmanām siddhiṃ yajanta iha devatāḥ |  
kṣīpraṃ hi mānuṣe loke siddhir bhavati karma-jā ||12||*

12. Among men, those desiring results from their work worship the *devatās*. The results coming from such actions appear quickly.

However, among men, those who are full of desire give up the path of *bhakti* even though it is coming directly from Me, and follow the path of *karma* which gives quick results. That is explained in this verse. The results of their actions (*karma-jā siddhiḥ*) such as going to Svarga, come quickly.

*cātur-varṇyaṃ mayā sṛṣṭaṃ guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ |  
taśya kartāram api mām viddhy akartāram avyayam ||13||*

13. The four *varṇas* were created by Me according to distinctions of quality and work. Though I made the system, know that I, being indestructible, am also not the maker of the system.

“Indeed, the paths of *bhakti* and *jñāna* give liberation, but the path of *karma* leads to bondage. Therefore, there is some inequality in You, the creator of all paths, the Supreme Lord.”

“That is not so at all. I have created the four *varṇas* for people who want their own enjoyment.” The suffix *ya* in the word *cātur-varṇya* indicates self-interest in the four orders.

The *brāhmaṇas*, predominated by *sattva*, perform activities such as controlling the senses and mind. The *kṣatriyas*, who are predominated by *rajas* and *sattva*, perform actions such as warfare and acts of heroism. The *vaiyāsas*, predominately *tamas* and *rajas*, do farming and raise cows. The *śūdras*, predominated by *tamas*, serve others. I have created this system of four *varṇas* divided according to *guṇa* and activity, taking shelter of the path of *dharma*. Know Me as the creator (*kartāram*) of the system, since it is created from the *guṇas* of *prakṛti* which is My energy. In that way I am the creator, but actually I am not the creator, since My *svarūpa* is beyond the

*guṇas* and *prakṛti*. Therefore, I am said to be indestructible (*avyayam*). I am not at all similar to the *varṇas* or matter, though I have created them.

*na mām karmāṇi limpanti na me karma-phale sprhā |  
iti mām yo 'bhijānāti karmabhir na sa badhyate ||14||*

14. Actions do not contaminate Me. I have no desire for the fruits of work. One who knows this about Me is not bound by actions.

“Let all that be, but now You have appeared in a *kṣatriya* family, and daily perform activities obligatory to the *kṣatriya*. It seems You are subsisting as a *kṣatriya*.”

“But these activities do not contaminate Me as they contaminate the *jīva*. Nor do I have desire for results of those actions, such as desire for Svarga. Being full of My own bliss because I am the Supreme Lord, the only reason for My doing these actions is to encourage mankind. He who knows this is not bound, but he who does not know it is bound by *karma*.”

*evam jñātvā kṛtam karma pūrvair api mumukṣubhiḥ |  
kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvam pūrvaiḥ pūrvataram kṛtam ||15||*

15. Those desiring liberation in ancient times performed actions knowing this. Therefore, perform action which the ancients performed.

Understanding how I have acted without being bound, previously person like Janaka performed *karma* in order to promote it with the people.

*kim karma kim akarmeti kavayo 'py atra mohitāḥ |  
tat te karma pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvā mokṣyase 'śubhāt ||16||*

16. Even the wise are bewildered about action and inaction. I will speak to you about that action, by knowing which you will be liberated from *samsāra*.

Moreover, action is not to be performed by the intelligent person just in an imitative way. It should be performed after having understood its varieties. First, the difficulty in understanding *karma* is described.

*karmaṇo hy api boddhavyaṃ boddhavyaṃ ca vikarmaṇaḥ |  
akarmaṇaś ca boddhavyaṃ gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ ||17||*

17. One should understand about *karma*, *vikarma* and *akarma*. The truth about these is difficult to understand.

One should understand the truth about *vikarma*--that performance of forbidden actions leads to misery. As for the truth about *akarma*--avoidance of action by the *sannyāsī*--how can that lead to auspiciousness? How will one obtain the highest goal without knowing the truth about these? The real truth (*gati*) about *karma*, *akarma* and *vikarma* is hard to understand. In the last line the word *karma* is used to represent all three types.

*karmaṇy akarma yaḥ paśyed akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ |  
sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsna-karma-kṛt ||18||*

18. He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is intelligent among men. He performs all actions.

This verse gives an understanding of the truth of action and non-action. He is intelligent who sees that persons of pure heart fixed in knowledge like Janaka who do not renounce activity, but rather engage in action, in *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, do not accrue *karma* (*akarma*); and who sees that one who does not perform actions, renouncing actions as a *sannyāsī*, being of impure heart without knowledge, though talking profusely of knowledge because of knowledge of scriptures, actually obtains bondage of *karma* leading to misery. He engages in all activities; he does not renounce action even through instructions or association of those who think themselves knowledgeable, talking a lot about *jñāna*.

The *Bhāgavatam* says:

*yas tv asaṃyata-śaḍ-vargaḥ praçaṇḍendriya-sārathiḥ  
jñāna-vairāgya-rahitas tri-danḍam upajīvati  
surān ātmānam ātma-sthaṃ nihnute mām ca dharmā-hā  
avipakva-kaṣāyo 'smād amuṣmāc ca vihīyate*

One who has not controlled the six forms of illusion--lust, anger, greed, excitement, false pride and intoxication--whose intelligence, the leader of the senses, is extremely attached to material things, who is bereft of knowledge and detachment, who adopts the *sannyāsa* order of life to make a living, who denies the worshipable demigods, his own self and the Supreme Lord within himself, thus ruining all religious principles, and who is still infected by material contamination, is deviated and lost both in this life and the next.  
SB 11.18.40-41

*yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāma-saṅkalpa-varjitāḥ |  
jñānāgni-dagdha-karmāṇaṁ tam āhuḥ paṇḍitaṁ budhāḥ ||19||*

19. The wise say that he is learned who, engaging in all activities, but being devoid of desire for enjoyment, has burned up all actions by the fire of knowledge.

This concept is further explained in five verses. One who completely engages in activity (*samārambhāḥ*) devoid of desires to attain objects of enjoyment performs actions consumed by the fire of knowledge, whether the actions are prescribed (*karma*) or forbidden (*vikarma*). In this way the nature of *vikarma* should be understood.<sup>52</sup> Just as the qualified person sees that *karma* does not lead to bondage, he also sees that *vikarma* or forbidden action do not accrue bondage. This verse is in agreement with the previous verse (seeing inaction in action). Later it will be said:

*api ced asi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpa-kṛt-tamaḥ  
sarvaṁ jñāna-plavenaiva vṛjinam santariṣyasi  
yathaidhāmsi samiddho 'gnir bhasma-sāt kurute 'rjuna  
jñānāgniḥ sarva-karmāṇi bhasma-sāt kurute tathā*

Even if you are considered to be the most sinful of all sinners, when you are situated in the boat of transcendental knowledge you will be able to cross over the ocean of miseries. As a blazing fire turns firewood to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge burn to ashes all reactions to material activities. BG 4.36-37

<sup>52</sup> *Vikarma* is not directly discussed in the text, though it was mentioned in verse 17.

*tyaktvā karma-phalāsaṅgam nitya-tr̥pto nirāśrayaḥ |  
karmany abhipravṛtto 'pi naiva kiñcit karoti saḥ ||20||*

20. Though intently engaged in actions, having given up the desire for results of action, being always satisfied, non-dependent on others, this person does nothing at all.

This person is always satisfied by his own bliss (*nitya-tr̥ptaḥ*). He does not take shelter at all of anything for his livelihood (*nirāśrayaḥ*).

*nirāśīr yata-cittātmā tyakta-sarva-parigrahaḥ |  
sārīram kevalam karma kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam ||21||*

21. Having given up all sense of taking from others, being without desire and controlled in mind and body, performing acts only to support his body, he does not incur sin.

He is controlled in mind (*cit*) and gross body (*ātmā*). For the purpose of maintaining his body he may accept things even from sinful persons, but does not incur sin. This is an extended explanation of the statement “one must understand the truth concerning *vikarma*.”

*yadṛcchā-lābha-santuṣṭo dvandvātīto vimatsaraḥ |  
samaḥ siddhāv asiddhau ca kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate ||22||*

22. Satisfied with what comes of its own accord, free of dualities, free of envy, calm in the face of success or failure, though engaging in work, that person is not bound.

*gata-saṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthita-cetasah |  
yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagram praviliyate ||23||*

23. Devoid of desire for results, free from attachment, absorbed in knowledge, and engaged in actions of *yajña*, he does not accrue karmic reactions.

For one who performs actions for the purpose of *yajña*, which will now be described, *karma* dissolves. The state of non-action or no reactions to work is attained by this.

*brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam |  
brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma-karma-samādhinā ||24||*

24. The oblation consisting of Brahman, with Brahman as the ladle, is offered into the fire which is Brahman, by the person who is Brahman. The person Brahman attains Brahman by being absorbed in actions of Brahman.

It has been stated in the previous verse that one should perform actions for the purpose of *yajña*. What type of *yajña* is this? This verse explains.

*Arpaṇam* refers to the instruments such as the wooden spoon used to offer the ghee into the fire. This is Brahman. The substance used as oblation is Brahman. The fire in which the oblation is placed is Brahman. The performer of the *yajña* is Brahman. The person who sees things in this way attains Brahman alone, not any other result. Why? It is because he has concentrated his attention on the action which is composed only of Brahman (*brahma-karma-samādhinā*).

*daivam evāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate |  
brahmāgnāv apare yajñam yajñenaivopajuhvati ||25||*

25. Others however, *karma-yogīs*, engage in worship of *devatās*, and the *jñāna-yogīs* offer the *jīva* into the fire of Brahman by means of the *mantra om*.

Hear about many other types of *yajñas*. The Lord explains this in eight verses. *Daivam* refers to that in which *devatās* like Indra and Varuṇa are worshipped. Thus the phrase *daivam yajñam* means worship having Indra and other *devatās* as subject. This is derived from the rule *sāsyā devatā* (*Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Pāṇini 4.2.24).<sup>53</sup> In this worship, it is indicated that there is

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<sup>53</sup> By this rule *deva* becomes *daiva*, meaning “belonging to the *deva*.”

lack of consciousness of Brahman.<sup>54</sup> The *karma-yogīs* (*yoginah*) worship the *devatās*.

Others, the *jñāna-yogīs*, offer the *jīva* (*yajñam*) (what is called *tvam*: you) as the oblation into the fire of Brahman or Paramātmā (what is called *tat*: that), using the *mantra praṇava* as the instrument (*yajñena*). This *jñāna-yoga* will be praised later (verse 33). The words *yajña* and *yajñena* used as object and instrument refer to the pure *jīva* and *praṇava* through the use of metaphor called *prathama atiśayokti*.<sup>55</sup>

*śrotrādīnīndriyāṅy anye saṁyamāgniṣu juhvati |*  
*śabdādīn viṣayān anyā indriyāgniṣu juhvati ||26||*

26. The *naiṣṭhikī brahmacārīs* offer the senses into the controlled mind. Other *brahmacārīs* offer the sense objects into the fire of the senses.

Others, *naiṣṭhikī brahmacārīs*, offer the senses such as ear into the fire of the controlled mind. This means that the senses completely disappear in the pure mind.<sup>56</sup> Others, less controlled *brahmacārīs*, offer the sense objects such as sound into fires of the senses. The sense objects disappear in the senses.<sup>57</sup>

*sarvāṅīndriya-karmāṅi prāṇa-karmāṅi cāpare |*  
*ātma-saṁyama-yogāgnau juhvati jñāna-dīpīte ||27||*

27. Others offer all the activities of the senses and the *prāṇas* into the fire of the soul, lit by knowledge.

Others, knowledgeable of *tvam*, the pure soul, offer the activities of all the senses, such as hearing and seeing as well as the activities of the ten *prāṇas* into the fire of purity (*saṁyama*) of the *jīva* (*tvam*).<sup>58</sup> These *yogīs* make the mind, intelligence, senses and ten *prāṇas* disappear. They think that only the

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<sup>54</sup> This is indicated by the word *eva*, here meaning “but.” This comes from Śrīdhara’s commentary.

<sup>55</sup> In this type of metaphor the object of comparison is not mentioned by name.

<sup>56</sup> This means that the senses stop functioning in relation to external objects, turning inward when the mind attains *samādhi*.

<sup>57</sup> This means that the senses contact sense objects, but remain detached.

soul perceiving inwards (*pratyag-atmā*) exists, not anything else such as the mind or other things.

The actions of the ten *prāṇas* are as follows. The *prāṇa* goes outward (exhaling), the *apāna* goes downwards (expelling). The *samāna* assimilates food and drink. The *udāna* leads upwards and the *vyāna* is pervading, regulating the other *prāṇas*.<sup>59</sup>

*udgāre nāga ākhyātaḥ kūrmas tūnmīlane smṛtaḥ  
kṛkaraḥ kṣut-karo jñeyo devadatto vijrmbhane  
na jahāti mrte kvāpi sarvavyāpī dhanañjayaḥ*

*Nāga* governs belching, *kūrma* causes opening of the eyes, *kṛkara* causes sneezing and hunger, and *devadatta* causes yawning and sleep. *Dhanañjaya*, pervading the whole body, lingers after death, causing decomposition. *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā* 5.64

*dravya-yajñās tapo-yajñā yoga-yajñās tathāpare |  
svādhyāya-jñāna-yajñāś ca yatayaḥ saṃśita-vratāḥ ||28||*

28. Others engage in severe vows of charity, austerities, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, and studying the Vedas.

Those who offer goods in charity (*dravya-yajña*), those who perform austerities like *cāndrāyana-vrata* (*tapo-yajña*), those who engage in *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* (*yoga-yajña*), those who put effort into engaging in knowledge by studying the Vedas—all these engage in very severe *vrata*.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ātmā* here refers to soul rather than mind, because offering sense to the mind has already been stated in verse 26, and it cannot mean *param brahman* since that has been stated in verse 25.

<sup>59</sup> Here is a more complete description. *Prāṇa*, located in the chest area, is associated with breathing and speech. *Apāna*, located below the navel, is responsible for excretion and gives energy to the lower organs in the body, including intestines, genital and anus. *Samāna*, located in the solar plexus, is responsible for digestion and assimilation of food. *Udāna*, controls the head region, swallowing, movement of limbs and erect posture. *Vyāna*, pervading the whole body, causes circulation of blood and coordinates the activities of the other *prāṇas*.

*apāne juhvati prāṇam prāṇe 'pānam tathāpare |  
prāṇāpāna-gatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāma-parāyanāḥ |  
apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇān prāṇeṣu juhvati ||29||*

29. Others, dedicated to controlling the breath, stopping the movement of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, offer the *prāṇa* into the *apāna*. Others, controlling eating, offer the senses into the *prāṇas*.

Others who are expert in *prāṇāyāma* offer the upward *prāṇa* into the downward *apāna*. At the time of fully inhaling, they merge the *prāṇa* with the *apāna*. At the time of fully exhaling (*recaka*) they offer the *apāna* into the *prāṇa*.<sup>60</sup> At the time of *kumbhaka*, they stop the movement of both *prāṇa* and *apāna*, and become completely absorbed in the practice of *prāṇāyāma*.

Others, desiring to conquer the senses, control the eating process; that is, they eat little. They offer the senses (*prāṇān*) into the *prāṇas* which are subsisting on restricted eating. When the *prāṇas* become weak, the senses, being dependent on the *prāṇas*, become incapable of grasping the sense objects, and become merged in the *prāṇas*.

*sarve 'py ete yajña-vido yajña-kṣapita-kalmaṣāḥ |  
yajña-śiṣṭāmṛta-bhujo yānti brahma sanātanam ||30||*

30. All of these knowers of sacrifice destroy sin through sacrifice. Eating the sweet remnants of the sacrifice, they attain the eternal Brahman.

All of those who know the characteristics of *yajña* as described previously (*yajña-vidah*) attain Brahman by *jñāna*. The secondary, unsought fruits are here described. They enjoy the sweet remnants of the *yajña* such as sense enjoyment and power (*bhoga-aiśvarya*). The sought result is then described: they attain Brahman.

*nāyam loko 'sty ayajñasya kuto 'nyah kuru-sattama ||31||*

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<sup>60</sup> This refers to the practice of *pūra*, in which the inhalation is prolonged, and *recaka*, where the exhalation is prolonged. *Kumbhaka* is stopping the breath after either inhaling or exhaling.

31. The person who does not perform sacrifice attains nothing in this life, what to speak of the next, O best of the Kurus.

The results of not acting in this way are described in this verse. One who does not perform *yajña* does not attain the little happiness available on this planet, what to speak of attaining the planet of the *devatās*.

*evam̐ bahu-vidhā yajñā vitatā brahmaṇo mukhe |  
karma-jān viddhi tān sarvān evam̐ jñātvā vimokṣyase ||32||*

32. Thus many types of sacrifice have been described in the *Vedas*. Know that they are all based on actions of body, mind and words. Knowing this, you will be liberated.

*Brahmaṇaḥ* means the *Vedas*. The phrase *vitatā brahmaṇo mukhe* whose literal meaning is “spread in the mouth of the *Vedas*” actually means “clearly spoken of by the *Vedas* themselves.” *Karma-jān* means based on the actions of the body, mind and words.

*śreyān dravya-mayād yajñāj jñāna-yajñāḥ parantapa |  
sarvam̐ karmākhilam̐ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate ||33||*

33. O afflicter of the enemies, the sacrifice involving *jñāna* is higher than the sacrifice of materials. With attainment of knowledge, O son of Pṛthā, all actions cease.

Among these sacrifices, the *jñāna-yajña* described in verse 25 with the words *brahmāgnāv apare yajñam̐ yajñenaivopajuhvati* is superior to the sacrifice of material objects such as oblations of ghee described in verse 24. Why? With the attainment of knowledge, all actions which bear fruit (*akhilam*)<sup>61</sup> are finished. After attaining knowledge, reactions to work no longer remain.

*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā |  
upadekṣyanti te jñānam̐ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ ||34||*

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<sup>61</sup> *Sarvam* meaning “all” has already been stated. *Akhila* means “all,” but also “not barren”. To avoid repetition, this meaning has been taken by Viśvanātha.

34. Know this by surrender, questioning and service. The seers of truth, the *jñānīs*, will teach you this knowledge.

This verse speaks of the method for attaining that knowledge. It is attained by offering respects, bowing down to the *guru*, the instructor; and by asking questions, such as “O master, why am I in this world of misery? How can this world of birth and death be stopped?” And it is attained by service to the *guru*. This is illustrated in the *śruti*:

*tad vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyam  
brahma-niṣṭham*

With fuel wood in his hand, the student should approach the *guru*, knowledgeable of the *Vedas* and fixed in Brahman, in order to attain knowledge of Brahman. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12

*yaj jñātvā na punar moham evaṁ yāsyasi pāṇḍava |  
yena bhūtāny aśeṣeṇa drakṣyasi ātmany atho mayi ||35||*

35. O son of Pāṇḍu, knowing this, you will no longer be bewildered. By this loss of bewilderment, you will see that all entities are individual *ātmas* and are situated in Me.

The result of knowledge is described in three and a half verses. Understanding that you are not the body but the soul, you will not have bewilderment, which is the quality of the mind. By destroying bewilderment through the attainment of the natural knowledge of the eternally perfect soul, you will see all living entities, such as men and beasts, as *jīvātmā* (*ātmani*), but situated as separate creatures by material identification, and you will also see them situated in Me (*mayi*), the supreme cause, since they are My products.

*api ced asi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpa-kṛt-tamaḥ |  
sarvaṁ jñāna-plavenaiva vṛjinam santariṣyasi ||36||*

36. Even if you are the most sinful among sinners, you will cross over all sins just by the boat of knowledge.

This verse is a glorification of knowledge.

The verse states “If you are more sinful than all sinners...” But how could a person who is sinful be pure hearted, and without purity of heart, how could he attain realization of knowledge? Actually, it is not possible for one who has attained knowledge to commit sinful acts. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī explains: the words *api* and *cet* are used to show the assumption of the impossible; though the commission of sin would be impossible, the assumption is made to show the results of attaining knowledge.

*yathaidhāmsi samiddho ’gnir bhasmasāt kurute ’rjuna |  
jñānāgniḥ sarva-karmāṇi bhasma-sāt kurute tathā ||37||*

37. As a blazing fire burns to ashes all fuel wood, the fire of knowledge turns to ashes all actions.

Knowledge arising from purity of heart destroys all *karmas* except the *prārabdha-karmas*.<sup>62</sup> This verse illustrates with an example. *Samiddhaḥ* means “blazing.”

*na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate |  
tat svayam yoga-samsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati ||38||*

38. In this world there is nothing as pure as knowledge. After some time it is attained of itself from within, through practice of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*.

In this world, among those who engage in austerities, *yoga* and other processes, there is nothing to compare to knowledge. That knowledge is not easily attained by everyone, but is fully attained (*sam siddhaḥ*)<sup>63</sup> by practicing *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*. It is not unobtainable, but is attained in time, not immediately. That knowledge is attained spontaneously within the self (*ātmani*), not by accepting external *sannyāsa*.

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<sup>62</sup> *Prārabdha-karmas* are those which are being experienced in this life. *Aprārabdha-karmas* are those which are waiting for future life times, not this life. *Jñāna* destroys the *aprārabdha-karmas* but not the *prārabdha-karmas*. *Bhakti* destroys all *karmas*.

<sup>63</sup> *Sam* stands for *samyak*, meaning “completely”.

*śraddhāvān labhate jñānaṁ tat-paraḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ |  
jñānaṁ labdhvā parāṁ śāntim acireṇādhigacchati ||39||*

39. Having faith in scripture, being fixed in practice of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, and finally attaining control of the senses, one attains knowledge. Attaining knowledge, one quickly attains freedom from *saṁsāra*.

How and when does this happen? Having faith in the meaning of the scriptures that knowledge will arise by purity of heart through practice of *niṣkāma-karma* (*śraddhāvān*), being fixed in execution of that *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* (*tat-paraḥ*), and finally attaining controlled senses, a person will attain knowledge (of *ātmā*). Then he will attain destruction of *saṁsāra* (*pārāṁ śāntim*).

*ajñāś cāśraddadhānaś ca saṁśayātmā vinaśyati |  
nāyaṁ loko 'sti na paro na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanaḥ ||40||*

40. The person ignorant of scripture, or one who knows scripture but has no faith in it, or one who is doubtful of attaining the goal even with faith, perishes. One who is afflicted with doubt attains nothing in this life, nothing in the next, and no happiness.

Having spoken of the person who was qualified with knowledge, in this verse Kṛṣṇa speaks of the person without qualification for knowledge. That person perishes who is ignorant like an animal, or who, though knowing the scriptures, does not believe in anything, because of seeing the arguments between various factions (*aśraddhadānaḥ*), or who though even having faith, is afflicted with doubt whether he can attain the goal. Among these persons (ignorant, faithless, and doubting), the doubting one is especially criticized in the last line.

*yoga-sannyasta-karmāṇaṁ jñāna-saṅchinna-saṁśayam |  
ātmavantaṁ na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya ||41||*

41. Actions do not bind the person who has renounced all action through *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, who has then cut all doubts through *jñāna-yoga*, and who has then attained directly realization of the *ātmā*.

In such a state, a person will reach a state of no *karma* (*naiṣkarmyam*). Having renounced all actions by *sannyāsa*, after performance of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, and having eradicated all doubts through practice of *jñāna*, actions do not bind that person, who has attained realization of the soul.

*tasmād ajñāna-sambhūtaṁ hṛt-sthaṁ jñānāsinātmanaḥ |  
chittvainaṁ saṁśayaṁ yogam ātiṣṭhottiṣṭha bhārata ||42||*

42. Therefore, cutting all doubts which have arisen from ignorance with the sword of knowledge, taking shelter of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, rise, O Bhārata.

This verse concludes the topic. Cutting the doubts situated in the heart, taking shelter of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, rise up in order to fight the battle.

Having spoken of the various means of liberation, *jñāna* is praised in this chapter. But the means to *jñāna* is *karma*. That has been pointed out in this chapter.

Thus, the commentaries on the fourth chapter of the *Gītā* for the pleasure of the devotees' minds have been completed following after the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Five

*arjuna uvāca*  
*sannyāsaṃ karmanāṃ kṛṣṇa punar yogam ca śamsasi |*  
*yac chreya etayor ekaṃ tan me brūhi su-niścitam ||1||*

1. Arjuna said: You praise both giving up action and performing action through *karma-yoga*. Please tell me definitely, which of the two is better.

In the fifth chapter the Lord explains that *karma* as superior to *jñāna*, because it strengthens *jñāna*, and explains knowledge of Paramātmā, along with qualities such as seeing things with equal vision.

Being worried about the contradiction between the two statements at the end of the previous chapter, Arjuna asks a question.

In verse 41 of the last chapter you spoke of renouncing *karma* by *jñāna* arising from *karma-yoga* (*yoga-sannyasta-karmāṇam*) but in verse 42 You again spoke of taking up *karma-yoga* (*yogam ātiṣṭhottīṣṭha bhārata*). It is not possible to perform both renunciation of action and *karma-yoga* at once because there is essential contradiction between the two, just as there is contradiction between remaining stationary and moving. Therefore the man of knowledge should either renounce *karma* or perform *karma-yoga*. Since I do not understand Your intention, I am asking. Among these two, which one is better? Please tell that definitely to me.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*sannyāsaḥ karma-yogaś ca niḥśreyasa-karāv ubhau |*  
*tayos tu karma-sannyāsāt karma-yogo viśiṣyate ||2||*

2. The Lord said: Both renunciation of work and *karma-yoga* produce the highest benefit. But of the two, *karma-yoga* is better than renunciation of *karma*.

*Karma-yoga* is better. Even for the *jñānī*, performing action is not at all a fault. Rather, by performance of *niṣkāma-karma*, the heart becomes fixed in purity. From that, *jñāna* becomes fixed. Sometimes there may arise

disturbance in the heart of the *sannyāsī*. In order to alleviate that disturbance, is it forbidden to engage in *karma*? Disturbance in the heart certainly obstructs the practice of *jñāna*, but taking up enjoyment of sense objects (rather than performing *niṣkāma-karma*) is a real degradation.

*jñeyah sa nitya-sannyāsī yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati |  
nirdvandvo hi mahā-bāho sukhaṁ bandhāt pramucyate ||3||*

3. O Mighty-armed one, the person engaged in *niṣkāma-karma* with pure heart, who is without duality, neither hating nor desiring, is known as the constant *sannyāsī*. Easily he is freed from bondage.

It should not be said that taking *sannyāsa* (renouncing all duties or *karma*) gives liberation and not taking *sannyāsa* does not give liberation. The pure hearted person engaged in action should be known as the constant *sannyāsī* (*nitya-sannyāsī*). He is a true warrior who conquers the city of liberation, O Mighty-armed one (*mahā-bāho*).

*sāṅkhya-yogau prthag bālāḥ pravādanti na paṇḍitāḥ |  
ekam apy āsthitaḥ samyag ubhayor vindate phalam ||4||*

4. The ignorant speak of *jñāna* and *karma-yoga* as different, but the wise do not. Performing one of these completely, one attains the results of both.

Your statement about which is the better of the two does not actually apply, because intelligent people do not see any difference between the two. The word *sāṅkhya* refers to being fixed in *jñāna*. An *aṅga* (component) of that practice is *sannyāsa*. The fools, not the wise, speak of the difference between *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga*. As the previous verse mentioned, “one should know the *karma-yogī* to be the real *sannyāsī*.” Thus, performing one of the two gives the result of both.

*yat sāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṁ tad yogair api gamyate |  
ekam sāṅkhyam ca yogam ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ||5||*

5. The goal achieved by *jñāna* is the goal achieved by *karma-yoga*. He who sees *jñāna-yoga* and *karma-yoga* as one actually sees.

This verse clarifies the issue. What is achieved by *sannyāsa* (*sāṅkhyaiḥ*) is achieved by *niškāma-karma* (*yogaiḥ*). The plural (singular would be *sāṅkhyena* and *karmaṇā*) is used to show respect for the processes. He who sees that these two which appear different are actually one by intelligence actually sees. He is a wise man with vision.

*sannyāsas tu mahā-bāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ |  
yoga-yukto munir brahma na cireṇādhiḡacchati ||6||*

6. Renunciation is difficult to attain without *karma-yoga*. The *jñānī* engaged in *karma-yoga* quickly attains Brahman.

*Sannyāsa* gives suffering for the *jñānī* who cannot fix complete purity in his heart. *Karma-yoga* however gives pleasure. The intended meaning of what was spoken earlier is made clear. Because of not performing *karma-yoga* which can pacify the disturbance of the heart, *sannyāsa* may give rise to suffering, if it is accepted without proper qualification. Thus it is said by the writers of the *Vārtikā*:

*pramāḡino bahiḡ cittāḥ piḡunāḥ kalahotsukāḥ  
sannyāsiṇo 'pi drḡyante daiva-sandūḡitāśrayāḥ<sup>64</sup>*

One sees *sannyāsis* who are absorbed in sense gratification, with evil minds, fond of arguing, who are contaminated shelters of spiritual life.

The personified *Vedas* also says:

*yadi na samuddharanti yatayo hṛḡi kāma-jaḡā*

Members of the renounced order who fail to uproot the last traces of material desire in their hearts remain impure, and thus You do not allow them to understand You. *SB* 10.87.39

*Bhāgavatam* also says:

*yas tv asaḡyata-ḡaḡ-vargāḥ pracāḡḡendriya-sārathiḥ*

<sup>64</sup> This is also quoted by Śrīdhara Svāmī. *Vārtikā* means a commentary.

*jñāna-vairāgya-rahitas tri-daṇḍam upajīvati  
surān ātmānam ātma-sthaṁ nihnute mām ca dharmā-hā  
avipakva-kaṣāyo 'smād amuṣmāc ca vihīyate*

One who has not controlled the six forms of illusion, lust, anger, greed, excitement, false pride and intoxication, whose intelligence, the leader of the senses, is extremely attached to material things, who is bereft of knowledge and detachment, who adopts the *sannyāsa* order of life to make a living, who denies the worshipable demigods, his own self and the Supreme Lord within himself, thus ruining all religious principles, and who is still infected by material contamination, is deviated and lost both in this life and the next.  
SB 11.18.40

Therefore, the *jñānī* (*muniḥ*) engaging in *niškāma-karma-yoga* (*yoga-yuktaḥ*) quickly attains Brahman.

*yoga-yukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ |  
sarva-bhūtātma-bhūtātma kurvann api na lipyate ||7||*

7. One engaged in *karma-yoga*, having controlled his intelligence, mind and senses, though he is engaged in work, is not contaminated, and is the object of love for all living entities.

The *jñānī* by performing *karma* is not contaminated. That is stated in this verse. The *jñānīs* engaged in *karma-yoga* are of three types: those who have controlled their intelligence (*viśuddhātmā*), those who have controlled their minds (*vijitātmā*), and those who have controlled their senses (*jitendriyaḥ*). The order of superiority is from last to first: having controlled intelligence is the best. All *jīvas* are attracted to such a *grhastha*. His body (*ātmā*) becomes the object of love (*ātma-bhūta*) for all living entities (*sarva-bhūta*).

*naiva kiñcit karomīti yukto manyeta tattva-vit |  
paśyañ śṛṇvan spr̥ṣaṇ jighrann aśnan gacchan svapaṇ śvasan ||8||  
pralapan viśṛjan gr̥hṇann unmiṣan nimiṣann api |  
indriyāñīndriyārtheṣu vartanta iti dhārayan ||9||*

8-9. The person engaged in *karma-yoga*, having knowledge, understanding that the senses alone are interacting with the sense objects while he is seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating<sup>65</sup>, going, sleeping, breathing, speaking, excreting (through genital or anus), receiving<sup>66</sup>, opening and closing the eyes, thinks, “I am doing nothing at all.”

The Lord teaches the method by which one is not contaminated by actions. Although the *karma-yogī* (*yukta*) is engaged in seeing and other actions, by verifying with his intelligence that the senses alone are engaged in the sense objects, he thinks, “I am doing nothing at all.”

*brahmany ādhāya karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā karoti yah |  
lipyate na sa pāpena padma-patram ivāmbhasā ||10||*

10. He who, giving up attachment, offers his actions to the Supreme Lord, is not contaminated by sin in those actions, just as a lotus leaf is not touched by water.

Moreover, he who, offering all his actions unto Me, the Supreme Lord (*brahmaṇi*), giving up attachment to actions, giving up false identification of “I am doing it”, performs actions, is not contaminated at all by any actions, of which some could be sinful. *Pāpena* here represents all actions, not just sinful ones.<sup>67</sup>

*kāyena manasā buddhyā kevalair indriyair api |  
yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgam tyaktvātma-śuddhaye ||11||*

11. The *karma-yogīs* perform action, giving up attachment to results, for purification of the mind, using voice, mind, intelligence or even the senses alone.

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<sup>65</sup> These are the actions of the *jñāna indriya*.

<sup>66</sup> These are the actions of the *karma indriya*, except for sleep and breathing, which are activities governed by the *prāṇas*. Opening and closing eyes are representative of the five secondary *prāṇas*. This is Rāmānuja’s opinion. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says sleeping is the function of the mind.

<sup>67</sup> *Puṇya* is also contaminating.

The *karma-yogīs* perform actions using the body, mind, intelligence and even the senses alone, while giving up attachment, for purification of the mind (*ātma-suddhaye*). At the time of making offerings of oblations using the senses, the mind may wander. This is the manner in which only the senses are employed (*kevalaiḥ indriyaiḥ api*).

*yuktaḥ karma-phalaṁ tyaktvā śāntim āpnoti naiṣṭhikīm |*  
*ayuktaḥ kāma-kāreṇa phale saktō nibadhyate ||12||*

12. He who is engaged in *karma-yoga* while giving up the results attains liberation. One not engaged in *karma-yoga*, being attached to the results out of lust, becomes bound up.

Performing action with no attachment leads to liberation and performing action with attachment leads to bondage. The performer of *karma-yoga* (*yuktaḥ*) attains steady peace (*naiṣṭhikīm śāntim*). This means he attains liberation. The *karmī* with desires (*ayuktaḥ*), who is attached to the results, due to performing actions out of lust (*kāma-kāreṇa*), becomes bound.

*sarva-karmāṇi manasā sannyasyāste sukhaṁ vaśī |*  
*nava-dvāre pure dehī naiva kurvan na kārayan ||13||*

13. Renouncing the activities by the mind while engaging in them, controlling the senses, he remains comfortable in the body which is a city with nine gates, knowing that he does nothing, nor causes anyone to do anything

If one performs actions without attachment, as previously stated in verse 3, he is the real *sannyāsī*. If one performs actions with the external body, but renounces in the mind, one resides happily, controlling the senses (*vaśī*). Where? One resides in the city of nine gates, in the body devoid of the misconception of “this is me.” The dweller in the body, the *jīva* (*dehī*), having attained knowledge, does nothing at all, knowing that he is not the cause of happiness through his actions and that he is not the cause of others doing actions.

*na kartṛtvaṁ na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ |*  
*na karma-phala-samyogaṁ svabhāvas tu pravartate ||14||*

14. The Lord does not create doership of the *jīva* nor does He force the results of action on the *jīva*. This takes place by the *jīva*'s nature.

“Well if the *jīva* is actually not the doer of activities, then, from seeing the *jīva* doing and enjoying everywhere in the universe created by the Supreme Lord, I think that the Lord has created the *jīva*'s (illusory) doership and enjoying, forcing it upon the *jīva*. Therefore, injustice and cruelty must be present in the Lord.”

No, that is not true at all. He does not make the *jīva* do activities nor does He give the *jīva* the results of his activities. Rather the nature of the *jīva* in the form of his beginningless ignorance alone produces this. That ignorance makes the *jīva* assume the false identification as the doer.

*nādatte kasyacit pāpaṁ na caiva sukṛtaṁ vibhuḥ |*  
*ajñānenāvṛtaṁ jñānaṁ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ ||15||*

15. Thus, the Lord does not receive the sinful or pious reaction from those actions. The *jīva*'s knowledge is covered by ignorance. Because of this, living entities are bewildered.

Since the Lord does not make the *jīva* do either good or bad actions, he does not experience the results in the form of suffering or enjoyment. He does not accept (*na adatte*) them. (He is not responsible for them). However, one of His associates, His *śakti* called ignorance (*ajñānena*) covers the inherent knowledge of the *jīva*. Because of this (*tena*), the *jīvas* are bewildered (and hence act. and suffer or enjoy their *karma*).

*jñānena tu tad ajñānaṁ yeṣāṁ nāsitam ātmanaḥ |*  
*teṣāṁ āditya-vaj jñānaṁ prakāśayati tat param ||16||*

16. When the *jīva*'s *vidyā* destroys *avidyā*, that *vidyā*, like the sun, reveals the spiritual knowledge within the *jīva*.

As ignorance or *avidyā* covers the knowledge of the *jīva*, the Lord's other energy called *vidyā* destroys ignorance and reveals knowledge. By the *vidyā-śakti* (*jñānena*), *avidyā* (*ajñānaṁ*) is destroyed, and knowledge of the *jīva* is

produced. Just as the glow of the sun destroys darkness and reveals objects like pots and cloth, so *vidyā* destroys *avidyā* and reveals the spiritual (*param*) knowledge in which the *jīva* is convinced of his spiritual nature. Thus, the Lord does not bind anyone nor does He liberate anyone, but *vidyā* and *avidyā* which are qualities of *prakṛti* liberate and bind the *jīva*.<sup>68</sup> The qualities of *prakṛti* are the causes of bondage in the form of instigating the *jīva* to become the doer and the enjoyer, and they are the causes of liberation in the form of such qualities as detachment and peace.

The respective qualities of *prakṛti* are awakened by the Supreme Lord, functioning in the capacity of Supersoul. He is only the initiator of *prakṛti*'s functions through this *aṁśa* or expansion. Thus, He does not show any injustice or cruelty towards the *jīva*.

*tad-buddhayaḥ tad-ātmānaḥ tan-niṣṭhāḥ tat-parāyaṇāḥ |  
gacchanty apunar-āvṛttiṁ jñāna-nirdhūta-kalmaṣāḥ ||17||*

17. Those whose intellect, mind and faith are fixed on Me, Paramātmā, who are absorbed in glorifying and serving Me, being washed of all ignorance by knowledge, never take birth again.

But this *vidyā* reveals knowledge about the *jīvātmā*, not knowledge of the Paramātmā.

The Lord says, *bhaktiḥ ekayā grahyaḥ*: I am attainable only by *bhakti*. Therefore the *jñānīs* must additionally practice *bhakti* in order to obtain knowledge of Paramātmā.<sup>69</sup> That is stated in this verse.

The word *tat* refers to the Supreme Lord previously mentioned as *vibhu* in verse 15. Those who place their intelligence in the Supreme Lord, who are dedicated to contemplation on the Lord using intellect (*tad-buddhayaḥ*), who are meditating on the Lord using the mind (*tad-ātmānaḥ*), who fix their knowledge in the Lord, giving up sattvic knowledge of the soul apart from the body, and becoming fixed only in the Lord (*tan-niṣṭhāḥ*) (since the Lord says one should surrender that knowledge to Him: *jñānam ca mayi*

<sup>68</sup> Jīva Gosvāmī in *Paramātmā Sandarbha* explains that *vidyā* and *avidyā* are two aspects of *māyā*.

<sup>69</sup> From this it is understood that *ātma jñāna* is not enough to give liberation. *Bhakti*, producing Paramātmā realization, is also necessary for liberation.

*sannyaset*. (SB 11.19.1); who become absorbed in the processes of hearing and chanting about the Lord (*tat-parānayaṅāḥ*)—these persons do not attain birth again. It will be said later:

*bhaktiyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ |  
tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tad-anantaram*

I am to be known in truth only by *bhakti*. Knowing Me in truth, one attains Me. BG 18.55

Those persons' ignorance has been previously completely destroyed by *vidyā* (*jñāna-nirdhūta-kalmaṣāḥ*).

*vidyā-vinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini |  
śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ ||18||*

18. The wise man sees equally the *brāhmaṇa* endowed with knowledge and good conduct, the cow, the elephant, the dog and dog-eater.

Those who are beyond the *guṇas* have no desire to see any object made of the *guṇas* in comparative terms of better or worse. They have equal vision. They do not see those in the mode of *sattva*, such as *brāhmaṇas* and cows, those in the mode of passion such as the elephant, and those in the mode of ignorance, such as dogs and dog-eaters, as superior or inferior. Being learned, they see equally. Equally (*sama*) means that they are beyond the *guṇas*, so that they do not see the particular distinctions due to the *guṇas*. They have the ability to see Brahman which is beyond the *guṇas*.

*ihaiva tair jitaḥ sargo yeṣāṃ sāmye sthitaṃ manaḥ |  
nirdoṣaṃ hi samaṃ brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ ||19||*

19. Those whose minds are situated in equality conquer over the world of birth and death. They are without fault, seeing equally everything as Brahman. Therefore they are situated in Brahman.

This verse praises the ability to see equally. In this world (*iha eva*), they have defeated *samsāra*, that which has been created (*sargaḥ jitaḥ*).

*na prahr̥ṣyēt priyaṃ prāpya nodvijet prāpya cāpriyam |  
sthira-buddhir asam̐mūḍho brahma-vid brahmaṇi sthitaḥ ||20||*

20. He whose intelligence is fixed, who is free of bewilderment, who has knowledge of Brahman, and who is situated in Brahman, does not rejoice on attaining what is dear, and does not become agitated on attaining what is not favorable.

Such a person is equal in the face of objects both dear and not dear in this world. Attaining dear objects he does not rejoice and attaining unwelcome objects he does not become disturbed. The potential mood of *prahr̥ṣyēt* and *udvijet* stands for the indicative present in this verse, or can mean that the person should practice that mood during the stage of *sādhana*. (Attaining dear objects, he should not rejoice and attaining unwelcome objects he should not become disturbed.) He is not bewildered (*asam̐mūḍhaḥ*), since bewilderment arises only from identification with joy, lamentation and other emotions.

*bāhya-sparśeṣv asaktātmā vindaty ātmani yat sukham |  
sa brahma-yoga-yuktātmā sukham akṣayam aśnute ||21||*

21. He who has attained the happiness of Paramātmā within the soul and is not attached to the happiness from sense objects, being totally absorbed in Paramātmā, attains permanent happiness.

His mind is not attached (*asaktātmā*) to the happiness of sense objects (*bāhya sparśeṣu*), since he experiences in the soul (*ātmani*) happiness from having attained Paramātmā. He then attains that happiness permanently (*akṣayam*), since, in constantly relishing the sweetness, he does not relish lower things.

*ye hi saṃsparśajā bhogā duḥkha-yonaya eva te |  
ādy-antavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ ||22||*

22. The enjoyments arising from sense objects are causes of suffering, and have a beginning and end. An intelligent person does not enjoy them.

An intelligent person (*budhaḥ*) does not attach himself to material pleasure.

*śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhum prāk śarīra-vimokṣaṇāt |  
kāma-krodhodbhavaṁ vegam sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ ||23||*

23. He who can tolerate in this world the agitation arising from lust and anger before being liberated from the body is a *yogī* and is happy.

Though fallen in the ocean of *samsāra*, this person alone is the *yogī* (*yuktaḥ*), and he alone is happy.

*yo 'ntaḥ-sukho 'ntar-ārāmas tathāntar-jyotir eva yaḥ |  
sa yogī brahma-nirvāṇam brahma-bhūto 'dhigacchati ||24||*

24. He whose happiness is within, whose enjoyment is within, and whose sight is within, is a *yogī*, and, having attained the stage of Brahman, attains liberation.

This verse states that one who transcends *samsāra* attains realization of the state of Brahman, which is happiness. He who has happiness in the soul (*antara*), because he enjoys in the soul (not by external objects), and therefore directs his vision to the soul (*antar jyotiḥ*), attains the happiness of Brahman.<sup>70</sup>

*labhante brahma-nirvāṇam ṛṣayah kṣīṇa-kalmaṣāḥ |  
chinna-dvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ ||25||*

25. The sages, devoid of ignorance, devoid of dualities, with controlled mind, engaged in the welfare of all beings, attain liberation.

This verse shows how many persons attain perfection through this practice.

*kāma-krodha-vimuktānām yatīnām yata-cetasām |  
abhito brahma-nirvāṇam vartate viditātmanām ||26||*

26. Those who have become free of lust and anger, who sincerely endeavor, and who, having weakened the subtle body, have realized Paramātmā, soon attain *brahma-nirvāṇa* liberation.

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<sup>70</sup> Later Viśvanātha comments that this phrase means liberation.

When will those who have realized the soul and then Paramātmā (*viditāmanām*) attain the happiness of *brahma nirvāṇa*? This verse explains. *Yat-cetasām* means those who have reduced the functions of the mind, weakened the subtle body. Being freed from lust and anger, and having weakened the functions of the mind, they attain *brahma-nirvāṇa* completely, in all ways (*abhitah*). This means without much delay, they attain *brahma-nirvāṇa*.

*sparsān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāmś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ |*  
*prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantara-cāriṇau ||27||*  
*yatendriya-mano-buddhir munir mokṣa-parāyaṇaḥ |*  
*vigatecchā-bhaya-krodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ ||28||*

27-28. That person, keeping the sense objects outside, focusing the eyes between the brows, equalizing the *prāṇa* and *apāna* moving in the nostrils, and thus controlling the senses, mind and intelligence, completely dedicated to liberation, thus freed from desire, fear and anger, is ever liberated.

The heart becomes purified by performance of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* offered to the Lord. Then arises *jñāna*, whose subject is the soul (*tvam*). Then arises *bhakti*, for gaining knowledge of the Lord, Paramātmā (*tat*). By the appearance of that knowledge of the Lord which is beyond the modes, one gains realization of Brahman. This has been stated in this chapter.

Now in three verses (27-29), the Lord speaks in abbreviated form what He will explain in the sixth chapter: that the process of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, practiced after having purified the heart by *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, is shown to be superior to the process of *jñāna-yoga* for producing realization of Brahman.

The word *sparsān* (touches) stands for all the sense objects--sound, touch, form, taste and smell. Externalizing these from the mind when they enter, that is, withdrawing the mind from the sense objects (*pratyāhāra*), placing the eyes between the eye brows, with half closed eyes, the *yogī* should fix his glance between the brows in order to prevent both sleep and wandering eyes. By extinguishing the upward and downward motions of the *prāṇa* and *apāna* which move in the nostrils through inhaling and exhaling, one makes

them equal. By that means, the senses, mind and intelligence are brought under control.

*bhoktāraṃ yajña-tapasāṃ sarva-loka-maheśvaram |  
suhṛdam sarva-bhūtānāṃ jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati ||29||*

29. Knowing Me who am the object of worship of the *karmīs* and *jñānīs* who do sacrifice and penance, the object of worship of the *yogīs* as *Paramātmā*, and the object of worship of the devotees-- the friend of all living entities by giving instructions on *bhakti*-- this *aṣṭāṅga-yogī* attains liberation.

This verse explains that *yogīs* who act in this way, by obtaining knowledge of *Paramātmā* through *bhakti*, like the *jñānīs*, attain liberation.

I am the guardian (*bhoktāraṃ*) of the *yajña* of the *karma-yogīs* and the austerities (*tapasāṃ*) of the *jñānīs*. That means that I am the object of worship of the *karma-yogīs* and *jñānīs*. I am the great controller of all people (*sarva-loka-maheśvaram*), the *Paramātmā*: the object of worship of the *aṣṭāṅga-yogīs*. I am the friend of all entities: I am the person who gives benefit to all living entities by instructions about *bhakti*, through the medium of My devotees, out of My mercy. I am the object of worship for the devotees.

One cannot attain realization of Me, who am beyond the modes, by *sattva-guṇa-jñāna*. I have said that I am attainable only by *bhakti*: *bhaktyāham ekayā grahyaḥ*. In the same way, the *yogī*, only by *bhakti* which is beyond the modes, by realizing Me as *Paramātmā* (*jñātvā mām*), the object of his worship, attains liberation (*śāntim*).

This chapter explains that the *jñānī* and the *yogī*, by *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, attain liberation, after realizing both *ātmā* and *Paramātmā*.

Thus ends the commentary on the fifth chapter of the *Gītā* for the joy of the devotees, through the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

Chapter Six

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
anāśritaḥ karma-phalaṃ kāryaṃ karma karoti yaḥ |*

*sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnir na cākriyaḥ ||1||*

1. He who performs his work out of duty while not seeking results is a *sannyāsī* and *yogī*, not one who lights no fire and performs no work.

In the sixth chapter, the method of controlling the fickle mind, achieved by the *yogī* who has controlled the senses through the process of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, is described.

In commencing the practice of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, one should not suddenly give up *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* which purifies the heart. He who performs actions prescribed by the scripture as inescapable duty (*kāryam karma*) without expectation of results (*anāśritaḥ karma-phalam*) is called a *sannyāsī*, since he renounces the results of his actions. He is called a *yogī* because his mind does not dwell on the enjoyment of objects of the senses. A person who merely renounces actions such as the fire sacrifice is not called a *sannyāsī*. Nor is one who merely half closes his eyes without external bodily activity (*akriyaḥ*) called a *yogī*.

*yam sannyāsam iti prāhur yogam tam viddhi paṇḍava |  
na hy asannyasta-saṅkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana ||2||*

2. O son of Pāṇḍu, know that the meaning of *sannyāsa* is the same as the meaning of *yoga*. One who has not given up desire in his actions is never a *yogī*.

*Sannyāsa* means to renounce the results of ones actions. *Yoga* means to have a mind which is not agitated by the desire to enjoy sense objects. Therefore it should be understood that both words mean the same thing. He who has not given up the desire to enjoy objects (*asannyasta-saṅkalpaḥ*) is not called a *yogī*.

*āruruḥṣor muner yogam karma kāraṇam ucyate |  
yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate ||3||*

3. For the sage wishing to attain *yoga*, action is said to be the cause of elevation. For the sage who has already attained *yoga*, cessation of action is said to be the cause of maintaining that state.

“But then the practitioner of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* would have to practice *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* for his whole life.”

This verse therefore speaks of the limits of *karma-yoga*. The practitioner of *yoga* (*muneḥ*), desiring to rise to the stage of steady meditation (*yogam*), produces his elevation by prescribed action, *karma*, because that purifies his heart. One who has attained steadiness in meditation (*yogārūḍhasya*) maintains that level by cessation (*samaḥ*) of all actions which produce agitation. In other words, the aspirant for steady meditation does not have complete purity of heart.

*yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmaṣv anuṣajjate |*  
*sarva-saṅkalpa-sannyāsī yogārūḍhas tadocyate ||4||*

4. When a person has no attachment to the sense objects or to action to attain them, having renounced all desires, he is called *yogārūḍha*--one who has attained steady meditation.

This verse speaks of the characteristics of the person who has attained steady meditation (*yogārūḍhaḥ*), one who has a completely pure heart. He is not attached either to the sense objects such as sound, nor to actions for attaining enjoyment of the objects of the senses (*karmaṣu*).

*uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet |*  
*ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ ||5||*

5. One should deliver the soul by the mind, not degrade it. The mind is the friend of the soul and its enemy as well.

Since the soul has fallen into the well of *saṁsāra* by attachment to objects of the senses, with effort one should deliver that soul. One should deliver the soul (*ātmānam*) by the mind which is devoid of attachment to objects of the senses (*ātmanā*). One should not let the soul fall into the well of *saṁsāra* by the mind which is attached to objects of the senses. Therefore, the mind (*ātmā*) is both the friend and enemy of the soul.

*bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmavātmanā jitaḥ |*

*anātmanas tu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatru-vat ||6||*

6. The mind is a friend of that soul which has conquered the mind. The mind is an enemy of that soul which has not controlled the mind.

The mind is whose friend and whose enemy? This verse answers. The mind (*ātmā*) is a friend, causing benefit, to that *jīva* who has conquered the mind. The mind acts as an enemy, causing harm, to that *jīva* who does not control the mind (*anātmanah*).

*jitātmanah praśāntasya paramātmā samāhitaḥ |  
śitoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu tathā mānāpamānayoḥ ||7||*

7. The *yogī* who has conquered the mind and is devoid of all attachments has his soul situated in deep trance--in all conditions of heat and cold, happiness and distress, and honor and dishonor.

Three verses show the qualities of the person who has attained steady meditation (*yogārūḍha*). The *yogī* who has controlled the mind (*jitātmanah*), who is devoid of attachment to objects (*praśāntasya*), has his soul (*ātmā*) completely (*param*) situated in *samādhi* (*samāhitaḥ*), in all conditions of duality--heat and cold, happiness and distress, respect and disrespect.

*jñāna-vijñāna-trptātmā kūṭa-stho vijitendriyah |  
yukta ity ucyate yogī sama-loṣṭrāsma-kāñcanaḥ ||8||*

8. He who is satisfied by scriptural teachings and realization, who is pervaded by one nature, completely in control of the senses, and who considers a lump of earth, stone and gold as the same, is called a *yogī*.

He is devoid of desires, being satisfied by knowledge attained by teachings (*jñāna*) and realization (*vijñāna*). He remains situated in one nature at all times (*kūṭa-sthaḥ*).<sup>71</sup> Since he has no attraction for any object, he sees as equal a lump of dirt (*loṣṭa*), rock and gold.

*suhṛṇ-mitrāry-udāsīna-madhyastha-dvesya-bandhuṣu |  
sādhuṣv api ca pāpeṣu sama-buddhir viśiṣyate ||9||*

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<sup>71</sup> He does not change but remains fixed in *ātmā*.

9. He sees the natural well-wisher, the friend, the neutral person, the mediator, the enemy, and the relative, the sinner and pious person as the same.

The *yogī* sees equally the person who wishes one well (*suhṛt*) by his nature, one who actually does good out of affection (*mitra*), the killer (*ari*), one who is neutral in times of conflict or honor (*udāsīna*), the mediator who tries to resolve conflict between the two sides (*madhyastha*), the person who deserves hatred because he harms one (*dveṣya*), the relative (*bandhu*), the follower of *dharma* and the follower of *adharma*. This position is superior to that of seeing dirt and gold as the same.

*yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṁ rahasi sthitaḥ |  
ekākī yata-cittātmā nirāśir aparigrahaḥ ||10||*

10. The *yogārūḍha* should always absorb his mind in *samādhi*, living alone in a solitary place, being controlled in mind and body,<sup>72</sup> without desire, and without possessiveness.

The *yogī* performs *yoga* with its *āṅgas*. That descriptions starts with this verse and ends with *sa yogī paramo mataḥ* in verse 32. He who has attained the stage of *yogārūḍha*, the stage of steady meditation (*yogī*), should remain engaging the mind (*ātmānam*) in *samādhi* (*yuñjīta*).

*śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiram āsanam ātmanah |  
nāty-ucchritam nāti-nīcam cailājina-kuśottaram ||11||  
tatraikāgram manaḥ kṛtvā yata-cittendriya-kriyāḥ |  
upaviśyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātma-viśuddhaye ||12||*

11-12. Establishing his own solid *āsana* in a clean place, not too high and not too low, with *kuśa*, then deer skin, and cloth on top, sitting on the *āsana*, concentrating the mind on one point, controlling the activities of the mind and senses, he should engage in *yoga* for purification of consciousness.

He establishes his own *āsana* which has *kuśa* on the bottom, then deer skin, and finally cloth on top. The *yogī* engages in meditation for purification of

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<sup>72</sup> The meaning of *yata cittātmā* is taken from 4.21.

the inner organ or consciousness (*ātma-visuddhaye*). This freedom from disturbance, which makes the internal organ very subtle, is suitable for the direct realization of Brahman. The *śruti* says, *dr̥śyate tv agryayā buddhyā sukṣmayā sukṣma darśibhiḥ*: paramātmā is seen by fine, concentrated intelligence by the seers of the subtle. (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.12)

*samaṁ kāya-śiro-grīvaṁ dhārayann acalaṁ sthiraḥ |*  
*saṁprekṣya nāsikāgraṁ svaṁ diśaś cānavalokayan ||13||*  
*praśāntātmā vigata-bhīr brahmacāri-vrate sthitaḥ |*  
*manaḥ saṁyamyā mac-citto yukta āsīta mat-paraḥ ||14||*

13-14. Keeping the body, hand and neck straight, motionless and firm, gazing at the tip of the nose, without looking in other directions, with peaceful mind, fearlessness, and celibacy, withdrawing his mind from sense objects, meditating on Me, the *yogī* remains absorbed in devotion to Me.

*Kāya* refers to the middle section of the body. One should hold the middle of the body, the head and neck straight without movement. Withdrawing the mind from objects (*manaḥ saṁyamyā--pratyāhāra*), the *yogī* remains thinking of Me, the beautiful form with four hands (*mac-cittaḥ*), absorbed in devotion to Me (*mat-parāyaṇaḥ*).<sup>73</sup>

*yuñjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī niyata-mānasaḥ |*  
*śāntim nirvāṇa-paramāṁ mat-saṁsthāṁ adhigacchati ||15||*

15. Constantly engaging the mind in meditation, because his consciousness is devoid of sense objects, the *yogī* attains destruction of bondage--the platform where liberation and realization of the impersonal Brahman can be attained.

Continually engaging the mind (*ātmānaṁ yuñjan*) in *dhyāna-yoga* because the consciousness is devoid of sense objects (*niyata-mānasaḥ*), he then attains the dissolution of *saṁsāra* (*śāntim*), in which supreme liberation (*nirvāṇa*) can be attained, and in which he attains continuous existence in Me as the *nirviśeṣa* Brahman (*mat-saṁsthāṁ*).

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<sup>73</sup> As with *jñāna*, as mentioned in BG 5.17, *yoga* must also include *bhakti*, in order to realize Paramātmā.

*nāty-aśnatas tu yogo 'sti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ |  
na cāti-svapna-śīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna ||16||*

16. *Yoga* is not possible for one who eats too much, or who does not eat, for one who sleeps too much, or does not sleep, O Arjuna.

Two verses describe the rules for making practice of *yoga* steady. One who eats too much is not a *yogī*. It is said:

*pūrayed aśanenārdham tṛtīyam udakena tu  
vāyoḥ sañcaraṇārtham tu caturtham avaśeṣayet*<sup>74</sup>

One should fill the stomach half with food, one quarter with water, and one quarter for the movement of air.

*yuktāhāra-vihārasya yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu |  
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā ||17||*

17. If one has regulated eating, regulated walking, regulated use of organs in both material and spiritual activities, regulated sleep and regulated waking, his *yoga* destroys all suffering.

*Yukta* here means “controlled.” One who controls eating and walking (*ahāra*, *vihārasya*), and controls actions such as speech (*ceṣṭasya*) during execution of both material and spiritual duties (*karmaṣu*), performs *yoga* which destroys suffering.

*yadā viniyatam cittam ātmany evāvatiṣṭhate |  
niḥsprhaḥ sarva-kāmebhyo yukta ity ucyate tadā ||18||*

18. When the motionless consciousness fixes itself in the self alone, free from desires for all objects of enjoyment, one is said to be perfect in *yoga*.

When does the *yogī* perfect that *yoga*? This verse describes that situation. When the consciousness stops all movement (*viniyatam cittam*), and is

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<sup>74</sup> This is quoted by Madhusūdāna Sarasvatī as well. Source is not mentioned.

firmly fixed without distraction in the self alone (*ātmani avatiṣṭhate*), it is said to be perfect *yoga*.

*yathā dīpo nivāta-stho neṅgate sopamā smṛtā |*  
*yogino yata-cittasya yuñjato yogam ātmanah ||19||*

19. The motionless consciousness of the *yogī* engaged in meditation on the self is considered exactly similar to a flame which does not move, being placed in a windless place.

It is considered exactly (*yathā*) similar (*upamā*) to a lamp, which does not move (*na iṅgate*) when in a windless place (*nivāta-sthah*). The elision of *sa* with *upamā* to form *sopamā* is according to the rule *so'ci lope cet pāda-pūraṇam*<sup>75</sup> (*Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Pāṇini 6.1.134) What is the comparison? That lamp is compared to the consciousness of the *yogī*, devoid of movement.

*yatroparamate cittam niruddham yoga-sevayā |*  
*yatra caivātmanātmānam paśyann ātmani tuṣyati ||20|*  
*sukham ātyantikam yat tad buddhi-grāhyam atīndriyam |*  
*vetti yatra na caivāyam sthitaś calati tattvataḥ ||21||*  
*yam labdhvā cāparam lābham manyate nādhikam tataḥ |*  
*yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate ||22||*  
*taṁ vidyād duḥkha-saṁyoga-viyogaṁ yoga-saṁjñitam |*  
*sa niścayena yoktavyo yogo 'nirviṇṇa-cetasā ||23||*

20-23. Wherein the consciousness, completely controlled, becomes inactive by the practice of *yoga*; wherein, seeing the Paramātmā with the aid of Paramātmā, the *yogī* is satisfied in the self; wherein he knows extreme bliss through spiritual intelligence, but not through material senses; and wherein he does not move from his true spiritual nature; wherein he considers, having obtained this, nothing more can be attained thereafter, and being so situated, is not disturbed by the greatest calamity--know such a state, separated from all misery, to be *yoga*. This *yoga* must be practiced with determination, devoid of depression.

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<sup>75</sup> The normal form would be *sa upamā*, but according to the rule, it can be *sopamā* for metrical reasons.

In verse 16 and the verses following, the word *yoga* referred to being situated in *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is of two types: *samprajñata* and *asamprajñata*. *Samprajñata-samādhi* has many types according to differences of *savicāra* and *savitarka*.<sup>76</sup>

What is *asamprajñata-samādhi* like? Three and a half verses answer. In that state of *asamprajñata-samādhi*, the consciousness does not touch any objects at all (*cittam uparamate*), because of complete stoppage (*niruddham*). As Patañjali's *sūtra* says: *yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ* : *yoga* means stopping the functions of the consciousness. (*Yoga Sūtra* 1.2) The word *yatra* (in which state) extends its meaning to verse 23.

In that *samādhi*, the *yogī*, seeing the *Paramātmā* (*ātmānam*) by his internal organ (*ātmanā*) which takes the form of *Paramātmā*,<sup>77</sup> is satisfied. In that state of *samādhi*, he then experiences extreme bliss, which is comprehended by intelligence in the form of the soul (*buddhyā*),<sup>78</sup> devoid of contact with material senses and sense objects. Then, in that state he does not move from the true state of the *ātmā*, his true form (*tattvataḥ*). Having attained that state, he does not consider attaining anything else. In that state, he is separated from all contact with suffering. One should know that state of *samādhi* as *yoga*.

“Though I cannot attain it quickly, certainly I can attain this *yoga*.” By such certainty (*anirviṇṇa cetasā*) one should practice. One should not be discouraged, saying, “After such a long time, I have not achieved perfection. What is the use of all this hard work?” One should practice with mind

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<sup>76</sup> These are described in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*. *Samprajñata-samādhi* involves meditation on objects. If the objects are gross, it is called *savitarka*. If the objects are subtle, then it is called *savicāra*. *Asamprajñata-samādhi* is meditation with no object at all.

<sup>77</sup> There seems to be two versions here. In one version, *ātmānam* means *paramātmanam*. Thus by the internal organ which takes the form of *paramātmā*, the *yogī* sees *Paramātmā*. In the other version the *yogī* sees the *ātmā* by the internal organ in the form of *Paramātmā*. Since the functions of mind etc. have stopped, and *ātmā* is not realized, the *Paramātmā* must function at this time to give him awareness of his own self and *Paramātmā*.

<sup>78</sup> Since he has realized the soul, it functions with its own intelligence, not material intelligence, which has stopped.

convinced, “What is it to me? Let me attain perfection in this life or in the next.”

Gauḍapāda has given an example:

*utseka udadher yadvat kuṣāgreāika-bindunā  
manaso nigrahas tadvad bhaved aparikhedataḥ*

One should gradually control the mind without complaining, though it is like taking drops of water from the ocean to dry it up with a tip of a *kuśa*.

There is a story to explain this. The ocean stole with its strong waves the eggs of a bird which were situated on the ocean’s shore. Determined to dry up the ocean, the bird took one drop of water at a time using its beak. The ocean, being emptied of many drops by the bird’s beak, was not at all affected. Though discouraged by Nārada, who happened to come there, the bird again made the promise in front of him. “In this life or the next, I will dry up the ocean.”

Then merciful Nārada, by the will of the Lord, send Garuḍa to help the bird, saying “The ocean has disrespected you by offending your relative, this small bird.” The ocean, becoming dried up by the wind coming from Garuḍa’s flapping wings, became frightened, and then returned the eggs to the bird.

Thus one should be convinced that the Lord will bestow His mercy on the resolute person who enthusiastically begins *yoga*, *jñāna* or *bhakti* with faith in the words of scripture.

*saṅkalpa-prabhavān kāmāms tyaktvā sarvān aśeṣataḥ |  
manasaivendriya-grāmaṁ viniyamya samantataḥ ||24||  
śanaiḥ śanair upamed buddhyā dhṛti-grhīṭayā |  
ātma-saṁsthaṁ manah kṛtvā na kiñcid api cintayet ||25||*

24-25. Giving up completely all desires born of thoughts, controlling all the senses completely by the mind, gradually one should cease all mental

functions by determined intelligence. Having fixing the mind on the self, one should then not think of anything material at all.

In such practice of *yoga*, the first and last actions are mentioned in two verses (24-25).

The first action is to give up desires and the last action is not to think of anything at all.

*yato yato niścaraṭi maṇaś cañcalam aṭhiraṃ |*  
*tataṭ tato niyamyaitad āṭmaṇy eva vaśaṃ ṇayet ||26||*

26. Restraining the fickle, unsteady mind from wherever it wanders, the *yogī* should keep it under control, fixing it on the self.

If the mind, contacting the mode of passion, happens to become unsteady due to the appearance of previous attachments, one should again practice *yoga*.

*praśānta-maṇasaṃ hy eṇaṃ yogiṇaṃ sukhamaṃ uttamaṃ |*  
*upaiti śānta-rajaṣaṃ brahma-bhūtaṃ akalmaṣaṃ ||27||*

27. Supreme bliss comes to that *yogī* who has pacified mind, is devoid of passion, free of sin, and thus on the level of realization of Brahman.

Then, as previously, the *yogī* again will enjoy the happiness of *samādhi*. *Sukham* is the subject of the sentence.

*yuñjann evaṃ sadātmāṇaṃ yogī vigata-kalmaṣaḥ |*  
*sukhena brahma-saṃsparṣaṃ atyaṇtaṃ sukhamaṃ aśnute ||28||*

28. Thus constantly engaging his mind, the *yogī*, free of all sin, easily attains the intense bliss of contact with Brahman as a *jīvan-mukta*.

Then, he attains success. Attaining bliss means he becomes *jīvan-mukta*, liberated even in this life.

*sarva-bhūta-sthamaṃ ātmāṇaṃ sarva-bhūtāṇi cātmani |*  
*ikṣate yoga-yuktātmā sarvatra sama-darśanaḥ ||29||*

29. The *yogī* whose consciousness has become Brahman realizes the Paramātmā as the indweller of all living entities and as the resting place of all living entities. He sees everything as Paramātmā.

This verse shows the *jīvan-mukta*'s direct experience of Brahman.

He, whose consciousness has taken the form of Brahman (*yoga-yukta ātmā*), realizes by spiritual perception (*ikṣate*) the Paramātmā who resides in all entities (*sarva-bhūta-stham ātmānam*), and is the resting place of all entities (*ātmani sarva-bhūtāni*). Thus He sees everything as Brahman (*sama-darsinaḥ*).

*yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati |  
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati ||30||*

30. He who sees Me as Brahman everywhere and sees everything in Me, never loses sight Me, nor do I lose sight of him.

The result of this spiritual realization is stated. I, the Brahman, never become invisible to that person (*na praṇaśyāmi*). Since I am continually present before him, the *yogī* (*sa*), My worshipper, is never lost to Me.

*sarva-bhūta-sthitaṁ yo mām bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ |  
sarvathā vartamāno 'pi sa yogī mayi vartate ||31||*

31. The *yogī* who worships Me as the one living being who is the cause of all, exists in Me, no matter what his manner of worship.

The *yogī* who worships Me as Paramātmā situated everywhere, even before direct realization, is beyond the rules. He who, acknowledging that the Paramātmā alone exists, since He is the cause of all (*ekatvam āsthitaḥ*), worships Me through hearing and chanting, resides in Me, not in *samsāra*, whether performing the acts indicated in the scriptures or not (*sarvathā vartamāno 'pi*).

*ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṁ paśyati yo 'rjuna |*

*sukham vā yadi vā duḥkham sa yogī paramo mataḥ ||32||*

32. I consider that practicing *yogī* who sees equally everything as equal to himself in all circumstances, whether in happiness or suffering, to be the topmost *yogī*.

Moreover, it has been stated that even the *yogī* at the stage of *sādhana* should have equal vision everywhere. This verse explains the most important type of equal vision. He sees what is good for himself and what is bad for himself as equally applicable to all others; he desires happiness for all others, and does not desire suffering for anyone. That *yogī* I consider the best.

*arjuna uvāca*  
*yo 'yaṁ yogas tvayā proktaḥ sāmyena madhusūdana |*  
*etasyāham na paśyāmi cañcalatvāt sthitim sthirām ||33*

33. O Madhusūdana, I do not see that this *yoga* with equal vision that you have described can be lasting, because of the fickle mind.

Seeing that it would be difficult to attain such equal vision, Arjuna speaks. “I do not see the permanence of this *yoga* which has achieved equal vision. This *yoga* will not last forever. This state will last for three or four days. Why? Because the mind is unsteady (*cañcalatvāt*). You spoke of seeing the happiness and distress of all living entities of the world as ones own happiness and distress. One can maintain such equal vision for friends or neutral persons, but it is not possible to maintain equal vision for enemies, who wish to cause you harm, for those who hate you or criticize you,. It is not possible for me to see as equal, at all times, the happiness and distress of Yudhiṣṭhira and Duryodhana. Even if by intelligence you see equally the *jīva*, Paramātmā, *prāṇas*, senses and bodily elements of oneself and ones enemies, that lasts only for two or three days, because the fickle mind is stronger than the discriminating intellect. One sees that the mind, attached to material enjoyment, overcomes the intellect.”

*cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad dṛḍham |*  
*tasyāham nigrahaṁ manye vāyor iva su-duṣkaram ||34||*

34. The mind is fickle, agitating, strong and firm. I think it is more difficult to control than the wind.

In this verse, Arjuna speaks of the fickle mind.

“But Arjuna, it is possible to control the mind by the discriminating intellect, according to the scriptures. The *śruti* says:

*ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi śarīraṁ ratham eva ca*

The soul is the passenger, and the body is the chariot. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.3

The *smṛti* says:

*āhuḥ śarīraṁ ratham indriyāṇi hayān abhīṣūn mana indriyeṣam  
vartmāni mātrā dhiṣaṇaṁ ca sūtam*

Transcendentalists who are advanced in knowledge compare the body, which is made by the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to a chariot. The senses are like the horses; the mind, the master of the senses, is like the reins; the objects of the senses are the destinations; intelligence is the chariot driver; and consciousness, which spreads throughout the body, is the cause of bondage in this material world.” *SB*7.15.41

“But the mind very strongly agitates the intellect (*pramāthi*)<sup>79</sup>.”

“How can that happen?”

“Just as a strong disease does not recognize the medicine which is supposed to cure it, the strong mind by its very nature ignores the discriminating intellect (*balavat*). Moreover, the mind is very firm, like iron which is impossible to pierce by the fine needle of intellect (*dr̥ḍham*). I consider it is difficult to overcome the mind by *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. That is like trying to control the violent wind in the sky by stopping the breath with *kumbhaka*.”

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<sup>79</sup> *Pra* stands for *prakarṣeṇa*, very strongly. *Math* means to churn.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*asamśayaṁ mahā-bāho mano durnigrahaṁ calaṁ |*  
*abhyāseṇa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca grhyate ||35||*

35. The Lord said: O Mighty-armed, certainly the mind is difficult to control and fickle. But it can be controlled by repeated practice and by detachment.

Accepting what Arjuna has said, Kṛṣṇa gives a conclusion.

What you have said is certainly true. But though a disease may be very serious, by taking the right medicine according to the doctor's prescription repeatedly, after a long time the disease gets cured. Similarly, though the mind is difficult to control, it is possible to control it by repeated practice according to the direction of the *guru*, by constant application of the process of meditation on the Supreme Lord (*abhyāseṇa*) and by dissociation from the objects of enjoyment (*vairāgyeṇa*). Patañjali says in his *sūtras*, *abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyām tan-nirodhaḥ* (*Yoga Sūtras* 1.12): the mind is controlled by practice and detachment.

Since you defeated many great warriors in battle (*mahā-baho*), and even defeated Lord Śiva, can you not defeat the mind? If you are able to defeat the soldier called the mind by the weapon of the great process of *yoga*, then you can be called "mighty-armed." O Kaunteya, you should not fear: as you are the son of My aunt Kuntī, it is proper that I help you.

*asamṛyatātmanā yogo duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ |*  
*vaśyātmanā tu yatatā śakyo 'vāptum upāyataḥ ||36||*

36. It is My opinion that *yoga* is not possible for one whose mind is without practice and detachment. But it is possible to attain for one who endeavors and controls the mind by the intense practice.

The Lord cites His own conclusion. *Yoga* is difficult for a person whose mind is not controlled by practice and detachment (*asamṛyata ātmanā*). *Yoga* or *samādhi*, characterized by stopping the mind, can be attained after a long time by a person who makes effort with the mind controlled (*vaśyātmanā*), because of intense practice (*upāyataḥ*).

*arjuna uvāca*  
*ayatiḥ śraddhayopeto yogāc calita-mānaśaḥ |*  
*aprāpya yoga-sāmsiddhim kām gatim kṛṣṇa gacchati ||37||*

37. Arjuna said: O Kṛṣṇa, what is the destination of one who, though having faith, does not continue the endeavor, because of unsteady mind, and does not attain the goal of *yoga*, *samādhi*?

You have said that *yoga* can be attained by a person who endeavors through practice and detachment. What happens to the person who does not endeavor, who does not practice, and does not have detachment? He puts in only a little effort (*ayatiḥ*).<sup>80</sup> He starts the practice of *yoga* with faith in the *yoga* scriptures, and is therefore not an imposter. But, he deviates from *yoga*, for his mind turns to objects of enjoyment because of lack of practice and detachment. Thus he does not attain complete perfection (*sāmsiddhim*).<sup>81</sup> But he has attained some results, since he has begun the first stage of progressing in *yoga*, after the stage of aspiring for *yoga*.

*kaccin nobhaya-vibhraṣṭaś chinnābhram iva naśyati |*  
*apraṭiṣṭho mahā-bāho vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ pathi ||38||*

38. Does he not disappear like a fragmented cloud, the *yogī* who fails in both ways, not having achieved the goal, and bewildered about the method of achieving Brahman,?

*Kvacit* indicates only a question. Having failed on both sides, having given up the path of *karma* and taken completely to the path of *yoga*, and having given that up also, does he not disappear like a cloud which separates from the original cloud and does not become another cloud, but instead disappears in the middle of the sky? The difficulty is that from having entered the path of *yoga*, one develops a desire to give up enjoyment of material objects, and because of lack of real detachment also, has a desire to enjoy those objects. Because of not doing activities leading to Svargaloka and also not completing the practice of *yoga* leading to liberation, he attains

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<sup>80</sup> The prefix *a* in the word *ayatiḥ* indicates “a little” rather than “no”, as in a phrase like “colorless porridge,” which actually means “porridge with insufficient color.”

<sup>81</sup> *Sam* stands for *samyak*, complete.

neither Svarga nor liberation. Thus, becoming bewildered in the method of attaining Brahman, not having achieved the goal (*apraṭiṣṭhaḥ*), does he get destroyed or not? This I ask You.

*etan me saṁśayaṁ kṛṣṇa chettum arhasy aśeṣataḥ |  
tvad-anyaḥ saṁśayasyāsya chettā na hy upapadyate ||39||*

39. You should fully destroy my doubt, O Kṛṣṇa. No one can be the destroyer of this doubt except You.

*Etat* (*etan*) stands for *etam* (accusative case).

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
pārtha naiveha nāmutra vināśas tasya vidyate |  
na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścīd durgatiṁ tāta gacchati ||40||*

40. O son of Pṛthā, he does not meet destruction in this life or the next. One who has done the auspicious work of *yoga* does not meet an unfortunate end, O My son.

He does not have destruction in this life (*iha*) or the next (*amutra*). Having performed *yoga* which gives auspiciousness (*kalyāṇa-kṛt*), he does not attain a destination of suffering.

*prāpya puṇya-kṛtām lokān uṣitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ |  
śucīnām śrīmatām gehe yoga-bhraṣṭo 'bhijāyate ||41||*

41. After attaining the worlds of the pious and living there for long years, the fallen *yogī* is born in the house of the religious and wealthy.

Then what destination does he attain? He attains the planet where those who perform *aśvamedha* sacrifices go (*puṇya-kṛtām lokān*). The result of *yoga* is both liberation and material enjoyment. In this case, the imperfect *yogī*, having desire for enjoyment, having fallen from *yoga*, attains material enjoyment. The perfected *yogī* however, because of not having desires for material enjoyment, attains liberation. Some *yogīs*, even though perfected, by fate have a desire to enjoy, and then accept such enjoyment. Examples are Kardama Muni and Saubhari. Such fallen *yogīs* (after enjoying materially)

are born in the houses of those performing proper religious acts (*śucīnām*) and who are wealthy merchants or kings (*śrīmatām*).

*atha vā yoginām eva kule bhavati dhīmatām |  
etad dhi durlabhataram loke janma yad idr̥sam ||42||*

42. Or, if he has practiced a long time, he is born in the family of intelligent *yogīs*. Such a birth is more difficult to obtain in this world.

The destination of *yogīs* who fell after doing a little practice has been described in the previous verse. This verse describes the different destination of *yogīs* who fell after practicing for a long time. They are born in the families of *yogīs* such as Nimi.

*tatra taṁ buddhi-saṁyogam labhate paurva-dehikam |  
yatate ca tato bhūyaḥ saṁsiddhau kuru-nandana ||43||*

43. In those two situations, he attains the state of his previous birth along with faith in *Paramātmā*, and strives again for complete perfection, O son of the Kurus.

In these two types of birth (*tatra*), he attains the state of mind of his previous life (*paurva-dehikam*) with faith in the *Paramātmā* (*buddhi-saṁyogam*).

*pūrvābhyāsenā tenaiva hriyate hy avaśo 'pi saḥ |  
jijñāsur api yogasya śabda-brahmātivartate ||44||*

44. He is attracted to that previous practice even against his will. Inquisitive about *yoga*, he surpasses the materialistic path of the *Vedas*.

Attracted by previous practice, he becomes inquisitive about *yoga* and surpasses the path of *karma* mentioned in the *Vedas* (*śabda-brahma*), but this time remains fixed on the path of *yoga*.

*prayatnād yatamānas tu yogī saṁśuddha-kilbiṣaḥ |  
aneka-janma-saṁsiddhas tato yāti parām gatim ||45||*

45. That *yogī*, unlike before, striving with full effort, becoming purified of his faults and reaching full perfection after many births, finally attains the supreme goal of liberation.

The cause of falling from the path is lack of effort. That has been mentioned before: though he has faith, he puts forth little effort (*ayatiḥ*). It has been mentioned that the fallen *yogī* with lax practice attains the practice of *yoga* again in the next life. However, he does not attain perfection. That will only be attained after many births when his practice becomes mature. But he does not become lax in the *yoga* practice, and cannot be called a fallen *yogī*.

The perfection takes place only after many births of practice. Kardama Muni says:

*bahu-janma-vipakvena samyag-yoga-samādhinā  
draṣṭuṁ yatante yatayaḥ śūnyāgāreṣu yat-padam*

After many births, mature *yogīs*, by complete trance in *yoga*, endeavor in secluded places to see the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. SB 3.24.28

Thus it is mentioned in this verse that he does not attain perfection in one birth. He makes great effort (*prayatnād yatamānaḥ*) in this life, in contrast to his previous life (*tu*), and burns up all faults, but even then he does not attain perfection in one life. Finally, he attains liberation (*parām gatim*).

*tapasvibhyo'dhiko yogī jñānibhyo'pi mato'dhikaḥ |  
karmibhyaś cādhiko yogī tasmād yogī bhavārjuna ||46||*

46. According to Me, the *yogī* is better than the *tapasvī*, better than the *jñānī*, and better than the *karma-yogī*. Therefore be a *yogī*, Arjuna.

Among those practicing *karma*, *jñāna*, *tapas* and *yoga*, who is the best? It is My opinion that the *yogī*, worshipper of Paramātmā,<sup>82</sup> is better than the performers of austerities such as the difficult *cāndrāyaṇa vrata*,<sup>83</sup> and is

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<sup>82</sup> However, many end up merging into the impersonal Brahman as stated in verse 15.

better than the *jñānīs* worshipping Brahman. If the *yogī* is better than the *jñānīs*, it goes without saying that he is better than the *karmīs*.

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā |  
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ ||47||*

47. But I consider he who worships Me with faith, with mind attached to Me, to be greater than all types of *yogīs*.

Then is there no one better than the *yogī*?

No, that cannot be said. In this verse the possessive case of *yoginām* stands for the ablative as in the previous verse as it is more suitable to the context. He who worships Me with faith is greater *than* all the *yogīs*, who are greater than the *jñānīs*, *tapasvīs* and *karmīs*. The devotee is not just superior to one type of *yogī*, but is superior to all types of perfected *yogīs*--those in *samprajñata-samādhi* and those in *asamprajñata-samādhi*.

Or another meaning is: Among all the processes (*yoga*) such as *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga*, *tapa-yoga*, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*, he who worship Me, he who is My devotee, has the best process (*yuktātmā*). The *karmīs*, *tapasvīs* and *jñānīs* are considered *yogīs*. The *aṣṭāṅga-yogī* is a better *yogī*. He who practices *bhakti* with hearing and chanting however is the best *yogī*.

As it is said in *Bhāgavatam*:

*muktānām api siddhānām nārāyaṇa-parāyaṇaḥ  
sudurlabhaḥ praśāntātmā koṭīṣv api mahā-mune*

O great sage, among many millions who are liberated and perfect in knowledge of liberation, one may be a devotee of Lord Nārāyaṇa, or Kṛṣṇa. Such devotees, who are fully peaceful, are extremely rare. SB 6.14.5

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<sup>83</sup> This is a fast in which every day food is decreased by a mouthful during the waning phase of the moon, and increased by a mouthful per day during the waxing phase.

This verse, a concise statement of *bhakti* which will be defined in middle six chapters, is the thread-like ornament on the neck of the devotees. The first chapter introduces the dialogue in the *Gītā*. The second, third and fourth chapters deal with *niṣkāma-karma*. The fifth deals with *jñāna* and sixth with *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. But the main topic of the first six chapters is *karma-yoga*.

The commentary on the sixth chapter for the joy of the devotees has been completed by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Seven

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*mayy āsakta-manāḥ pārtha yogaṁ yuñjan mad-āśrayaḥ |*  
*asamśayaṁ samagraṁ mām yathā jñāsyasi tac chṛṇu ||1||*

1. The Lord said: With your mind attached to Me, establishing a relationship with Me, surrendered to Me alone, you will know Me in My complete form, without doubt. Please listen.

When will I take shelter of Mahāprabhu's feet, which are a sweet ocean of mercy, made of eternal bliss? Then, somehow or other, I will attain the nectar of *prema* through the path of *bhakti*, which shuns liberation.

The seventh chapter describes the powers of Kṛṣṇa, the powers of the Lord who is most worthy of worship. The four types of persons who worship and do not worship Kṛṣṇa are also described.

In the first six chapters of the *Gītā*, *jñāna* and *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* which lead to liberation, and depend upon *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* which first purifies the heart, have been described. In the middle six chapters, two types of *bhakti* will be described: that *bhakti* which yields *sālokya* and other types of liberation by being either without desire or with desire, because of mixture of *karma*, *jñāna* or other elements; and the main type of *bhakti* which yields liberation in the form of becoming an associate of the Lord with *prema*. This type of *bhakti* is independent of *karma*, *jñāna* or other processes, and, moreover, independently yields all goals such as Svarga and *mokṣa* without performance of any other process. Though easy to perform for all people, it is most rare.

*yat karmabhir yat tapasā jñāna-vairāgyataś ca yat  
yogena dāna-dharmaṇa śreyobhir itarair api*

*sarvaṃ mad-bhakti-yogena mad-bhaktō labhate 'ñjasā  
svargāpavargaṃ mad-dhāma kathañcid yadi vāñchati*

Everything that can be achieved by fruitive activities, penance, knowledge, detachment, mystic *yoga*, charity, religious duties and all other means of perfecting life is easily achieved by My devotee through loving service unto Me. If somehow or other My devotee desires promotion to heaven, liberation, or residence in My abode, he easily achieves such benedictions. SB 11.20.32-33

“But the *śruti* says *tam eva viditvā ati mṛtyum eti*: knowing it, one surpasses death (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.15). How can you then say that without knowledge, just by *bhakti*, one attains liberation?”

This is not a correct conclusion. The meaning of that *śruti* statement is: knowing Paramātmā (*tam*), having direct realization of Paramātmā (the word *tat* refers to Paramātmā, not *jīva*), one surpasses death. It does not mean “Knowing the individual soul (*tvam padārtham*), or *prakṛti* or any existing object at all, one surpasses death.” Just as the cause of tasting sugar is the tongue, not the eye or ear, so the cause of tasting the *para-brahman*, is *bhakti*. It is possible to grasp the Brahman which is beyond the *guṇas* only by the process of *bhakti* which is also beyond the *guṇas*, and not by sattvic knowledge of the *ātmā* being different from the body (*ātma-jñāna*). This is understood from the Lord’s statement *bhaktyāham ekayā grahyaḥ*: I am obtained only by *bhakti*. (SB 11.14.11) And I will elaborate on this in the commentary on the verse *bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yas cāsmi tattvataḥ*: I can be known as I am only by *bhakti*. (BG 18.55)

And the accomplishment of liberation through *jñāna* and *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* is brought about only through the influence of *bhakti* which is a subordinate element within those practices. It is stated in many places in the scriptures that without *bhakti*, those two processes are insignificant.

Moreover, because of the absence of the word *eva* (only) after *viditvā*, there is another meaning. This sentence without *eva* does not indicate that exclusively by knowing Paramātmā, one attains liberation. Rather, knowing Paramātmā or not knowing, one attains liberation. Therefore, one can get liberation by knowledge beyond the *guṇas*--knowledge of Paramātmā, which arises through *bhakti*; and sometimes also, one can attain liberation without Paramātmā knowledge arising from *bhakti*--by *bhakti* alone. It is just like eating *matsyaṅḍika* which cannot be tasted, due to malfunction of the tongue. But gradually taste is restored and as well, the sickness is destroyed (one action accomplishes two results). According to *Amara Kośa*, *matsyaṅḍika* is a transformation of sugar.<sup>84</sup>

*nanv īśvaro 'nubhajato 'viduṣo 'pi sākṣāc  
chreyas tanoty aḡada-rāja ivopayuktah*

It is true that the Supreme Lord Himself awards His blessings even to an ignorant worshiper, just as the best medicine works even when taken by a person ignorant of its ingredients. SB 10.47.59

In the *Mokṣa Dharma*, there is a statement made about Nārāyaṇa:

*yo vai sādhana sampattiḥ puruṣārtha catuṣṭhaye  
tayā vinā tad āpnoti naro nārāyaṇāśrayaḥ*

Even without performing actions for attaining the four *puruṣārthas* (*artha*, *dharma*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*), the person who surrenders to Nārāyaṇa attains the goal.

As quoted above already, *Bhāgavatam* says:

Everything that can be achieved by fruitive activities, penance, knowledge, detachment, mystic *yoga*, charity, religious duties and all other means of perfecting life is easily achieved by My devotee through loving service unto Me. If somehow or other My devotee desires promotion to heaven, liberation, or residence in My abode, he easily achieves such benedictions. SB 11.20.32-33

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<sup>84</sup> Perhaps the previous sentence is a quotation from some scripture, and thus in the next sentence Viśvanātha explains the meaning of the word *matsyaṅḍika*.

*yan-nāma sakṛc chravanāt pukkaśo 'pi vimucyate sāmsārāt*

Not to speak of seeing You personally, merely by hearing the holy name of Your Lordship only once, even *caṇḍālas*, men of the lowest class, are freed from *sāmsāra*. SB 6.16.44

Thus, according to many such statements in the scriptures, liberation can be attained by *bhakti* alone.

Now, let us return to the verse.

“In Your statement at the end of the last chapter (*yoginām api sarveśām*), I have understood that You have indicated the unique quality of Your own devotee who absorbs his mind in You (*mad gatenāntarātmanā*) and has faith in You. But what type of devotee is he? One would expect that he is qualified with knowledge (*jñāna*) and realization (*vijñāna*).” The Lord then answers in two verses.

Realization will occur gradually in proportion to the intensity of the worship.

*bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir  
anyatra caiṣa trika eka-kālah  
prapadyamānasya yathāśnataḥ syus  
tuṣṭiḥ puṣṭiḥ kṣud-apāyo 'nu-ghāsam*

Devotion, direct experience of the Supreme Lord, and detachment from other things—these three occur simultaneously for one who has taken shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in the same way that pleasure, nourishment and relief from hunger come simultaneously and increasingly, with each bite, for a person engaged in eating. SB 11.2.42

Just as by eating a handful of food one does not attain satisfaction or nourishment but by taking a lot of food one does get satisfaction and nourishment, when you have attained the stage of attachment to Me (*mayy*

*āsakta manāḥ*) in My form of Śyāmasundara with yellow cloth, you will know Me. Hear how (*yathā*) you will realize Me clearly.

What type of *yoga* is this? You will gradually attain a relationship with Me (*samyogam yuñjan*). You will take shelter of Me alone, not *karma* or *jñāna* (*mad-āśrayaḥ*), since you are My *ananya-bhakta*. You will be absolutely without doubt about which is better--My impersonal aspect or My personal aspect, as indicated later in chapter 12 with My words:

*kleśo 'dhikataras teṣām avyaktāsakta-cetasām  
avyaktā hi gatir duḥkham dehavadbhir avāpyate*

Those who are attached to the impersonal aspect endure great difficulties. The impersonal goal gives difficulties for one a body. BG 12.5

Moreover, that Brahman is just an expression of My greatness, as I, in the form of Matsya, say to Satyavrata:

*madīyaṁ mahimānaṁ ca param brahmeti śabditam  
vetsyasy anugrhitam me sampraśnair vivṛtam hr̥di*

You will be thoroughly advised and favored by Me, and because of your inquiries, everything about My glories, which are known as *param brahma*, will be manifest within your heart. SB 8.24.38

In the *Gītā* I will later say, *brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*: I am the basis of Brahman. Thus, in comparison to knowledge about Me in My personal form, which is complete (*samagram*), this knowledge of impersonal Brahman is incomplete. Therefore you will know Me completely (*samagram mām*), without doubt.

*jñānaṁ te 'haṁ sa-vijñānam idaṁ vaksyāmy aśeṣataḥ |  
yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo 'nyaj jñātavyam avaśiṣyate ||2||*

2. I will explain to you knowledge of My powers (*jñāna*) along with knowledge of My sweetness (*vijñāna*), knowing which nothing else remains to be known.

Before attaining the stage of attachment to Me, the devotee understands (*jñānam*) about My powers. After that, he realizes (*viññānam*) My sweetness. Hear about both of these. Knowing this, nothing else remains to be known, for knowledge and realization of My impersonal aspect are included in it.

*manuṣyāṇām sahasreṣu kaścīd yatati siddhaye |  
yatatām api siddhānām kaścīn mām vetti tattvataḥ ||3||*

3. Among thousands of men, some attain success in their endeavors. Among those who attain success, hardly anyone knows Me.

Knowledge of Me and realization of Me are rare for the *jñānīs* and *yogīs* who were described in the previous six chapters. First, the Lord speaks of the rarity of realizing the sweetness of the Lord (*viññāna*) among those persons.

Among the countless *jīvas*, one may be a human being. Among thousands of humans, one of them may work for spiritual progress. Among thousands who work for spiritual progress, only one will know Me. Only one person will directly realize Me, truly, in the form of Śyāmasundara. This implies that the bliss from realization of personal Brahman is thousands of times greater than the bliss from realization of the impersonal Brahman.

*bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuh kham mano buddhir eva ca |  
ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā ||4||*

4. Earth, water, fire, air, ether (as well as their sense objects), mind, intelligence, false ego (with the ten senses and *mahat-tattva*) are My separated energy in eight divisions.

And, knowledge in relation to *bhakti* also means knowledge of the Lord's powers, not knowledge of the *ātmā* being separate from the body (which is knowledge in relation to the process of *jñāna*). In defining knowledge of the Lord's powers, the Lord speaks of His two energies (*prakṛti*), superior and inferior, in two verses.<sup>85</sup> By the listing of the five gross elements beginning

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<sup>85</sup> The previous verse spoke of the Lord's sweetness (*viññānam*). This and the next verse describe the Lord's powers (*jñānam*), by describing His inferior and superior energies.

with earth, the subtle elements, known as the sense objects smell, taste, form, touch and sound, are understood to be included as well. By the word false ego, the ten senses which arise from it, and the *mahat-tattva*, its cause, are also understood to be included. Mind and intellect are listed separately to show their greater importance among all the elements.

*apareyam itas tv anyām prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām |  
jīva-bhūtām mahā-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat ||5||*

5. This is My inferior energy. Understand My superior energy which is different from this inferior energy. It is the *jīvas*, by whom the inferior energy is employed for their enjoyment.

This *prakṛti* is called the external energy. As it is not conscious, it is inferior (*aparā*). Know also the other energy, *tataṣṭha-śakti*, which gives rise to the *jīvas*, which is superior (*parām*), because it is conscious. Why is the *jīva* considered superior? The unconscious matter (*idam jagat*) is employed (*dhāryate*) by this conscious *jīva*, for *jīva*'s own enjoyment.

*etad-yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṅīty upadhāraya |  
aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā ||6||*

6. Know that all things have their origin in these two energies, and that I am the origin and dissolution of the whole universe.

The Lord is the cause of the world, by these two energies. Know that all moving and non-moving entities arise from these two energies, *māyā-śakti* and *jīva-śakti*, *kṣetra* and *kṣetra-jña*. I alone am the creator of all this universe, since these two energies arise from Me, and I alone am the destroyer of the universe, since it merges into Me, the possessor of these two energies.

*mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti dhanañjaya |  
mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva ||7||*

7. There is nothing superior to Me, O conqueror of wealth. Everything is pervaded by Me, as pearls are strung on a thread.

Because of this, I am everything. That is expressed in this verse.

There is nothing superior to Me, because I am both the cause and the effect, and I am the *śakti* and *śaktimān*. As the *śruti* says, *ekam evādvitīyaṃ brahma*: there is only one Brahman and nothing else (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.2); and *neha nānāsti kiñcana*: there is no variety at all. (*Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.19)

Having thus spoken about His own identity with everything, the Lord then speaks about His entrance into everything. The whole universe (*sarvam idam*), composed of conscious and unconscious *prakṛti*, is identical with Me, because it is My effect. Still, everything is pervaded by the Paramātmā (I am in everything), as pearls are strung on a thread. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says that being strung like pearls means only that everything is pervaded by the Lord, and does not refer to material causality. A suitable example of material causality would be gold and gold earrings.

*raso 'ham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śāśi-sūryayoḥ |  
pranavaḥ sarva-vedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣam nṛṣu ||8||*

8. I am the taste of water, and the light of the sun and moon. I am *pranava* in the *Vedas*, sound in the ether and successful efforts of men.

Just as I have entered into the universe, My effect, in the form as Paramātmā, also I exist in the form of the cause of those effects (as sound in ether), or in the form of the essence of those things (as in success in man). This is expressed in four verses. The water's taste, which is its cause, is a manifestation of My power (*vibhūti*). Likewise one can find a similar meaning in the items following. I am light itself which gives light to the sun and moon. I am *omkāra*, the source of the *Vedas*. I am sound in the ether, as sound is the cause of the ether.<sup>86</sup> I am the distinguishing efforts (*pauruṣam*) of men, since effort is the essence of humans.

*puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyām ca tejaś cāsmi vibhāvasau |  
jīvanam sarva-bhūteṣu tapaś cāsmi tapasviṣu ||9||*

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<sup>86</sup> Sound gives rise to ether, touch gives rise to air, form gives rise to fire, taste gives rise to water, and smell gives rise to earth.

9. I am the fragrance of the earth element, the heat in fire, the life in all entities, the austerity in the *tapasvī*.

*Punya* means “pleasing” or “natural” according to *Amara Kośa*. I am the natural fragrance of earth element. *Ca* indicates that this statement applies to all the elements. Thus, I am the pleasing taste of water, the pleasing form of fire as well as the natural fragrance of the earth element. I am the power of fire, the essence—that which can burn, illuminate, and relieve cold in all things. I am the life span of all entities—their essence. I am the toleration of suffering, the essence of those performing austerities.<sup>87</sup>

*bijaṃ mām sarva-bhūtānām viddhi pārtha sanātanam |  
buddhir buddhimatām asmi tejas tejasvinām aham ||10||*

10. I am the eternal, original cause of all entities, O son of Pṛthā. I am the intelligence of the intelligent people and the majesty of the majestic.

*Bija* or seed means the cause before transformation, the *pradhāna*. *Sanātana* means eternal. Intelligence is the essence of the intelligent persons. I am that intelligence.

*balaṃ balavatām cāhaṃ kāma-rāga-vivarjitam |  
dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo ’smi bharatarṣabha ||11||*

11. I am the strength of the strong which is devoid of lust and anger. I am that lust which is according to *dharma*, O best of Bharata lineage.

I am the strength of the strong, not displayed out of anger or used with the desire to maintain to ones own lifestyle. I am lust not contrary to *dharma*, directed towards one’s wife only for the production of children.

*ye caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmasās ca ye |  
matta eveti tām viddhi na tv ahaṃ teṣu te mayi ||12||*

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<sup>87</sup> In this verse the Lord is the essence of all items, except the fragrance of earth. Fragrance is the cause of earth.

12. Know that all things in *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* come from Me. I am not in them, but they are in Me.

The expressions of My powers (*vibhūti*), being the cause of things or the essence of things and being the living entities such as Rākṣasas<sup>88</sup> have thus been mentioned to some degrees. There is no need to list these more extensively. All things are dependent on Me, and are an expression of My power. Those things (*bhāvā*) in the mode of goodness, like sense and mind control and the *devatās*; those things in the mode of passion, such as lust and pride, and the *asuras* like Hiraṇyakaśipu; and those things in the mode of ignorance like lamentation, illusion and the Rākṣasas--these are all the products of the *guṇas* of *prakṛti* belonging to Me. I do not exist in them: I do not depend on them like the *jīvas*. But they exist in Me: they are dependent on Me.

*tribhir guṇa-mayair bhāvair ebhiḥ sarvam idaṁ jagat |  
mohitaṁ nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam ||13||*

13. The whole world, bewildered by the objects and persons made of three *guṇas*, does not know Me, the unchanging, who am above all of those things.

“Then if You are all things, why do people not know You, the Supreme Lord?”

All the *jīvas* born in the universe (*sarvam idaṁ jagat*), being bewildered by the states such as sense and mind control in the mood of goodness, jubilation in the mode of passion, and lamentation in the mode of ignorance, stemming from the nature of the *guṇas*, do not know Me, who am superior to them (*param*) and without change (*avyayam*), since I am beyond the *guṇas*.

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā |  
mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te ||14||*

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<sup>88</sup> The reference seems unclear since Rākṣasas have not been mentioned in the above list of *vibhūtis*.

14. My *māyā* made of the *guṇas*, fit for *jīva*'s pleasure, is hard to surpass, but those who surrender to Me alone can cross over *māyā*.

“Then how will they be delivered from this bewilderment of the three modes?”

The word *daivī* comes from *deva*, which means “those who sport with sense enjoyment.” It refers to the *jīvas*. Thus *daiva* makes it possessive: that belonging to the *jīvas* for their pleasure. *Daivī* therefore means that which bewilders the *jīvas*.

This *māyā* is the bewilderer of the *jīvas* who enjoy sense objects (*daivī*). It is made of the *guṇas*, and by implication, it is a great noose of three strands (*guṇa* means rope). This *māyā*, the external energy, belongs to Me, the Supreme Lord. It is difficult to surpass. As a noose, it is impossible for anyone to untie or to cut it. Touching His chest, the Lord says, “Have faith in My words. Anyone who surrenders unto Me, the form of Śyāmasundara, crosses over this *māyā*.”

*na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ |*  
*māyayāpahṛta-jñānā āsuram bhāvam āsritāḥ ||15||*

15. The falsely intelligent, consisting of the animalistic humans engrossed solely in material pleasure, the condemned humans who give up *bhakti* after practicing it, the deluded theists who think My body is material, and the demons who attack My form, do not surrender to Me.

“Do not the wise then surrender unto You?”

Yes, those who are wise surrender to Me but those who only think themselves wise do not. *Duṣṭa* means evil or spoiled, and *kṛtinah* means clever. Those who have evil intelligence (*duṣkṛtinah*) are of four types. One is the *mūḍhah*, the fool equal to an animal. He pursues only (animalistic) enjoyment through his work. It is said:

*nūnam daivena nihatā ye cācyuta-kathā-sudhām*  
*hitvā śṛṇvanty asad-gāthāḥ purīṣam iva viḍ-bhujah*

Because they are averse to the nectar of the activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, they are compared to stool-eating hogs. They give up hearing the transcendental activities of the Lord and indulge in hearing of the abominable activities of materialistic persons. *SB* 3.32.19

*mukundaṁ ko vai na seveta vinā naretaraḥ*<sup>89</sup>

Who would not serve Mukunda except a non-human?

Others are *narādhamas*. For some time, they attain the status of a human by accepting the process of *bhakti*, but they then reject it by their own will, thinking that it is not useful as a practice for attaining their goals. They become the lowest beings (*adhama*) because of giving up *bhakti* (after attaining it).

Others, though having studied the scriptures, have their knowledge stolen by *māyā*. They think that Nārāyaṇa residing in *Vaikuṅṭha* is obtainable by constant *bhakti*, but not Kṛṣṇa or Rāma, whom they consider humans. It is said, *avajānanti mām mūḍhā mānuṣīm tanum āśritam* (*BG* 9.11). These fools think that I have a human body. This means that though they surrender to Me (in some forms), they actually do not surrender to Me.

Others take shelter of the mood of the *asuras*. *Asuras* like Jarāsandha, seeing My form, attack it with arrows. They even try to destroy My form in *Vaikuṅṭha* by their bad arguments, based on faulty logic such as insisting on visible proof. They do not surrender at all.

*catur-vidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna |*  
*ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bhāratarṣabha ||16||*

16. Four types of religious persons worship Me, O Arjuna: the sufferer, the inquirer, the enjoyer and the *jñānī*.

“Then, who worships You?”

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<sup>89</sup> *Bhāgavatam* 5.15.11 is similar. Perhaps the quotation is a different version of the text.

Four types worship Me. Those who follow the rules of *varṇāśrama* (*sukṛtinah*), worship Me. Among them some desire relief from affliction, from calamities like sickness; some desire knowledge of *ātmā* or desire knowledge of scriptures with grammar; and some desire enjoyment in this life and the next with land, elephants, horses, women, gold and other such things. These persons worship Me. These three are *sakāma grhasthas*. The fourth type, the *jñānī*, a *sannyāsī* with pure heart who worships Me with devotion, is *niškāma*, without material desire.<sup>90</sup>

These four types of devotees, qualified for *pradhānī bhūtā bhakti* (in which *bhakti* is the principle component), have been enumerated. The first three types of persons have *karma-miśra-bhakti*. The fourth type has *jñāna-miśra-bhakti*. Later in the book, *yoga-miśra-bhakti* will also be described in verse like *sarva dvārāni saṁyamyā* (BG 8.12).

But *kevalā bhakti*, unmixed with *karma* or *jñāna*, was also described in the beginning of this chapter with the words *mayyāsakta manaḥ pārtha* (BG 7.1). *Kevalā bhakti* will also be described in the eighth chapter with *ananya cetāḥ satatam* (BG 8.14), in the ninth with *mahātmānas tu mām pārtha* (BG 9.13) and with *ananyāś cintayanto mām* (BG 9.22). The Lord describes these two types of *bhakti*, *pradhānī bhūtā* and *kevalā bhakti*, in the middle six chapters of the *Gītā*.

A third type of *bhakti*, *guṇī bhūtā bhakti* (processes in which *bhakti* is a secondary element) is seen in the *karmīs*, *jñānīs* and *yogīs*, who predominantly desire results for their actions (*bhukti* and *mukti*). Because of the lack of predominance of *bhakti*, and instead a predominance of *karma*, *jñāna* or *yoga*, this *guṇī bhūtā bhakti* it is not classed as *bhakti*. As things should be classed by predominance of quality, these processes are classed as *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga*, and the practitioners are not classed as *bhaktas*, but as *karmīs*, *jñānīs* or *yogīs*.

The result of *sakāma-karma* is Svarga, the result of *niškāma-karma* is *jñāna-yoga*, and the result of *jñāna* and *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* is *nirvāṇa mokṣa*, impersonal liberation. The results of the two types of *pradhānī bhūtā bhakti* are described as follows. Among the types of *pradhānī bhūtā bhakti*, the first

<sup>90</sup> In this definition the *jñānī* does not have a desire for liberation. The devotee desiring liberation is mentioned at the end of the chapter as a *sakāma-bhakta*.

three are *karma-miśra-bhakti*, or *sakāma-bhakti*. The result of this *bhakti* is attainment of the respective desires (deliverance from suffering, attainment of scriptural knowledge with materialistic method, gain of material benefits). And after that, because the superior nature of their object of worship (the Lord), those devotees attain liberation in the form of *sālokya* (attaining the same planet) with predominance of happiness and powers (*sukha* and *aiśvarya*). And there is no fall down as in the case of exhausting enjoyment in Svarga as a result of *karma*. It will be said, “Those who worship Me come to Me.” (BG 9.25)

The result of *jñāna-miśra-bhakti*, which is superior to the other three types, is *śānta rati* (*bhāva*), as in the case of Sanaka and others. Sometimes, because of exceptional mercy of the Lord and His devotee, the result of *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* is the supreme position of *prema*, as in the case of Śukadeva.

If *sakāma-bhakti* (the first three types) becomes *niṣkāma*, without desires, the result is *jñāna-miśra-bhakti*, and the result of that *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* is as stated above (*śānta-rati*). Sometimes, those who have *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* or *karma-miśra-bhakti* attain *prema* in *dāśya* and higher *rasas* on their own (with no apparent association of devotees in this life), because of influence of association with devotees in previous lives. However, that *prema* is predominated by a mood of reverence (*aiśvarya*).

The result of pure *bhakti* unmixed with *jñāna*, *karma* or *yoga*, called *ananyā bhakti akiñcanā bhakti* or *uttamā bhakti*, which has many types, is that one becomes an associate of the Lord with *dāśya*, *sākhya*, and other *rasas*. This is explained elaborately in the commentaries on the *Bhāgavatam*. As it is a matter related to the topic at hand, the distinctions in perfected *bhakti* have been briefly discussed.<sup>91</sup>

*teṣāṃ jñānī nitya-yukta eka-bhaktir viśiṣyate |*  
*priyo hi jñānino 'tyartham ahaṃ sa ca mama priyaḥ ||17||*

17. Of these four types, the *jñānī*, who is constantly engaged in thinking of Me, who is practicing *bhakti* alone, is the best. I am cherished by that *jñānī*, and he is cherished by Me.

<sup>91</sup> Though the topic is *sādhana*, the results of *sādhya*, *prema*, are also described here to illustrate the difference in the *sādhanas*.

Among these four types who are qualified with *bhakti* (those with *pradhānī bhūtā bhakti*), who is the best? Among them the *jñānī* is the best. He is absorbed in Me constantly (*nitya-yukta*). This means that because his consciousness has been brought under control by practice of *jñāna*, he has full concentration in the mind. The other three types do not have this quality.

“But does the *jñānī* just worship you out of fear that his *jñāna* will be ineffective without *bhakti*?”

No, he has a predominance of *bhakti* (*eka-bhaktiḥ*), not like other *jñānīs* who have a predominance of *jñāna*; or the meaning can be “He has great attachment to the process of *bhakti* alone, and is a *jñānī* in name only.” I, in the form of Śyāmasundara, am exceedingly (*atyartham*) dear to such a *jñānī*. He cannot give Me up either in the stage of *sādhana* or perfection. I also hold him very dear. This is according to the reasoning that I respond to the devotee in proportion to his amount of surrender to Me.

*udārāḥ sarva evaite jñānī tv ātmaiva me matam |*  
*āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā mām evānuttamām gatim ||18||*

18. They are all exalted, but the *jñānī* is My soul, because he is firmly convinced that I alone am the highest goal. That is My opinion.

“Then, that means that the other three are not dear to You?”

No, they are all dear to Me. Those who worship Me, accepting objects they have desired, but which I wanted to give them anyway, are certainly dear to Me, who have affection for My devotees. This is because I give generously to them. But the *jñānī* is Myself. He worships Me and does not desire anything at all from Me, neither Svarga nor *mokṣa*. Thus I am dependent on him: he is My soul. This is My opinion. This is because he is firmly convinced (*asthitaḥ*) that I alone in the form of Śyāmasundara, not My impersonal aspect as *brahma-nirvāṇa*, am the highest goal (*anuttamām gatim*) to be attained. The *jñānī*, who has a predominance of *bhakti* and no material desires, is considered by the affectionate Lord as His own self. But

the *kevalā bhakta*, the pure devotee, is considered by the Lord to be *dearer than His very self*.

*na tathā me priyatama ātma-yonir na saṅkaraḥ  
na ca saṅkarṣaṇo na śrīr naivātmā ca yathā bhavān*

My dear Uddhava, neither Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa, the goddess of fortune nor indeed My own self are as dear to Me as you are.  
SB 11.14.15

*nāham ātmānam āśāse mad-bhaktaiḥ sādhubhir vinā*

O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, without saintly persons for whom I am the only destination, I do not desire to enjoy My transcendental bliss and My supreme opulences. SB 9.4.64

*ātmārāmo 'py arīramat*

Smiling upon hearing these despondent words from the *gopīs*, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme master of all masters of mystic *yoga*, mercifully enjoyed with them, although He is self-satisfied. SB 10.29.42

*bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate |  
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ 19||*

19. The *jñānī*, seeing Vāsudeva everywhere, surrenders to Me through devotee association after many births. He has a steady mind and is very rare.

“You say that this *jñānī* is fixed in You as the supreme goal. Consequently this *jñānī bhakta* attains You. But after how long does a *jñānī* become qualified as a devotee?”

He who possesses knowledge, seeing Vāsudeva everywhere, after many births surrenders to Me. Such a saintly person surrenders to Me through chance association with devotees. That *jñānī-bhakta* has a very steady mind (*mahātmā*), and is very rare. As I have said, *manuṣyānām sahasreṣu*, out of

thousands, one person may know Me in truth. What to speak of the rarity then, of the *kevala* or *ekānta bhakta*? Such a person is even rarer.

*kāmais tais tair hr̥ta-jñānāḥ prapadyante 'nya-devatāḥ |  
taṁ taṁ niyamam āsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā ||20||*

20. Those who have become foolish because of their many desires worship various *devatās*, adopting various rules, under the control of their low natures.

“It is understood from what you have said that the *sakāma-bhaktas*, because they worship You, the Lord, who responds to them, become somewhat successful. But what happens to those who have material desires and worship the *devatās* with the desire to remove their suffering or gain material pleasure?”

Four verses answer this question. These people, having no intelligence (*hr̥ta-jñāna*), think that the *devatās* like Sūrya will give immediate relief from afflictions like sickness, whereas Viṣṇu will not. They therefore surrender to the *devatās*. They are under the control of their natures (*prakṛtyā niyatā svayā*), which are corrupted, averse to surrender to Me.

*yo yo yām yām tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitum icchati |  
tasya tasyācalām śraddhām tām eva vidadhāmy aham ||21||*

21. I give those persons firm faith in those *devatās* whose forms they desire to worship with faith.

You should not say that the *devatā*, pleased with being worshiped, will produce faith in worshipping the Supreme Lord, in order to give benefit of the worshipper. As those *devatās* cannot even produce faith in their followers to worship the *devatās*, how then can they produce faith in their followers to worship Me? When those people desire to worship forms (*tanuṁ*) such as Sūrya, which are actually My forms since they are My *vibhūtis*, I, as Paramātmā, give the faith in those forms of *devatās*. The *devatās* do not give the faith.

*sa tayā śraddhayā yuktas tasyārādhnam īhate |*

*labhate ca tataḥ kāmān mayaiḥ vihitān hi tān ||22||*

22. Endowed with the faith given by Me, that person worships the *devatā*, and attains his desired objects, which are given only by Me.

That person, endowed with that faith, performs (*ihate*) worship of that *devatā*. He obtains the results of that worship (*kāmān*) from the worship of that particular *devatā*. But those *devatās* cannot fulfill those desires. It is I who fulfill those desires.

*antavat tu phalaṁ teṣāṁ tad bhavaty alpa-medhasām |  
devān deva-yajo yānti mad-bhaktā yānti mām api ||23||*

23. The results obtained by these foolish persons are temporary. Those who worship *devas* attain the *devas*, and those who worship Me attain to Me.

“But then You give the devotees of the *devatā* temporary results, whereas You give Your devotees permanent results. It is unjust for You to do that, since You are the Supreme Lord.”

No, it is not unjust. Those who worship the *devatās* attain (*yānti*) the *devatās*. Those who worship Me attain Me. The meaning is this. It is very logical that a person attains what he worships. Thus if the *devatā* are temporary, how can their devotees become permanent, and how can the results of worship be permanent? Thus it is said here that the devotees of those *devatā* are not intelligent (*alpa-medhasām*). The Supreme Lord however is eternal, and therefore His devotees are also eternal. Their *bhakti* and all the results of their *bhakti* are eternal.

*avyaktam vyaktim āpannam manyante mām abuddhayaḥ |  
param bhāvam ajānanto mamāvyayam anuttamam ||24||*

24. The unintelligent think that the impersonal Brahman has manifested an illusory form as Myself. They do not know My transcendental nature (consisting of form, qualities and activities), which are eternal and most excellent.

What to speak of the worshippers of the *devatā* being foolish and not recognizing Me, even those who study all the scriptures such as the *Vedas* do not know the truth about Me. Lord Brahmā has said to Me:

*athāpi te deva padāmbuja-dvaya-  
prasāda-leśānugrhīta eva hi  
jānāti tattvaṁ bhagavan mahimno  
na cānya eko 'pi ciraṁ vicinvan*

My Lord, if one is favored by even a slight trace of the mercy of Your lotus feet, he can understand the greatness of Your personality. But those who speculate to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead are unable to know You, even though they continue to study the *Vedas* for many years. SB 10.14.29

Thus, apart from My devotees, everyone else is foolish regarding knowledge of Me. With this intention He speaks this verse.

The unintelligent think that the formless Brahman beyond the material world (*avyaktim*) has taken birth as Myself in the house of Vasudeva (*vyaktim*) with an illusory form: what is now visible is just an illusory form. This is because they do not know My transcendental state. They do not know that My form, birth, activities, and pastimes are beyond *māyā* (*mama param bhāvam*). What type of state is this? It is eternal (*avyayam*) and most excellent (*anuttamam*).

According to Medinī, *bhāva* means existence, nature, intention, endeavor, self, birth, action, pastime and meaning of a word. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *Bhāgavatāmṛta* has described this eternal nature of the Lord: the Lord's form, qualities, birth, actions, and pastimes are eternal since they have no beginning and no end. Śrīdhara Svāmī has also said, “*Bhāvam* means form, and *avyayam* means eternal. ...It is a pure form of *sattva* endowed with great power.”

*nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yoga-māyā-samāvṛtaḥ |  
mūḍho'yaṁ nābhijānāti loko mām ajam avyayam ||25||*

25. Being covered by My *yoga-māyā*, I am not visible at all times even to My devotees in My spiritual abodes. And the foolish do not understand that I, though appearing as the son of Vasudeva, am without birth and certainly have no material birth.

“If You have eternal form, qualities and pastimes, then why do we not see these things at all times?”

“I am not manifest to all people living at all times and places. I am always present with My associates, qualities and pastimes in some universe, at some time, but just as the sun is not visible to all people at all times, but only sometimes, since it gets covered by Mount Meru, I also am not visible at all times, being covered by *yoga-māyā*. Though the sun is situated within the zodiac and is always present there for all the living beings, it is not visible to all people at all times and places. Similarly I am not visible to all people at all times in the various sections of Bhārata.”

“But as the sun is always visible in its own abode, why is Kṛṣṇa not always visible to all the people presently dwelling in His abodes such as Mathurā and Dvārakā?”

“Since Meru is present in the middle of the zodiac, then the sun, when covered, is not visible. In the same way, within Kṛṣṇa’s effulgent abodes, *yoga-māyā* is always present like Meru. Kṛṣṇa, like the sun, covered by that Meru in the form of *yoga-māyā*, is not visible constantly, but only sometimes. This is all without fault. As well, the foolish people do not understand that I, in My form as Śyāmasundara (*mām*), though appearing as Vasudeva’s son (*ajam*), am free from material birth (*ajam avyayam*). Thus, finally rejecting Me, the ocean of auspicious qualities, they worship My impersonal aspect, Brahman.”

*vedāham samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna |  
bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni mām tu veda na kaścana ||26||*

26. I know all things in the past and present, Arjuna. I know everything in the future as well, but no one knows Me.

But My own knowledge is not covered by external *māyā* or the internal *yoga-māyā*, since I cannot be bewildered by that to which I give shelter. I know everything. But no one, whether material or spiritual, not even Śiva or the most omniscient person, knows Me completely, since knowledge of Me is covered by either *māyā* or *yoga-māyā* according to the qualification of the person.

*icchā-dveṣa-samutthena dvandva-mohena bhārata |  
sarva-bhūtāni sammohaṁ sarge yānti parantapa ||27||*

27. Since the beginning of creation, all living beings have been intensely bewildered by the ignorance caused by duality arising from like and dislike.

When do the *jīvas* become bewildered by Your *māyā*? At the beginning of the creation of this universe (*sarge*), all the *jīvas* (*sarva-bhūtāni*) become bewildered. How? Desire for objects favorable to the senses, and hatred for things which obstruct the pleasure of the senses, arising from previous actions, give rise to illusion of duality--of respect and disrespect, hot and cold, happiness and distress, and woman and man. A person thinks "I am happy, being respected." "I am sad, being disrespected." "This is my wife." "This is my husband." This duality gives rise to complete ignorance (*moha*). That in turn gives rise to complete bewilderment (*sammohaṁ*)--extreme attachment to wife and sons.

Those who are extremely attached are not qualified for devotion to Me. I will explain this to Uddhava:

*yadr̥cchayā mat-kathādau jāta-śraddhas tu yaḥ pumān |  
na nirviṇṇo nāti-sakto bhakti-yogo 'sya siddhi-daḥ ||*

If somehow or other by good fortune one develops faith in hearing and chanting My glories, such a person, being neither very disgusted with *nor attached to material life*, should achieve perfection through the path of loving devotion to Me. SB 11.20.8

*yeṣāṁ tv anta-gataṁ pāpam janānāṁ puṇya-karmaṇām |  
te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā bhajante mām dṛḍha-vratāḥ ||28||*

28. But those whose sins have been destroyed by pious acts, being free of the ignorance arising from duality by worshipping Me, then worship Me with determination.

Then who is qualified for *bhakti*? This verse answers. Those who have *punya karma*, who have destroyed sins partially, develop a predominance of *sattva-guṇa* and diminished *tamo-guṇa*. The result of this is a decrease in illusion. Consequently they become less attached. Then they have chance association with My devotees. They then become completely free of sin by practice of worship. Being freed completely of illusion (*dvandva-moha-nimuktā*), they become steady (*dr̥ḍha-vratāh*) in worshipping Me. Thus, one should not consider that *punya karma* is the cause of any type of *bhakti*.<sup>92</sup>

For the Lord has said:

*yaṁ na yogena sāṅkhyena dāna-vrata-tapo-'dhvaraiḥ |*  
*vyākhyā-svādhyāya-sannyāsaiḥ prāpnuyād yatnavān api ||*

Even though one engages with great endeavor in the mystic yoga system, philosophical speculation, charity, vows, penances, ritualistic sacrifices, teaching of Vedic *mantras* to others, personal study of the *Vedas*, or the renounced order of life, still one cannot achieve Me. SB 11.12.9

In many places, it is stated that *punya-karmas* are dependent on *kevalā bhakti*, and not its cause.

*jarā-marāṇa-mokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye |*  
*te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ karma cākhilam ||29||*

29. Those *yogīs* who, taking shelter of Me, strive for freedom from birth and death, know Brahman, the *jīva*, and rebirth of the *jīva* due to the influence *karma*.

It has been said that the three types of *sakāma-bhaktas* who worship Me become successful, but the worshippers of *devatās* (also *sakāma*) fail. Those

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<sup>92</sup> Association with the devotees is the cause.

who are not qualified for worshipping the Lord have also been described. Now the Lord speaks about a fourth type of *sakāma-bhakta*.

Those *yogīs* who strive to destroy old age and death (*jarā-maraṇa-mokṣāya yatanti*), who desire liberation (*mokṣa-kāmī*), and consequently worship Me, know all about the famous Brahman (the Lord).<sup>93</sup> They know about the *jīva* (*adhyātmam*), present as the controller (*adhi*) of the body (*ātmānam*), and the repeated bodies of the *jīva* generated from all types of actions (*karma akhilam*), due to the power of devotion to Me.

*sādhibhūtādhidaivam mām sādhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ |  
prayāṇa-kāle 'pi ca mām te vidur yukta-cetasah ||30||*

30. Those who know Me along with matter, who know Me as the controller of *devas*, and who know My presence in sacrifice, fixed in knowledge, will know Me even at the time of death.

Those who develop such knowledge of Me by the influence of devotion to Me maintain that knowledge even at the time of death. It is not like the intelligence of others, established by *karma*, which varies according to the future body. The terms *adhibhūta*, *adhidaiva* and *adhiyajña* will be explained in the next chapter.

The devotees alone, enumerated as six types,<sup>94</sup> who know the truth about the Lord, cross over *māyā*. This has been presented as the meaning of the chapter.

Thus, the commentary on the seventh chapter of the *Gītā* has been completed for the pleasure of the devotees' minds, through the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

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<sup>93</sup> Brahman will be defined as *akṣara*, in verse 3 of the next chapter, and *akṣara* will be defined as *Nārāyaṇa* in verse 21.

<sup>94</sup> These types are three *sakāma* devotees mentioned in verse 16, the *mokṣa-kāma-bhakta* mentioned in verse 29, the *niskāma-jñāna-mīśra-bhakta* mentioned in verse 16, and the *kevala-bhakta* mentioned in verse 1.

## Chapter Eight

*arjuna uvāca*  
*kim tad brahma kim adhyātmaṁ kim karma puruṣottama |*  
*adhibhūtaṁ ca kim proktam adhidaivaṁ kim ucyate ||1||*

*adhiyajñaḥ kathaṁ ko 'tra dehe 'smin madhusūdana |*  
*prayānakāle ca kathaṁ jñeyo 'si niyatātmabhiḥ ||2||*

1-2. Arjuna said: What is Brahman, what is *adhyātma*, what is *karma*, what is *adhibhūta* and what is *adhidaiva*, O Supreme Person? Who is the *adhiyajña*, and how is he known in the body? How are You to be known at the point of death by those with concentrated minds?

In the eighth chapter, the Lord speaks about pure *bhakti* and *yoga-miśra-bhakti*, in reply to Arjuna's questions. He also describes the two destinations of the *yogīs*.

At the end of the previous chapter, the Lord mentioned knowledge of seven items (Brahman, *adhyātma*, *karma*, *adhibhūta*, *adhidaiva*, *adhiyajña*, and Himself, Kṛṣṇa). Wanting to know about these things, Arjuna asks questions about them in the first two verses of this chapter.

Who is the ruler of *yajña* in the body (*atra dehe*) and how should He be known in the body at the point of death? The sentence is completed with the next line of verse 2.

*śrī bhagavān uvāca--*  
*akṣaram brahma paramaṁ svabhāvo 'dhyātmaṁ ucyate |*  
*bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo visargaḥ karma-samjñitaḥ ||3||*

3. The Lord said: the Brahman is the supreme indestructible entity. *Adhyātma* is the *jīva*. *Karma* refers to transmigration arising from the creation of bodies made of material elements.

The Lord answers. Brahman refers to the *akṣara*--that which does not get destroyed, that which is eternal and supreme. The *śruti* says *etad vai tad akṣaram gārgi brāhmaṇā abhivadanti*: the knowers of Brahman call the

Supreme Lord (*tad*) the indestructible (*akṣaram*).<sup>95</sup> (*Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.8.8)

*Svabhāva* means “that which produces one’s self (*svam bhāvayati*), from imposition of a body.” In other words, it means the *jīva*, since it creates the body. The *jīva* is called *adhyātma*. Or the meaning of *svabhāva* can be “that which causes one to attain the Paramātmā (*sva* meaning the Lord in this case). In this case *adhyātma* refers to the purified *jīva*, since only the pure *jīva* is qualified to attain Paramātmā.

The word *karma* refers to transmigration (*visarga*) of the *jīva*, the creation of bodies (*bhāva*) through the material elements (*bhūta*). It is called *karma* because it is produced from actions.

*adhibhūtaṁ kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cādhideivatam |*  
*adhiyajño 'ham evātra dehe deha-bhṛtam vara ||4||*

4. *Adhibhūta* refers to all the temporary material objects. *Adhideiva* refers to the universal body of the Lord. I, on the other hand, am the *adhiyajña* situated in the body, O Arjuna, best among souls situated in a body.

The word *adhibhūta* refers to temporary objects (*kṣaro bhāvaḥ*) such as pots and cloth. The word *adhideiva* refers to the person representing the totality of the universe, understood from the derivation of the word *adhideiva* as “He within whom all the *devatās* exist as His subjects”. In the body (*atra*), I, the Paramātmā, am the *adhiyajña*, the person who induces others to perform actions like *yajña*.

But why should the word *eva* (for emphasis) be used with *aḥam*, since the Paramātmā, *antaryāmī*, is only My expansion or *aṁśa*? It is because this *antaryāmī*, though an *aṁśa*, is not different from Me, whereas the other items such as *adhyātma* (*jīva*) are different from Me.

O best person (*vara*), among those having bodies (*deha-bhṛtam*), you are the best of all in this body, because you have a direct relationship with Me as friend.

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<sup>95</sup> In verse 21 Viśvanatha says that the *akṣara* is Nārāyaṇa.

*anta-kāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram |  
yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvaṁ yāti nāsty atra saṁśayaḥ ||5||*

5. At the point of death, he who leaves the body while knowing Me in truth, attains a nature similar to Mine. Of this there is no doubt.

This verse answers the question “How are you to be known at the time of death?” *Smaran* means remembering Me, knowing Me in truth, not like knowing pots or cloth. The method of knowing or remembering the Lord is now explained in fourteen verses.

*yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ tyajaty ante kalevaram |  
taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitaḥ ||6||*

6. Whatever one thinks of when leaving the body, one attains a state similar to that object of constant thought, O son of Kuntī.

This verse explains that just as, by remembering Me, one attains Me (stated in the previous verse), so by remembering something else, one attains that object. Being influenced (*bhāvitaḥ*) by constant thoughts (*bhāva*) of that object, a person becomes similar to the object (*bhāvitaḥ*).

*tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca |  
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir mām evaiśyasy asaṁśayaḥ ||7||*

7. Therefore, at all times remembering Me, fight. Without doubt, one whose intelligence and mind are offered to Me attains Me.

The mind creates the decision to think of Me. The intelligence creates the determination to remain fixed in thinking of Me.

*abhyāsa-yoga-yuktena cetasā nānya-gāminā |  
paramaṁ puruṣaṁ divyaṁ yāti pārthānucintayan ||8||*

8. Continuously contemplating Me with mind engaged in the practice of repeated remembrance, without deviation, one attains the transcendental supreme person.

Therefore, that person who practices remembrance of Me during his life will naturally remember Me at the time of death, and by that, he will attain Me. Therefore, remembering Me by the mind is the highest *yoga*. That is expressed in this verse. *Abhyāsa* means to repeatedly remember Me. The mind should be engaged in this method (*yoga*) of repetition of remembering Me. It should not wander to other objects of remembrance. By this practice one will conquer of the nature of the mind.

*kaviṁ purānam anuśāsītāram  
aṅor aṅyāṁsam anusmared yaḥ |  
sarvasya dhātāram acintya-rūpam  
āditya-varṇam tamaśaḥ parastāt ||9||*

*prayāṇa-kāle manasācalena  
bhaktyā yukto yoga-balena caiva |  
bhruvor madhye prāṇam āveśya samyak  
sa taṁ paraṁ puruṣam upaiti divyam ||10||*

9-10. At the time of death, a person endowed with devotion and with unwavering mind, who concentrates between the brows through the strength of *yoga* practice, and who remembers He who is omniscient, beginningless, the teacher, smaller than the smallest, the container of everything, the inconceivable, an independent form like the sun, who is above *prakṛti*--that person attains the transcendental supreme person.

Without practice of *yoga* it is difficult to withdraw the mind from sense objects. Without withdrawing the mind from sense objects, it is difficult to think constantly of the Lord. Therefore one should execute *bhakti* along with some type of *yoga* practice. The Lord here speaks of such *bhakti* mixed with *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* (*yoga-miśra-bhakti*) in five verses.

The Lord is omniscient (*kavi*). But though one may be omniscient, like Sanaka and others, one may not be eternal. Therefore, the Lord is described as *purāna*, without beginning. Though He is both omniscient and without beginning, this does not indicate that He becomes the instructor of *bhakti* as Paramātmā. Therefore He is called *anuśāsītāram*, the teacher, who by His mercy gives instructions about devotion to Himself when He appears as Kṛṣṇa or Rāma. Though He is merciful, He is still a difficult object to know

factually: compared to the smallest He is even smaller. Then, is He like the *jīva*, the size of an atom? No, He is also of the greatest size, spreading everywhere, since everything is contained within Him (*sarvasya dhātāram*). Thus He is said to be inconceivable in form (*acintya-rūpam*). Though He appears of medium size, as a human being, His manifestation is independent of all others. Thus He has a form (*varṇa*) which is like that of the sun (*āditya*), revealing both Himself and all others. Thus, though He is the possessor of *māyā-śakti* (*prakṛti*), His form is transcendental to *prakṛti* or *māyā* (*tamasah parastāt*).

At the time of death (*prayāna-kāle*), with unwavering mind, engaged in *bhakti* with constant remembrance of Me as described above, the *yogī* attains Me. How does he attain unwavering mind? He attains it through the strength of his practice of *yoga* (*yoga-balena*). The *yoga* process is then described. Fixing his *prāṇa* in the *ājñā-cakra* (*bhruvor madhye*), he attains Me.<sup>96</sup>

*yad akṣaram veda-vido vadanti  
viśanti yad yatayo vīta-rāgāḥ |  
yad icchanto brahmacaryam caranti  
tat te padam saṅgrahaṇa pravakṣye ||11||*

11. Along with the method, I will speak of the final goal which the knowers of the *Veda* call *om*, and which the *sannyāsīs* who have given up attachment attain. Desiring this, they practice celibacy.

“Just by Your mentioning that the *yogī* should concentrate the *prāṇa* at the *ājñā-cakra*, I cannot understand this *yoga*. What is the manner of doing this *yoga*? What should be chanted? Upon what should one meditate? What is to be obtained by this *yoga*? Briefly You should tell me.” Kṛṣṇa speaks three verses to answer him.

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<sup>96</sup> From verse 13 it seems that attaining the Lord means attaining His abode, attaining a distant relationship with the Lord.

Please listen as I describe what will be factually attained (*padam*) along with the method of attainment (*saṅgrahena*)<sup>97</sup>--that Brahman which the knowers of the Veda call *om* (*akṣara*), which the *sannāyāsīs* attain.

*sarva-dvārāṇi samyamya mano hṛdi nirudhya ca |*  
*mūrdhny ādhāyātmanah prāṇam āsthito yoga-dhāraṇām ||12||*  
*om ity ekākṣaram brahma vyāharan mām anusmaran |*  
*yaḥ prayāti tyajan dehaṁ sa yāti paramām gatim ||13||*

12-13. He who leaves his body while withdrawing the senses from senses objects, concentrating the mind in the heart, fixing the *prāṇa* at the *ājñā-cakra*, completely absorbing his thoughts in Me, uttering “*om*” and remembering Me constantly, attains My planet.

Elaborating what was previous spoken, the Lord describes the method of *yoga*. Withdrawing the openings of all the senses (*sarva-dvārāṇi*) from the external objects; confining the mind to the heart, with no desire for other objects; fixing the *prāṇa* between the brows (*mūrdhni*); and taking shelter of Me completely (*yoga-dhāraṇām*); uttering just one syllable, *om*, the form of Brahman; and meditating continuously upon Me (*mām anusmaran*) represented by *om*-- giving up his body, he attains *sālokyam* (*paramām gatim*).<sup>98</sup>

*ananya-cetāḥ satataṁ yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ |*  
*tasyāhaṁ sulabhāḥ pārtha nitya-yuktasya yoginaḥ ||14||*

14. The devotee who remembers Me daily, at all times, without deviation to other processes, persons or goals, and who desires association with Me, easily attains Me.

Having spoken of *pradhānī bhūtā bhakti*, *bhakti* mixed with *karma*, mentioned in *ārto jijñāsur arthārthī* (BG 7.16), and with desire for liberation in *jarā-maraṇa-mokṣāya* (BG 7.29), and also *bhakti* mixed with *yoga* in this chapter (verse 9-13), now the Lord speaks of *kevalā bhakti*, the best *bhakti*,

<sup>97</sup> *Saṅgraha* is analyzed as “the means by which something is completely (*samyak*) understood (*grhyate*).”

<sup>98</sup> From this statement it would appear that this *yoga-miśra-bhakta* attains a similar state as the three types of *sakāma-bhaktas* mentioned in chapter 7.

devoid of any material tinge. The mind of that devotee is free from performing other processes such as *karma-yoga* or *jñāna-yoga*,<sup>99</sup> free from worship of other persons or *devatās*, and free from other goals, such as attainment of Svarga or *mokṣa*. Thus he is called *ananya-cetāḥ*, with mind not thinking anything else except the Lord. He remembers Me every day, (*nityaśaḥ*), constantly (*satatam*), not depending upon appropriate time, place, person, or purity. I can be easily attained (*sulabhah*) by that person, by that *bhakti*. It is not mixed with the difficulties encountered in practicing *yoga*, *jñāna* or other processes. He constantly desires association with Me (*nity-yuktasya*). This grammatical form expresses desire in the future as well as the past. *Yoginaḥ* here refers to the person doing *bhakti-yoga*. Or it can mean a person who has a relationship (*yoga*) with the Lord, in *dāśya*, *sākhyā* or other relationships.

*mām upetya punar janma duḥkhālayam aśāsvatam |  
nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhim paramām gatāḥ ||15||*

15. Attaining Me, those great souls do not return to a birth which is full of suffering and temporary, having attained the highest goal of personal service to Me.

“What happens to that person who attains You?”

Attaining Me, they do not attain birth again which is full of suffering (*duḥkhālayam*) and temporary, but attain a birth similar to Mine, which is full of joy, because it is eternal. According to the *Amara Kośa*, *śāśvata* means certain, eternal, continual, everlasting. When I take My birth, which is full of joy, spiritual, and eternal, in the house of Vasudeva, My devotees, being My eternal associates, will also take such birth, and not at other times (caused by *karma*). Other devotees attain perfection, but those who exclusively think of Me (*ananya-cetāḥ*) attain the very highest perfection (*paramām saṁsiddhim*)--a position as an assistant in My pastimes. This

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<sup>99</sup> The *jñāna-miśra-bhakta*, referred to as the *jñānī* in the enumeration of the four types does not have a desire for material results nor for liberation. Therefore he has not been mentioned in the previous sentence. However, the *jñāna-miśra-bhakta* retains some elements of the *jñāna* process while practicing *bhakti* and is thus distinguished from the *kevala-bhakta* who performs only *bhakti*.

indicates the observable superiority of the *kevala-bhakta* over all other types of devotees mentioned.

*ā-brahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ punar-āvartino 'rjuna |  
mām upetya tu kaunteya punar-janma na vidyate ||16||*

16. O Arjuna, all persons including the inhabitants of Brahmāloka take birth again. But having attained Me, O son of Kuntī, a person does not take birth again.

All *jīvas* take rebirth even if they have great *puṇyas*. But My devotees do not take such rebirth. Even the inhabitants of the planet of Brahmā (*ā-brahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ*) take rebirth.

*sahasra-yuga-paryantam ahar yad brahmaṇo viduḥ |  
rātriṁ yuga-sahasrāntām te'ho-rātra-vido janāḥ ||17||*

17. The knowers of the day and night of Brahmā, knowing that a day lasts one thousand cycles, also know that a night of Brahmā lasts one thousand *yuga* cycles.

It is said in *Bhāgavatam*:

*amṛtam kṣemam abhayam tri-mūrdhno 'dhāyi mūrdhasu*

Deathlessness, fearlessness and freedom from the anxieties of old age and disease exist in the kingdom of God, which is beyond the three higher planetary systems and beyond the material coverings.  
SB 2.6.19

“But some say that there is fearlessness on Brahmāloka as well, and thus, it is not possible for the *sannyāsī* to die there, if they desire to stay there.”

No, if even Brahmā, the master of that planet, must die, what can we say of others? Those who are knowledgeable of scripture, who know that the day of Brahmā lasts a thousand *yugas*, also know that the night lasts a thousand *yugas*, because they are knowers of day and night. By such days, fortnights and months pass. A hundred of such years make the life of Brahmā. Then

after that, Brahmā dies. However, a Brahmā who is a Vaiṣṇava attains liberation.

*avyaktād vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavanti ahar-āgame |  
rātry-āgame praliyante tatraivāvyakta-samjñake ||18||*

18. At the coming of day, all things become manifest from the sleeping state of Brahmā, and at the approach of night they again become unmanifest.

Those who are inferior, residing within the three planetary systems, perish day after day. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says: the word *avyakta* refers to Brahmā in his sleeping state (not a total dissolution), since during the daily creation and dissolution of the universe, the elements remain intact. Then from a sleeping state (*avyaktāt*), through Brahmā, the places of enjoyment in the form of bodies and objects of enjoyment manifest (*vyaktayā*), or become suitable for use. At the coming of night, when Brahmā sleeps, everything disappears within him.

*bhūta-grāmaḥ sa evāyam bhūtvā bhūtvā praliyate |  
rātry-āgame 'vaśaḥ pārtha prabhavaty ahar-āgame ||19||*

19. In this way all the moving and non-moving entities, having appeared, disappear at the coming of night, beyond their control, and reappear at the approach of day.

Thus, all the moving and non-moving living entities (*bhūtā-grāmaḥ*), after appearing, repeatedly disappear.

*paras tasmāt tu bhāvo 'nyo'vyakto 'vyaktāt sanātanaḥ |  
yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati ||20||*

20. Superior to the unmanifest state of Brahmā's night is another unmanifest state which is eternal, which is not destroyed when everything else is destroyed.

Superior to that state of dissolution, to the Hiranyagarbha or Brahmā, superior to what has so far been described (*paraḥ tasmāt avyaktāt*), is

another state, the cause of Hiranyagarbha, which is indeed unmanifest (*avyakta*), and without beginning (*sanātanaḥ*).

*avyakto 'kṣara ity uktas tam āhuḥ paramām gatim |  
yaṁ prāpya na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama ||21||*

21. That which was described as eternal and unmanifest is called the supreme goal. Attaining that eternal form, they do not return.

The word *avyakta* of the previous verse is explained. That which is *avyakta* is without destruction (*akṣara*): Nārāyaṇa. As the *śruti* says, *eko nārāyaṇa āsīn na brahmā na ca saṅkaraḥ*: only Nārāyaṇa existed, and not Brahmā or Śiva.<sup>100</sup> Attaining My eternal form (*mama paramaṁ dhāma*), they do not return.

The word *akṣara* may also be interpreted as the impersonal Brahman, in which case *dhāma paramaṁ mama* means “My form of light,” since *dhāma* also means “light.”<sup>101</sup>

*puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyas tv anyanyā |  
yasyāntaḥ-sthāni bhūtāni yena sarvam idaṁ tatam ||22||*

22. That supreme person, within whom exist all entities and by which this universe is pervaded, is attained by pure *anyanyā bhakti*, O son of Pṛthā.

That supreme person, who is just My *aṁśa*, cannot be known by other means, which have in them desires for *karma-yoga* or *jñāna-yoga*. As I previously said, *ananya-cetāḥ satatam*.

*yatra kāle tv anāvṛttim āvṛttim caiva yoginaḥ |  
prayātā yānti taṁ kālāṁ vaksyāmi bharataraṣabha ||23||*

23. O best of Bharata’s lineage, I will now explain about the paths by which the *yogīs* return or do not return.

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<sup>100</sup> *eko ha vai nārāyaṇa āsīn na brahmā neśāno* is found in the *Mahā Upaniṣad*. The quotation is probably another version of the same passage.

<sup>101</sup> This would be the attainment for *jñānīs* and *yogīs* who also perform a small amount of *bhakti* without offense.

“You have said in verse 21 that anyone who attains You does not come back, but You have not mentioned about any particular path that the devotee must traverse. Since the devotee is beyond the *guṇas*, his path is also beyond the *guṇas*, not a sattvic path such as going through the sun planet. But I am asking about the path taken by the *yogīs*, *jñānīs* and *karmīs*. I will speak about the path (*kālam*)<sup>102</sup> of return and no return that they traverse when they have died.”

*agnir jyotir ahaḥ śuklaḥ ṣaṅ-māsā uttarāyaṇam |  
tatra prayātā gacchanti brahma brahma-vido janāḥ ||24||*

24. The knowers of Brahman (*jñānīs*) who depart on the path of fire and light, the waxing fortnight, and the northern progress of the sun attain Brahman.

He speaks in this verse about the path of no return. The words *agnir jyotir* (fire and light) indicate the presiding deity of the sun according to the *śruti* statement *te 'rciṣam abhisambhavanti*: they go to the sun planet. *Aha* indicates the deity of the day, and *śukla* indicates the deity of the fortnight of the waxing moon. The six months of *uttarāyaṇa* means the deity who presides over the *uttarāyaṇa*. The *jñānīs* (*brahma vidah*) who go on the path of these *devatās* attain Brahman. As the *śruti* says:

*te 'rciṣam abhi sambhavanti arciṣo 'rahna āpūryamāṇa-pakṣam  
āpūryamāṇa-pakṣād yān ṣaṅ-māsānudānāditya eti mālebhyo deva-  
lokam*

They reach the deity of fire. From there they go to the deity of the day, from there to the deity of the waxing fortnight, and from there to the *uttarāyaṇa* deity. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 5.10.2

*dhūmo rātris tathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣaṅ-māsā dakṣiṇāyanam |  
tatra cāndramasam jyotir yogī prāpya nivartate ||25||*

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<sup>102</sup> *Kāla* usually means “time,” but in this context means “path.”

25. Departing on the path of smoke, the night, the waning fortnight, the southern course of the sun, and attaining Svargaloka, the *karma-yogī* returns.

This verse describes the path of return taken by the *karmī*. *Smoke* indicates the deity of smoke, and similarly *night* indicates the deity of night. Similarly there are the deity of the dark fortnight and the deity of the *dakṣiṇāyana*. The *karma-yogī* who goes on the path represented by these *devatās* attains Svarga indicated by the words *cāndramasaṁ jyotiḥ*. Having enjoyed there, he returns.

*śukla-kṛṣṇe gatī hy ete jagataḥ śāśvate mate |  
ekayā yāty anāvṛttim anyayāvartate punaḥ ||26||*

26. These two paths, of light and darkness, are considered eternal in this world. By one path, one does not return, and by the other path, one returns.

The Lord summarizes the two paths mentioned. They are considered without beginning (*śāśvate*), since the transmigration of the *jīvas* is without beginning. By the path of light one attains no return, and by the path of darkness, one takes birth again and again on the earth.

*naite sṛtī pārtha jānan yogī muhyati kaścana |  
tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu yoga-yukto bhavārjuna ||27||*

27. The *yogī* who knows these two paths is never bewildered. Therefore, at all times have a concentrated mind, Arjuna.

Knowledge of these two paths produces a sense of discrimination. This verse praises such discrimination. Therefore at all times you should have a concentrated mind (*yoga-yuktaḥ*).

*vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapahsu caiva  
dāneṣu yat punya-phalaṁ pradiṣṭam |  
atyeti tat sarvam idaṁ viditvā  
yogī param sthānam upaiti cādyam ||28||*

28. Knowing this, the *yogī* endowed with devotion surpasses all the pious results declared by studying the *Vedas*, performance of sacrifice, austerity and giving in charity. He attains the spiritual, eternal place.

This verse relates the results of knowing what has been explained in this chapter. Surpassing (*atyeti*) all the results of other processes, the *yogī*, possessing devotion,<sup>103</sup> attains the best place, which is non-material (*param*) and eternal (*ādyam*).

The superiority of the devotees has been previously stated. It is made clear in this chapter. As well, in this chapter, the supreme position of the *ananya-bhakta* among all types of devotees has been indicated.

Thus the commentary on the eighth chapter of the *Gītā* for the pleasure of the devotees has been completed by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Nine

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*

*idaṁ tu te guhyatamaṁ pravakṣyāmy anasūyave |  
jñānaṁ vijñāna-sahitaṁ yaj jñātvā mokṣyase 'subhāt ||1||*

1. The Lord said: I will speak to you, who have no envy, the most secret knowledge, *bhakti*, along with realization of Me, knowing which you will be freed from suffering.

The majestic aspect of the Lord as the object of worship, suitable for His servants, and the excellence of that pure devotee are described clearly in the ninth chapter.

*Bhakti* is superior to *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga* and other processes. As described in the seventh chapter, such *bhakti* is either *pradhāni bhūtā* or *kevalā*. And amongst the types of *bhakti*, the supreme position of *kevalā bhakti*, which is

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<sup>103</sup> This seems to indicate that this verse refers to the *yoga-mīśra-bhakta*. A mere *yogī* without *bhakti* could not attain the place of the Lord or even liberation. A *yogī* with a small amount of *bhakti* could attain liberation. Such *yogīs* were described in chapter 6. A devotee with some mixture of *yoga* however attains *sālokya*.

extremely powerful, not dependent of purity of heart or other elements like *jñāna*, has clearly been shown.

The ninth chapter begins to speak about the powers of the Lord required as knowledge in order to perform that pure *bhakti* (*kevalā bhakti*). The *Gītā* is the essence of all scriptures, and essence of the *Gītā* is the middle six chapters. The middle of those six chapters, the ninth and tenth chapters, is the further essence of the six chapters.

In three verses, the Lord praises what He will be describing in the chapter. The *jñāna* which gives liberation described in the second, third and other chapters is *guhya*, or secret. The knowledge which I revealed in the seventh and eighth chapter, which is suitable for attainment of Me--the method of knowledge,<sup>104</sup> *bhakti*, by which Bhagavān is known--is *guhyatara*, more secret. In this chapter, I will speak to you knowledge about *kevalā*, or *suddhā bhakti*, which is by far *guhyatama*, most secret.

By the word *jñāna* or knowledge, one should understand that it means only *bhakti*, not the well known *jñāna* mentioned in the first six chapters. In the second verse, by using the adjective *avyayam* or indestructible, it must be understood that this knowledge is beyond the *guṇas*. It is *bhakti* which is beyond the *guṇas*, not the *jñāna* mentioned earlier, which is in *sattva-guṇa*. In verse 3, the word *dharma* means only *bhakti* as well. I will teach this most secret *bhakti* to you, to one who is not hostile or selfish (*anasūyave*). This indicates that there is a rule that *bhakti* should only be taught to one who is not selfish or inimical. I will teach you this *bhakti* (*jñāna*), culminating in direct realization of Me (*viññāna-sahitam*), by which you will be freed from rebirth, or freed from all obstacles to *bhakti* (*aśubhāt*).

*rāja-vidyā rāja-guhyam pavitram idam uttamam |  
pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam susukham kartum avyayam ||2||*

2. This is the highest type of *bhakti*, the most secret type of *bhakti*, the most purifying of all methods. It is directly realized, the highest *dharma*, easy to execute, and eternal.

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<sup>104</sup> *Jñāna* is defined as “that by which something is known.” Thus *bhakti* is called *jñāna* since by *bhakti* Bhagavān is known.

Moreover, this knowledge (*bhakti*) is the king of knowledge (*raja-vidyā*), meaning the king of worship. There are various types of *bhakti* and this is the king, or in the highest position, exceeding all others. The usage of *raja-vidyā* is similar to the word *raja-danta* or front teeth. As in the usage *raja-danta* (front teeth: king of teeth), there is reversal of the normal order of the elements of the compound word. This is permitted according to the rule *rāja-dantāditvād* (*Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Pāṇini 2.2.31). Of all secrets, it is the highest. *Bhakti* of any type is very secret, and of all the types of *bhakti*, this *kevalā bhakti* is the king, the most secret (*raja-guhyam*).

It is called most purifying (*pavitram uttaman*), because it acts as the atonement for all sins. It is even more purifying than knowledge of the soul (*tvam padārtha*). According to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, since it immediately uproots all the sinful reactions spread over many thousands of lifetimes which are situated in the gross and subtle bodies, and as well uproots the cause of all sins, ignorance, it is called the most purifying of all things.

It gives direct realization (*pratyakṣāvagamam*):

*bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir  
anyatra caiṣa trika eka-kālah  
prapadyamānasya yathāśnataḥ syus  
tuṣṭiḥ puṣṭiḥ kṣud-apāyo 'nu-ghāsam*

Devotion, direct experience of the Supreme Lord, and detachment from other things—these three occur simultaneously for one who has taken shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in the same way that pleasure, nourishment and relief from hunger come simultaneously and increasingly, with each bite, for a person engaged in eating. *SB* 11.2.42

From this verse of *Bhāgavatam*, it should also be understood that the realization is constant, since the realization comes in accordance with the worship (and the *ananya-bhakta* constantly worships the Lord).

It does not deviate from *dharma* (*dharmyam*), because, though one may fail to perform all dharmas or religious duties, those dharmas are fulfilled simply by executing *bhakti*. This is understood from the statement of Nārada:

*yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena  
tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopasākhāḥ  
prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyānām  
tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā*

As pouring water on the root of a tree energizes the trunk, branches, twigs and everything else, and as supplying food to the stomach enlivens the senses and limbs of the body, simply worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead through devotional service automatically satisfies the demigods, who are parts of that Supreme Personality. *SB* 4.31.14

Unlike *karma*, *jñāna* and other processes, *bhakti* is easy to execute (*susukham kartum*). There are no extreme pains to the body, voice or mind by renunciation of the senses, since *bhakti* makes use of the ears and other senses as principal elements in hearing chanting and other processes.

Because it is beyond the *guṇas*, the process of *bhakti* is eternal (*avyayam*), unlike such processes as *karma* and *jñāna* which are temporary.

*āsraddadhānāḥ puruṣā dharmasyāsya parantapa |  
aprāpya mām nivartante mṛtyu-saṁsāra-vartmani ||3||*

3. O afflicter of enemies, those who do not have faith in this *bhakti* do not attain Me and remain fixed on the path of transmigration and death.

“Well if this *dharma* is so easy to execute, who will remain in this world?” This verse answers.

Using genitive (possessive case) instead of locative case in the phrase *dharmasya asya* is poetic license. Those who do not have faith in this process of *dharma*, who think that the supreme position given to *bhakti* in the scriptures is just exaggeration, and who do not accept it with faith, do not attain Me, even though they make efforts to attain Me by other methods. They remain completely (*nivartate* is equal to *nitarām vartate*) on the path of transmigration (*saṁsāra-vartmani*), pervaded by death.

*mayā tatam idam sarvaṁ jagad avyakta-mūrtinā |  
mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni na cāham teṣv avasthitaḥ ||4||*

4. I pervade this whole universe by My form invisible to material senses, since I am the cause. All entities are situated in Me, since I am their cause, but I am not in them, since I am completely detached.

In seven verses, the Lord speaks of the knowledge of the powers of God required by devotees who are situated in *dāśya-bhakti*.

This whole universe is pervaded by Me, whose form is invisible to the senses (*avyakta*), since I am the cause of the universe (I am in the universe). And as well, all the living entities moving and non-moving are situated in Me (*mat-sthāni*), a form of pure consciousness, since I am their cause (The universe is in Me). But I am not situated in all these entities (I do not pervade them), as clay is present in its product a pot, because I am completely independent of everything.

*na ca mat-sthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogam aiśvaram |  
bhūta-bhṛt na ca bhūta-stho mamātmā bhūta-bhāvanaḥ ||5||*

5. And the living beings as well are not situated in Me. See my power of *yoga*. My body, maintaining them and protecting them, is not in them.

“Though everything is situated in Me, they are not situated in Me, since I am completely independent of everything.”

“But this is contrary to what You said before: that You are pervading the universe and that You are the shelter of the universe.”

“See My supernatural (*yogam*) power (*aiśvaram*), My extraordinary skill in doing what cannot be done! And see also something else which is astonishing. Even though I am the maintainer of all the living beings (*bhūtā-bhṛt*) in the universe, and the protector of them all (*bhūtā-bhāvanaḥ*), I, in My spiritual body (*mamātmā*), am not situated in them (*na bhūtā-sthaḥ*).”

Since in the Lord there is no difference between the body and the soul, the expression “My body” (*mamātmā*) is employed in the manner of the

expression “the head of Rāhu.” Though Rāhu and his head are non-different,<sup>105</sup> as Kṛṣṇa and His body are non-different, the possessive case is used, making some distinction.

The meaning is this: the *jīvas* accept a body, protect it, and, developing attachment to it, remain in that body. But though I accept all the living beings and protect them-- though they are My material body consisting of all creatures--I am not situated there, because I am not attached.”

*yathākāśa-sthīto nityam vāyuḥ sarvatra-go mahān |  
tathā sarvāṇi bhūtāni mat-sthānīty upadhāraya ||6||*

6. Please understand that just as the wind, going everywhere and greatly expansive, is situated in the ether, so all beings are situated in Me.

Though the living beings are in Me, who remain detached and independent, they are not in Me; and though I am in them, I am not in them. An example is given in this verse to illustrate.

The wind remains always situated in the ether, which has a nature of being detached. The wind has a nature of being restless, going everywhere (*sarvatra-gaḥ*) and is great in size (*mahān*). Because of the detachment of the ether, the wind is situated in it, but not situated in it--the ether, though in the wind, is not in the wind, because of detachment. Similarly, all things such as ether, which are great in dimension and are moving everywhere, are situated in Me, but are not situated in Me, since I also have the nature of detachment. Please consider and accept this fact.

“But You have said that Your powers are inconceivable: *paśya me yogam aiśvaram*. How then can those powers remain inconceivable if they are just like common ether and wind?”

This is explained as follows. Ether has detachment because it is unconscious by its very nature. Among conscious beings however, detachment does not exist anywhere, *except in the Lord*, even though He is at once contains everything and dwells in everything. This fact establishes the

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<sup>105</sup> Rāhu has only a head and no other bodily part.

inconceivability of the Lord. In any case, this example, comparing ether to the Lord, is given for the understanding of the common man.

*sarva-bhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtiṁ yānti māmikām |  
kalpa-kṣaye punas tāni kalpādaḥ visṛjāmy aham ||7||*

7. O son of Kuntī, all things will enter My *prakṛti* at the time of destruction. At the time of creation, again I create everything.

“I understand that all these things which can presently be seen are situated in You, but at the time of destruction where will they go?” This verse answers.

All these things will merge into My energy called *prakṛti* composed of the three *guṇas*. At the end of the period of destruction, at the time of creation, (*kalpa-kṣaye*), I will again create everything in detail (*viśeṣeṇa sṛjāmi*).

*prakṛtiṁ svām avaṣṭabhya visṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ |  
bhūta-grāmam imam kṛtsnam avaśam prakṛter vaśāt ||8||*

8. Being situated in *prakṛti*, which belongs to Me, I create again and again all the entities who are all dependent, being under the control of their natures caused by their previous actions.

“But how can You create if You are detached and are unchangeable by nature?” This verse answers.

By being situated in My (*svām*) energy (*prakṛtim*), I again create all entities who are dependent on action and other factors (*avaśam*), since they are under control of their own natures (*prakṛter vaśāt*), which are caused by actions of previous lives.

*na ca mām tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanamjaya |  
udāsīna-vad āsīnam asaktam teṣu karmasu ||9||*

9. O conqueror of wealth, these actions do not bind Me, who am situated like an indifferent party, unattached to these activities.

“But then, since You do so much activity, how is it that You do not get bound like the *jīvas*?” This verse answers.

Activities like creation do not bind Me. Bondage arises from attachment to action. Because all My desires are fulfilled spontaneously without having to act, I do not have attachment to action, and have no bondage. I am like an indifferent person who is not affected by the mixture of happiness and distress of quarreling parties (*udāsīnavad*).

*mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sa-carācaram |*  
*hetunānena kaunteya jagad viparivartate ||10||*

10. By My direction, *prakṛti* gives rise to the universe of moving and non-moving entities. By this cause, O son of Kuntī, the universes appears again and again.

“I cannot accept that You are indifferent in Your acts such as creation.”

By My direction as the efficient cause (*nimitta*),<sup>106</sup> *prakṛti* gives rise to this universe of moving and non-moving entities (*sūyate*). I am only the director. It is like the duties of the kingdom going on under the kings like Ambarīṣa through their ministers. In that situation, the king remains aloof. But just as nothing can be done by the ministers without the king sitting on the throne, so unconscious matter can do nothing without My directorship in the form of My presence and authority. By this cause (*hetunā*), by My presence, this world is repeatedly created.

*avajānanti mām mūḍhā mānuṣīm tanum āśritam |*  
*param bhāvam ajānanto mama bhūta-maheśvaram ||11||*

11. The fools deride Me in this human form, not knowing that I am the great Lord of the Brahman, higher than all else.

“That well known Mahāpuruṣa lying on the Kāraṇa Ocean with *sat-cid-ānanda* form, spreading Himself through millions of universes, who creates

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<sup>106</sup> The efficient cause (*nimitta*) is distinguished from the material cause (*upādāna*), *prakṛti*. The potter is the efficient cause and the clay is the material cause of the pot.

the universe by His own energy, is indeed You. But some say in deprecation that when You come as the son of Vasudeva with human-like form it is just an *aṁśa* of that Mahāpuruṣa.” In response the Lord speaks this verse.

Yes, they deride this human-like form that I assume. They do not know that this human-like body is the supreme form (*param bhāvam*). It is My *svarūpa*, My actual form, more attractive than and superior to the Mahāpuruṣa lying on the Kāraṇa Ocean and other forms as well. What type of form is this? It is the highest truth (*bhūta*), meaning Brahman; and it is the great lord (*maheśvaram*). The phrase “great lord” excludes other meanings of the word *bhūta*. According to the *Amara Kośa*, *bhūta* has various meanings such as truth, the elements like earth, or being fit.

The *śruti* says:

*tam ekaṁ govindaṁ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaṁ vṛndāvana-sura-  
bhūruha-bhāvanāsīnaṁ satataṁ sa-marud-gaṇo’haṁ paramayā stutyā  
toṣayāmi*

I constantly satisfy with praises along with the Maruts that one Govinda with *sat-cid-ānanda* form sitting beneath a desire tree.  
*Gopāla Tāpanī Upaniṣad 1.35*

The *smṛti* says *narākṛti-para-brahma*: the supreme Brahman has a human form. (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 4.11.2) Thus My knowledgeable devotees describe My human-like body as being *sat-cid-ānanda*. My mother Yaśodā also saw that *sat-cid-ānanda* form during My childhood, that form which extended over the whole universe.

Or another meaning of *param bhāvam*<sup>107</sup> is as follows. The last line describes the reality of that *mānusiṁ tanum*. That human form is the most exalted state (*param bhāvam*), *viśuddha-sattva*, a *svarūpa* of *sat-cid-ānanda*. *Amara Kośa* says *bhāva* means state, ones nature or intention. That highest state is then detailed. I am the great lord (*maheśvaram*) of beings such as Brahṁā (*bhūta*) whom I create. This means that I, the lord of Brahṁā and others, unlike the *jīvas*, since I am their lord, am not different from My human body. I am My

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<sup>107</sup> The first meaning of *param bhāvam* was that it was superior to the form of Mahāviṣṇu.

body. My body is Myself. That body is Brahman. Śukadeva, who is knowledgeable, says My body is directly Brahman:

*śābdam brahma dadhad vapuḥ*

Then, in the Satya-yuga, the lotus-eyed Supreme Personality of Godhead, being pleased, showed Himself to that Kardama Muni and displayed His transcendental form, which can be understood only through the *Vedas*.

SB 3.21.8

This should be accepted by persons like you.

*moghāsā mogha-karmāṇo mogha-jñānā vicetasah |  
rākṣasīm āsurīm caiva prakṛtim mohinīm śritāḥ ||12||*

12. Among those who cannot distinguish this truth, those who are devotees do not gain *sālokya*, those who are *karmīs* do not attain their material fruits, and those who are *jñānīs* do not attain liberation. They assume the nature of Rākṣasas and *asuras*.

What is the destination of those who do not accept You, Kṛṣṇa, as the Lord and think that You have a human material body? Even if devotees are in this condition, their aspirations are in vain (*moghāsah*). They do not achieve *sālokya* or whatever else they have desired. If they are *karmīs*, they do not attain the desired results of their actions such as Svarga (*mogha-karmaṇah*). If they are *jñānīs*, they do not attain the result of knowledge, liberation (*mogha-jñāna*). Then what do they attain? They assume the nature (*prakṛtim*) of Rākṣasas.

*mahātmānas tu mām pārtha daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ |  
bhajanty ananya-manaso jñātvā bhūtādīm avyayam ||13||*

13. The fortunate souls, attaining *deva* nature, worship My human form with no distractions, knowing that My human-like body is the cause of all things and is indestructible, being fully spiritual.

But those men who attain greatness by unpredictable mercy of My devotees attain the nature of the *devas* (*daivīm prakṛtim*) (rather than *asuras*), and worship Me in My human-like form. Their minds do not dwell on such things as desires for *jñāna* or *karma* (*ananya manasaḥ*). By knowledge of My powers (*mayā tatam idam sarvam*), they know that I am the cause of all the unlimited bodies starting with Brahmā (*bhūtādīm*). They know that I am indestructible (*avayayam*), since I have a body of *sat-cid-ānanda*. For understanding that I am worthy of worship, they should have at least this much knowledge of Me. Knowing this (*jñātvā*), they worship Me. It should be understood that this *bhakti*, which is not dependent on *karma* or *jñāna* which aim at realization of *ātmā* (*tvam*), and which is exclusively centered on the Lord, is the best of all, the king of knowledge, the king of secrets.

*satatam kīrtayanto mām yatantaś ca dr̥ḍha-vratāḥ |*  
*namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā nitya-yuktā upāsate || 14 ||*

14. They worship Me at all times with devotion, in the form of singing about Me, having strict vows, desiring to be My associates, wandering about to gain association, and offering unto Me respects as well as other devotional acts.

In the last verse, it was mentioned that they worship Me. What type of worship do they perform? They worship always (*satatam*), not as in *karma-yoga* which is dependent on suitable time, place, person and purity for its execution. The *smṛti* says:

*na deśa-niyamas tatra na kāla-niyamas tatha*  
*nocchiṣṭhādau niṣedho 'sti śrī-harer nāmni lubdhaka*

For one eager for the name of Hari, there are no restrictions of time, place or impurity. *Viṣṇu Dharma*

Just as poor householders strive for money at the door of a wealthy man in order to support their families, My devotees seek out (*yatanti*) the assembly of devotees in order to obtain devotional processes like chanting. Attaining that, they repeatedly recite the scriptures teaching *bhakti*. They have strict rules for themselves (*dr̥ḍha-vratāḥ*), thinking, “I must do this number of rounds of chanting, this many obeisance, this much service.” They offer

their obeisances. The word *ca* indicates that they also perform all the other process of *bhakti* such as hearing, and serving the lotus feet which are not mentioned in the verse. They desire to be in eternal association with Me (*nitya-yuktāḥ*). There is a rule that desire can be expressed by the past tense. Here the past tense expresses the present condition of desiring.<sup>108</sup> Singing about Me, they worship Me. This parallel construction indicates that the singing and other acts are their form of worship. Thus there is no fault in repetition of the word *mām*.

*jñāna-yajñena cāpy anye yajanto mām upāsate |  
ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśvato-mukham ||15||*

15. Others worship Me through knowledge sacrifices, thinking of themselves as non-different from Me, worshipping Me in many different forms, and worshipping Me as the universe in many ways.

Thus, in this chapter and the previous chapter, the *ananya-bhakta*, also called the *mahātmā* (BG 8.15), is shown to be superior to the other devotees such as the one who approaches the Lord to rid himself of suffering. Now the Lord shows three other types of devotees who have not been mentioned previously, who are inferior to the previously mentioned ones: those who worship themselves, those who worship *pratīka* or secondary forms, and those who worship the *viśvarūpa*.

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī explains the verse as follows. These others are unable to practice the *sādhana* of the *mahātmā* mentioned previously. They worship by the sacrifice of knowledge mentioned in the *śruti* in this way: *tvam vā aham asmi bhagavo devate aham vai tvam asi* : O Lord, I am You and You are I. (*Varāha Upaniṣad* 33) They worship solely by a process of knowledge in which they identify themselves with God. Thus it is called *jñāna-yajña*. *Ca* means “only” and *api* indicates that they give up other practices. Thus the meaning is: some, not desiring any other form of *sādhana*, worship Me through the sacrifice of knowledge, denying difference, simply by contemplating the non-difference of the worshipper and the object of worship (*ekatvena*). These are the best of the three types.<sup>109</sup> Inferior to this type are others who, thinking of difference (*pṛthaktvena*) between

<sup>108</sup> Rāmānuja gives the same meaning.

<sup>109</sup> This is Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s opinion, not the Vaiṣṇava philosophy.

worshipper and object of worship, worship Me through sacrifice of knowledge in different external forms (*devatās*) representing the Lord, according to the *śruti* statements such as *ādityo brahmety ādeśaḥ*: the sun is Brahman, this is the instruction. (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.19.1) Others who are inferior to that, and are unable to worship either in non-difference or difference, worship Me as the soul of all (*viśvato mukham*), *viśvarūpa*, by many methods (*bahudhā*).

According to the Tantric idea, one who does not identify with the *deva* cannot worship that *deva*: *nādevo devam arcayet*.<sup>110</sup> Such worship in which one thinks, “I am Gopāla” is called *ahamgrahopāsanā*. The worship of the *vibhūtis* of the Lord, taking one and worshipping separately, is called *pratīkopāsanā*. In such worship the person thinks, “The Supreme Lord Viṣṇu is non-different from the sun, He is non-different from Indra, He is non-different from Soma.” Worship of the totality of the *vibhūtis*, thinking “Viṣṇu is everything” is called *viśvarūpa upāsanā*. These are the three types of *jñāna-yajña*.

Or the meaning of *ekatvena pṛthaktvena* can mean that the two states “I am Gopāla” (oneness) and “I am the servant of Gopāla,” (difference) are simultaneously contemplated by one person, just like the river going to the ocean is different and non-different from the ocean. In this case there are only two types of *jñāna-yajña*.<sup>111</sup>

*aham kratuḥ aham yajñāḥ svadhāham aham auśadham*  
*mantra 'ham aham evājyam aham agniḥ aham hutam ||16||*  
*pitāham asya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ |*  
*vedyaḥ pavitraḥ omkāra ṛk sāma yajur eva ca ||17||*  
*gatir bhartā prabhuh sāksī nivāsaḥ śaraṇam suhṛt |*  
*prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānam nidhānam bijam avyayam ||18||*  
*tapāmy aham aham varṣam nigṛhṇāmy utsṛjāmi ca |*  
*amṛtam caiva mṛtyuś ca sad asac cāham arjuna ||19||*

16-19. I am the sacrifices mentioned in the *śruti* and *smṛti*, the offering to the Pitṛs, the herbs, the *mantra*, the ghee, the fire and the act of offering. I am the father of the universe, the mother, the maintainer, the grandfather,

<sup>110</sup> This is quoted in *Tattva* and *Bhakti Sandarbhas* as well.

<sup>111</sup> The other worship would be worship of *viśvarūpa*.

the object of knowledge, the purifier, *om*, the *Ṛk*, *Sāma* and *Yajur Vedas*. I am the result, the master, the controller, the witness, the abode, the shelter, the friend. I am creation, destruction and maintenance, the treasure, the indestructible cause. I create heat, withdraw rain and then shower it. I am liberation and bondage, the subtle and gross, O Arjuna.

“How one can worship You as *visvarūpa* in many ways (*bahudhā*)?” The Lord speaks four verses in response.

*Kratu* means sacrifices mentioned in the *śruti* like the *agniṣtoma*. *Yajña* refers to sacrifices mentioned in the *smṛtis* like *vaiśvadeva-homa*. *Auśadham* refers to food made from herbs.

I am the father (*pitā*) because I give rise to individual and total ingredients (material cause) for all the universes. I am the mother (*mātā*) because I hold within My womb the universe. I am the nourisher (*dātā*) of the universe. I am the grandfather, because I produce the creator of the universe, Brahmā. I am the object to be known and the object which purifies.

I am the result (*gati*), the master (*bhartr*), the controller (*prabhu*), the seer of all good and bad things (*sakṣi*), the abode (*nivāsaḥ*), the deliverer from dangers (*śaraṇam*), and the motiveless benefactor (*suhṛt*). I am the act of creation, destruction and maintenance (*prabhava-pralaya-sthānam*). I am the treasures (*nidhānam*) such as *padma-nidhi* and *śaṅkha-nidhi*,<sup>112</sup> the cause (*bījam*), which is indestructible (*avyayam*), unlike rice and other seeds which are temporary.

Being the sun, I cause heat in the summer, and shower rain in the rainy season, and sometimes I also hold back the rain. I am liberation (*amṛtam*), and repeated birth and death in bondage (*mṛtyuḥ*). I am the subtle and the gross (*sad-asad*). Thus the person, thinking that I am all of this, worships Me as the form of universe. These verses are thus connected with the last part of verse 15 which mentions the universal form.

*traividyā mām soma-pāḥ pūta-pāpā  
yajñair iṣṭvā svar-gatiṁ prārthayante |  
te puṇyam āsādyā surendra-lokam*

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<sup>112</sup> These are some of Kuvera's treasures.

20. Knowers of the three *Vedas*, worshipping Me indirectly through sacrifice, drinking soma and becoming purified, pray for Svarga. Attaining *punya* in the form of the planet of Indra, they enjoy in heaven the celestial pleasures of the *devas*.

Those devotees who worship Me through those three methods, and know Me as the Supreme Lord, become liberated.<sup>113</sup> But those who follow material *karma* do not become liberated. This is explained in two verses. Those who study and know the three *Vedas*, *Ṛk*, *Yajur*, and *Sāma*, or those who are absorbed in the *karmas* described in those three *Vedas*, not knowing that Indra and other *devatās* are actually My forms, and consequently worship Me (indirectly) through worshipping those forms (*mām iṣtvā*), drink the remnants of the sacrifice (*soma-pāḥ*), and thus attain *punya*.

*te tam bhuktvā svarga-lokaṁ viśālam  
kṣīṇe puṇye martya-lokaṁ viśanti |  
evaṁ trayī-dharmam anuprapannā  
gatāgatam kāma-kāmā labhante ||21||*

21. Having enjoyed the vast pleasures of Svarga and exhausting their merit, they return to this planet. Following the rites of the three *Vedas*, desiring objects of enjoyment, they take repeated birth and death.

Being filled with desires for enjoyment, they take repeated birth and death (*gatāgatam*).

*ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate |  
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām yoga-kṣemam vahāmy aham ||22||*

22. But I carry the burden of supply and maintenance of those who desire constant association with Me, and who, thinking only of Me, worship only Me.

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<sup>113</sup> These three types of devotees were classed as inferior to the other types, and performed *jñāna-yajña* as part of *bhakti*. Because the worship is inferior to that of the *ananya* and mixed devotees, they attain less than *sālokyā*.

On the other hand, the happiness of My *ananya-bhaktas* is given by Me. It is not obtained by pious acts. They are at all times (*nityam*) well versed in matters concerning Me (*abhiyuktānām*) and are always ignorant of all other things. Or the phrase can mean that they constantly desire to be in My association. For such persons, I take care of their attainment of wealth (*yoga*) and their maintenance (*kṣemam*), though they do not expect such things. It would be unsuitable for the Lord simply to say that he performs these acts. Thus the word *vahāmi* meaning “carry,” is used. The use of the word *vahāmi* indicates that the Lord bears the burden of maintaining their bodies, in the manner that the householder takes the responsibility for maintaining his own wife and children. Thus, one should not say that, like others, their attainment or preservation of bodily needs is due to *karma*.

“Still, since You are *ātmārāma*, enjoying within, and indifferent to all things as the Supreme Lord, where is the question of You bearing this responsibility?”

“The *śruti* says:

*bhaktir asya bhajanaṁ tad ihāmutropādhi-nairāsyenāmuṣmin manaḥ-  
kalpanam etad eva naiṣkarmyam*

*Bhakti* is worship of the Lord, concentrating the mind on Him, renouncing all material desires for enjoyment (*upādhi*) in this world and the next. It destroys all *karmas*. *Gopāla Tāpanī Upaniṣad*, 1.15

Because My *ananya* devotee has no *karma* due to lack of desire (*naiṣkarmyam*), his happiness is given by Me. Though I am indifferent to all else, I have great affection for My devotee. This is the cause. One should also not say that in giving the burden of their maintenance to their worshipable Lord, the devotees show lack of *prema*. In fact, they do not give to Me that burden. Rather, I, by My own will, accept it. It should also be understood that I am not bearing it as a duty, in the manner that I create and maintain the universe by My will alone. Rather, being attached to My devotees, I take the greatest pleasure in taking care of their needs, like carrying the weight of one’s lover.”

*ye ’py anya-devatā-bhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ |*

*te 'pi mām eva kaunteya yajanty avidhi-pūrvakam ||23||*

23. Those who are devoted to other gods and with faith worship them--they also worship Me, but by the wrong method, O son of Kuntī.

“In verse 15, You have mentioned the three types of worship, and then to explain the third type of worship (*viśvarūpa*) You have recited verses to illustrate it (verse 16-19). Some others worship Indra and others as part of their practice in *karma-yoga* (verse 20). Though they predominantly worship other *devatās*, they are also Your devotees. Why do they not get liberation? Rather, You said, ‘They again take repeated birth and death’ (verse 21) and ‘Men of small intelligence worship the demigods, and their fruits are limited and temporary.’” BG 7.23

This verse answers. Yes, they do worship Me (*te mam eva yajanti*). However, they worship without any rules for attaining Me (*avidhi-pūrvakam*). Thus they return to this world.

*aham hi sarva-yajñānām bhoktā ca prabhur eva ca |  
na tu mām abhijānanti tattvenātaś cyavanti te ||24||*

24. I am the enjoyer and master of all sacrifices. Those who do not know Me in truth fall down.

This verse expands on the phrase *avidhi-pūrvakam*. I am the only enjoyer of the fruits, , and I am the only master (*prabhu*), and the only giver of fruits, through the forms of these *devatās*. But they do not know this about Me factually. For instance, such persons think, “I am a worshipper of the sun. May the sun be pleased with me and give me my desired results. The sun is the Supreme Lord, not Nārāyaṇa. He gives me faith to worship him, and gives the results of my worship.” Thus lacking true knowledge about Me, they return to this world.

But those who worship Me as the form of the universe, understanding that they are worshipping Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Lord through the form of the sun, attain liberation. It is thus indicated here that one must worship the Lord's *vibhūtis* such as the sun while *understanding* that they are *vibhūtis* of the Lord.

*yānti deva-vratā devān pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ |  
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti mad-yājino 'pi mām ||25||*

25. The worshippers of the *devas* go to the *devas*, and the worshippers of the Pitṛs go to the Pitṛs. The worshippers of ghosts go to the ghosts, and worshippers of Me go to Me.

“But they are just worshipping those particular *devatās* according to the rules established in the books describing the method of worshipping those *devatās*. The Vaiṣṇavas worship Viṣṇu according what is stated in the books dedicated to Viṣṇu worship. What is wrong if those worshippers follow the instructions of those books?”

“That is true, but the rule is this: the devotees of those particular *devatās* will attain only those particular *devatās*. And because the *devatās* are destructible, how can the worshippers of those *devatās* become indestructible? But it is understood that My devotees are eternal. They are imperishable, just as I am eternal and imperishable.”

Both *śruti* and *smṛti* confirm the eternal nature of both the Lord and the devotee:

*bhavān ekaḥ śiṣyate śeṣa-samjñah*

At that time, You alone remain, and You are known as Ananta. SB  
10.3.25

*eko nārāyaṇa evāsīn na brahmā na ca saṅkaraḥ*

Nārāyaṇa alone existed, not Brahmā or Śiva. *Mahā Upaniṣad* 1

*parārdhānte so 'budhyata gopa-rūpo me purastād āvirbabhūva*

At the end of Brahmā's night, He arose from *yoga nidrā* and appeared before me as before in the form of a cowherd boy. *Gopāla Tāpanī Upaniṣad* 1.27

*na cyavante ca mad-bhaktā mahati pralaye 'pi*

My devotees are not destroyed even at the time of *pralaya*. *Skanda Purāna*

*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyāṁ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati |  
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ ||26||*

26. I accept that which is offered with love from the genuine devotee, having pure body and mind, who gives just a leaf, flower, fruit or water.

For the worshippers of the *devatās*, there is extreme trouble, but this is not so for My devotees. In this verse, the word *bhaktyā* in the instrumental case literally means “by the devotional process.” But then with the next phrase *bhakty upahṛtam* (offered by the process of *bhakti*), there would be unnecessary repetition. The sentence would read, “I accept that which is offered by devotion from whoever offers by devotion.” Thus the word *bhaktyā* in this verse should mean *bhaktyā sahitaḥ*, indicating in this sentence “a person endowed with genuine devotion--the real devotee.” Thus the meaning should be “I accept that which is offered with *bhakti* from the real devotee even if he gives just a leaf, flower, fruit or water.” Thus, I do not accept what is offered by persons who are not My devotees, who have only some temporary spurt of devotion. But whatever My devotee gives, I enjoy it in a suitable way (*aśnāmi*). What type of offering is it? He does not offer it because someone told him to offer it, but he gives it out of love (*bhakty upahṛtam*). But if My devotee has an impure body, I do not accept even that offering. He must have a pure body (*prayatātmanaḥ*, ritually pure body). This excludes persons from offering during menstrual cycle or with other impurities. However, the word *prayata ātmanaḥ* can also mean a person with pure mind. No one except My devotee has a pure mind.

As Parīksit says:

*dhautātmā puruṣaḥ kṛṣṇa-pāda-mūlaṁ na muñcati*

A pure devotee of the Lord whose heart has once been cleansed by the process of devotional service never relinquishes the lotus feet of

Lord Kṛṣṇa, for they fully satisfy him, as a traveler is satisfied at home after a troubled journey.  
SB 2.8.6

The sign of their purity is the fact that they cannot give up the service to My lotus feet. Even if there is a trace of lust or anger, it is insignificant, like the bite of a toothless snake.

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat |  
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva mad-arpanam ||27||*

27. Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever austerity you perform, offer it to Me, O son of Kuntī.

“Among all the types of *bhakti* You have mentioned starting with mention of the *bhakti* of the sufferer, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive and *jñānī*, which *bhakti* should I perform?”

O Arjuna, because you cannot reject *karma*, *jñāna* and other processes in your present state, and are not qualified for the supreme *bhakti*, *kevalā bhakti*, and because you should not degrade yourself to perform the inferior *sakāma-bhakti*, you should perform *bhakti*, with a slight mixture of *karma* and *jñāna* (*karma-jñāna-miśra pradhānī bhūtā bhakti*), but which is *niṣkāma*.<sup>114</sup> Kṛṣṇa explains this in two verses.

Whatever you do, whether following rules of the *Veda* or whether performing worldly action, whatever you eat or drink in ordinary life, whatever austerities you perform, do it in such a way that it becomes an offering to Me. One should call this neither *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* nor *bhakti-*

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<sup>114</sup> This is predominately *bhakti* with some mixture of other elements. It is similar to *karma-yoga* because activities are performed, but it superior to *karma-yoga* and *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* because all activities, even beyond prescribed duties, are offered to the Lord without desire. It is similar to *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* because the person has knowledge of *ātmā* and Paramātmā. But it is superior to *jñāna- miśra-bhakti* because it has abundant appreciation of the personal features of the Lord. But because the consciousness is not always fixed on the Lord, the activities are offered after performance rather than before. Thus it cannot be classed as *ananyā bhakti*.

*yoga*. The practitioners of *karma-yoga* offer actions prescribed in the scriptures to the Lord, but not all of the actions they do in ordinary life. This view is accepted by everyone. The devotees, however, offer to the Lord all the actions of their mind, *prāṇas* and senses. The method of *bhakti* is stated:

*kāyena vācā manasendriyair vā  
buddhyātmanā vānusṛta-svabhāvāt  
karoti yad yat sakalam parasmai  
nārāyaṇāyeti samarpayet tam*

In accordance with the particular nature one has acquired in conditioned life, whatever one does with body, words, mind, senses, intelligence or purified consciousness one should offer to the Supreme, thinking, “This is for the pleasure of Lord Nārāyaṇa.” SB 11.2.36

“But when you mention that I should offer in sacrifice, that sacrifice is derived from *arcana*, which is an *aṅga* of *bhakti*, aiming at the pleasure of Viṣṇu. And when you mention austerities, it means vows such as Ekādaśī fast. This is all *anyā bhakti*. How can You say that it is not?”

True, but *anyā bhakti* does not mean that you perform an action and then offer it to the Lord. Rather, in *anyā bhakti* the action is done after first offering it to the Lord. This is mentioned by Prahāda when he says *iti puṁsārpitā viṣṇau bhaktiś cen nava-lakṣaṇā kriyeta bhagavaty*: this *bhakti* of nine types after being offered to the Lord should then be performed for the Lord. (SB 7.5.24)

Śrīdhara Svāmī has explained this Bhāgavatam verse. “In *anyā bhakti*, actions, first being offered to the Lord, should be performed, rather than performing the acts and then offering them later.”

Thus, the present verse is not included in *kevalā bhakti*, since the acts are performed and then offered.<sup>115</sup>

*śubhāśubha-phalair evaṁ mokṣyase karma-bandhanaiḥ |*

<sup>115</sup> Nor is it considered *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* because all acts are offered, not just prescribed duties.

28. By this process of *bhakti* mixed with *niṣkāma-karma* and *jñāna*, you will be free from the bondage of *karma* with its pious and sinful reactions. Being engaged in renunciation of results, being specially liberated, you will attain Me and serve Me intimately.

You will be liberated from the bondage of *karma* in the form of unlimited sinful and pious reactions. The *śruti* says,

*bhaktir asya bhajanam  
tad ihāmutropādhi-nairāsyenaivāmuṣmin manaḥ-kalpanam  
etad eva ca naiṣkarmyam*

*Bhakti* is worship of the Lord, concentrating the mind on him, renouncing all material desires for enjoyment in this world and the next. It destroys all *karmas*. *Gopāla Tāpanī Upaniṣad* 1.15

You, with mind engaged in renunciation of the results of action (*sannyāsa-yoga*), will not only be liberated, but being preeminent among the liberated souls (*vimuktaḥ*), will attain Me. You will come close to Me to serve Me directly.

*Smṛti* says:

*muktānām api siddhānām nārāyaṇa-parāyaṇaḥ  
sudurlabhaḥ praśāntātmā koṭiṣv api mahāmune*

O great sage, among many millions who are liberated and perfect in knowledge of liberation, one may be a devotee of Lord Nārāyaṇa, or Kṛṣṇa. Such devotees, who are fully peaceful, are extremely rare. *SB* 6.14.5

Śukadeva has also said:

*muktīm dadāti karhicit sma na bhakti-yogam*

Those engaged in getting the Lord's favor attain liberation from the Lord very easily, but He does not very easily give the opportunity to render direct service unto Him. SB 5.6.18

This achievement, with direct service to Me, is far superior to liberation. That is indicated in this verse.<sup>116</sup>

*samo 'haṁ sarva-bhūteṣu na me dveṣyo 'sti na priyaḥ |  
ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpy aham ||29||*

29. I am equal to all living beings. I do not hate anyone nor do I favor anyone. To whatever extent a person worships Me with devotion, I am attached to them in a similar way.

“You liberate the devotees and then give Yourself to Your devotees, but not to the non-devotees. But then do You not show prejudice, arising from attraction and repulsion?” The Lord refutes this in this verse.

I am equal to all. I neither hate nor favor anyone. The Lord then says, “But the devotees who worship Me with devotion exist in Me, and I exist also in them.” There is nothing special in this statement since the whole universe exists within the Lord, and the Lord exists everywhere in the universe. Thus the statement should actually mean “As those who worship Me with devotion are attached to Me (*te mayi*), so I am attached to them (*aham teṣu*).” This takes into consideration the statement “As they surrender to Me, I respond to them.”

To compare the Lord to a *kalpa-vṛkṣa*, which gives to all persons without discrimination, is only partially correct. Those who take shelter of that tree do not become attached to it without desire for the fruit. Nor is the *kalpa-vṛkṣa* attached to those who take shelter of it. Nor does it hate the enemies of those who have taken shelter. But the Lord kills with his own hands the enemies of His devotee. The Lord says to Prahlāda:

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<sup>116</sup> Those who perform *bhakti* attain more than liberation, which is reserved for the *jñānīs* and *yogīs*. This *bhakti* is superior to *sakāma-bhakti* and *niṣkāma-jñāna-miśra-bhakti*, which yield *sālokya* and *śānta rasa* respectively. It yields direct service to the Lord.

*prahrādāya yadā druhyed dhanīṣye 'pi varorjitam*

I shall kill Hiranyakasipu immediately, despite the benedictions of Brahmā.

SB 7.4.28

Some persons explain that the word *tu* indicates a different intention. “I am equal to all, but still I favor My devotee.” Thus it means that the Lord has some prejudice, classed as affection, for the devotee. But, they explain, in the Lord, this is an ornament or enhancement, not a fault. The affection of the Lord for His devotee is well known. He does not have affection for the *jñānī* or the *yogī*. Just as other persons have affection for their own servants and not for the servants of others, the Lord also has affection for His devotees, and not for the devotees of Śiva or Durgā.

*api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāk |*  
*sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ ||30||*

30. Even if the most sinful person worships Me with no other desire than to please Me, I consider that person to be My devotee, as he has fixed himself completely in Me.

My attachment to My devotee is My very nature. That attachment does not decrease even if the devotee commits wrong, for I make him come up to the highest standard. If someone with bad conduct, addicted to violence, thievery, or adultery (*sudurācārah*), worships Me, and worships no one except Me, and does not follow any other process like *karma* or *jñāna*, and has no other desire than My desire (*ananya-bhak*), he is My devotee (*sādhuh*).

“But, considering his bad conduct, how is he a devotee?”

“He is to be respected (*mantavyaḥ*) as a devotee because of his devotee qualities. It is a command. Not doing so is offense. My order is the authority.”

“So he should be considered a devotee in that portion where he worship You, and as a non-devotee in that portion where he commits adultery?”

“No, he should be considered as a devotee (*eva*) in all his parts. You should not see his bad qualities at all. He is completely convinced (*samyak vyavasthitah*). He makes a splendid resolution: ‘I will go to hell for my sinful actions which are hard to give up, but I will not give up dedicated worship of Kṛṣṇa.’”

*kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā śaśvac-chāntim nigacchati |  
kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ pranaśyati ||31||*

31. Very quickly he becomes a righteous person, and becomes completely devoid of contamination. O son of Kuntī, you declare that My devotee never perishes.

“How can You accept the worship of such a sinful person? How can you eat the food and drink offered by a heart contaminated with lust and anger?”

“Very quickly he becomes righteous.” The present is used and not the future to express the fact that having committed sin, by remembering the Lord, he becomes repentant, and thus very quickly becomes righteous. “O how unfortunate I am! There is no one as low as I, bringing bad name to the devotees.” Repeatedly (*śaśvat*), he feels completely (*ni* for *nitarām*) disgust (*sāntim*) for those actions.

Or, the use of the present tense can indicate that in the future he will develop righteousness fully, but even right now it exists in a subtle form. After taking medicine, though the destructive effects of fever or poison remains for some time, it is not considered seriously. Thus, with the entrance of *bhakti* in his mind, the sinful actions are not taken seriously. And the traces of sin such as lust and anger should be considered insignificant, like the biting of a toothless snake. Thus he attains (*nigacchati*) complete cessation of lust and anger (*sāntim*) permanently (*śaśvat*). In *nigacchati*, *ni* stands for *nitarām*, completely. This means that even during the stage of having tendency to commit sin, he has a pure heart.

“If he eventually becomes righteous there would be no argument. However, if a devotee is sinful right up till his death, what is his position?”

The Lord, affectionate to His devotees, then speaks loudly with a little anger. “O son of Kuntī, My devotee is not destroyed. At the time of death, he does not fall.”

“But arguers with harsh tongues will not respect this.”

Kṛṣṇa then encourages the worried, lamenting Arjuna. “O Kaunteya, going to the squabbling assembly, with a tumultuous sound of drums, throwing your hands in the air, you should fearless declare this.”

“Declare what?”

“Declare that My devotee, the devotee of the Supreme Lord, though committing sin, does not perish, but rather reaches success. Arguments defeated, pride deflated, they should undoubtedly respect you as a *guru*.” This is Śrīdhara Svāmī’s explanation.

But why does the Lord order Arjuna to declare this, when He could do it himself? As He will say later, *mām evaiśyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyo’si me*: I declare to you that you will truly come to Me. You are very dear to Me.” (BG 18.65) In the same way, why does He not now say, “I declare, Kaunteya, that My devotee does not perish.”?

The reason is explained here. The Lord considered as follows. Being affectionate to My devotee and not tolerating even a slight degradation of My devotee, I will under all circumstances uphold the declaration made by My devotee, whereas I can break My own promise and accept criticism of Myself--just as, in breaking My own promise in fighting with Bhīṣma, I fulfilled Bhīṣma’s promise. Thus, hearing a declaration from My mouth, the materialistic disputers will laugh, but they will accept Arjuna’s declaration as if written on stone. Therefore, I will have Arjuna make the declaration.

And thus, one should not accept the statements of the falsely intelligent persons, who, after hearing about *ananyā bhakti* even of the greatest sinner, think that this declaration made by the pure devotee cannot apply in cases where attachment to wife and children, sinful acts, lamentation, illusion, lust, anger and other despicable qualities manifest.

*mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ |  
striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās te 'pi yānti parām gatim ||32||*

32. Women, *vaiśyas* and *śūdrās*, and even the outcastes, if they surrender to Me, attain the supreme goal.

Is it so remarkable that My *bhakti* does not consider the accidental faults arising by actions of My misbehaving devotee? For My *bhakti* does not even consider the inherent faults of such a person which arise from his very birth. Even those of sinful birth (*pāpa-yonayaḥ*), outcastes or *mlecchas*, who surrender to Me, attain the supreme goal.

*kirāta-hūṇāndhra-pulinda-pulkaśā  
ābhīra-śumbhā yavanāḥ khasādayaḥ  
ye'nye ca pāpā yad-apāśrayāśrayāḥ  
śudhyanti tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ*

Kirāta, Huṇa, Āndhra, Pulinda, Pulkaśa, Ābhīra, Śumbha, Yavana, members of the Khasa races and even others addicted to sinful acts can be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord, due to His being the supreme power. I beg to offer my respectful obeisances unto Him. SB 2.4.18

*aho bata śva-paco 'to garīyān  
yaj-jihvāgre vartate nāma tubhyam  
tepus tapas te juhuvuḥ sasnur āryā  
brahmānūcur nāma grṇanti ye te*

Oh, how glorious are they whose tongues are chanting Your holy name! Even if born in the families of dog-eaters, such persons are worshipable. Persons who chant the holy name of Your Lordship must have executed all kinds of austerities and fire sacrifices and achieved all the good manners of the Āryans. To be chanting the holy name of Your Lordship, they must have bathed at holy places of pilgrimage, studied the *Vedas* and fulfilled everything required. SB 3.33.7

What then to speak of women, *vaiśyas* or others who are impure or subject to bad qualities such as lying?

*kiṁ punar brāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarśayas tathā |  
anītyam asukhaṁ lokam imaṁ prāpya bhajasva mām ||33||*

33. What then to speak of devotees who are pure *brāhmaṇas* or kings? Therefore, having come into this impermanent world of distress, worship Me.

What then to speak of *brāhmaṇas* born in pure families, of good conduct who are devotees? Therefore, you should worship Me.

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī mām namaskuru |  
mām evaiśyasi yuktvaivam ātmānam mat-parāyaṇaḥ ||34||*

34. Concentrate your mind on Me. Be My devotee. Worship Me. Offer respects to Me. Having absorbed your body and mind in Me, surrendering to Me, you will come to Me.

In this verse the Lord concludes by describing the method of worship. Therefore, having absorbed your body and mind in Me (*ātmānam yukta*), you will certainly come to Me.

That supreme position of pure *bhakti*, the topmost secret, which does not discriminate between who is qualified or unqualified, and by its contact purifies all persons, has been described in this chapter.

Here ends the commentaries on the ninth chapter of the *Gītā* for the pleasure of the devotees' minds, by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Ten

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
bhūya eva mahā-bāho śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ |*

*yat te 'ham prīyamāṇāya vakṣyāmi hita-kāmyayā ||1||*

1. The Lord said: Again, O Mighty-armed one, hear My supreme teachings, which I will speak to you, who are qualified with *prema*, because I desire to give you benefit.

Starting from the seventh chapter, after revealing His powers, Kṛṣṇa spoke of *bhakti*. Now in the tenth chapter, He speaks of the confidential elements of *bhakti* along with a description of His *vibhūtis*.

By knowing the powers of the Lord, one understands that the Lord is worthy of worship. These powers have been described starting from the seventh chapter. Now the Lord will explain the powers in detail for the pleasure of those who have devotion. According to the rule that the *ṛṣis* speak indirectly and the Lord is fond of such indirect statements, and thus, because this knowledge is somewhat difficult to comprehend, the Lord speaks again (*bhūyah*).

*parokṣa-vādā ṛṣayaḥ parokṣam ca mama priyam*

The Vedic seers and *mantras* deal in esoteric terms, and I also am pleased by such confidential descriptions. *SB 11.21.35*

“Again (*bhūyah*), hear My words.” This means, “Again I will speak about the king of knowledge, the king of secrets.”

“O Mighty-armed one, you display your supreme power of your arms. This power is greater than that of all others. In the same way, you should display the supreme power of your intelligence in this topic. Listen to the words I speak.” This implies that Arjuna should limit his attention to what is spoken, though he is already listening.

“These words are even superior to what I have spoken previously (*paramam vacaḥ*). I speak these words to you, in order to cause you astonishment.” Use of the dative case (*te*) with a verb (*vakṣyāmi*) indicates a suppressed

infinitive of purpose, by the rule *kriyārthopapadasya ca*. (Aṣṭādhyāyī, Pāṇini 2.3.14)<sup>117</sup>

The reason for speaking to Arjuna is then given: “I will speak to you because you are filled with *prema* (*priyamāṇāya*).”

*na me viduḥ sura-gaṇāḥ prabhavaṁ na maharṣayaḥ  
aham ādir hi devānāṁ maharṣīnāṁ ca sarvaśaḥ ||2||*

2. The *devatās* and great ṛṣis do not know about My extraordinary birth, for I am the source of the *devatās* and great ṛṣis.

“My appearance can be known only by My unprecedented mercy and by no other means. The *devatās* do not know My most extraordinary (*pra*) birth (*bhavam*) from Devakī.”

“Well, the *devatās* may not know because they are absorbed in material pleasure, but the sages must know.”

“No, they also do not know (*na maharṣayaḥ*).”

The Lord explains the reason why they do not know: “Because I am the cause of all of them, in all ways, they do not know about My birth, just as the sons cannot know about the birth of the father.”

One should not think of another meaning of the word *prabhavam*,<sup>118</sup> because in verse 14, Arjuna says in confirmation of that meaning that neither the demons nor *devas* know about the appearance (birth) of the Lord: *na hi te bhagavan vyaktiṁ vidur devā na dānavāḥ*.

*yo mām ajam anādiṁ ca vetti loka-maheśvaram  
asammūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu sarva-pāpaiḥ pramucyate ||3||*

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<sup>117</sup> Use of *te* (dative case) with the verb *vakṣyāmi* indicates there is a hidden infinite which should be understood. Thus, *aham te vakṣyāmi*, instead of simply meaning “I speak to you” means “I speak to you in order to amaze you, impress you, please you etc.”

<sup>118</sup> *Prabhava* means “power” as well as “birth.”

3. He who, without bewilderment, knows that I am unborn since I have no beginning, and also am born, and knows that I am the lord of all planets, is freed from all sins in this world and performs *bhakti* without impediments.

“But certainly the *devatās* and *ṛṣis* know about birth of this body belonging to You, the supreme Brahman, who are unlimited by all time and space.”

Placing His index finger on His chest the Lord speaks this verse. “He who knows that I am without birth and am beginningless is free from sin.”

“Does not everyone know that Brahmā is not beginningless, but that you, Paramātmā, are called *aja*, without birth, because of having no beginning (*ajam anādim*)?”

“He who knows that I am unborn, and *also born to Vasudeva*, and am still without beginning, is freed from all sins.” *ca* here signifies that He is also born. By using the word *mām* (me), Kṛṣṇa indicates His particular birth from Vasudeva. This refers back to the Lord’s previous statement in chapter four, “He who knows that My birth and activities are transcendental....”

“I take birth, but because I am Paramātmā, I am eternally without birth.” Both these conditions are absolute truth, a demonstration of the *acintya śakti*. The Lord has said, *ajo’ pi san avyayātmā... sambhavāmi*, “Though I am unborn, I appear.” Uddhava also says:

*karmāny anīhasya bhavo ’bhavasya te  
durgāśrayo ’thāri-bhayāt palāyanam  
kālātmano yat pramadā-yutāśramah  
svātman-rateḥ khidyati dhīr vidām iha*

My Lord, even the learned sages become disturbed in their intelligence when they see that Your Greatness engages in fruitive work although You are free from all desires, that You take birth although You are unborn, that You flee out of fear of the enemy and take shelter in a fort although You are the controller of invincible time, and that You enjoy householder life surrounded by many women although You enjoy in Your Self. SB 3.4.16

The commentary in the *Laghu Bhagavatāmṛta* says:

*tat tan na vāstavaṃ cet syād vidāṃ buddhi-bhramas tadā  
na syād evety ato 'cintyā śaktir lilāsu kāraṇam*

If all this were not true, then all perceptions would be illusory. But that is not so. Thus the *acintya-śakti* is the cause of His pastimes.  
*Laghu Bhāgavatamṛta* 1.5.119

In My childhood, during the Dāmodara-līlā, it is inconceivable that I could be bound by strings of bells, but not by the cords of mother Yaśodā. In the same way, My birth and non-birth are also inconceivable.

The Lord then speaks of His powers, which are hard to understand. He who knows that, though I am your chariot driver, I am also the great controller of all the planets (*loka-maheśvaram*)--he alone is not bewildered among men, and is free of all sins, which are an obstacle to *bhakti*. But he who, though accepting that the Lord is unborn, without beginning and is the controller of all beings, thinks that His being born is just a semblance of birth, is bewildered, and is not freed from all sins.

*buddhir jñānam asammohaḥ kṣamā satyam damaḥ śamaḥ |  
sukhaṃ duḥkhaṃ bhavo 'bhāvo bhayaṃ cābhayaṃ eva ca ||4||  
ahiṃsā samatā tuṣṭis tapo dānaṃ yaśo 'yaśaḥ |  
bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānāṃ matta eva pṛthag-vidhāḥ ||5||*

4-5. Intelligence, knowledge, freedom from illusion, tolerance, truthfulness, sense control, mind control, pleasure, pain, birth, death, fear, fearlessness, non-violence, equanimity, satisfaction, austerity, charity, fame, infamy--all these various states of the living beings arise only from Me.

Even those who are knowledgeable of scriptures cannot know about Me by their intelligence. Because intelligence and other elements are generated from the material *guṇas* like *sattva*, and though they all originate in Me, in themselves they are not suitable for understanding about Me who am beyond the *guṇas*. The list of items in these verses is given to show this.

Intelligence (*buddhi*) is capable of discerning the fine meaning of things. Knowledge (*jñāna*) refers to the ability to distinguish between *ātmā* and non-*ātmā*.<sup>119</sup> Non-bewilderment (*asammoha*) means to be devoid of perplexity. These three qualities, though they are regarded as causing knowledge of Me, are not really causes of that knowledge.

The other states seen in people which are mentioned here also do not arise on their own (they come from Me). Tolerance (*kṣamā*), to speak the truth (*satyam*), control of the external senses (*dama*), and control of the internal sense (*śama*) are sattvic. Happiness is sattvic and sorrow is tamasic. Birth and death, types of sorrow, and fear, are tamasic. Fearlessness arising from knowledge is sattvic, but if it arises from *rajas* or *tamas*, it is rajasic or tamasic. Non-violence and seeing others as ones self (*samatā*) are sattvic. Satisfaction, if unconditional is sattvic, and if conditional, is rajasic. Austerity and charity, if unconditional, are sattvic and if conditional, are rajasic. Fame and infamy are similarly either sattvic or rajasic. All these arise from My energy. Because of the non-difference of the energy and the source of energy, it is said they arise from Me (*mattah*).

*maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve catvāro manavas tathā  
mad-bhāvā mānasā jātā yeṣāṃ loka imāḥ prajāḥ ||6||*

6. The seven great sages, and before them, the four Kumāras, and the fourteen Manus, whose descendants are the people of this world, arose from Me, from My mind.

Not having mentioned that intelligence, knowledge and non-bewilderment cannot give real knowledge of the Lord, the Lord in this verse states that these things cannot give true knowledge of the Lord.

The seven great sages beginning with Marīci,<sup>120</sup> the four Kumāras such as Sanaka, and the fourteen Manus beginning with Svāyambhuva, take birth from Me in the form of Hiranyagarbha (Brahmā). They arose from My mind. The *brāhmaṇas* and others exist as the offspring, sons and grandsons, or

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<sup>119</sup> Even knowledge of *ātmā* distinct from the body is only *sattva guṇa*.

<sup>120</sup> The seven sages are Bhṛgu, Marīci, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasiṣṭha.

students, and students of students of the seven sages, the four Kumāras and the Manus.<sup>121</sup>

*etām vibhūtim yogam ca mama yo veti tattvataḥ |  
so 'vikalpena yogena yujyate nātra saṁsayah ||7||*

7. He who knows My *vibhūti*s, which will be recited in this chapter, and the process of *bhakti-yoga*, and who accepts this as the highest truth, becomes fixed in unflinching *bhakti* with knowledge about Me. Of this there is no doubt.

But according to My own statement, I can be attained only by pure *bhakti*: *bhakti āham ekayā grahyaḥ*: (SB 11.14.21) Only My *ananya-bhakta*, receiving firm faith in My words by My mercy, knows the truth about Me. That is stated in this verse.

He who knows the *vibhūti*s of which I will speak in summary and who knows *bhakti-yoga* (*etām vibhūtim yogam ca*); who then becomes endowed with even stronger faith, thinking “This alone is the highest truth (*tattvataḥ*), because My master Kṛṣṇa has said so,” becomes endowed with unwavering (*avikalpena*) *bhakti-yoga*—which is characterized by knowledge of My true nature (*yogena*). There is no doubt about this.

*aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate |  
iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ ||8||*

8. I am the source of everything. Due to Me everything operates. Convinced by this knowledge, the intelligent persons, endowed with love, worship Me.

Here He speaks of His *vibhūti* characterized by great power. I am the cause of the existence and manifestation of everything--both material and spiritual (*prabhavaḥ*). Because of Me alone (*mattaḥ*), in the form of Paramātmā, the whole material world operates (*sarvaṁ pravartate*). As well, because of Me alone, in the form of *avatāras* like Nārada (*mattaḥ*), all the spiritual *sādhana*s such as *bhakti*, *jñāna*, *tapas* and *karma* and the goals of these *sādhana*s operate (*sarvaṁ pravartate*). He then describes the *yoga* which is *anyā*

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<sup>121</sup> Because all of these persons with great intelligence and wisdom arise from the Lord, they cannot understand about the Lord.

*bhakti*. Being convinced through faith by this knowledge (*iti matvā*), the intelligent persons endowed with *bhāva* in the forms of *dāyasa*, *sākhya* or other relationships (*bhāva-samanvitāḥ*), worship Me.<sup>122</sup>

*mac-cittā mad-gata-prāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam |  
kathayantaś ca mām nityam tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca ||9||*

9. With minds greedy for Me, being completely dependent on Me, mutually hearing about Me, and singing about Me, they continuously experience satisfaction and enjoyment.

Such *ananya-bhaktas*, who have attained spiritual intelligence (*buddhi-yoga*) by My mercy, attain factual knowledge of Me mentioned previously, which is hard to understand.

Their minds are greedy for My form, name, qualities pastimes and the taste of sweetness (*mac-cittāḥ*). They are unable to maintain their lives without Me (*mad-gata-prāṇāḥ*), just as men are completely dedicated to food (*anna-gata-prāṇa-nara*), since they depend on it to live. They explain to each other with friendliness about the types of *bhakti* and the real nature of *bhakti* (*bodhayantaḥ*). They talk about Me, a great ocean of very sweet form, qualities and pastimes (*kathayantaḥ*) and glorify Me by narrating about My form, qualities and pastimes. Since *smaraṇa* (*mac-cittāḥ*), *śravaṇa* (*bodhayantaḥ*) and *kīrtana* (*kathayantaḥ*) are the best among all types of *bhakti*, they have been specifically mentioned here. Thus, by this *bhakti* alone, these devotees are satisfied and experience happiness. This is the mysterious aspect of *bhakti*.<sup>123</sup>

Or the meaning of “satisfaction and enjoyment” can be as follows. They are satisfied even at the stage of *sādhana*, by continual performance of their worship brought about by good fortune, and they take pleasure in thinking of their future attainment of *prema*, and enjoy with their Lord through the mind. This interpretation indicates *rāgānuga-bhakti*.

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<sup>122</sup> Thus the *vibhūti* and the *yoga* mentioned in the previous verse have been explained in this verse.

<sup>123</sup> Materialists cannot understand how devotees can enjoy without dependence on external material stimulation.

*teṣām satata-yuktānām bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam |  
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te ||10||*

10. I appear within the heart of those who constantly desire to be with Me and worship Me with great love. By this appearance in their heart, they attain My direct association.

“It is understood that the joy of the devotee described in the previous verse is spiritual bliss beyond the modes. But by which method do the devotees gain direct contact with You? Who gives them the method of realizing You?” Anticipating such a question, the Lord speaks this verse.

I give *buddhi-yoga (bhakti)* to those who are constantly desirous of association with Me (*satata-yuktānām*). This means that the Lord alone causes *buddhi-yoga (bhakti-yoga)*—I alone appear within the functions of their minds. This *buddhi-yoga* cannot be obtained at all from any other source and it does not appear on its own. The statements means that realization of Me is given only by Me and received only by the devotee. By this *bhakti*, they attain Me; they attain direct association with Me (*upayānti*—they come near Me).

*teṣām evānukampārtham aham ajñānajaṁ tamaḥ |  
nāśayāmy ātma-bhāva-stho jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā ||11||*

11. To show favor to them, I, by Myself, situated in their mental functions, extinguish the darkness born of ignorance with the shining lamp of knowledge.

“Without the functioning of knowledge and other such elements, how can they attain You and how can they even strive for that goal?”

All this is not at all necessary. Having the intention of giving them mercy by all means, even without them having to worry about attaining My mercy, since I Myself make the endeavor to give them mercy (*teṣām eva anumampārtham*), I, being situated within the functioning of their intellects (*ātma-bhāvasthaḥ*)--by the lamp of knowledge, knowledge arising from *bhakti* which is beyond the *guṇas*, not sattvic knowledge, since *bhakti* alone can reveal Me--destroy the darkness born of ignorance in them alone, and

not in other persons such as the *yogīs* . I alone (*aham eva*) do this, all on My own. Why should they strive for this purpose? I have already said that I carry the responsibility of their spiritual and material welfare (*yoga-kṣemam vahāmy aham*). I accept responsibility to supply all their material and spiritual requirements.

These famous four verses which have been narrated are the essence of all topics in the *Gītā* , removing the misery and producing complete joy for the *jīvas*.

*arjuna uvāca*  
*param brahma param dhāma pavitrām paramam bhavān |*  
*puruṣam śāsvatām divyam ādi-devam ajam vibhum ||12||*  
*āhus tvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve devarṣir nāradas tathā |*  
*asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayam caiva bravīṣi me ||13||*

12-13. Arjuna said: You are the supreme Brahman, the supreme body, the most purifying. The sages, Nārada, Asita, Devala and Vyāsa, therefore declare You to be the eternal human form, beyond the *guṇas*, unborn, the source of all, and the greatest. And so also do You declare it to me.

Desiring to hear in detail what was just spoken briefly by the Lord, Arjuna speaks by first praising the Lord.

You are *param brahma* and You are the most attractive body in the form of Śyāmasundara (*param dhāma*). According to *Amara Kośa*, *dhāma* means house, body, light and glory. That Brahman is You. You have no difference between Yourself and Your body, unlike the *jīva*. What type of body is this? It is supremely purifying, taking away the contamination of ignorance for the person who sees it (*paramam pavitrām*). Therefore all the *ṛṣis* speak of the eternity of You in the human form (*śāsvatām puruṣam āhuḥ*).

*sarvam etad ṛtam manye yan mām vadasi keśava |*  
*na hi te bhagavan vyaktim vidur devā na dānavāḥ ||14||*

14. I accept as true all that you have told me, Keśava. But, O Lord, the *devas* and *Dānavas* do not know about Your birth.

I do not doubt at all what You say to me. But these ṛṣis say that Your supreme body is without birth. They do not know about Your birth (*vyaktim*). They do not understand how You with Your *svarūpa* of *para-brahma* can be both unborn and born. What You have said in verse 10.2-- that neither the *devatās* nor ṛṣis know about Your birth--I accept as completely true (*sarvam etad ṛtaṁ manye*). O Keśava, You bind up even Brahmā and Śiva with ignorance of Your true nature. (*ka*=Brahmā, *īśa*=Śiva, *va*=to bind). Then, certainly it must be said that the *devatās* and Dānavas also do not know You.

*svayam evātmanātmānam vettha tvaṁ puruṣottama |  
bhūta-bhāvana bhūteśa deva-deva jagat-pate ||15||*

15. O supreme among the creators, the lord of creators of all creators, the performer of pastimes, the master of all in this universe, You alone know Yourself by Yourself.

Therefore, You alone know about Yourself. Your devotee knows that actually You do have birth and are also without birth, though such a condition is difficult to exist. But he also does not know by which method it can happen. You alone (*eva*) know that. You know through Yourself (*ātmanā*) alone, not through any other means. Therefore, among all the *puruṣa avatāras*, who are creators of the *mahat-tattva* and other elements, You are supreme (*uttama*). Not only are You supreme among them. You are the lord of those lords up to Brahmā, who have become the creators of all material bodies (*bhūtā-bhāvana-bhūteśa*). Not only are You the lord of all of them, You are also the performer of pastimes (*deva*),<sup>124</sup> taking the *devas* as instruments in Your pastimes (*deva-deva*). Moreover, out of Your infinite mercy, You are the master of those like me (just a *dāsa*) dwelling within the universe (*jagat-pate*). All four of these terms starting with *puruṣottama* and ending with *jagat-pate* are in the vocative case.

Another meaning is as follows. These words may be taken as terms describing the nature of being the supreme person (*puruṣottama*). You are father of all creatures (*bhūtā-bhāvana*). But since sometimes a father is not respected, Arjuna says “You are the controller of all creatures (*bhūteśa*).” But

<sup>124</sup> The word *deva* comes from the root *div* and means “one who plays.”

sometimes even a controller is not so worthy of worship. Therefore he says “You are the *deva* among all the *devas*.” Though the *devas* are worshipable, sometimes they do not give protection. Therefore he says “You are the protector of the universe (*jagat-pate*).”

*vaktum arhasy aśeṣeṇa divyā hy ātma-vibhūṭayaḥ  
yābhir vibhūtibhir lokān imāms tvam vyāpya tiṣṭhasi ||16||*

16. You should speak about Your *vibhūti*s in detail, at least about those by which You remain pervading this universe.

“It is difficult to understand the truth about You. Therefore, I want to know about Your *vibhūti*s. Your *vibhūti*s are very attractive (*divya*). You should speak about them fully.”

“But it is impossible to speak of all of My *vibhūti*s fully.”

“Speak about those *vibhūti*s by which You spread Yourself in this world.”

*katham vidyām aham yogims tvām sadā paricintayan |  
keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyo 'si bhagavan mayā ||17||*

17. O master of *yoga māyā*, by what method of thinking can I know You at all times? How should I think of You with devotion in various objects, O Lord?

“O Lord, one who possesses the *yoga-māyā-śakti* (*yogin*)!” This is similar to the construction of *vanamalin*, one who wears a garland of flowers. How can I, thinking of You, know You (*vidyām*) at all times? Of course you say *bhaktiyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ*: only by *bhakti* can I be known as I am in truth. (BG 18.55) But in which objects (*bhāveṣu*) can I think of You? This means “How can I perform *bhakti* by thinking of You in various objects?”

*vistareṇātmano yogam vibhūtiṁ ca janārdana |  
bhūyaḥ kathaya tṛptir hi śṛṇvato nāsti me 'mṛtam ||18||*

18. O Janārdana, please tell me again in detail about Your *vibhūti*s and Your *bhakti-yoga*. Hearing Your nectar, I have no satiation.

“I have already said that I am the source of everything and everything moves because of Me: *aham sarvasya prabhavaḥ*. Therefore you should understand that everything is My *vibhūti*. And by saying, “Knowing this, they worship Me” (*iti matvā bhajante mām*) I have indicated *bhakti-yoga*.”

“But speak in detail about Your *vibhūti*s and about *bhakti*. O Janārdana, in people such as me (*jana*), by the sweetness of Your beneficial instructions, you create longing. You make us agitated (*ardana*), and You make us beg. What can we do? For me, hearing nectar in the form of Your instructions, relishing through a tongue in the form of my ear, there is no satiation.”

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*hanta te kathayiṣyāmi divyā hy ātma-vibhūtayaḥ |*  
*prādhānyataḥ kuru-śreṣṭha nāsty anto vistarasya me ||19||*

19. The Lord said: By My mercy, I will tell you about the chief of My excellent *vibhūti*s. O best of the Kurus, there is no end to My manifestations.

Oh (*hanta*), out of mercy, I will tell you about these *vibhūti*s. I will speak of the chief ones, because there is no end to their number. *Vibhutayaḥ* is used for *vibhutīḥ* (feminine plural accusative). These *vibhūti*s are excellent (*divya*), not like grass or bricks. The word *vibhūti* includes both material and spiritual manifestations of power of the Lord. Because they all arise from the *śakti* of the Lord, they should all be considered as worthy of meditation as forms of the Lord, though some are preferable to others.

*aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarva-bhūtāśaya-sthitaḥ |*  
*aham ādiś ca madhyam ca bhūtānām anta eva ca ||20||*

20. O conqueror of sleep, I am the soul of *prakṛti*, situated as the spirit within each universe, and within each living entity. I alone am the creation, maintenance and destruction of all creatures.

First you should think of Me alone as the cause of all these *vibhūti*s by using just one of My portions. I am *ātmā*, the soul within *prakṛti*; I am the creator

of the *mahat-tattva*, the *puruṣa*, the Paramātmā (Karaṇodakaśāyī). O one who conquers sleep (Guḍākeśa), you are qualified for meditation since you do not sleep. I am situated in the aggregate of all beings (*vairājas*), as the *antaryāmī* of the *virāt* (Garbhodakaśāyī). I am also situated within the hearts of all living entities, as the *antaryāmī* of the individuals (Kṣīrodakaśāyī). (Two meanings are given to the phrase *sarva-bhutāśaya-sthitah*). I am the cause of the creation (*adiḥ*), the maintenance (*madhyam*) and the destruction of all entities.

*ādityānām ahaṁ viṣṇur jyotiṣām ravir amśumān |  
marīcir marutām asmi nakṣatrāṇām ahaṁ śaśī ||21||*

21. Among Ādityas I am Viṣṇu, and among lights, I am the many-rayed sun. Among the winds, I am Marīci.<sup>125</sup> I am the moon amidst the stars.

The genitive case is use for the rest of the chapter to indicate a specific head of group of items and also to indicate a relation to a group. Among the twelve Ādityas, I am Viṣṇu, one of the names of the sun.<sup>126</sup> This is My *vibhūti*. Among all lights, those things which reveal, I am the sun, with a multitude of rays. Marīci is outstanding among the winds.

*vedānām sāma-vedo 'smi devānām asmi vāsavaḥ |  
indriyāṇām manaś cāsmi bhūtānām asmi cetanā ||22||*

22. Among the *Vedas*, I am the *Sāma*, and among the *devatās*, I am Indra. Among the senses, I am the mind. In all living creatures, I am the power of awareness.

Among the *devatās*, I am Indra (*vāsavaḥ*). I am *jñāna-śakti* (*cetanā*) related to all beings. Here the use of the genitive is relational.

*rudrāṇām śaṅkaraś cāsmi vittiśo yakṣa-rakṣasām |*

<sup>125</sup> The story is told in SB 6.18. Indra entered Diti's womb and cut her son into forty-nine parts. In this way the forty-nine kinds of air known as the Maruts appeared.

<sup>126</sup> The sun is given twelve names according its position in the twelve zodiac signs throughout the year. The names are Dhātṛ, Aryaman, Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, Vivasvat, Pūṣan, Parjanya, Amśa, Bhaga, Tvaṣṭṛ and Viṣṇu.

*vasūnām pāvakaś cāsmi meruḥ śikhariṇām aham ||23||*

23. Among the Rudras, I am Śaṅkara<sup>127</sup>, and among the Yakṣas and Rākṣasas, I am Kuvera.<sup>128</sup> Among the Vasus, I am fire.<sup>129</sup> Among the peaked mountains, I am Meru.

*Vittesaḥ*, lord of wealth, means Kuvera.

*purodhasām ca mukhyaṁ mām viddhi pārtha bṛhaspatim |  
senānīnām ahaṁ skandaḥ sarasām asmi sāgaraḥ ||24||*

24. Among head priests, I am the chief one, Bṛhaspati. Among leaders of armies, I am Kārtikeya. Among reservoirs of water, I am the ocean.

*Skanda* means Kārtikeya. The form *senānīnām* is poetic license (the other form would be *senāniyam*).

*maharṣīnām bhṛgu ahaṁ girām asmy ekam akṣaram |  
yajñānām japa-yajño 'smi sthāvarāṇām himālayaḥ ||25||*

25. Among the great sages, I am Bhṛgu. Among words, I am *om*. Among sacrifices, I am *japa*. Among immovable objects, I am the Himālayas.

*Ekākṣara*, one syllable, refers to the *praṇava om*.

*aśvatthaḥ sarva-vṛkṣāṇām devarṣīnām ca nāradaḥ |  
gandharvāṇām citrarathaḥ siddhānām kapilo muniḥ ||26||*

26. Among the trees, I am the *pippala*.<sup>130</sup> Among the divine sages, I am Nārada. Among the Gandharvas, I am Citraratha. Among perfected beings, I am Kapila.

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<sup>127</sup> Lord Brahmā said: My dear boy Rudra, you have eleven other names: Manyu, Manu, Mahinasa, Mahān, Śiva, Ṛtadhvaja, Ugraretā, Bhava, Kāla, Vāmadeva and Dhṛtavrata. *SB* 3.12.12

<sup>128</sup> Kuvera is a Yakṣa.

<sup>129</sup> The eight Vasus are Āpa, Dhurva, Soma, Dharma, Anila, Pāvaka, Pratyuṣa and Prabhāsa.

<sup>130</sup> This tree is regarded as a representative of Viṣṇu.

*uccaiḥśravasam aśvānām viddhi mām amṛtodbhavam |  
airāvataṃ gajendrāṇām narāṇām ca narādhipam ||27||*

27. Know that among horses I am Uccaiḥśrava who rose from the nectar ocean. Among elephants I am Airāvata.<sup>131</sup> Among men I am the king.

Among horses, I am Uccaiḥśrava who arose from the churning of the nectar ocean (*amṛtodbhavam*).

*āyudhānām ahaṃ vajraṃ dhenūnām asmi kāma-dhuk |  
prajānaś cāsmi kandarpaḥ sarpāṇām asmi vāsukih ||28||*

28. Among weapons, I am the thunderbolt. Among cows, I am the Kāmadhenu. Among types of lust, I am that for producing offspring. Among snakes, I am Vāsuki.

Among the cows, I am Kāmadhenu (*kāma-dhuk*).<sup>132</sup> Among the types of lust, I am lust for the purpose of producing offspring (*prajānaḥ*).

*anantaś cāsmi nāgānām varuṇo yādasām aham |  
pitṛṇām aryamā cāsmi yamaḥ saṃyamatām aham ||29||*

29. Among Nāgas,<sup>133</sup> I am Ananta. Among inhabitants of water I am Varuṇa. Among the Pitṛs, I am Aryamā. Among punishers, I am Yama.

Among the inhabitants of the water (*yādasām*), I am Varuṇa. Among those who punish (*saṃyamatām*), I am Yama.

*prahlādaś cāsmi daityānām kālāḥ kalayatām aham |  
mṛgāṇām ca mṛgendro 'haṃ vainateyaś ca pakṣiṇām ||30||*

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<sup>131</sup> The elephant also arose from the churning of the ocean.

<sup>132</sup> This cow was born from the churning of the milk ocean. She gives unlimited milk.

<sup>133</sup> Nāgas have many heads, whereas sarpas, regular snakes, have only one head each.

30. Among the demons, I am Prahlāda. Among controllers, I am time. Among animals, I am the lion. Among birds, I am Garuḍa.

Among subjugators (*kalayatām*), I am time. Among animals, I am the lion (*mṛgendrah*). Among birds, I am Garuḍa (*vainateyaḥ*).

*pavanaḥ pavatām asmi rāmaḥ śastrabhṛtām aham |  
jhaṣāṇām makaraś cāsmi srotasām asmi jāhnavī ||31||*

31. Among purifiers and the swift, I am the wind. Among holders of weapons, I am Paraśurāma. Among the fishes, I am the *makara*. Among rivers, I am the Gaṅgā.

Of moving or purifying agents, I am the wind. Among bearers of weapons, I am Paraśurāma. He is suitable as a *vibhūti* because He is an *aveśāvatāra*, and because He is an outstanding *jīva* among those who have been given powers by the Lord.<sup>134</sup> *Padma Purāṇa*, quoted in *Bhāgavatāmṛta* says “O devi, I have recited to you the story of Paraśurāma, a *śaktyaveśa avatāra* of the Lord.” Also it says, “He took birth as an empowered *jīva*.” The characteristics of the *aveśāvatāra* are also mentioned in the *Bhāgavatāmṛta*. “Where a *jīva* is filled with portions of *jñāna-śakti* or other *śakti* of the Lord, he is called *aveśāvatāra*.” (*Laghu Bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.4 .39, 1.4.38, 1.1.18) Among fish (*jhaṣāṇām*), I am the *makara*, a special type of fish. Among rivers (*srotasām*), I am the Gaṅgā.

*sargāṇām ādir antaś ca madhyam caivāham arjuna |  
adhyātma-vidyā vidyānām vādaḥ pravadatām aham ||32||*

32. I am the creation, destruction and maintenance of all elements. Among types of knowledge, I am knowledge of the soul. Among types of debate I am *vāda*.

I am the creation (*adiḥ*) and destruction (*antaḥ*) of ether and other elements (*sargāṇām*), and the maintenance of them as well. One should meditate upon creation, maintenance and destruction as My *vibhūti*s. This means that I, the Supreme Lord, am the creator, maintainer and destroyer. Among types

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<sup>134</sup> Rāma is taken as Paraśurāma rather than Rāmacandra, since he is a *jīva*. A *jīva* can be a *vibhūti*, but not the Lord Himself.

of knowledge, I am knowledge of the self. Among types of argumentation in order to establish ones own idea and defeat others ideas, such as *jalpa* and *vitaṇḍa*, I am *vāda*, which attempts to discern actual truth with the goal of coming to a conclusion.<sup>135</sup>

*akṣarāṇām a-kāro 'smi dvandvaḥ sāmāsikasya ca |  
aham evākṣayaḥ kālo dhātāhaṁ viśvato-mukhaḥ ||33||*

33. I am the letter “a” among all letters. Among compounds, I am the *dvandva*. Among destroyers, I am Śiva and among creators, I am Brahmā, with four faces.

The *dvandva* compound is superior among compounds since its elements are equal.<sup>136</sup> Among destroyers I am indestructible time. This refers to Mahākāla, Rudra, famous as the destroyer. Among the creators I am Brahmā (*dhātā*), with four faces (*viśvato mukhaḥ*).

*mṛtyuḥ sarva-haraś cāham udbhavaś ca bhaviṣyatām |  
kīrtiḥ śrīr vāk ca nārīṇām smṛtir medhā dhṛtiḥ kṣamā ||34||*

34. Among deaths, I am that which takes away all memory. Among all transformations of the body which will take place, I am the first one, birth. Among women I am Kīrti, Śrī, Vāk, Smṛti, Medhā, Dhṛti and Kṣamā, and other wives of Dharma.

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<sup>135</sup> *Vāda*, *jalpa* and *vitaṇḍa* are famous as the three types of argument. When both parties desire to win by establishing their own opinion with proofs and arguments, and refuting the opponent’s view with circumvention (*chala*), false generalization (*jāti*) and syllogistic fault (*nigraha-sthāna*), it is called *jalpa*. When one party refutes the opponent’s view (by the above means), without establishing his own opinion, it is called *vitaṇḍa*. These two types of debate, with a desire to win, simply display skill in debating and bear no result. That discussion having a desire for truth is called *vāda*.

<sup>136</sup> In the *avyayībhāva* compound the first element is more important: *adhyātma*, in the soul. In the *tat-puruṣa* compound the second element is more important: *gunātita*, surpassing the *gunas*. In the *bahu-vrīhi* compound both elements are unimportant, depending on reference to a third element: *mahā-bahuḥ*, one who has strong arms.

Among all types of deaths which are happening at every moment, I am death which takes away all memory. It is said *mṛtyur atyanta-vismṛtiḥ*: death is extreme forgetfulness. (SB 11.22.39) Among the transformations which will take place for the living entities in the future, I am birth, the first transformation. Among women, I am fame, beauty, and refined speech (*vāk*), these three and also the four: memory, intelligence, fortitude and tolerance. *Ca* indicates the other wives of Dharma such as Mūrti<sup>137</sup>.

*bṛhat-sāma tathā sāmnam gāyatrī chandasām aham |  
māsānam mārga-śiṛṣo 'ham ṛtūnam kusumākaraḥ ||35||*

35. Among the *sāmas*, I am the *Bṛhat Sāma*. Among meters, I am *gāyatrī*. Among months, I am *Mrgaśiṛṣa*.<sup>138</sup> Among the seasons, I am the spring.

The Lord has already said that he is the *Sāma* among the *Vedas*. Here he says that among the verses to be sung he is the *Bṛhat Sāma* in the verse which begins *tvamṛddhim havāmahe*. (Ṛg Veda 6.46.1) Among meters I am *gāyatrī*, and among seasons I am spring (*kusumākaraḥ*), filled with flowers.

*dyūtaṁ chalayatām asmi tejas tejasvinām aham |  
jaya 'smi vyavasāyo 'smi sattvaṁ sattvatatām aham ||36||*

36. I am gambling in the cheaters. Among conquerors, I am their victory. Among those who endeavor, I am the endeavor. Among the strong, I am their strength.

Related to those who mutually cheat each other, I am gambling. Here genitive case is used to show relationship with the cheaters. Among the conquerors, I am victory. Among those who endeavor, I am effort. Among the strong, I am strength (*sattvam*).

*vṛṣṇīnām vāsudevo 'smi pāṇḍavānām dhanañjayaḥ |  
munīnām apy aham vyāsaḥ kavīnām uśanā kavīḥ ||37||*

<sup>137</sup> Dharma married thirteen daughters of Dakṣa. Śraddhā, Maitrī, Dayā, Sānti, Tuṣṭi, Puṣṭi, Kriyā, Unnati, Buddhi, Medhā, Titikṣā, Hrī and Mūrti are mentioned in SB 4.1.49. *Mahābhārata* gives a different list which includes Kīrti, Śrī, and Dhṛti. *Vāk* does not seem to be one of Dharma's wives.

<sup>138</sup> This is the first month in one calendar system.

37. Among the Vṛṣṇis, I am Vasudeva. Among the Pāṇḍavas, I am Arjuna. Among the sages, I am Vyāsa. Among the wise, I am Uśanas.

Among the Vṛṣṇis, I am Vasudeva, who is My father.<sup>139</sup> He is My *vibhūti*. The rule is given as follows: *prajñāditvāt (Aṣṭādhyāyī, Pāṇini 5.4.38)*.<sup>140</sup> Sometimes the long *ā* can have the same meaning as short *a*. The long *ā* is used to indicate self-interest. Others would propose that the meaning is “Among the Vṛṣṇis, I am Myself, the son of Vasudeva.” This however is not agreeable, as it does not mean anything.

*daṇḍo damayatām asmi nītir asmi jigīṣatām |  
maunam caivāsmi guhyānām jñānam jñānavatām aham ||38||*

38. I am punishment among those who punish. In those who desire victory, I am proper policy. In secrets, I am silence. I am knowledge in those who have knowledge.

Among those who punish, I am punishment. Here the genitive is used to indicate relationship.

*yac cāpi sarva-bhūtānām bījam tad aham arjuna |  
na tad asti vinā yat syān mayā bhūtam carācaram ||39||*

39. I am that seed which causes all living entities to manifest, O Arjuna. No moving or non-moving entities can exist without Me.

I am the seed of all beings, the cause of their sprouting, because without Me, moving and non-moving creatures would not exist. This means they would be false things.

*nānto 'sti mama divyānām vibhūtīnām parantapa |  
eṣa tūddeṣataḥ prokto vibhūter vistaro mayā ||40||*

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<sup>139</sup> Baladeva says that Vāsudeva refers to Balarāma, since Vāsudeva usually means the son of Vasudeva. In either case, taking Vāsudeva as father or brother avoids making Kṛṣṇa his own *vibhūti*.

<sup>140</sup> Vāsudeva usually means the son of Vasudeva. However sometimes by the rule given, Vāsudeva can simply mean Vasudeva.

40. There is no end to My wonderful *vibhūtis*, O afflicter of enemies. I have only briefly declared the expanse of My *vibhūtis*.

Now the Lord summarizes the subject. There is no end to My *vibhūtis*. Briefly only (*uddeśataḥ*), in name only, I have spoken of the multitude of My *vibhūtis*.

*yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā |  
tat tad evāvagaccha tvaṁ mama tejo-'mśa-sambhavam ||41||*

41. Whatever object in past, present or future displays majesty, excellence, or strength, know that it has arisen from just a fragment of My power.

In this verse the Lord brings together all the *vibhūtis* of past, present and future which were not previously mentioned. Whatever object (*sattvam*) has majesty (*vibhūtimat*), excellence (*śrīmat*), or extraordinary strength or power (*ūrjitam*), know that it comes from a portion of My power.

*atha vā bahunaitena kiṁ jñātena tavārjuna |  
viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat ||42||*

42. But what is the use of all this knowledge for you, Arjuna? Please understand: by just one portion of Myself, I am firmly established in this universe.

Know the results that come from these many separate pieces of knowledge. By one portion alone, by the Paramātmā in human form, fixing Myself (*viṣṭabhya*) in the world which I have created, supporting this created world by being its basis, superintending the world by being its ruler, controlling the world by being its controller, pervading the world by being pervasive, and creating the world by being its cause, I am situated in this world.

Everything in this universe is Kṛṣṇa alone, and He is thus worthy of service. By intelligence given by that realization, one should taste His sweetness. This has been explained in this chapter.

Here ends the commentaries on the tenth chapter of the *Gītā* for the pleasure of the devotees' minds, by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Eleven

*arjuna uvāca*

*mad-anugrahāya paramaṁ guhyam adhyātma-samjñitam |  
yat tvayoktaṁ vacas tena moho 'yaṁ vigato mama ||1||*

1. Arjuna said: By Your mercy, my illusion concerning Your powers is gone, through hearing the words you spoke concerning the highest secret of your *vibhūtis* along with knowledge of the soul.

In the eleventh chapter, Arjuna, seeing the universal form, praises it in reverence. When Kṛṣṇa shows Himself again, Arjuna becomes pleased.

At the end of the last chapter, hearing about one *aṁśa* of his dear friend, the *adipurusa* who is the shelter of all the *vibhūtis*, with the words *viṣṭabhyāham idam kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat*, Arjuna became submerged in the highest bliss and desired to see that form. He praises what the Lord has just spoken in three verses.

“The words spoken by You revealing *vibhūtis* present in Yourself (*adhyātma*) have removed my ignorance concerning Your powers (*mohaḥ*).” The word *adhyātma* is here taken as an *avyayībhāva* compound of *adhi* (in) and *ātmā* (self), meaning “in the self.”

*bhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām śrutau vistaraśo mayā |  
tvattaḥ kamala-patrākṣa mähātmyam api cāvyaayam ||2||*

2. O lotus-eyed one, in detail I have heard about the creation and dissolution of all beings arising through You, as well as how You remain unaffected as well.

I have heard plenty about the creation and destruction of the living entities coming from You (*tvattaḥ*) in the middle six chapters, in such statements as *aḥam kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā*: I am the creation and

destruction of the universe. And I have also heard how You remain aloof and unaffected in spite of being the creator and destroyer (*māhātmyam avyayam*), in such verses as *mayā tatam idaṁ sarvam*: I am pervading all this universe; and *na ca mām tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti*: these actions do not bind Me.

*evam etad yathāttha tvam ātmānaṁ parameśvara |  
draṣṭum icchāmi te rūpam aiśvaraṁ puruṣottama ||3||*

3. O Supreme Lord, what You have spoken about Yourself is all true. O Supreme Person, I desire to see that powerful form of Yours.

Whatever You have said about Yourself, such as “I am supporting the whole universe by one of My portions,” is indeed true (*evam etad*). I do not have any doubt about it. But still, desiring to be fully satisfied, I desire to see that form displaying Your powers. I now want to see, *with my eyes*, that expansion form of Yours by which You support this world.

*manyase yadi tac chakyaṁ mayā draṣṭum iti prabho |  
yogeśvara tato me tvam darśayātmānam avyayam ||4||*

4. If You think that I am qualified to see that form, O master, O Lord of qualification, then show to me that indestructible form.

The word *yogeśvara* indicates that though Arjuna is unqualified (*ayogya*), the Lord with His power of qualification (*yoga*), can make him qualified to see that form.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
paśya me pārtha rūpāni śataśo 'tha sahasraśaḥ |  
nānā-vidhāni divyāni nānā-varṇākṛtīni ca ||5||*

5. The Lord said: O son of Pṛthā, see My hundreds and thousands of wonderful forms, of various types, of various colors, and various shapes.

“First I will show him that form described in the *puruṣa-sūkta* as *sahasra-śīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt*: that form with a thousand heads, a

thousand eyes and a thousand feet. It is My own expansion, the first *puruṣa avatāra* (Mahaviṣṇu), the *antaryāmī* of *prakṛti*. Later, by having the necessary qualification, I will show him My form of time.” Considering in this way in His mind, the Lord faced Arjuna, telling him to pay attention. Thus He speaks this verse.

“See these hundreds and thousands of forms (*rūpāṇi*). In My one form, My *svarūpa*, see hundreds of My *svarūpas*, which are My *vibhūtiḥ*.”

*paśyādityān vasūn rudrān aśvinau marutas tathā |  
bahūny adṛṣṭa-pūrvāṇi paśyāścaryāṇi bhārata ||6||*

6. See the Ādityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the two Āsvins and the Maruts. O descendant of Bharata, see many astonishing forms not seen before.

*ihaika-sthaṁ jagat kṛtsnam paśyādya sa-carācaram |  
mama dehe guḍākeśa yac cānyad draṣṭum icchasi ||7||*

7. Now, in this place, see in one part of My body this whole universe with its moving and non-moving entities, O conqueror of sleep, and see whatever else you desire to see.

On this occasion (*iha*), this universe, which is impossible for you to see completely even if you wander within it for millions of years, is situated in just one part of My body (*eka-stham*). See that universe and whatever else you desire to see, such as your victory or defeat (*yac ca anyat*), in My body, which is the shelter of the universe, being its cause.

*na tu mām śakyase draṣṭum anenaiva sva-cakṣuṣā |  
divyaṁ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ paśya me yogam aiśvaram ||8||*

8. But you will not be able to see with your material eye alone. I give you the eye of the *devas*. Behold My majestic power.

Arjuna should not think that this is some form caused by magical trick or material illusion. For the purpose of giving him faith that the form which contains this whole universe is *sat-cid-ānanda*, He speaks this verse.

By your material eyes (*anena*) you cannot see Me. You cannot see My purely spiritual form. *Śaknose* stands for *śaknosi*. Therefore, I give you divine (*divyam*) eyes. See with those divine eyes. By letting him see with those eyes, the Lord's intention was to give a little astonishment to Arjuna, who was thinking himself to be a material person.

Actually, because he is a principal associate of the Lord, and therefore previously had appeared as Nara along with the Nārāyaṇa *avatāra*, Arjuna does not have material eyes like ordinary material persons. What is the logic in giving spiritual eyes to Arjuna in order to see a mere expansion of the Lord, when that same Arjuna with his very eyes directly realizes the sweetness of his Lord?

But, on the other hand, it can be said that the superior eye which sees only the great sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's human pastimes, as in the case of the *ananya-bhakta*, does not at all accept the glories of the Lord's pastimes performed with the *devatās* (*deva līlā*). One who has tasted the juice of the white lotus cannot relish sugar candy with his tongue. Thus the Lord, wanting to show the majestic nature of His pastimes with the *devatās* (*deva-līlā*), in order to cause astonishment in Arjuna who had requested just that, gave to Arjuna non-human eyes suitable for seeing *deva-līlā* (*divyam*), majestic in quality. The intention of giving such eyes will be explained at the end of the chapter.

*sanjaya uvāca*

*evam uktvā tato rājan mahā-yogeśvaro hariḥ |*  
*darśayām āsa pārthāya paramam rūpam aiśvaram ||9||*

9. Sañjaya said: O King, having spoken thus, Kṛṣṇa, the master of great *yoga*, showed to Arjuna His supreme, majestic form.

*aneka-vaktra-nayanam anekādbhuta-darśanam |*  
*aneka-divyābharanam divyānekodyatāyudham ||10||*

10. It had many mouths and eyes, many astonishing aspects, many wonderful ornaments, uplifting many wonderful weapons.

*divya-mālyāmbara-dharam divya-gandhānulepanam |*  
*sarvāścarya-mayaṁ devam anantaṁ viśvato-mukham ||11||*

11. That form wore astonishing garlands and dress, astonishing perfumes and ointments. It was shining, greatly amazing, infinite, with faces in every direction.

*Viśvato mukham* means “whose faces are everywhere.”

*divi sūrya-sahasrasya bhaved yugapad utthitā |  
yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād bhāsaḥ tasya mahātmanah ||12||*

12. If the splendor of a thousand suns rose simultaneously in the sky, that effulgence would be somewhat similar to the effulgence of this great form.

If at one time the effulgence (*bhāḥ*) of a thousand suns arose, then it would be somewhat similar to the effulgence (*bhāsaḥ*) of the universal form (*mahātmanah*).

*tatraika-stham jagat kṛtsnam pravibhaktam anekadhā |  
apaśyad deva-devasya śarīre pāṇḍavas tadā ||13||*

13. On the battlefield, Arjuna saw parts of the universe in various parts of that body in various ways.

In that place (*tatra*), on the battle field, in the body of the Lord (*deva-devasya*), it was impossible to take into account the whole universe. Therefore Arjuna saw a part situated in one part of the body at different moments (*pravibhaktam, eka-stham*)--a part situated in the Lord's pore or a part situated in His belly, and in various ways (*anekadhā*). That is, he saw that form made of earth, made of gold, made of jewels, or measuring fifty *koṭi yojanas*, or a hundred *koṭi yojanas* or a hundred thousand *koṭi yojanas*.

*tataḥ sa vismayāviṣṭo hr̥ṣṭa-romā dhanañjayah |  
praṇamya śirasā devaṁ kṛtāñjalir abhāṣata ||14||*

14. Then, overcome with wonder, hair standing on end, Arjuna, bowing his head before the Lord and folding his hands in prayer, spoke.

*arjuna uvāca*

*paśyāmi devāms tava deva dehe  
sarvāms tathā bhūta-višeṣa-saṅghān |  
brahmānam īsam kamalāsana-stham  
ṛṣimś ca sarvān uragāms ca divyān ||15||*

15. Arjuna said: In Your body I see all the *devatās*, as well as the mass of all the beings. I see Lord Brahmā, seated on a lotus, all the *ṛṣis*, and shining snakes.

I see a multitude of viviparous animals (*bhūtā-višeṣa*) and Brahmā situated on Mount Meru at the center of the lotus of the earth planet.

*aneka-bāhūdara-vaktra-netraṁ  
paśyāmi tvā sarvato 'nanta-rūpam |  
nāntaṁ na madhyaṁ na punas tavādim  
paśyāmi viśveśvara viśva-rūpa ||16||*

16. I see You everywhere with infinite form, with many arms, stomachs, mouths and eyes. O lord of the universe, origin of all this! O form of the universe! I do not see a beginning, middle or end of this form of Yours.

*Viśveśvara* means the original person, the origin of this form.

*kirīṭinaṁ gadīnaṁ cakriṇaṁ ca  
tejo-rāṣim sarvato dīptimantam |  
paśyāmi tvāṁ durnirīkṣyaṁ samantād  
dīptānalārka-dyutim aprameyam ||17||*

17. I see You with crown, club, *cakra*, a mass of light shining everywhere, difficult to behold, with immeasurable radiance on all sides like the blazing of fire and sun.

*tvam akṣaraṁ paramaṁ veditavyaṁ  
tvam asya viśvasya paramā nidhānam |  
tvam avyayaḥ śāśvata-dharma-goptā  
sanātanas tvāṁ puruṣo mato me ||18||*

18. You are known as the supreme Brahman. You are the place of destruction of this universe. You are indestructible, the protector of eternal *dharmā*. I know that You are the eternal person.

You are known by the strivers for liberation as Brahman (*akṣaram*). You are the place of destruction of all things (*nidhānam*).

*anādi-madhyāntam ananta-vīryam  
ananta-bāhurṁ śaśi-sūrya-netram |  
paśyāmi tvāṁ dīpta-hutāśa-vaktram  
sva-tejasā viśvam idam tapantam ||19||*

19. I see You are without beginning, middle or end, possessed of infinite strength, infinite arms, with the sun and moon for Your eyes, with a mouth of blazing fire, burning this universe with its heat.

With words like *anādi*, Arjuna seems to repeat himself. Do not find fault however with the repetition in the words of Arjuna, who was submerged in the ocean of the *rasa* of great astonishment (*mahā-viśmaya-rasa*). It is said: *prasāde viśmaye harṣe dvi-trir-uktam na duṣyati*: repetition of statements two or three times due to joy, astonishment or kindness is not a fault.

*dyāv-ā-pṛthivyor idam antaram hi  
vyāptam tvayaikena diśaś ca sarvāḥ |  
dṛṣṭvādbhutam rūpam idam tavogram  
loka-trayaṁ pravayathitam mahātman ||20||*

20. The space between heaven and earth and all directions are filled with You alone. Seeing this astonishing and ferocious form of Yours, the three worlds have become terrified, O great soul.

Now that Arjuna had the proper qualification, the Lord shows him His form as time. This is described in ten verses.

*amī hi tvā sura-saṅghā viśanti  
kecid bhītāḥ prāñjalayo grṇanti |  
svastīty uktvā maharṣi-siddha-saṅghāḥ  
stuvanti tvāṁ stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ ||21||*

21. This host of *devatās* enters into You. Some in fear praise You with folded hands. Shouting “*Svasti!*” the host of great sages and Siddhas praise You with excellent verses.

*Tvā* stands for *tvām*.

*rudrādityā vasavo ye ca sādhyā  
viśve ’śvinau marutaś cośma-pās ca |  
gandharva-yakṣāsura-siddha-saṅghā  
vikṣante tvām vismitās caiva sarve ||22||*

22. The Rudras, Ādityas, Vasus, Sadhyas, Viśvas, Aśvins, Maruts, Piṭṛs, Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Asuras, and Siddhas all look at You in astonishment.

*Uṣma-pā* refers to those who drink hot vapor of food. That refers to the Piṭṛs. The *śruti* says *ūśmabhāgā hi pitarah:* the Piṭṛs eat the steam. (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, Yajur Veda, 1.3.10.6*)

*rūpaṃ mahat te bahu-vaktra-netraṃ  
mahābāho bahu-bāhūru-pādam |  
bahūdaram bahu-damṣṭrā-karālaṃ  
dṛṣṭvā lokāḥ pravyathitās tathāham ||23||*

23. O mighty-armed one, seeing this great form with many mouths and eyes, many arms, many thighs and feet, many stomachs, fearful with many teeth, the world and I as well are filled with terror.

*nabhaḥ-sprśam dīptam aneka-varṇam  
vyāntānam dīpta-viśāla-netraṃ |  
dṛṣṭvā hi tvām pravyathitāntar-ātmā  
dhṛtiṃ na vindāmi śamaṃ ca viṣṇo ||24||*

24. O Viṣṇu, seeing You touch the heavens, shining in many colors, with gaping mouth, and wide, blazing eyes, I have become distressed in mind, and do not find any satisfaction or relief.

*Śama* means relief or tranquility.

*damṣṭrā-karālāni ca te mukhāni  
dr̥ṣṭvaiva kālānala-sannibhāni |  
diṣo na jāne na labhe ca śarma  
prasīda deveṣa jagan-nivāsa ||25||*

25. Seeing Your mouth with sharp teeth, like the fire of cosmic destruction, I cannot recognize the directions and I feel no comfort. O master of the *devas*, abode of the universe, be merciful to me.

*amī ca tvām dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāḥ  
sarve sahaivāvani-pāla-saṅghaiḥ |  
bhīṣmo droṇaḥ sūta-putras tathāsau  
sahāsmadīyair api yodha-mukhyaiḥ ||26||*

*vaktrāṇi te tvaramānā viśanti  
damṣṭrākarālāni bhayānakāni |  
kecid vilagnā daśanāntareṣu  
sandṛśyante cūrṇitair uttamāṅgaiḥ ||27||*

26-27. All the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra along with the host of rulers of the earth, Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Karna, together with our prominent warriors, enter swiftly into Your fearful mouth with sharp teeth. Some, with their heads ground up, are sticking between Your teeth.

*yathā nadīnām bahavo 'mbu-vegāḥ  
samudram evābhimukhā dravanti |  
tathā tavāmī nara-loka-vīrā  
viśanti vaktrāṇy abhivijvalanti ||28||*

28. As many swift currents of rivers flow towards the sea, so these heroes of the world enter Your flaming mouths.

*yathā pradīptam jvalanam pataṅgā  
viśanti nāśāya samṛddha-vegāḥ |  
tathaiva nāśāya viśanti lokās  
tavāpi vaktrāṇi samṛddha-vegāḥ ||29||*

29. As moths with increasing speed enter a blazing fire to meet their destruction, so men enter Your mouths with increasing speed to meet their destruction.

*lelihyase grasamānaḥ samantāl  
lokān samagrān vadanair jvaladbhiḥ |  
tejobhir āpūrya jagat samagram  
bhāsas tavogrāḥ pratapanti viṣṇo ||30||*

30. Swallowing all these men all around with Your fiery mouths, You are licking Your lips repeatedly. O Viṣṇu, Your fierce rays, filling the whole universe with their splendor, are burning it up.

*ākhyāhi me ko bhavān ugra-rūpo  
namo 'stu te deva-vara prasīda |  
vijñātum icchāmi bhavantam ādyam  
na hi prajānāmi tava pravṛttim ||31||*

31. Tell me who You are, with this terrifying form. I offer respects to You. O best of the devas, be merciful to me. I desire to know You, the first being. I do not understand Your purpose.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
kālo 'smi loka-kṣaya-kṛt pravṛddho  
lokān samāhartum iha pravṛttauḥ |  
ṛte 'pi tvām na bhaviṣyanti sarve  
ye 'vasthitāḥ pratyānīkeṣu yodhāḥ ||32||*

32. The Lord said: I am time, the destroyer of the worlds. Increasing in power, I am here engaged in destroying these men. Even without You, all these warriors arrayed in confronting armies will cease to be.

*tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva  
jītvā śatrūn bhuñkṣva rājyaṁ samṛddham |  
mayai vaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva  
nimitta-mātraṁ bhava savyasācin ||33||*

33. Therefore rise and gain fame. Conquering the enemies, enjoy a prosperous kingdom. These have all been killed by Me already. Just be an instrument, O Arjuna!

*dronam ca bhīṣmam ca jayadratham ca  
karmaṁ tathānyān api yodha-vīrān |  
mayā hatāms tvaṁ jahi mā vyathishṭhā  
yudhyasva jetāsi rane sapatnān ||34||*

35. Slay Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Jayadratha, Karṇa and other brave warriors, who have already been killed by Me. Do not grieve. Fight and you will be victorious over the enemies in the war.

*sañjaya uvāca  
etac chrutvā vacanam keśavasya  
kṛtāñjalir vepamānaḥ kirīṭi |  
namaskṛtvā bhūya evāha kṛṣṇam  
sa-gadgadaṁ bhīta-bhītaḥ praṇamya ||35||*

35. Sañjaya said: Hearing the words of Keśava, Arjuna, with folded hands, trembling, offered his respects; and again overcome by great fear, offering respects, spoke to Kṛṣṇa in faltering voice.

*Namaskṛtvā* is poetic license. The normal form is *namaskṛtya*.

*arjuna uvāca  
sthāne hṛṣīkeśa tava prakīrṭyā  
jagat prahṛṣyaty anurajyate ca |  
rakṣāmsi bhītāni diśo dravanti  
sarve namasyanti ca siddha-saṅghāḥ ||36||*

36. Arjuna said: O controller of the senses, rightly the world rejoices and becomes attracted to You by Your glorification. Rightly also, the frightened Rākṣasas flee in all directions, and the host of devotees bow down to You.

Suddenly realizing that the pleasing form and ferocious form of the Lord were objects of attraction and repulsion, he explains this fact and praises the Lord. *Sthāne*, an indeclinable, here means “suitable.”

O Hṛṣīkeśa, You inspire the senses of Your devotees to turn towards You, and You inspire the senses of the non-devotees to turn away from You! The universe becomes joyful (*prahr̥ṣyati*) by the *saṅkīrtana* glorifying You (*prakīrtya*), and becomes attracted to You (*anurajyate*). This is reasonable (*sthane*) since the universe is favorable to You. The Rākṣasas , *asuras*, Dānavas, Piśācas and others (*rakṣāmsi*) however, becoming fearful, flee to the directions (*diśaḥ dravanti*). This is also reasonable since they are unfavorably inclined to You. And the whole group of those who are perfected by devotion to You (*siddha-saṅghāḥ*) offer their respects to You. This also is reasonable, since they are Your devotees. This verse is famous in *mantra-sāstra* for its ability to give protection from Rākṣasas .

*kasmāc ca te na nameran mahātman  
garīyase brahmaṇo 'py ādi-kartre |  
ananta deveśa jagan-nivāsa  
tvam akṣaram sad asat tatparam yat ||37||*

37. O great soul, why should they not offer respects to You, the first creator, greater than Brahmā? O infinite one, lord of the *devas*, abode of the universe, You are the Brahman, above cause and effect.

Why should they not offer respects to You? Certainly, they should offer respects to You, for You are Brahman (*akṣaram*), above both cause and effect (*sad-asat param*)?

*tvam ādi-devaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇas  
tvam asya viśvasya param nidhānam |  
vettāsi vedyam ca param ca dhāma  
tvayā tataṁ viśvam ananta-rūpa ||38||*

38. You are the original *deva* , the oldest person, the final place for the universe after destruction. You are the knower, the object of knowledge, the transcendental form. O infinite form! You pervade this whole universe.

*Nidhānam* means the place of merging at the time of destruction. *Param dhāma* means the transcendental form of the Lord beyond the *guṇas*.

vāyur yamo 'gnir varuṇaḥ śaśāṅkaḥ  
prajāpatis tvam prapitāmahaś ca |  
namo namas te'stu sahasra-kṛtvaḥ  
punaś ca bhūyo 'pi namo namas te ||39||

39. You are Vāyu, Yama, Agni, Varuṇa, the moon, Prajāpati, and the great grandfather. I offer respects to You a thousand times, and again I offer respects to You.

namaḥ purastād atha pṛṣṭhataś te  
namo'stu te sarvata eva sarva  
ananta-vīryāmita-vikramas tvam  
sarvaṁ samāpnoṣi tato 'si sarvaḥ ||40||

40. I offer respects from the back, from the front, from all sides, O person who is everything! You have infinite power, with immeasurable skill. You pervade everywhere, and therefore You are everything.

You pervade all of this universe (*sarvaṁ samāpnoṣi*), since it is Your product, like gold in earrings and bracelets. Thus You are everything.

sakheti matvā prasabham yad uktam  
he kṛṣṇa he yādava he sakheti |  
ajānatā mahimānam tavedam  
mayā pramādāt praṇayena vāpi ||41||

yac cāvahāsārtham asat-kṛto 'si  
vihāra-śayyāsana-bhojaneṣu |  
eko 'tha vāpy acyuta tat-samakṣam  
tat kṣāmaye tvām aham aprameyam ||42||

41-42. I beg pardon from You, not knowing this greatness of Yours, and through want of consideration or through affection, looking upon You, the immeasurable, as a friend, for whatever I have said rudely, such as addressing You “O Kṛṣṇa, O Yādava, O friend”, and for whatever disrespect I have shown to You in fun, while playing, lying, sitting together or dining, whether alone or in the company of others.

“O, I have committed the greatest offense to You, who are filled with such great, great powers.” In this way, Arjuna manifests great regret.

“O Kṛṣṇa (he kṛṣṇa), You are well known as the son of Vasudeva who is not famous, who was a human, a mediocre fighter situated on the same chariot as another fighter (ardha ratha). I, Arjuna, am well known as the son of a king, Pāṇḍu, a great warrior fighting on his own chariot (*atiratha*).<sup>141</sup> O Yādava (he yādava), You do not have the king’s position in the Yadu dynasty. But I have kingship over the Puru dynasty. (The *sandhi* of *sakha* with *iti* is poetic license) O friend (he *sakha*), my friendship with You is not because of the greatness of Your forefathers nor because of the reputation of Your family, but it is simply based on familiarity. I beg pardon for such rough words (*prasabham*) I have spoken, for intending the above meanings.” The sense of verse 41 is continued in verse 42 with the verb *kṣamayē*. The proper form of the verb would be *kṣamayām* (I should beg for forgiveness).

Either through negligence or out of affection, not knowing You as the universal form (*mahimānam*), I have treated You badly during leisure and other times, in order to joke. I have scolded You with sarcastic words saying that You are truthful, innocent, and very gullible. I beg forgiveness for the thousands of offenses produced when You were alone, not in the presence of friends, or when You were surrounded by friends who were joking (*tat samakṣam*). O master, I beg You to forgive me (*kṣamayē*).

*pitāsi lokasya carācarasya  
tvam asya pūjyaś ca gurur garīyān |  
na tvat-samo ’sty abhyadhikaḥ kuto ’nyo  
loka-traye ’py apratima-prabhāva ||43||*

43. You are the father of the world, of all moving and non-moving beings. You are most deserving of worship and as the teacher, even more deserving of worship. No one is equal to You, or greater than You in the three worlds, O person with unsurpassed glory.

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<sup>141</sup> This is the implication of Arjuna calling out “Kṛṣṇa.” Each of the three names of address implies that Kṛṣṇa is in a low position, not suitable in addressing the Supreme Lord.

*tasmāt praṇamya praṇidhāya kāyaṃ  
prasādaye tvāṃ ahaṃ īśaṃ īḍyam |  
piteva putrasya sakheva sakhyuḥ  
priyaḥ priyāyārhasi deva soḍhum ||44||*

44. Therefore, bowing down, prostrating my body, I beg pardon from You, the Lord, most worthy of worship. O Lord, You, so dear to me, should tolerate me, so dear to You, just as a father tolerates his son, or a friend tolerates his friend.

*Praṇidhāya* means placing the body on the earth like a rod, out of respect. The *sandhi* in *priyāyārhasi* is poetic license.

*adr̥ṣṭa-pūrvam hr̥ṣito 'smi dr̥ṣṭvā  
bhayena ca pravayathitaṃ mano me |  
tad eva me dar̥śaya deva rūpaṃ  
prasīda deveśa jagan-nivāsa ||45||*

45. I am delighted, having seen what was unseen before, but at the same time my mind is greatly troubled with fear. O Lord, show me that pleasing form of Yours. Be kind to me, O lord of the *devas*, the resting place of the universe at destruction.

Though I am delighted, having seen Your body composed of the form of the universe which has not been previously seen, my mind is distressed with fear because of its ferocity. Therefore, show me that form (*tad eva rūpa*), the form of the son of Vasudeva, the form of sweetness, which is millions of times dearer to my life. Show favor to me—do not display to me that form of great power any longer. I have now seen You as the Lord of the *devatās* (*deveśa*), the resting place of the universe (*jagan-nivāsaḥ*). It should be understood that Arjuna did not see the body of Kṛṣṇa in human form which was the origin of all the forms seen by Arjuna when Kṛṣṇa displayed the universal form, because his vision was covered by *yoga māyā*.

*kirīṭinaṃ gadināṃ cakra-hastam  
icchāmi tvāṃ draṣṭum ahaṃ tathaiva |  
tenaiva rūpeṇa catur-bhujena  
sahasra-bāho bhava viśva-mūrte ||46||*

46. I wish to see You wearing a crown, holding a club and *cakra*. O thousand-armed one, form of the universe, appear with that four-armed form.

Moreover, when you show Your form with power, show that powerful form filled with the highest *rasa*, which gives joy to the mind and eyes of people like us, which we saw before, in the form of the son of Vasudeva for performing human like pastimes-- and not the majestic form which is distasteful to our mind and eye, revealed as the universal form, related to pastimes with the *devatās*, which was never seen before. With this intention Arjuna speaks.

I desire to see that same form with a crown of valuable jewels (*tathā eva*) which we saw previously sometimes, and which Your parents saw when You were born. O form of the universe, now having thousands of hands, withdraw that form and appear (*bhava*) in that form with four hands.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*mayā prasannena tavārjunedaṁ*  
*rūpaṁ paraṁ darśitam ātma-yogāt |*  
*tejo-mayaṁ viśvam anantaṁ ādyaṁ*  
*yaṁ me tvad-anyaena na dr̥ṣṭa-pūrvam ||47||*

47. The Lord said: Being pleased with You, I have shown this supreme, brilliant, infinite, original form of the universe, which has not ever been seen by any except you, by My own *yoga-māyā*.

“O Arjuna, you have said that you desired to see My majestic form (verse 3) and by your request, I have shown the form of the universe which is one of My parts. Why has your mind become disturbed on seeing it? Is it not astonishing that you plead with Me, wanting now to see My human form?” Thus the Lord speaks this verse.

Being pleased with you, I have shown this form to you (*tava*) alone, and not to anyone else, since it has not been seen previously by anyone. In spite of that, do you not want to see that form?

*na veda-yajñādhyayanair na dānair  
na ca kriyābhir na tapobhir ugraiḥ |  
evam-rūpaḥ śakya aham nṛ-loke  
draṣṭuṁ tvad-anyena kuru-pravīra ||48||*

48. Not by study of the *Vedas*, by sacrifice, by recital of the scriptures, by charities, by rituals, or by severe austerities can this form been seen in this world by anyone except you, O hero of the Kurus.

This form which I have shown to you is rarely seen even by those who study the *Vedas* and follow other processes. I cannot be seen in this form (*evam rūpaḥ*) by anyone except you. The absence of *visarga* and consequent *sandhi* to form *śakyo' ham* instead of *śakya aham* in this verse is poetic license.

Therefore considering this, that you have attained something which is not attainable by others, fix your mind on this form, difficult to see for everyone—a form which is certainly the Lord. Having seen that form, you should forget about the human form you are again desiring to see.

*mā te vyathā mā ca vimūḍha-bhāvo  
dr̥ṣṭvā rūpaṁ ghoram īdr̥ṇ mamedam |  
vyapeta-bhīḥ pṛīta-manāḥ punas tvam  
tad eva me rūpaṁ idaṁ prapaśya ||49||*

49. Do not be fearful, do not be bewildered, having seen that terrifying form of Mine. Devoid of fear, pleased in mind, see again this form of Mine.

“O Supreme Lord, why do You not understand me? You are forcibly giving me something which I do not want. Seeing this form of Yours, my limbs are distressed, my mind is pained. Constantly, I am fainting. Let me offer my respects again and again to that majestic form from far away. I will never again pray to see that form. Forgive me, forgive me. Show to me that human form with moon-like face, covered in showers of nectar through the sweetest smiles. Please show that to me.”

The Lord then speaks this verse in a comforting mood to Arjuna who is distressed in the above manner.

*sañjaya uvāca*  
*ity arjunam vāsudevas tathoktvā*  
*svakam rūpam darśayām āsa bhūyaḥ |*  
*āśvāsayām āsa ca bhītam enam*  
*bhūtvā punaḥ saumyavapur mahātmā ||50||*

50. Having spoken to Arjuna thus, Vāsudeva showed him His personal four-handed form again. Then again, appearing in His pleasant two-handed form, the great soul gave comfort to the fearful Arjuna.

Just as the Lord has showed the very ferocious form, which arose from just one of his parts, He again showed His own, very sweet personal form (*svakam rūpam*) with four hands, crown, club, *cakra* and other ornaments, which was requested by Arjuna, and which was a mixture of sweetness and grandeur. Then again that great soul became the two handed, pleasant form (*saumya-vapuḥ*), wearing bracelets, earrings turban and yellow cloth, and comforted the fearful Arjuna.

*arjuna uvāca*  
*dr̥ṣṭvedam mānuṣam rūpam tava saumyam janārdana |*  
*idānim asmi saṁvṛttaḥ sa-cetāḥ prakṛtiṁ gataḥ ||51||*

51. Arjuna said: O Janārdana, seeing this pleasant human form of Yours, I have regained my consciousness and have gained composure.

Then Arjuna, seeing the very sweet form of Kṛṣṇa, bathing in an ocean of bliss, spoke. “O Janārdana, now I have regained my consciousness (*sa-cetāḥ saṁvṛttaḥ*), and have gained composure (*prakṛtiṁ gataḥ*).”

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*su-durdarśam idam rūpam dr̥ṣṭavān asi yan mama |*  
*devā apy asya rūpasya nityam darśana-kāṅkṣiṇaḥ ||52||*

52. The Lord said: This form of Mine which you have seen is very difficult to see. Even the *devas* are always eager to see this form.

Here the Lord glorifies in three verses His *viśvarūpa* which He showed. The *devatās* desire to see the *viśvarūpa*, but cannot see it. But you do not desire

that form at all. How can your two eyes, which continually taste the great sweetness of My human form, which is the original form, enjoy that universal form? Therefore, I gave you *divya* eyes to see it: *divyaṃ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ*. But though I gave *divya* (heavenly) eyes, I did not give you a *divya* mind. Thus, by those *divya* eyes alone you cannot enjoy completely that form, because your mind relishes only the great sweetness of My human form. If I had given you a *divya* mind, then you would have relished that *svarūpa* of the *puruṣa* as the universal form just as *devatās* do.

*nāham vedair na tapasā na dānena na cejyayā |  
śakya evaṃ-vidho draṣṭuṃ dṛṣṭavān asi mām yathā ||53||*

53. Not through the *Vedas*, not through austerities, not through charities, nor through performance of sacrifice, is it possible to see Me as you have seen Me.

Moreover, please understand that others--who desire as the goal of their lives that *svarūpa* which is not desired by you-- cannot see that form or know that form even by such practices as study of the *Vedas*.

*bhaktiyā tv anyanyayā śakya aham evaṃ-vidho 'rjuna |  
jñātuṃ draṣṭuṃ ca tattvena praveṣṭuṃ ca parantapa ||54||*

54. Only by *anyanyā bhakti* it is possible to know Me, see Me, or even merge with Me, O Arjuna.

Then, by what practice can this *viśvarūpa* be attained? By *bhakti* I can be known and seen. The dropping of *visarga* (ḥ) without *sandhi* to form *śakyo'ham*, the normal form, instead of *śakya aham* in the present text, is poetic license.

Even if one desires *nirvāṇa-mokṣa*, then one can merge (*praveṣṭuṃ*) with the Brahman (*tattvena*) only by *anyanyā bhakti* and not by other processes. The *guṇī bhūtā bhakti* of the *jñānīs* remains as a small amount of *anyanyā bhakti* after the renunciation of *jñāna* at the time of death. By that, they attain *sāyujya-mukti*. I will substantiate that point later with the verse *tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tad anantaram*: Knowing Me as Brahman, they then enter Me. (BG 18.55)

*mat-karma-kṛn mat-paramo mad-bhaktaḥ saṅga-varjitaḥ |  
nirvairah sarva-bhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti pāṇḍava ||55||*

55. He who works for Me, who holds Me as supreme, who is devoted to Me, without material attachment, devoid of hatred of any living being, attains Me, O Arjuna.

In order to summarize the subject of *bhakti*, in this verse the Lord speaks about the general characteristics of various types of devotees who were described starting in the seventh chapter. *Saṅga-varjitaḥ* means devoid of material attachment.

Arjuna understood that his victory on the battle field was dependent on the great power of Kṛṣṇa alone. This is the meaning of this chapter.

Here ends the commentaries on the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā* for the pleasure of the devotees' minds, by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Twelve

*arjuna uvāca  
evam satata-yuktā ye bhaktās tvām paryupāsate |  
ye cāpy akṣaram avyaktam teṣām ke yoga-vittamāḥ ||1||*

1. Arjuna said: Who are the best knowers of *yoga*-- those devotees who worship You as just described, with desire to constantly associate with You, or those who worship the unmanifest Brahman?

In the twelfth chapter, the superiority of all types of devotees to the *jñānīs* is described, and among the devotees those who are endowed with wonderful qualities like lack of hatred are praised. Arjuna heard the great superiority of *bhakti* at the beginning of the topic of *bhakti* in the following words:

*yoginām api sarveṣām mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā  
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

But I consider he who worships Me with faith, with mind attached to Me, to be greater than all types of yogīs. BG 6.47

Arjuna, desiring to hear about the superiority of *bhakti*, even if it is in summary, asks a question. The devotees described as being constantly engaged, worship You as Śyāmasundara, mentioned at the end of the last chapter with - *mat-karma-kṛm mat-paramaḥ* (BG 11.55). Others worship the Brahman (*akṣara*) with no qualities (*avyakta* means *nirviśeṣa*) described in the *śrutis* with statements such as *etad vai tad akṣaram gārgi brāhmaṇā abhivadanty asthūlam ananv ahrasvam*: O Gārgī, that *akṣara*, which is not wide, not small and not short, is called Brahman. (*Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.8.9) Among these two types of persons who know *yoga*, who are the best knowers of *yoga* (*yoga-vittamaḥ*)? Who know the best process for attaining You? Or, do they not know the process for attaining You?

In a comparison involving two items, usually the form *yoga-vittara* (which of the two types know *yoga* better) would be used. The word *yoga-vittama* should be understood to suggest that among the better of the two types of knowers of *yoga* (*yoga-vittarā*), who are the best knowers of *yoga* (*yoga-vittamā*)?

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*mayy āveśya mano ye mām nitya-yuktā upāsate |*  
*śraddhayā parayopetās te me yuktatamā matāḥ ||2||*

2. The Lord said: I consider those who worship Me, desiring to associate with Me constantly, absorbing their minds in Me, endowed faith beyond the *guṇas*, to be the best knowers of *yoga*.

Among them, My devotees are the best. Those who absorb their minds in Me, Śyāmasundara, those who desire to be constantly united with Me (*nitya-yuktā*), with faith which is beyond the *guṇas* (*parayā śraddhayā*)-- they, My *ananya-bhaktas*, are the best knowers of *yoga* (*yuktatamā*).

Concerning faith, it is said:

*sāttviky ādhyātmikī śraddhā karma-śraddhā tu rājasī*  
*tāmasy adharme yā śraddhā mat-sevāyām tu nirguṇā*

Faith directed toward spiritual life is in the mode of goodness, faith rooted in fruitive work is in the mode of passion, faith residing in irreligious activities is in the mode of ignorance, but *faith in My devotional service is purely transcendental*. SB 11.25.27

From this it should be inferred that inferior to these *ananya-bhaktas* are those having *bhakti* mixed with *jñāna*, *karma* or other processes, who are called *yoga-vittarā*. Thus it shown here that *bhakti* is better than *jñāna*, and that, among the types of *bhakti*, *ananyā bhakti* is the best.

*ye tv akṣaram anirdeśyam avyaktam paryupāsate |*  
*sarvatra-gam acintyaṁ ca kūṭa-stham acalaṁ dhruvam ||3||*  
*sanniyamyendriya-grāmaṁ sarvatra sama-buddhayaḥ |*  
*te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ ||4||*

3-4. But those who worship the unnamed, formless entity, all-pervading in space and time, the inconceivable, unchanging, eternal Brahman, completely subduing their senses, looking on all things equally, intent on the welfare of all, attain Me alone-- in the form of impersonal Brahman.

Those who worship My impersonal *svarūpa* known as Brahman are inferior because of their state of suffering. This the Lord states in two verses. Those who worship the Brahman (*akṣaram*) which is not possible to designate (*anirdeśyam*), because it is without form or other qualities (*avyaktam*), which is spread everywhere (*sarvatra-gam*), beyond logic (*acintyam*) and extending over all time (*kūṭa-stham*), devoid of increase or other change (*acalam*) and eternal (*dhruvam*), attain Me in the form the impersonal Brahman. He says that they attain “Me” because the Brahman is non-different from the Lord. *Amara Kośa* says that *kūṭasha* means “that which pervades time with one form.”

*kleśo 'dhikataras teṣāṁ avyaktāsakta-cetasām |*  
*avyaktā hi gatiḥ duḥkham dehavadbhir avāpyate ||5||*

5. Those who are attached to the impersonal realization encounter extreme difficulties. The unmanifest goal brings suffering to those who have bodies.

This verse describes a little of their inferior position. Those who are attracted to only Brahman (*avyaktāsakta-cetasām*), who desire only realization of Brahman, undergo excessive difficulties in attaining it, because (*hi*) by what means at all can something without qualities be made manifest? That goal is attained by the *jīvas* endowed with bodies (*dehavadbhiḥ*) only by undergoing suffering (*duḥkham*). The senses have the power for particular knowledge such as sound, not for something which does not possess particular qualities. Therefore, stopping of the senses is necessary for those who desire knowledge of the impersonal without particular qualities (*nirviśeṣa*). But stopping the senses is like stopping rivers. Stopping the senses is difficult. Sanat Kumāra says:

*yat-pāda-paṅkaja-palāśa-vilāsa-bhaktyā  
karmāśayaṁ grathitam udgrathayanti santah  
tadvan na rikta-matayo yatayo' pi ruddha-  
sroto-gaṇās tam araṇaṁ bhaja vāsudevam*

The devotees, who are always engaged in the service of the toes of the lotus feet of the Lord, can very easily overcome hard-knotted desires for fruitive activities. Because this is very difficult, the non-devotees—the *jñānīs* and *yogīs*—although trying to stop the waves of sense gratification, cannot do so. Therefore you are advised to engage in the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva. *SB* 4.22.39

*kṛcchro mahān iha bhavārṇavam aplaveśāṁ  
ṣaḍ-varga-nakram asukhena titīṛṣanti  
tat tvam harer bhagavato bhajanīyam aṅghrim  
kṛtvodupam vyasanam uttara dustarāṇam*

The ocean of nescience is very difficult to cross because it is infested with many dangerous sharks. Although those who are non-devotees undergo severe austerities and penances to cross that ocean, we recommend that you simply take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord, which are like boats for crossing the ocean. Although the ocean is difficult to cross, by taking shelter of His lotus feet you will overcome all dangers. *SB* 4.22.40

Furthermore, even that goal of impersonal Brahman which is attained by such suffering is attained only by having a mixture with *bhakti*. Without *bhakti* to the Lord, the worshippers of the impersonal Brahman obtain only suffering, and not Brahman. Brahmā says:

*teṣām asau kleśala eva śiṣyate  
nānyad yathā sthūla-tuṣāvaghātinām*

As a person who beats an empty husk of wheat cannot get grain, one who simply speculates cannot achieve self-realization. His only gain is trouble. SB 10.14.4

*ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sannyasya mat-parāḥ |  
ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate ||6||  
teṣām ahaṁ samuddhartā mṛtyu-saṁsāra-sāgarāt |  
bhavāmi na cirāt pārtha mayy āveśita-cetasām ||7||*

6-7. O son of Pṛthā, I quickly deliver from the ocean of repeated birth and death those who meditate on Me and worship Me with *ananyā bhakti*, having surrendered to Me and given up all other processes for attaining Me.

But the devotees, even without *jñāna*, by *kevalā bhakti* alone, comfortably attain liberation from *saṁsāra*. Having given up (*sannyasya* means *tyāga* or renunciation) all other process for the purpose of attaining Me (*mayi*), they worship Me by *ananyā bhakti-yoga* (*ananyena yogena*)—which is devoid of *karma*, *jñāna*, *tapas* or other elements. It is said:

*yat karmabhir yat tapasā jñāna-vairāgyataś ca yat  
yogena dāna-dharmaṇa śreyobhir itarair api  
sarvaṁ mad-bhakti-yogena mad-bhaktō labhate'ñjasā  
svargāpavargam mad-dhāma kathañcid yadi vāñchati*

Everything that can be achieved by fruitive activities, penance, knowledge, detachment, mystic *yoga*, charity, religious duties and all other means of perfecting life is easily achieved by My devotee through loving service unto Me. If somehow or other My devotee desires promotion to heaven, liberation, or residence in My abode, he easily achieves such benedictions. SB 11.20.32-33

In the *Mokṣa Dharma*, Nārāyaṇīya portion it also says:

*yā vai sādhana m sampattiḥ puruṣārtha catuṣṭaye  
tayā vinā tad aṇoti naro nārāyaṇāśrayaḥ*

Whatever among the four goals of human life can be achieved by various spiritual practices is automatically achieved without such endeavors by the person who has taken shelter of Lord Nārāyaṇa, the refuge of all persons.

“Still, what is the method by which they cross *samsāra*?”

“There is no question about the method by which they cross *samsāra*, because without even having a method, I take them over it. I quickly become their deliverer from the ocean of *samsāra*.” Implied here is that the Lord has affection for His devotees, but not for the *jñānīs*.

*mayy eva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya |  
nivasīsyasi mayy eva ata ūrdhvaṁ na samśayaḥ ||8||*

8. Concentrate your mind only on Me. Fix your intelligence on Me. You will attain residence with Me after leaving the body, without doubt.

“Since *bhakti* is the best, please perform only *bhakti*.” He teaches this *bhakti* in three verses.

The word *eva* excludes the impersonal aspect of the Lord. Concentrate your mind on Me only, remember only Me (*mayy eva mana ādhatsva*), that form of Śyāmasundara, with yellow cloth and forest garland--and not the impersonal Brahman. And also, fix your intelligence, which has the power of discrimination, upon Me. This means to continually reflect on the statements of scripture using intelligence, which will result in meditation. Such contemplation is called *manana*. Thus, you will attain residence near Me. *Nivasīsyasi* is a poetic form of *nivatsyasi* (future of *nivas*) for metrical purpose.

*atha cittam samādhātuṁ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram |*

9. Otherwise, if you are not able to concentrate your mind on Me steadily, then seek to attain Me by the method of repetition of fixing your mind on Me, O conqueror of wealth.

The Lord then speaks of a method to attain the state of remembrance mentioned above, if one is unable to remember the Lord with no preparation. Repeatedly withdrawing the mind when it goes here and there, and fixing the mind on Me is called *abhyāsa*. By this method of *abhyāsa* (*abhyāsa-yogena*), endeavor to attain Me.

In common words, this means, “Stop the movement of mind, which like a river cannot be controlled, and which gravitates to vulgar sense objects such as taste, and establish the mind’s movement in My beautiful form and taste. O Dhanañjaya, having conquered many enemies, you have taken much wealth. Now, conquering the mind, you can take the treasure of meditation.”

*abhyāse ’py asamartho ’si mat-karma-paramo bhava |  
mad-artham api karmāni kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi ||10||*

10. If you are unable to practice in this manner, then perform transcendental services for Me. Performing activities for My pleasure, you will attain perfection.

“As the tongue contaminated by jaundice does not like sugar candy, so the mind contaminated by ignorance does not accept Your form, even though it is sweet. Therefore, it is not possible for me to combat this very strong, uncontrollable mind.”

“If you should think in this way, then I answer with these words.”

“Become engaged in My supreme activities, in activities meant for the highest benefit (*mat-karma-paramah*). Doing services (*karmāni kurvan*) such as hearing and singing about Me, bowing to Me, worshiping Me, sweeping and washing My temple, picking flowers,<sup>142</sup> even without remembrance of

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<sup>142</sup> These are external activities of *bhakti*.

Me as previously described, you will attain perfection (*siddhim*), characterized by being one of My associates in *prema*.”

*athaitad apy aśakto 'si kartuṁ mad-yogam āśritah |  
sarva-karma-phala-tyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān ||11||*

11. If you cannot do this, take shelter of dedicating all prescribed actions to Me. While controlling your mind, act with detachment from the results of the work.

If you are unable to do this, then taking shelter of the process of offering all your actions to Me (*mad-yogam āśritah*), give up all the results of your actions as described in the first six chapters (*karma-yoga*).

The meaning is this. In the first six chapters, the Lord spoke of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* offered to the Lord, a method to attain liberation. In the second six chapters, the Lord spoke of *bhakti-yoga*, the method of gaining the Lord Himself. *Bhakti-yoga* has two types: being fixed in *bhakti* through internal senses, and being fixed in *bhakti* through external senses.

The first type of *bhakti*, using internal senses, has three sub categories: *smaraṇa ātmika* and *manana ātmika* (mentioned in verse 8, using mind and intellect), and for those who desire remembrance, but cannot do continual remembrance, practice of the above, called *abhyāsa-rūpa* (verse 9). These three are difficult for a person with poor intelligence, and easy to perform for one with good intellect and no offenses.

The second type, relying on external senses, is composed of hearing and chanting (verse 10). It is easy to perform for everyone. Those who are qualified for performing both methods (internal and external) are most outstanding. This was stated in the second six chapters. Those who cannot do this, who do not have faith in fixing the senses on the Lord, those who are qualified for *niṣkāma-karma* offered to the Lord as mentioned in the first six chapters of the *Gītā*, are in an inferior position to the devotees (verse 11).

*śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāj jñānād dhyānam viśiṣyate |  
dhyānāt karma-phala-tyāgas tyāgāc chāntir anantaram ||12||*

12. *Manana* is better than practice, but meditation is better than *manana*. From meditation, one easily becomes detached from the results of work in the form of *bhukti* and *mukti*. From this detachment one finally attains lasting peace (absorbing his senses only in Me.)

In this verse, the Lord makes clear the successive superiority of *abhyāsa*, *manana* and *smaraṇa* (meditation) mentioned previously.

Better than practice is fixing the intelligence on Me (*jñānam* or *mananam*). By performing practice alone, it is difficult to achieve meditation. By performing *manana*, easily one can come to meditation. Therefore, by this distinction, it is concluded that meditation (*mayi mana ādhatsva*, or *smaraṇa*) is better than *jñāna* (*manana*). Why? From meditation one becomes devoid of desire for fruits of *sakāma-karma* in the form of Svarga, and the fruits of *niškāma-karma* in the form of liberation. Even though Svarga and liberation are attained without his endeavor, the devotee becomes indifferent to them. Before the devotee reaches steady meditation, when he has not yet attained *rati* (*bhāva*), he has just a desire to give up liberation. But when he becomes fixed in meditation (at *bhāva* stage), he becomes disgusted with *mokṣa*. He takes liberation as insignificant. That meditation is the cause for indifference to *mokṣa*. This is stated in *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu*, where *bhakti* is glorified with six qualities:

*kleśa-ghnī śubhadā mokṣa-laghutākṛt sudurlabhā  
sāndrānanda-viśeṣātmā śrī-kṛṣṇākaraṣaṇī ca sā*

*Bhakti* is characterized by destruction of suffering, bestowal of good qualities, disregard for liberation, rarity, intense spiritual bliss and attracting even Kṛṣṇa.<sup>143</sup> *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu* 1.1.17

*na pārameṣṭhyam na mahendra-dhiṣṇyam  
na sārva-bhaumam na rasādhipatyam*

<sup>143</sup> The first two qualities appearing during *sādhana-bhakti*, the second two, including indifference to liberation, appear during *bhāva-bhakti*, or *rati*. The last two qualities appear in *prema-bhakti*. The state of meditation is equated with *bhāva-bhakti*. One is naturally detached from both *bhukti* and *mukti* at that stage, achieving *karma-phala-tyāga* mentioned in this verse.

*na yoga-siddhīr apunar-bhavaṁ vā  
mayy arpitātmecchati mad vinānyat*

The devotee who has offered his soul to Me does not want anything if it is separate from Me—not the position of the supreme demigod of the universe, Brahmā, nor that of Lord Indra, nor kingship over the entire earth or over the lower planetary systems, nor the mystic perfections of *yoga*, nor even freedom from the cycle of rebirth. SB 11.14.14

In that verse, the phrase *mayy arpita ātmā* means “fixed in *dhyāna* on Me.”

After developing distaste for the fruits of action, he then attains peace in the form of stopping the senses from dwelling on all objects except My form and qualities. This explanation directly links the succession of stages from the two words *śreyah* and *viśiṣyate* in the first line to *anantaram* in the second line. No other explanation can be considered.

*adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānāṁ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca |  
nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ kṣamī ||13||  
santuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī yatātmā dṛḍha-niścayaḥ |  
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir yo mad-bhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ ||14||*

13-14. That devotee who is without hatred towards any person, who is a friend to all living entities, who is merciful, without possessiveness, without false identification with his body, who is equal in happiness and distress, tolerant, satisfied with what comes of its own accord, constantly engaged in *bhakti-yoga*, restrained in mind, fixed in determination, and with mind and intelligence offered to Me, is dear to Me.

What is the description of the devotee who has attained such peace? In response to this question, the different natures of many types of devotees are described in eight verses.

*Adveṣṭa* means that a person does not have hatred even for those who hate oneself. Rather one has friendliness towards them (*maitraḥ*). One is merciful to them, thinking that they should not end up in unfortunate circumstances (*karuṇaḥ*).

“But by having what type of discriminating powers can one attain friendliness and mercy even to enemies?”

“One should not make distinctions at all. By non-possessiveness of children and wife (*nirmamaḥ*), by not thinking of the body as the self (*nirahankārah*), My devotee never develops hatred towards others. Why should he accept such distinctions, if he wants to reduce suffering produced from hatred (a distinction):”

“But then one will be suffering pain in the body by getting punched or kicked by others.”

“It is said by Siva:

*nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve na kutaścana bibhyati  
svargāpavarga-narakeṣv api tulyārtha-darśinaḥ*

Devotees solely engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, never fear any condition of life. For them the heavenly planets, liberation and the hellish planets are all the same, for such devotees are interested only in the service of the Lord. SB 6.17.28

Thus one should consider happiness and distress equally (*sama-duḥkha-sukham*). Moreover, that person thinks that he should necessarily endure his *prārabdha-karmas*.<sup>144</sup> In being equal to happiness and distress, he should be tolerant of the suffering (*kṣamī*).” *Kṣamī* means having tolerance, coming from the root *kṣam* meaning to endure.

“But how will such a devotee be able to maintain his life?”

“He is satisfied to eat what comes of its own accord, or with very little effort (*santuṣṭhaḥ*).”

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<sup>144</sup> *Prārabdha-karmas* are those which will manifest results in this lifetime. *Aprārabdha-karmas* will manifest in future bodies, though the acts have been committed in past lives.

“But since You have said that one should be equal in happiness and distress, then how can one express satisfaction (*santuṣṭhaḥ*) with getting something to eat?”

“That person is constantly engaged in *bhakti-yoga* (*satatam yogī*). He is acting for the purpose of attaining perfection in *bhakti*.<sup>145</sup> It is said:

*āhārārtham yatataiva yuktaṁ tat-prāṇa-dhāraṇam  
tattvaṁ vimṛśyate tena tad vijñāya param vrajet*

If required, one should endeavor to get sufficient foodstuffs, because it is always necessary and proper to maintain one’s health. When the senses, mind and life air are fit, one can contemplate spiritual truth, and by understanding the truth one is liberated. SB 11.18.34

“Moreover, if by chance he does not attain his required food, his mind is restrained (*yata ātmā*); it is without agitation. Even if his mind happens to become disturbed, he does not resort to *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* or other processes to bring about peace. He remains convinced that he should only perform *ananya bhakti* (*dr̥ḍha-niścayaḥ*). His devotion does not become weakened. The cause of all of this is mentioned: he is absorbed in meditating on and contemplating Me (*mayy arpita mano buddhiḥ*). Such a devotee greatly pleases Me (*me priyaḥ*).”

*yasmān nodvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ |  
harṣāmarṣa-bhayodvegair mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ ||15||*

15. He who does not agitate others, nor is agitated by others, he who is free from material emotions such as joy, jealousy, fear and anxiety, is dear to Me.

Moreover, it is said:

*yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā  
sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ*

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<sup>145</sup> He will express satisfaction because it is helpful for him to execute *bhakti-yoga*.

One who has unflinching devotion for the Personality of Godhead has all the good qualities of the demigods. SB 5.18.12

By this statement it is understood that other qualities which please the Lord also automatically appear by the constant performance of *bhakti* to Me. Please hear about these. Five verses describe these qualities. The qualities mentioned here--being freed from material jubilation, anger, fear and anxiety--are mentioned again in verse 17 in order to show the difficulty in becoming free from those elements.

*anapekṣaḥ śucir dakṣa udāsīno gata-vyathah |  
sarvārambha-parityāgī yo mad-bhaktah sa me priyah ||16||*

16. He who is devoid of expectations from his work, is clean, skilful in all situations, detached from other persons, without distress, and who rejects all undertakings, is dear to Me.

*Anapekṣaḥ* means devoid of expectations from material work. *Udāsīnah* means to be unattached to material persons. He has the quality of giving up all material endeavors in the present and future, and even some spiritual endeavors such as teaching scripture (*sarvārambha-parityāgī*).

*yo na hr̥ṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati |  
śubhāsubha-parityāgī bhaktimān yah sa me priyah ||17||*

17. The devotee who neither rejoices or hates, neither laments nor hankers, who gives up all sinful and pious actions, is dear to Me.

*samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoh |  
śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅga-vivarjitah ||18||*

*tulya-nindā-stutir maunī santuṣṭo yena kenacit |  
aniketah sthira-matir bhaktimān me priyo narah ||19||*

18-19. The devotee who is equal to enemy and friend, equal in respect or disrespect, in cold or heat, happiness or distress, who is free from attachments, equal in criticism or praise, silent, satisfied with whatever is there, unattached to his house, and steady in mind, is dear to Me.

*Aniketah* means that he is not attached to his material house.

*ye tu dharmāmṛtam idaṁ yathoktaṁ paryupāsate |  
śraddadhānā mat-paramā bhaktās te 'tīva me priyāḥ ||20||*

20. But those devotees who completely take up the nectar of these qualities just taught, who are full of faith and most devoted, are most dear to Me.

Summarizing the qualities fixed in various types of His devotees which He has just mentioned, the Lord now describes the result of hearing and deliberating on the these qualities by devotees desirous of obtaining all those qualities. Since these qualities arise from sense control (*sānti*, mentioned in verse 12), which in turn arises from *bhakti*, they are thus not material qualities. *bhaktiyā tuṣyati kṛṣṇo na guṇaiḥ*: Kṛṣṇa is pleased by *bhakti*, not by good material qualities. (*Padyāvali* 8) Such statements are innumerable in the scriptures.

*Tu* here indicates differentiation. The various devotees previously mentioned were fixed in their individual natures with certain qualities. But those practitioners who desire all of the qualities of all the types of devotees are superior to those just mentioned, who have attained only some of the qualities. Therefore, the word *atīva* (surpassingly) is used. Such devotees, who take up all the qualities, are even dearer to Me.<sup>146</sup>

The astonishing qualities of *bhakti*, which is supreme and blissful, whose goal can be attained by all, and which is easy to perform, have been explained in this chapter. Though it has been shown that *jñāna* is bitter like *nīma* fruit and *bhakti* is sweet like grape juice, still, these two processes are taken up their respective followers who crave that particular taste.

Thus end the commentaries on the twelfth chapter of the *Gītā*, to give joy to the hearts of devotees, through the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Thirteen

*arjuna uvāca*

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<sup>146</sup> *Paryupāsate* means “to completely take up.”

*prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva kṣetraṁ kṣetra-jñam eva ca  
etad veditum icchāmi jñānam jñeyam ca keśava ||1||*

1. Arjuna said: O Keśava, I desire to know about *prakṛti*, *puruṣa*, the field and knower of the field, as well as the process of knowing and the object of knowledge.<sup>147</sup>

Let me offer my respects to the Lord's *bhakti*, which, by its mercy, resides within *jñāna* and other processes to a small degree in order to bring about success in those processes. In the last six chapters of the *Gītā*, *jñāna* mixed with *bhakti* is delineated. Within these six chapters, *kevalā bhakti* also is shown indirectly to be supreme. In the thirteenth chapter, the body where *jīva* and *Paramātmā* reside, the practice of *jñāna*, the *jīva* and *prakṛti* are described.

In the middle six chapters, it was mentioned that by *kevalā bhakti* one attains the Lord, *Bhagavān*, and three other methods of worship, starting with worship of oneself, were then described. Liberation arising from *jñāna* mixed with *bhakti* practiced by followers of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* and the process of *jñāna* were briefly described in the first six chapters. The third six chapters explain this *jñāna* in detail by first examining the field, the knower of the field, the process of knowledge and the object of knowledge.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
idaṁ śarīraṁ kaunteya kṣetraṁ ity abhidhīyate |  
etad yo vetti taṁ prāhuḥ kṣetra-jña iti tad-vidah ||2||*

2. The Lord said: O son of Kuntī, this body is called the field. Those in knowledge call the person who knows this field the knower of the field.

This verse answers the question “What is the field and who is the knower of the field?” This body with senses, the abode of enjoyment, is the field, since it is the basis for sprouting the tree of repeated births. He who knows that body in terms of “I and mine” in the conditioned state due his attachment to that body, and he who, being devoid of the conception of “I and mine” in the liberated state, knows that he is not attached to that body, is the *jīva*. He is called the knower of the field, situated in these two conditions. Like one

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<sup>147</sup> This verse is omitted in some editions.

who ploughs the field, he is the knower of the field, and is the enjoyer of the fruit. The Lord says:

*adanti caikaṁ phalam asya ṛdhrā  
grāme-carā ekam aranya-vāsāḥ  
haṁsā ya ekaṁ bahu-rūpaṁ ijjair  
māyā-mayaṁ veda sa veda vedam*

Those lusty after material enjoyment and dedicated to family life enjoy one of the tree's fruits, and swanlike men in the renounced order of life enjoy the other fruit. One who with the help of the bona fide spiritual masters can understand this tree to be a manifestation of the potency of the one Supreme Truth appearing in many forms actually knows the meaning of the Vedic literature. *SB* 11.12.23

The meaning of this verse from *Bhāgavatam* is as follows. *Ṛdhrāḥ* means “those who desire.”<sup>148</sup> Those who have desire and who move in society, the conditioned *jīvas*, eat one fruit of the tree called distress, because the tree has the ability to generate distress, even with its ripened fruits of Svarga. The swans, which live in the forest, the liberated *jīvas*, eat another fruit called happiness, because the tree has ability to generate happiness in the form of liberation. Thus, the one tree of *saṁsāra* has many forms since it has the capacity to let one attain hell, Svarga, and liberation. It is called *māyā-mayaṁ*, made of *māyā*, because it is generated from the Lord's *māyā-śakti*. He who knows this tree with the help of the worshipable *gurus* (*ijyaih*) knows the *Vedas*.

*Tad-vidaḥ* in the *Gītā* verse refers to persons who know the field and the knower of the field.

*kṣetra-jñāṁ cāpi mām viddhi sarva-kṣetreṣu bhārata |  
kṣetra-kṣetraññayor jñānaṁ yat taj jñānaṁ mataṁ mama ||3||*

3. O descendent of Bharata, know that I also am the knower of the field in all bodies. According to Me, knowledge means knowledge of the field and knowledge of the two types of knowers of the field.

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<sup>148</sup> This word also means “vulture.”

It has been said that the *jīva* is the knower of the field because of his knowledge of his body. But the Paramātmā also is the knower of the field because He knows all bodies completely. “Know that I, the Paramātmā situated as the monitor in all the bodies, am the knower of the field. Each *jīva* has knowledge of his particular body, but not of all bodies. But I, though one person, have knowledge of all bodies completely.” This distinction should be understood. What is knowledge? Knowledge of the *jīva* and Paramātmā, both knowers of the field, along with knowledge of the field, is called knowledge according to Me.

Explaining this verse in a different way, saying that there is only one *jīva* in existence, one knower of the field,<sup>149</sup> cannot be accepted, since that opinion is contradicted by the later statement *uttamaḥ puruṣas tv anyañ paramātmety udāhṛtaḥ*: but there is another supreme person called the Paramātmā. (15.17)

*tat kṣetraṁ yac ca yādṛk ca yad-vikāri yataś ca yat |  
sa ca yo yat-prabhāvaś ca tat samāsenā me śṛṇu ||4||*

4. Hear from Me briefly what is the composition of this field, what are its qualities, what are its transformations, from where it originates, by what varieties it is known, who is the knower and what are his powers.

Now the Lord begins to elaborate on what He has said previously in abbreviated form.

Hear from Me in brief of what the body consists (*yac ca*)-- a conglomeration of five gross elements, *prāṇa*, senses and other things; what qualities it exhibits (*yadṛk*)-- such as desire and hatred; what its transformations are (*yad-vikāri*)—into desirable or undesirable things; from what it arises (*yataḥ*)--from the combination of matter and soul; by what it is distinguished (*yat*)--by differences among various moving or non-moving bodies; and who (*yah*) is he (*sa*)--the knower of the field--the *jīva* and the Paramātmā.

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<sup>149</sup> This is the case in Māyāvāda philosophy. Baladeva in his commentary explains and defeats this interpretation.

The neuter form singular *yat* and *tat* are used instead of the masculine, though *jīva*, *Paramātmā* and the field are referred to, by the rule of grammar *napuṃsakam anapuṃsakennaikavac ca* (*Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Pāṇini 1.2.69). If there is a group of items with the same base of various genders including neuter, the neuter gender can be used to indicate all of them. This operation is called *eka-śeṣa* (single remainder).

*ṛṣibhir bahudhā gītaṃ chandobhir vividhaiḥ pṛthak |  
brahma-sūtra-padais̄ caiva hetumadbhir viniścitaiḥ ||5||*

5. This has been described by many *ṛṣis*, by many verses of the *Vedas* and by the logical, very decisive words of the *Brahma Sūtras*.

“You are describing this briefly. Who then has described this in detail?”

It has been described by *ṛṣis* such as *Vasiṣṭha* in the scriptures dealing with *yoga*, by the *Vedas* (*chandobhiḥ*) and by the words of the *Brahma Sūtras*. The *Brahma Sūtras*, through their words (*padaiḥ*) such as *athāto brahma jijñāsa* (*Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1) make known (*padyate*) Brahman. But what type of words are they? They are words of logic (*hetumadbhir*), which are very decisive (*viśeṣataḥ niścitaiḥ*). Examples are as follows:

*īkṣater nāśabdam*

Brahman is not inexpressible by words, because it is seen that it is conveyed through the words in the *Vedas*. *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.5

*ānandamayo ’bhyāsāt*

The word *ānandamaya* refers to *para brahman* because of the repeated use of the word *brahman* in relation to it. *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.13

*mahā-bhūtāny ahaṅkāro buddhir avyaktam eva ca |  
indriyāṇi daśaikam ca pañca cendriya-gocarāḥ ||6||  
icchā dveṣaḥ sukhaṃ duḥkhaṃ saṅghātaś cetanā dhṛtiḥ |  
etat kṣetraṃ samāsenā sa-vikāram udāhṛtam ||7||*

6-7. The field in brief is said to consist of the five gross elements, false ego, *mahat-tattva*, *prakṛti*, the ten senses, the mind and the five sense objects, desire, hatred, happiness and distress, the body, and conscious determination, along with its transformations.

In this verse, the nature of the field is described. *Mahābhūtāni* refers to ether, air, fire, water and earth. *Ahaṅkāra* refers to false ego, the cause of the *mahābhūtas*. *Buddhi* refers to *mahat-tattva*, composed of *viñāna*, the cause of *ahaṅkāra*. *Avyakta* refers to *prakṛti*, the cause of *mahat-tattva*. *Indriyāni* refers to the ten senses: eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, hands, feet, genital, anus and voice. *Eka* refers to the mind. The five *indriya-gocarā* are the sense objects--sound, touch, form, taste and smell. The field is made of these twenty four elements.<sup>150</sup>

*San̄ghāta* is the body, evolving from the twenty four elements. *Ichā*, *dveṣa*, *sukha* and *duḥkha* are well known. *Cetanā* is the mental function constituted of knowledge. *Dhṛti* is perseverance. *Ichā* and other qualities mentioned in this verse are qualities of the mind not the soul, and thus they are included in the field.<sup>151</sup> These are representative of *saṅkalpa* and other qualities mentioned in the *śruti* (not being an exhaustive list of the qualities of the mind):

*kāmaḥ saṅkalpo vicikitsā śraddhā dhṛtir hrīr dhīr bhīr ity etat sarvaṁ mana eva*

Desire, determination, uncertainty, faith, lack of faith, perseverance, lack of perseverance, humility, intelligence, and fear are all products of the mind. *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.5.3

By this list, the qualities of the field which was previously promised by the word *yadrk* in verse 3 have been shown. This field which has six transformations (*savikāra*), such as birth and growth,<sup>152</sup> has thus been briefly described (*udāhṛtam*).

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<sup>150</sup> *Yac ca* of verse 3, “what is the field composed of,” has been described here.

<sup>151</sup> This does not mean, however, that the soul does not have qualities such as perseverance.

<sup>152</sup> The six transformations are birth, growth, maintenance, maturity, decline and death.

*amānitvam adambhitvam ahimsā kṣāntir ārjavam |*  
*ācāryopāsanam śaucaṁ sthairyam ātma-vinigrahaḥ ||8||*  
*indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam anahaṅkāra eva ca |*  
*janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha-doṣānudaṛśanam ||9||*  
*asaktir anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putra-dāra-grhādiṣu |*  
*nityam ca sama-cittatvam iṣṭāniṣtopapattiṣu ||10||*  
*mayi cānanya-yogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī |*  
*vivikta-deśa-sevitvam aratir jana-saṁsadi ||11||*  
*adhyaṭma-jñāna-nityatvam tattva-jñānārtha-darśanam |*  
*etaj jñānam iti proktam ajñānam yad ato'nyathā ||12||*

7-12. Freedom from pride; lack of ostentation; non-violence; forbearance; sincerity; worship of the teacher; purity; steadiness; control of the mind; detachment from enjoyment of sense objects; lack of identification with body; understanding that all states of existence such as birth, death, old age and disease give rise to suffering; freedom from attachment to others, lack of identification with the condition of sons and others; equanimity of mind in the face of desirable or undesirable events; devotion to me with undeviating attention; resorting to solitary places with distaste for crowds; constant engagement in knowledge of the self; and always keeping in mind the goal of liberation--all of these are declared to be knowledge. What is otherwise is ignorance.

The two knowers of the field, the *jīva* and *Paramātmā*, which are to be known by distinguishing them from the field just mentioned will be described in detail. The twenty factors to be used for gaining that knowledge are first mentioned in five verses. Of these, eighteen are common to both the devotees and the *jñānīs*. However the devotees zealously engage in the one element mentioned in the eleventh verse, *mayi cānanya-yogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī*. The other seventeen items manifest automatically for those who engage in that one item. The *bhaktas* do not devote effort to the seventeen items individually. This is the tradition. The last two items are especially for the *jñānīs*. The meaning of the items such as *amānitva* is clear, therefore no comments are given.

*Śauca* refers to both internal and external cleanliness. The *smṛti* says:

*śaucaṁ ca dvividhaṁ proktaṁ bāhyam abhyantaram tathā  
mrj-jalābhyāṁ smṛtaṁ bāhyam bhāva-suddhis tathāntaram*

There are two types of cleanliness described, internal and external. External cleanliness is by water and earth. Internal cleanliness is purity of mind.<sup>153</sup>

*Anudarśanam* means to observe constantly the detrimental effect of sorrow, caused by birth, death, old age and disease.

*Asakti* means to give up affection for sons and others.

*Anābhiṣvaṅga* means of lack of identification with the happiness and distress of sons and others.

*Sama-cittatvam* means to remain calm in the face of receiving either favorable or unfavorable treatment or events.

One should have *bhakti*, unmixed with *karma*, *jñāna*, *tapa* or *yoga* (*mayi ananya yogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī*), unto Me, Śyāmasundara. The word *ca* here indicates that *bhakti* may also be performed with a slight mixture of *jñāna* or other elements (*jñāna-miśra-bhakti*). The first, the unmixed type, will be executed by the devotees. The second type will be executed by the *jñānīs*. Some devotees say however that this statement, being in the last six chapters, is for showing that just as *ananyā bhakti* produces *prema*, it is also necessary to practice for realization of Paramātmā. And if the sentence refers only to *jñānīs*, then the phrase *ananya yogena* means “by thinking of everything as *ātmā*.” *Avyabhicāriṇī* means that one should do it daily. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says the word *avyabhicāriṇī* refers to *bhakti* which cannot be stopped by any means at all.

*Adhyātma-jñāna* means knowledge related to the *ātmā*. One should engage oneself in that knowledge constantly. This means that one should be fixed in the purity of the self (*adhyātma-jñāna-nityatvam*). One should always keep in mind one’s goal of *mokṣa* in ones cultivation of knowledge of truth (*tattva-jñānārtha-darśanam*).

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<sup>153</sup> There is a similar verse in Śandilya Upaniṣad: *śaucaṁ nāma dvividhaṁ bāhyam āntaram ceti tatra mrj jalābhyāṁ bāhyam manaḥ suddhir āntaram*

These twenty elements are the common means of attaining knowledge of *jīva* and Paramātmā. (*Jñānam* here refers to the means of knowledge rather than knowledge itself). The additional methods necessary for realizing Paramātmā will be explained later. Doing the opposite of this, such as exhibiting pride instead of lack of pride, is called ignorance.

*jñeyam yat tat pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvāmṛtam aśnute |  
anādi mat param brahma na sat tan nāsad ucyate ||13||*

13. I will now speak about the object of knowledge, knowing which you will attain liberation. This supreme Brahman, Paramātmā, is without beginning, taking shelter of Me, and beyond material cause and effect.

Thus, by means of the methods mentioned above, one should know the *jīva* and Paramātmā. The Paramātmā however is present in all beings and is known as Brahman. That Brahman is worshiped by the devotees as personal, with qualities, and by the *jñānīs* as impersonal, with no qualities. As the object of meditation with four hands situated within the body, Brahman is known as Paramātmā. This verse speaks of that Brahman first.

That form has no beginning (*anādi*). That means that since it is His *svarūpa*, it is eternal. *Mat-param* means “of which I alone am the supreme shelter (*para*).” What is it? It is called *brahman* (Paramātmā), of which I alone am the supreme shelter, and which is beyond cause and effect (*na sad na asad*). The Lord will later say *brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*: I am the basis of Brahman.

*sarvataḥ pāṇi-pādam tat sarvato 'kṣi-śiro-mukham |  
sarvataḥ śrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati ||14||*

14. Everywhere this Brahman has His hands and feet. Everywhere Brahman has His eyes, heads and mouths. Everywhere are His ears. Brahman covers everything in the universe.

The doubt may arise that if this Brahman is without cause and effect, then that contradicts the statements of *śruti* such as *sarvam khalv idaṁ brahma* (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14) and *brahmaivedaṁ sarvam* (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 2.2.12): everything is Brahman.

Though Brahman in its essential nature is beyond cause and effect, this Brahman (Paramātmā) is also cause and effect because of non- difference between the energy and the source of energy.<sup>154</sup> That is stated in this verse. This Brahman has His hands and feet everywhere. By the manifestation everywhere of hands and feet of all creatures from Lord Brahmā down to the ant (His effects), one can say that Brahman is endowed with countless hands and feet. Similarly, His eyes, head, and face are everywhere.

*sarvendriya-guṇābhāsam sarvendriya-vivarjitam |  
asaktam sarva-bhṛc caiva nirguṇam guṇa-bhoktr ca ||15||*

15. That Brahman illuminates all the senses and sense objects, but is devoid of all material senses. He is without attachment, but maintains everything. He is without material *guṇas*, but He is the enjoyer of all *guṇas*.

He illuminates all the senses and sense objects (*guṇa*). The *śruti* says *tac cakṣuṣaś cakṣuḥ* (*Kena Upaniṣad* 1.2): He inspires the sight of the eye. Or the meaning can be “He shines forth or is endowed with all the senses and objects of the senses such as sound.” He however is also without all senses (*sarvendriya vivarjitam*). This means He is without material senses. Thus the *śruti* says:

*apāni-pādo javano grahītā paśyaty acakṣuḥ sa śṛṇoty akarṇaḥ.*

Without hands and feet He moves and receives. Without eyes He sees. Without ears He hears. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.1

*parāsya śaktir bahudhaiva śrūyate svābhāviki jñāna-bala-kriyā ca*

The energy of the Lord is divided into *jñāna*, *bala* and *kriyā śaktis*. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.8

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<sup>154</sup> The Lord is the creator of material bodies since *prakṛti* produces the bodies, but *prakṛti*, being the energy of the Lord, is non-different from Him. Thus as *prakṛti*, He is a cause of the material bodies.

This meaning is valid because it is well known in the *śrutis* that He is the abode of the *svarūpa śakti*, His spiritual energy.<sup>155</sup> He is without attachment (*asaktam*), and also maintains everything by His form of Viṣṇu (*sarva-bhṛt*). He has a form without the material *guṇas* of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* (*nirguṇa*). But He is the enjoyer or taster of the six *guṇas* or *bhagas* known as *aiśvarya*, *vīrya*, *yaśas*, *śrī*, *jñāna* and *vairāgya* (*guṇa-bhoktṛ*).<sup>156</sup>

*bahir antaś ca bhūtānām acaram caram eva ca |  
sūkṣmatvāt tad avijñeyam dūra-stham cāntike ca tat ||16||*

16. He is outside and inside all beings. He alone is all moving and non-moving beings. He is difficult to understand because of His subtle nature. He is far away and also very near.

He exists within and outside of all living entities, who are His products (*bhūtānām* means arising from Him), just as ether and other elements exists within and outside all bodies of which they are the cause. All non-moving and moving beings are only the Lord, since He is the cause and they are the effect. He cannot be clearly known (*tad avijñeyam*). In other words, for the ignorant, He is situated far away at millions of *yojanas* distance and for the wise He is near, as if living in that person's house, since He is situated as the *antaryāmī* within the person. The *śruti* says:

*dūrāt sudūre tad ihāntike ca paśyatsv ihaiva nihitam guhāyām*

He is further than far, and very close. In the body He is situated in the heart, in those who see. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 3.1.7

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<sup>155</sup> The Lord's energies enable the Lord to fulfill His desires, just as a living entity's senses enable him to fulfill his desires. He is therefore not devoid of organs to fulfill those desires.

<sup>156</sup> The six qualities of Bhagavān are defined as follows. *Aiśvarya* means the Lord's natural control of everything. *Vīrya* is refers to the Lord's inconceivable potencies, by which he manifests *jīva* and *prakṛti* and expands as unlimited *avatāras*. *Yaśaḥ* refers to the Lord's ocean of good qualities relating to body, mind and speech. *Śrī* refers to the Lord's eternal, beautiful, youthful body. *Jñāna* refers to the Lord's omniscience. *Vairāgya* refers to the Lord's detachment from all material affairs.

*avibhaktam ca bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam |  
bhūta-bharṭṛ ca taj jñeyam grasiṣṇu prabhaviṣṇu ca ||17||*

17. He is undivided, and also divided in all the living entities. He is to be known as the maintainer, the destroyer and the creator.

As the cause, which is one (*avibhaktiam*), He is situated in all the moving and non-moving entities, and as the effect or product, He is situated separately as each object. As the form of Nārāyaṇa, He is the protection of the living entities (*bhūtā-bharṭṛ*) during the duration of maintenance, the destruction (*grasiṣṇu*) at the time of *pralaya*, and the creation of all beings (*prabhaviṣṇu*) at the time of creation. The word *prabhaviṣṇu* which usually means “lord” is taken here as meaning “what is created” since the word can also mean “he who is the product (*prabhavana*) because the cause is manifest in the effects.”

*jyotiṣām api taj jyotis tamasah param ucyate |  
jñānam jñeyam jñāna-gamyam hr̥di sarvasya viṣṭhitam ||18||*

18. This light of all luminaries is said to be beyond darkness. He is knowledge, what is to be known, and is obtained by the process of knowledge. He is situated in the heart of all.

Of the sun, moon and other light bodies, He is the illuminator (*tad-jyotih*), by which the sun shines, by whose power light radiates. The *śruti* says:

*yena suryah tapati tejasendhah*

By His power the sun burns. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 3.12.9.7, 5

*na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra-tāraḥ  
nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yam agniḥ  
tad eva bhāntam anubhāti sarvaṁ*

There, the sun does not shine, nor do the moon or stars. There, lightning does not flash, what to speak of fire. Everything shines in obedience to He who shines. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.5.15

*aditya varṇam tamasaḥ parastāt*

He is like the sun, beyond ignorance. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.8

*Jñānam* means what is revealed by the function of intelligence. The Lord is that *jñānam* (awareness). *Jñeyam* means that awareness which develops a specific form, qualities etc. (*jñeyam*). The Lord is that object of awareness. He is attained by the process of knowledge (pridelessness etc.) mentioned previously (*jñāna-gamyam*). Being the form of Paramātmā, He is situated as the regulator in the hearts of all living entities (*dhiṣṭhitam*).

*iti kṣetram tathā jñānam jñeyam coktam samāsataḥ |  
mad-bhakta etad vijñāya mad-bhāvāyopapadyate ||19||*

19. Thus I have described concisely the field, the process of knowing, and the object of knowledge. My devotee, understanding this, attains *prema*.

In this verse the Lord summarizes the topic about the field and other items previously described, along with the result for those who practice. The field consists of the items starting with the five gross elements and ending with *dḥṛti* or perseverance in verses 5 and 6. Knowledge was described starting with pridelessness (*amānitvam*) and ending with reviewing the goal of liberation (*tattva-jñānārtha-darśanam*) in verses 7 through 11. The object of knowledge to be attained by the process of knowledge was described in verses 12 through 18, starting with the word *anādi* and ending with the word *dhiṣṭhitam*. The one truth known as Brahman, meaning Bhagavān and Paramātmā, has thus been briefly described.

The *jñānī* endowed with some devotion (*mad-bhaktah*), knowing this, merges with Me (*mad bhāvāya*). An alternate meaning of the sentence is “My *ekanta-bhakta*, understanding that I, his master, have such powers (*etad vijñāya*), becomes endowed with *prema* (*mad-bhāvāya*) for Me.”

*prakṛtiṁ puruṣam caiva viddhy anādi ubhāv api |  
vikārāmś ca guṇāmś caiva viddhi prakṛti-sambhavān ||20||*

20. Know that both *prakṛti* and the *jīva* are without origin. And know that the *guṇas* and its transformations all arise from *prakṛti*.

“You have described the Paramātmā as the knower of the field. But speaking of the *jīva* who is also the knower of the field, how does the *jīva* come in contact with *māyā* and when did it start?”

Know that *māyā* (*prakṛti*), and the *jīva* (*puruṣa*) are both without an origin (*anādi*), having no first cause. This is because they are *śaktis* of Me, the Lord who is also without origin (*anādi*). In verses 4 and 5 of chapter 7 it was said:

*bhūmir āpo ’nalo vāyuh khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca  
ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā  
apareyaṁ itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām  
jīva-bhūtāṁ mahābāho yayedāṁ dhāryate jagat*

From this it is understood that, because matter and *jīva* are both without origin, being My *śaktis*, their connection is also without origin (*anādi*). But there is a real difference between them, even though they are mutually connected. Know that the body, senses and other elements (*guṇān*) and the transformations of the *guṇas* such as happiness, distress, lamentation and illusion (*vikārān*), all arise from *prakṛti*. Know that the *jīva* is very different from that *prakṛti* which has transformed into the field.

*kārya-kāraṇa-kartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtir ucyate |  
puruṣaḥ sukha-duḥkhānāṁ bhokṛtve hetur ucyate ||21||*

21. *Prakṛti* is said to be the cause of the connection, because of supplying the body, senses and sense *devatās*. The *jīva* is said to be the cause of the connection, being the enjoyer of happiness and distress.

In this verse the Lord shows the *jīva*’s connection with *prakṛti*. *Prakṛti* is the cause of the *jīva*’s unfortunate condition by offering the body (*kārya*), the senses which produce happiness and distress (*kāraṇa*) and the presiding deities of the senses (*kartṛ*). *Prakṛti*, by association with the *jīva*, transforms into the form of body, senses and sense *devatās*, and, by its function of ignorance, it becomes the bestower of the *jīva*’s misidentification.

The *jīva* (*puruṣa*), having the position as the enjoyer of the happiness and distress produced by *prakṛti*, is also the cause of the connection.

The meaning is this. Even though the body, the senses, the sense *devatās* and the *jīva*'s capacity for enjoyment (*bhokṛtva*) are all qualities of *prakṛti*, because of the predominance of unconsciousness in the body, senses and sense *devatās*, and the predominance of consciousness in experiencing happiness and distress (*bhokṛt*), the two get separately designated as causes according to predominance. According to this reasoning, it is said that *prakṛti* is the cause, by producing the body, sense and sense *devatās*, and *jīva* is the cause by his capacity to experience happiness and distress.

*puruṣaḥ prakṛti-stho hi bhunkte prakṛti-jān guṇān |  
kāraṇam guṇa-saṅgo 'sya sad-asad-yoni-janmasu ||22||*

22. The *jīva*, identifying with *prakṛti* in the form of his body, thinks he is experiencing happiness and distress which are born from his mind. This is caused by his association with the body, which causes his birth in various bodies of *devatā* and animal.

But the *jīva*, just by misidentification caused by beginningless ignorance, thinks that his capacity for action and enjoyment are his very nature, though they are just the nature of things related to him (body, senses). From this, he takes repeated birth. Situated in the body produced from *prakṛti* and identifying with it (*prakṛti-sthaḥ*), the *jīva* enjoys and suffers by identifying as his own (*bhunkte*) the lamentation, illusion, happiness and distress (*guṇān*) which are qualities of his mind (*prakṛti-jān*). The cause is the contact of the soul (*asya*) with the body, made of *guṇas* (*guṇa-saṅgaḥ*). Though the soul does not actually contact the body, the contact is fabricated through ignorance. Where does the *jīva* enjoy? In repeated births in life forms like *devatās* (*sad-yoni*) or animals (*asad-yoni*), produced by his pious or sinful actions.

*upadraṣṭānumantā ca bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ |  
paramātmēti cāpy ukto dehe'smin puruṣaḥ paraḥ ||23||*

23. There is also a supreme person in the body, called *Paramātmā*, the great lord, who is the witness situated close to the *jīva*, merciful to the *jīva*, the supporter and protector of the *jīva*.

Having spoken of the *jīva*, the Lord now speaks about the Paramātmā. Though the Lord already described Paramātmā in general and in detail from verses thirteen to eighteen, it should be understood that the present statement is made in order to clearly show that the Paramātmā is situated in all bodies along with the *jīva*, but different from the *jīva*.

In this body, there is another, supreme *puruṣa*, the great Lord, called the Paramātmā (*paramātmā iti ca api uktah*). The word *parama* in Paramātmā clearly indicates a personal expansion of Lord (*svāmśa*), distinct from the *jīva*, in order to defeat those who propound the theory of one soul only. He is the witness (*draṣṭā*) situated close to (*upa*) each *jīva*, but separate from him. He is the bestower of favors (*anumantā*), showing mercy by His very closeness to the *jīva*. The *śruti* says *sakṣi cetah kevalo nirguṇas ca*: He is the witness, the consciousness, pure, beyond the material *guṇas*. (*Gopāla Tāpanī Upaniṣad* 2.96) He is the supporter (*bhartā*) and the protector (*bhoktā*) of the *jīva*.

*ya evam veti puruṣam prakṛtiṁ ca guṇaiḥ saha |  
sarvathā vartamāno 'pi na sa bhūyo 'bhijāyate ||24||*

24. He who knows the Paramātmā, *prakṛti*, and the *jīva*, along with the *guṇas*, does not take birth again, though encountering all sorts of circumstances.

The results of this knowledge are stated in this verse. He who knows Paramātmā (*puruṣam*), *prakṛti* or *māyā-śakti* (along with its qualities), and the *jīva* (indicated only by the word *ca*), does not take birth again, even though in this life he may be situated in all sorts of unfavorable circumstances (*sarvathā vartamāno 'pi*), such as being overcome by sleep and having uncontrolled mind or other such problems.

*dhyānenātmani paśyanti kecid ātmānam ātmanā |  
anye sāṅkhyena yogena karma-yogena cāpare ||25||*

25. Some see Paramātmā through meditation in *bhakti-yoga*. Others practice *jñāna-yoga* or *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, and others practice *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*.

Alternative methods are mentioned in two verses. Some devotees, by contemplation of the Lord (*dhyānena*) in the mind (*atmani*) without help from any other process, spontaneously (*ātmanā*), not by any other process except *bhakti*, see the Paramātmā. This is understood from a later verse: *bhaktiā mām abhijānāti* (BG 18.55), only by devotion am I known. Others (*anye*), *jñānīs*, by distinguishing soul from body (*sāṅkhyena*), and others (*apare*), *yogīs*, by *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* (*yogena*), and others by *niṣkāma-karma* (*karma-yogena*), see Paramātmā. In this regard, *jñāna-yoga*, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* are successive causes of each other and not direct causes of seeing Paramātmā. That is because their nature is sattvic (and thus the result can only be sattvic) but the nature of Paramātmā is beyond the *guṇas*. Moreover, it is said by the Lord:

*jñānaṁ ca mayi sannyaset*

A self-realized person who has cultivated scriptural knowledge up to the point of enlightenment and who is free from impersonal speculation, understanding the material universe to be simply illusion, should surrender unto Me *both that knowledge and the means by which he achieved it*. SB 11.19.1

*bhakyāham ekayā grāhyaḥ*

Only by practicing unalloyed devotional service with full faith in Me can one obtain Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. S 11.14.21

Thus, after giving up *jñāna*, indicated in the first of the verses quoted, becoming free from *jñāna*, one sees Paramātmā by *bhakti* alone, indicated in the second verse.

*anye tv evam ajānantaḥ śrutvānyebhya upāsate |  
te 'pi cātitaranty eva mṛtyuṁ śruti-parāyaṇāḥ ||26||*

26. Others who perform worship, though not knowing, but hearing from others, also surpass death, being intent on hearing.

Others, who worship Paramātmā, hearing talks from various sources, also surpass death.

*yāvat sanjāyate kiñcit sattvaṁ sthāvara-jaṅgamam |  
kṣetra-kṣetrajaṅga-samyogāt tad viddhi bharatarṣabha ||27||*

27. Know that all entities, whether moving or non-moving, high or low, appear from the combination for matter and *jīva*, O best of Bharata's lineage.

From this verse till the end, the Lord expands on the meaning of what He already spoke. Know that all living entities (*sattvam*), whether low or high, non-moving or moving, are born from the combination of field and knower of the field.

*samaṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ parameśvaram |  
vinaśyatsv avinaśyantaṁ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ||27||*

27. One who sees the indestructible Paramātmā situated in all destructible bodies actually sees.

One should therefore know Paramātmā. He who sees the Paramātmā situated in the destructible bodies (*vinaśyatsu*) of all beings, actually sees. He is an actual *jñānī*.

*samaṁ paśyan hi sarvatra samavasthitam īśvaram |  
na hinasty ātmanātmānam tato yāti parāṁ gatim ||28||*

28. He who sees Paramātmā situated everywhere equally does not degrade the soul by the deviating mind, and attains to the supreme goal.

He who sees Me situated everywhere does not make the soul (*ātmānam*) fall down (*hinasti*) by the mind (*ātmanā*), which wanders on the wrong path.

*prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamānāni sarvaśaḥ |  
yaḥ paśyati tathātmānam akartāram sa paśyati ||29||*

29. He who sees all activities being done by matter alone, and sees the soul as doing nothing, actually sees.

One who sees that all actions are done by *prakṛti* in the form of body and senses, and who sees that the *jīva* (*ātmānam*) is the doer only by thinking himself the body, but is not actually the doer, actually sees.

*yadā bhūta-pṛthag-bhāvam eka-stham anupaśyati |  
tata eva ca vistāram brahma sampadyate tadā ||30||*

30. When one sees that all separate beings are situated in one *prakṛti* at the time of dissolution, and arise from that *prakṛti* at the time of creation, the person becomes Brahman.

When one perceives that the various forms of the living beings, moving and non-moving (*pṛthag-bhāvam*), are situated in the one *prakṛti* at the time of *pralaya*, and sees at the time of creation the expansion of living entities from *prakṛti*, he becomes Brahman (*brahma sampadyate*).<sup>157</sup>

*anāditvān nirguṇatvāt paramātmāyam avyayaḥ |  
śarīra-stho 'pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate ||31||*

31. Because He is the supreme cause and everything arises from Him, this indestructible Paramātmā, though situated in the body, does not think Himself the doer and is not contaminated.

“You have said that the *jīva* in contact with his body takes repeated birth (verse 22). The *jīva*, by thinking himself the body by being in the body, becomes contaminated by the *guṇas* and takes repeated birth. But the Paramātmā does not become contaminated. Why?”

He is called *anādi* because He has no original cause. But just as *anuttama* can mean *parama uttama* taking the ablative sense of the word (no one higher than Him), so *anādi*, “having no cause”, can mean the supreme cause (no other cause than Him). Therefore because He is the final cause (*anāditvāt*), and because the *guṇas* such as creation and destruction arise out of Him (*nirgataḥ + guṇa = nirguṇatvāt*), this Paramātmā is distinguished from the

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<sup>157</sup> Brahman would here mean that the *jīva* attains qualities similar to the Lord.

*jīva*. At all times, in all circumstances, He is without decrease in His own knowledge, bliss and other qualities. Though situated in the body, because He does not take up the qualities of the body, He does not think He is a doer like the *jīva* (*na karoti*)-- He does not become an enjoyer--nor does He get contaminated by the *guṇas* of the material body (*na lipyate*).

*yathā sarva-gataṁ saukṣmyād ākāśaṁ nopalipyate |  
sarvatrāvasthito dehe tathātmā nopalipyate ||32||*

32. Just as the ether, which spreads everywhere, is not contaminated, because of its subtle nature, the Paramātmā, though situated everywhere in the body, is not contaminated.

In this verse the Lord gives an example. Just as the ether, situated in mud and other places, is not contaminated because it is most subtle--not contacting the mud at all, the Paramātmā is not connected with the *guṇas* or faults of the material body, and therefore is not contaminated.

*yathā prakāśayaty ekaḥ kṛtsnaṁ lokam imaṁ raviḥ |  
kṣetram kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnaṁ prakāśayati bhārata ||33||*

33. Just as one sun lights up the whole world, this Paramātmā illumines the whole body, O descendent of Bharata.

Using an example, the Lord shows how the Paramātmā, being the source of illumination, is not connected with the qualities of what He illuminates. Just as the sun, the illuminator, is not connected to the qualities of what He illuminates, the Paramātmā (*kṣetrī*) illumines everything and is not affected. The *śruti* says:

*sūryo yathā sarva-lokasya cakṣur  
na lipyate cākṣuṣair bāhya-doṣaiḥ  
ekas tathā sarva-bhūtāntarātmā  
na lipyate śoka-duḥkhena bāhyaḥ*

Just as the sun is the eye of all people but is not contaminated by the material faults of the eyes, so the Paramātmā within all beings is

not contaminated by lamentation and suffering of the material world. *Kātha Upaniṣad* 5.11

*kṣetra-kṣेत्रajñāyor evam antaram jñāna-cakṣuṣā |  
bhūta-prakṛti-mokṣam ca ye vidur yānti te param ||34||*

34. Those who know the difference between the two knowers of the field as well as their difference from the field, and also the process for liberation from *prakṛti* for the living entities, attain the supreme goal.

The Lord summarizes the contents of the chapter.

Those who know the difference between two knowers of the field (*kṣetra-jñāyoḥ*), the *jīva* and *Paramātmā*, along with the field, and also the method of liberation (*mokṣa*) from *prakṛti* for the living entities (*bhūta*), such as meditation, achieve the supreme goal.

Among the knowers of the field, the *jīva*, enjoying the qualities of the field, is bound up, but is also liberated by knowledge. This is the meaning of the chapter.

Thus end the commentaries on the thirteen chapter of the *Gītā* for the pleasure of the devotees' minds, by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Fourteen

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
param bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi jñānānām jñānam uttamam |  
yaj jñātvā munayaḥ sarve parām siddhim ito gatāḥ ||1||*

1. The Lord said: Again I will speak the highest knowledge among all types of knowledge, by knowing which all the sages attained the highest perfection.

In the fourteenth chapter, the bondage caused by the *gunas* and the symptoms are described. The many symptoms of the disappearance of the *gunas*, and the cause of disappearance, *bhakti*, are also described.

In the previous chapter, it was described that the contact of the *jīva* with the body made of *guṇas* is the cause of his taking repeated births: *kāraṇam guṇa-saṅgo 'sya sad-asad-yoni-janmasu*. What types of results come from contact with the *guṇas*? What are the symptoms of those associated with the *guṇas*? How is one liberated from the *guṇas*? In anticipation of these questions, the Lord promises to speak about the above topics while praising them. “Knowledge” here means teachings by which one gains knowledge.

*idaṁ jñānam upāśritya mama sādharṁyam āgatāḥ |  
sarge 'pi nopajāyante pralaye na vyathanti ca ||2||*

2. Those who, taking shelter of this knowledge, have attained a form like Mine, do not attain rebirth in this world, and do not experience pain at the time of death.

He who has taken shelter of this knowledge and attained liberation in the form of *sārūpya*, similarity of form with Mine (*sādharṁyam*), does not experience pain at the time of death. The form *vyathayanti* is used instead of *vyathayante* (*ātmanepada*).

*mama yonir mahad brahma tasmin garbham dadhāmy aham |  
saṁbhavaḥ sarva-bhūtānām tato bhavati bhārata ||3||*

3. The great expanse called *prakṛti* is My womb. In that womb I place the seed in the form of all *jīvas*. The birth of all beings comes from that, O descendent of Bharata.

In order to explain how the contact of the *jīva* with the *guṇas* through beginningless ignorance creates bondage, the Lord speaks about the method of appearance of the field and knower of the field. My (Supreme Lord's) place of impregnation is *prakṛti*, called *mahat*, because it extends through all place and time continuously. It is called *brahma* because it is the cause of increase (root is *br̥h*). In some *śruti* texts, *prakṛti* is referred to as *brahma*.

I place the seed (*garbha*) within that *prakṛti*. The Lord said *itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām jīva-bhūtām*: know this other *prakṛti* of Mine, which is superior and which gives rise to the *jīvas*. (BG 7.5) From this it is understood that there is a mass of consciousness, the *jīva-prakṛti*, which is

called the *tataṣṭha-śakti*. This is called the seed (*garbha*), because it gives life to all beings.

Then (*tataḥ*) from My action of placing the seed (*jīva-śakti*) in the *prakṛti*, the appearance of all the entities such as *Brahmā* and others takes place.

*sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ |*  
*tāsāṃ brahma mahad yonir ahaṃ bija-pradaḥ pitā ||4||*

4. O son of *Kuntī*, *prakṛti* is the mother and I am the father of all forms that arise in all wombs in this world.

Not only at the time of creation of the universe is *prakṛti* the mother and I the father, but at all times. *Prakṛti*, *mahad brahma*, is the place of birth (*yonih*), the mother, of all those forms of moving and non-moving creatures which appear in all wombs from *devas* to grass, and I am the giver of the seed. I am the father, the giver of the seed, the giver of the *jīvas*.

*sattvaṃ rajas tama iti guṇāḥ prakṛti-sambhavāḥ |*  
*nibadhnanti mahā-bāho dehe dehinam avyayam ||5||*

5. The *guṇas* of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* arising from *prakṛti* bind the unchanging *jīva* in this body, O Mighty-armed one.

After the Lord has described the appearance of all the living entities through *prakṛti* (mother) and *puruṣa* (father), how are the *guṇas* to be described? What type of bondage arises for the *jīva* from association with these *guṇas*? This verse answers these questions.

In the body, the product of *prakṛti*, the *guṇas* bind up the *jīva* (*dehinam*) situated there by his identification with it, due to the association with the *guṇas* arising from beginningless ignorance, even though the *jīva* actually is without change (*avyayam*) and not attached.

*tatra sattvaṃ nirmalatvāt prakāśakam anāmayam |*  
*sukha-saṅgena badhnāti jñāna-saṅgena cānagha ||6||*

6. The mode of *sattva*, which is peaceful and gives knowledge, binds the *jīva* with false conceptions of happiness and knowledge, O sinless one.

This verse describes how *sattva-guṇa* binds the *jīva*. It is without distress (*anāmayam*); it is peaceful. The association of the *jīva* with happiness, which is the product of peacefulness, and the association of the *jīva* with knowledge, which is the product of illumination (*prakāśakam*), produce the mistaken identity of “I am happy, I am learned.” Thus, from happiness and knowledge whose quality is to produce these designations, from this ignorance, the *jīva* develops his misconception of himself. These bind him. O pure one (*anagha*), do not accept impurity in the form of such misconception of “I am happy” or “I am learned.”

*rajo rāgātmakam viddhi tṛṣṇā-saṅga-samudbhavam |*  
*tan nibadhnāti kaunteya karma-saṅgena dehinam ||7||*

7. O son of Kuntī, know that *rajas*, consisting of attraction, arising from longing for the unattained and attachment to the attained, binds the *jīva* with attachment to action.

Know that *rajo-guṇa* consists of attraction (*rāgātmakam*). When one does not obtain ones desired objects, one develops desire (*tṛṣṇa*), and when one obtains ones objects, one develops attachment (*saṅga*). *Rajo-guṇa* gives rise to these two. *Rajo-guṇa* binds up the soul (*dehinam*) by attachment (*saṅgena*) to actions, in quest of present and future goals. Attachment to action arises by desire and attachment (*tṛṣṇa* and *saṅga*).

*tamas tv ajñāna-jam viddhi mohanam sarva-dehinām |*  
*pramādālasya-nidrābhis tan nibadhnāti bhārata ||8||*

8. Know that *tamas*, which produces ignorance, which causes confusion for all living beings, binds the *jīva* with inattention, laziness, and sleep.

If *tamas tv ajñāna jam* means “*tamo-guṇa* arising from ignorance,” then *tamo-guṇa* would appear to arise from its own result, since *tamo-guṇa* produces ignorance. Therefore the meaning of *ajñāna-jam* must be that *tamo-guṇa* produces ignorance. *Mohanam* means confusion or error.

*Pramāda* means inattention. *Alasya* means lack of effort. *Nidrā* means sleep, arising from lack of energy in the consciousness.

*sattvaṃ sukhe sañjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata |*  
*jñānam āvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde sañjayaty uta ||9||*

9. *Sattva* produces attachment to happiness; *rajas* produces attachment to action; and *tamas*, covering knowledge, produces attachment to inattention, O descendent of Bharata.

The Lord summarizes what He has just said in this verse. *Sattva* subjugates or binds the *jīva* who is attached to the happiness he has achieved from his actions. *Rajas* binds the *jīva* who is attached to the actions he performs. *Tamas* binds the *jīva* who is inattentive to his works, and produces ignorance in him (*jñānam āvṛtya*).

*rajas tamaś cābhibhūya sattvaṃ bhavati bhārata |*  
*rajaḥ sattvaṃ tamaś caiva tamaḥ sattvaṃ rajas tathā ||10||*

10. When *rajas* and *tamas* disappear, *sattva* becomes prominent, O descendent of Bharata. When *rajas* and *sattva* vanish, *tamas* becomes prominent. When *tamas* and *sattva* disappear, *rajas* becomes prominent.

With regards to their respective effects, how do the *guṇas* arise? When *rajas* and *tamas* are eclipsed, *sattva* appears. It appears because these two become invisible. Thus, *rajo guṇa* appears from the eclipse of *sattva* and *tamas*. *Tamas* appears from the eclipse of *sattva* and *rajas*.

*sarva-dvāreṣu dehe 'smin prakāśa upajāyate |*  
*jñānam yadā tadā vidyād vivṛddham sattvam ity uta ||11||*

11. When illumination in the form of knowledge arises in all gates of the body, know that *sattva* has increased.

It has been stated that the prominent *guṇa* appears when the other two *guṇas* become weak of their own accord. Now the Lord speaks of the qualities of increased *guṇas* in three verses. When illumination or knowledge, real awareness of things through the sound of the *Vedas*, appears

in all the doors such as the ears, one should understand there is an increase in *sattva* through such symptoms of knowledge. The word *uta* (also) indicates there will also be an appearance of happiness arising from the soul. When knowledge and happiness appear, one should understand there is an increase in *sattva*.

*lobhaḥ pravṛttir ārambhaḥ karmaṇām aśamaḥ spṛhā |  
rajasy etāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha ||12||*

12. Greed, absorption, intense efforts in actions and incessant enjoyment of objects arise with an increase of *rajas*, O best of the Bharata lineage.

Greed, absorption in various endeavors (*pravṛttiḥ*), effort in actions such as building a house, and the non-cessation of enjoyment of objects (*aśamaḥ*) and desire appear with the increase of *rajas*.

*aprakāśo 'pravṛttiś ca pramādo moha eva ca |  
tamasy etāni jāyante vivṛddhe kuru-nandana ||13||*

13. Absence of discernment, absence of effort, inattention and absorption in the false appear with the increase of *tamas*, O son of the Kuru.

Absence of discrimination, accepting sound and other sense objects not approved by the scriptures (*aprakāśaḥ*); absence of all effort (*appravṛttiḥ*); inattention, for example, conviction that one does not have anything when holding it in ones hands (*pramādaḥ*); and absorption in the wrong or false (*mohaḥ*) appear with the increase of *tamas*.

*yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu pralayaṁ yāti deha-bhṛt |  
tadottama-vidāṁ lokān amalān pratipadyate ||14||*

14. When a person with predominance of *sattva* dies, he attains the pure planets of the worshippers of Brahmā.

When a person with a predominance of *sattva* dies (*pralayaṁ yati*), he attains the pure worlds of the worshipers of Hiranyagarbha (*uttamā-vidāṁ*) and others, worlds which give happiness.

The word *uttama vidam* means “of those who attain (*vindanti*) the supreme (*uttama*).”

*rajasi pralayam gatvā karma-saṅgiṣu jāyate  
tathā pralīnas tamasi mūḍha-yoniṣu jāyate ||15||*

15. He who dies in the mode of *rajas* attains a position among persons attached to work. He who dies in the mode of *tamas* is born in the wombs of the foolish.

Those who die in the mode of *rajas* are born among men attached to work (*karma-saṅgiṣu*).

*karmaṇaḥ sukṛtasyāhuḥ sattvicīm nirmalam phalam  
rajasas tu phalam duḥkham ajñānam tamasah phalam ||16||*

16. The result of sattvic work is purity and absence of distress. The result of *rajas* is sorrow. The result of *tamas* is ignorance.

The result of sattvic (*sukṛtṛsya*) work is purity without distress (*nirmalam*). The result of *rajas* work is sorrow. The result of tamasic work is senselessness or unconsciousness (*ajñānam*).

*sattvāt sañjāyate jñānam rajaso lobha eva ca  
pramāda-mohau tamaso bhavato jñānam eva ca ||17||*

17. Knowledge arises from *sattva*. Greed arises from *rajas*. Inattention, confusion and ignorance arise from *tamas*.

*ūrdhvam gacchanti sattva-sthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ  
jaghanya-guṇa-vṛtti-sthā adho gacchanti tāmasā ||18||*

18. Those situated in *sattva* go to higher planets. Those in *rajas* remain in the world of humans. Those of the lowest *guṇa*, *tamas*, go downwards to hell.

According to the amount of *sattva* one can go upwards to Brahmaloaka.

Those in *rajo guṇa* dwell on the human plane (*madhye*). Those of the lowest (*jaghanya*) *guṇa*, with tamasic behavior like inattention and laziness, go to hell (*adhah*).

*nānyam guṇebhyaḥ kartāram yadā draṣṭānupāśyati  
guṇebhyaś ca param vetti mad-bhāvam so 'dhigacchati ||19||*

19. When the *jīva* sees that action is being performed by the *guṇas*, in the form of the doer, the action and the objects of the actions, and understands that the soul is separate from this, he attains a state of merging with Me.

Having shown the repeated births caused by association with the *guṇas*, the Lord now shows liberation, which is beyond the *guṇas*, in two verses. When the *jīva* (*draṣṭā*) does not observe any other doer than the *guṇas*, which change into the form of agent, the action and the object--when he realizes that only the *guṇas* are always the doers, and knows the soul is separate from the *guṇas*--the *jīva* attains (*adhigacchati*) merging with Me (*mad-bhāvam*). It should be understood from the second to last verse in this chapter that one must still perform *bhakti* even after practicing such *jñāna*, in order to get this result.

*guṇān etān atīya trīn dehī deha-samudbhavān |  
janma-mṛtyu-jarā-duḥkhair vimukto 'mṛtam aśnute ||20||*

20. Surpassing the three *guṇas* which give rise to the body, free from the suffering of birth, death and old age, one attains eternal life.

That person is beyond the *guṇas*. That is explained in this verse.

*arjuna uvaca  
kair līngais trīn guṇān etān atīto bhavati prabho |  
kim-ācāraḥ katham caitāms trīn guṇān ativartate ||21||*

21. O Lord, by what symptoms is a person known to be beyond the *guṇas*. What is his conduct? How does he surpass the *guṇas*?

This is the same question asked in chapter two: *sthita-prajñasya kā bhāsā* (please describe the *sthita-prajña*). However, out of extreme desire to know,

Arjuna asks again. One question is “By what symptoms should one understand a person is beyond the *guṇas*?” (*kair līngaiḥ*) The second question is “What is his behavior?” (*kim ācāraḥ*) The third question is “What is the means of attaining transcendence of the *guṇas*?” (*katham ca etān*)

When Arjuna asked his question in chapter two, he did not ask how a person could transcend the *guṇas*. But now he asks this question also. That is the difference.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*prakāśam ca pravṛtīm ca moham eva ca pāṇḍava |*  
*na dveṣṭi sampravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati ||22||*

22. One who is beyond the *guṇas* does not lament at the appearance of illumination, activity or confusion, nor rejoice at their disappearance.

Kṛṣṇa answers the question “What are the symptoms of one who is beyond the *guṇas*?” Illumination (*prakāśaḥ*) is the effect of *sattva guṇa*, as mentioned previously in the verse *sarva dvāreṣu dehe’ smin prakāśa upajayate*. Absorption in various projects (*pravṛtti*) is the effect of *rajo guṇa*. Absorption in the false (*moha*) is the effect of *tamo guṇa*. These three words are representative of all the other qualities (mentioned previously) of the respective *guṇas*.

He who does not lament when all these effects of the *guṇas*, illumination, absorption in activities and absorption in falsity appears suddenly, nor rejoice when the effects of the *guṇas* disappear, is said to be beyond the *guṇas*.

The last phrase of verse 25, *sa guṇātīta ucyate* is understood to apply to all the verses preceding. Using the neuter gender in the word *sampravṛttāni* is poetic license.

*udāsīna-vad āsīno guṇair yo na vicālyate |*  
*guṇā vartanta ity evaṁ yo ’vatiṣṭhati neṅgate ||23||*

23. One who remains unmoved by the *guṇas*, who is situated indifferently, who remains without action, understanding that only the *guṇas* are acting, is said to have surpassed the *guṇas*.

Kṛṣṇa answers the second question, about the conduct of the person beyond the *guṇas*, in verses 23-25. He who is not disturbed by the effects of the *guṇas* (*guṇaiḥ*), in the form of happiness and distress, who does not move from his *svarūpa* as *ātmā* (*guṇaiḥ na vicālyate*), who remains silent (*avatiṣṭhati*), knowing “The *guṇas* alone are giving these effects; I have no relationship with this happiness and distress,” (*guṇa vartante iti evam*), who does not strive for bodily needs (*na iṅgate*), is said to be beyond the *guṇas*. *Avatiṣṭhati* is used for *avatiṣṭhate* as poetic license.

*sama-duḥkha-sukhaḥ sva-sthaḥ sama-loṣṭāśma-kāñcanaḥ |*  
*tulya-priyāpriyo dhīras tulya-nindātma-samstutiḥ ||24||*  
*mānāpamānayos tulyas tulyo mitrāri-pakṣayoḥ |*  
*sarvāmbha-parityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate ||25||*

24-25. He who is firmly situated, who is equal in sorrow and joy, who sees a lump of earth, a stone and gold as the same, who regards dear and not dear as the same, who regards criticism and praise as the same, who remains equal in respect or disrespect, who is equal to friend and foe, who has given up all undertakings, is said to be beyond the *guṇas*.

On seeing such symptoms and conduct of the person beyond the *guṇas*, one should describe that person as being beyond the *guṇas*. One who merely talks about the possibility of being beyond the *guṇas* is not said to be beyond the *guṇas*.

*mām ca yo ’vyabhicāreṇa bhakti-yogena sevate |*  
*sa guṇān samatīyaitān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate ||26||*

26. He who serves Me in pure devotional service surpasses the *guṇas*, and is qualified for Brahman.

In this verse, the Lord answers the third question about the method of surpassing the *guṇas*. *Ca* in this verse means *eva*: “only”. He who serves only Me (*mama ca*)--in My form as Śyāmasundara, the Supreme Lord--by *bhakti*-

yoga, he alone is qualified for becoming Brahman, or realizing Brahman (*brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*). This statement is supported by the use of the adjective *ekayā* in the statement *bhaktyāham ekayā grahyaḥ*: I can be attained by *bhakti* alone. And in the statement *mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etām taranti te*: those who surrender to Me surpass the material world, from use of the word *eva* (only), it is confirmed that without *bhakti* (to the Lord only), realization of Brahman cannot be attained. It cannot be attained by any other method.

What type of *bhakti-yoga* is this? It should be without deviation (*avyabhicāreṇa*). That means it is without mixture of *karma*, *jñāna* or other elements, because there are statements rejecting *niškāma-karma*, and statements rejecting even *jñāna* by the *jñānī* in his final stage. *jñānam ca mayi sanniyaset*: One should surrender that *jñāna* to Me. (SB 11.19.1) But there are no statements about the rejection of *bhakti-yoga* anywhere. Thus, by *bhakti-yoga*, after giving up even *jñāna-yoga*, just as he has previously given up *karma-yoga*, the *jñānī* surpasses the *guṇas*. There is no other means. However, the *ananyā bhakta* is already beyond the *guṇas*, as understood from the statement in the Eleventh Canto *nirguṇo mad apāśrayaḥ*: one who surrenders to Me is beyond the *guṇas*. (SB 11.25.26)

Here is the principle.

*sattviḥ kārako ’saṅgī rāgāndho rājasah smṛtaḥ  
tāmasah smṛti-vibhraṣṭo nirguṇo mad-apāśrayaḥ*

A worker free of attachment is in the mode of goodness; a worker blinded by personal desire is in the mode of passion, and a worker who has completely forgotten how to tell right from wrong is in the mode of ignorance. But a worker who has taken shelter of Me is understood to be transcendental to the modes of nature. SB 11.25.26

It is understood that those who are free from attachment are practicing either *karma-yoga* or *jñāna-yoga* on the level of *sattva*. And the person who is beyond the *guṇas*, having taken shelter of the Lord, is practicing *sādhana-bhakti*. The *jñānī*, having reached the perfection of *jñāna*, becomes transcendental to the *guṇas* by then giving up the level of *sattva*. But the

devotee, even at the beginning stage as a *sādhaka*, is beyond the *guṇas*. This is the meaning of the *Bhāgavatam* verse.

Śrīdhara Svāmī also says that *ca* gives the meaning of limitation, “only”. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says the meaning is “He who serves only Me, the Lord, Nārāyaṇa, by undeviating *bhakti-yoga* as described in the twelfth chapter, qualifies for liberation.”

*brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham amṛtasyāvyaṇḍasya ca |*  
*śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyaikāntikasya ca ||27||*

27. I am the basis of impersonal Brahman, the basis of indestructible liberation, the basis of the eternal method *bhakti* and the basis of the bliss of the unalloyed devotee.

“But why would Your devotees attain the impersonal Brahman, which happens only for those who realize oneness with God?”

“That is because I am also the basis of that famous Brahman, since I am the supreme basis of everything. The meaning of *pratiṣṭha* is shelter, that upon which something is standing firmly, as this also is the meaning used everywhere in the *śrutis*, such as in the description of the *annamaya-puruṣa* in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. And I am the basis or shelter of nectar (*amṛtasya*).”

“Does this mean the nectar of Svarga?”

“No, it is indestructible (*avyayaṇḍasya*): therefore *amṛta* means liberation. I am the basis of liberation. Also I am the basis of the eternal method (*śāśvatasya dharmasya*), which is eternally present, both in the stage of *sādhana* and perfection, the supreme method called *bhakti*. And also I am the basis of happiness--of *prema* (*sukhasya*) in relation to the *ekāntika* devotee (*aikāntikasya*), who is qualified to receive it. And because everything is dependent on Me, he who worships Me with a desire to be one with God merges into the Brahman and attains the status of Brahman.”

Śrīdhara Svāmī gives the following meaning of the verse: “I am the basis of Brahman” means “I am the condensed Brahman,” just as the sun globe is

condensed light. Just as the sun, though being the form of light, is also acts as the basis of light, so I, Kṛṣṇa, am the form of Brahman, but I am also the basis of Brahman.

In this regard, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.7.76 provides the authority: *subhāśrayaḥ sa cittasya sarvagasya tathātmanaḥ*. This statement is explained by Śrīdhara Svāmī. “He is the shelter (*āśrayaḥ*), or the *pratiṣṭha*, of the supreme Brahman (*sarvagasya ātmanaḥ*). Thus it is stated by the Lord: I am the shelter of Brahman (*brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*).”

Also in the *Viṣṇu Dharmottara*, concerning the subject of Naraka Dvādaśī, it is said:

*prakṛtau puruṣe caiva brahmaṇyāpi ca sa prabhuh  
yathaika eva puruṣo vāsudevo vyavasthitaḥ*

The Lord, one person, Vāsudeva is situated in *prakṛti*, the *jīva* and the Brahman.

In relation to *māsarkaṣa* worship it is also said:

*yathācyutas tvam parataḥ paramāt sa brahmabhūtāt parataḥ parātmā*

Just as Acyuta, Paramātmā is superior to all others, he is superior to Brahman. *Viṣṇu Dharma* 26.13

The Lord speaks to Arjuna in relation to bringing back the children of the *brāhmaṇa* in *Hari Vamśa*, *Viṣṇu Parvā* 114:

*tat param paramam brahma sarvam vibhajate jagat  
mamaiva tad ghanam tejo jnātum arhasi bhārata*

That supreme Brahman illuminates the whole universe. You should know that the condensed light belongs to Me.

*Brahma Saṁhitā* says:

*yasya prabhā prabhavato jagad-aṇḍa-koṭi-*

*koṭīśv aśeṣa-vasudhādi-vibhūti-bhinnam  
tad brahma niṣkalam anantam aśeṣa-bhūtaṁ  
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam aham bhajāmi*

I serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead Govinda, the primeval Lord, whose transcendental bodily effulgence, known as the *brahmajyoti*, which is unlimited, unfathomed and all-pervasive, is the cause of the creation of unlimited numbers of planets, etc., with varieties of climates and specific conditions of life. *Brahma Saṁhitā* 5.40

In the Eighth Canto, the Lord says:

*madīyaṁ mahimānaṁ ca para-brahmeti śabditam  
vetsyasy anugrhitāṁ me sampraśnair vivṛtaṁ hṛdi*

You will be thoroughly advised and favored by Me, and because of your inquiries, everything about *My glories, which are known as param brahma*, will be manifest within your heart. Thus you will know everything about Me. *SB* 8.24.38

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī explains as follows: “But Your devotee should attain You. How is he qualified merely for the state of Brahman (*brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*), when You are different from Brahman? This verse answers that. I alone am the end, the conclusion or *parāptiḥ* of Brahman.” According to the *Amara Kośa*, the word *parāptiḥ* means complete fullness. With the following verse Madhusūdana Sarasvatī offers his praise to Kṛṣṇa:

*parākṛta-mano-dvandvaṁ paraṁ brahma narākṛti  
saundarya-sāra-sarvasvaṁ vande nandātmajaṁ mahah*

I offer my respects to the son of Nanda, joy personified, the very essence of all beauty in human form, the supreme Brahman, devoid of dualities of the mind.

This chapter explains the misfortune in being bound by the *guṇas* and the satisfaction in being free of the *guṇas*, which is produced by *bhakti* alone.

Thus end the commentaries on the fourteenth chapter of the *Gītā* for the pleasure of the devotees' minds, by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Fifteen

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*ūrdhva-mūlam adhaḥ-śākham aśvatthaṁ prāhur avyayam |*  
*chandāmsi yasya parṇāni yas taṁ veda sa veda-vit ||1||*

1. They speak of this indestructible *aśvattha* tree which has its roots upwards and branches downwards and whose leaves are the Vedas. He who knows this tree knows the Vedas.

The fifteenth chapter states that detachment is the cause of cessation of birth, that the soul is an *amśa* of the Lord, and that Kṛṣṇa is superior to matter and the *jīva*.

The second to last verse of the last chapter stated that by *bhakti-yoga* one attains the status of Brahman:

*mām ca yo 'vyabhicāreṇa bhakti-yogena sevate*  
*sa guṇān samatīyātān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate BG 14.26*

The question may be asked “How does a person attain impersonal Brahman by *bhakti-yoga* rendered to the Lord who possesses a human form?”

True, I am human in form, but I am the basis of Brahman, the supreme shelter of Brahman. This statement, which functions as a *sūtra*, forms the beginning of chapter fifteen. You said that the devotee, surpassing the *guṇas* (*sa guṇān samatīya*), attains the status of Brahman. What is this material world made of the *guṇas*? From where did it begin? Who is that *jīva* who surpasses *samsāra* by devotion to You? You also spoke of the *jīva* being qualified for Brahman (*brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*). What is that Brahman? And who are You, the basis of the Brahman?

Anticipating these questions, the Lord now speaks. First, with use of a metaphor, the material world made of *guṇas* is compared to an *aśvattha* tree. Above all planets, in Satyaloka, lives four-headed Brahmā, who is the one root of the tree of the material world, and who is composed of *mahat-tattva*, the first sprout from *prakṛti* (*ūrdhva-mūla*). The branches of the tree are below, composed of *devas*, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, *asuras*, Rākṣasas, Pretas, Bhūtas, humans, cows, horses and such beasts, birds, insects, worms, moths, and immobile creatures at the bottom, in the realms of Svaḥ, Bhuvaḥ and Bhūloka.

This *aśvattha* tree is the best tree because it lets one fulfill one's goals of *artha*, *dharma*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. But according to the viewpoint of *bhakti*, *aśvaḥ* means that which will not last till tomorrow (*a*= not, *śvaḥ*= tomorrow). *Aśvattha* therefore means that which is bound to perish. For the non-devotees however, it appears to be indestructible (*avyayam*). *Chandāmsi* refers to the *Vedas*, which expound *karma* in such verses as the following:

*vāyavyam śvetam ālabheta bhūmikām*

Desiring wealth and power one should sacrifice a white horse in the northwest. *Taittirīya Samhitā* 2.1.1.1

*aindram ekādaśaka-pālam nirvapet prajākāmah*

Desiring offspring one should offer eleven oblations in the east. *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtras* 13.2.120.7

Because they expand the bondage of the material world, they are called the leaves (*parṇāni*). With these leaves the tree becomes attractive. He who knows this tree is the knower of the *Vedas*.

*Katha vallī śruti* says:

*ūrdhva-mūlo'vāk-śākha eṣo' śvatthaḥ sanātanah*

This eternal *aśvattha* tree has its root is upwards and branches downwards. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.3.1

*adhaś cordhvaṃ prasṛtās tasya śākhā  
 guṇa-pravṛddhā viṣaya-pravālāḥ |  
 adhaś ca mūlāny anusantatāni  
 karmānubandhīni manuṣya-loke ||2||*

2. The branches, nourished by the *guṇas*, with sense objects for twigs, spread up and down. Secondary roots spread out everywhere in the world of men, and are causes of continued action.

The branches of this tree spread down (*adhaḥ*) in the form of animals and others, and upward in the form of the birth of *devatās* and other elevated beings. These branches increase and increase by the watering process in the form of actions of the three *guṇas* (*guṇa-pravṛddhā*). The small twigs on the branches are the sense objects such as sound (*viṣaya-pravālāḥ*). Moreover, it can be inferred that, at the base of the tree, unknown to all people, is some great treasure. There are external roots from the branches of the *aśvattha*, meaning in this case a banyan tree,<sup>158</sup> which is dependent for support on both the main root and the external roots. These secondary roots, the cause of continued action, spread out everywhere (*anusantatāni*) below Brahmaloaka (*adhaḥ*), in the planet of humans. *Karma anubandhīni* means that after enjoying the results of ones actions in one life, those actions become stimulus for actions in another human birth.

*na rūpam asyeha tathopalabhyate  
 nānto na cādir na ca saṃpratiṣṭhā |  
 aśvattham enaṃ su-virūḍha-mūlam  
 asaṅga-śastreṇa dr̥dhena chittvā ||3||*

*tataḥ padam tat-parimārgitavyam  
 yasmin gatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ |  
 tam eva cādyam puruṣam prapadye  
 yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇi ||4||*

3-4. The real form of this tree, its end, its beginning, and its shelter, cannot be perceived in this world. Cutting down this tree which has roots sprouting everywhere, using the axe of detachment, a person should search out the treasure, attaining which he does not return again. He should seek refuge in

<sup>158</sup> The *aśvattha* tree does not have these secondary roots from the branches.

that original person from whom the ancient actions of samsāra have originated.

Moreover, the real form of the tree cannot be perceived in the world of men. This is because of the great variety of opinions such as “The world is real. The world is false. The world is eternal.” One cannot understand its end (*na antaḥ*), and because it seems unlimited, one cannot understand its beginning as well. Because it seems to have no beginning, one cannot understand its shelter (*sampratiṣṭhā*) or support. One cannot understand what it is, because of lack of real knowledge. In any case, knowing that detachment is the weapon to cut down the tree, which is the only cause of the suffering of all *jīvas*, one should cut down the tree with that detachment, and should look for the treasure situated at the base of the root.

The word *asaṅgaḥ* here means detachment, or complete renunciation. Having cut the tree down with the axe (*śastreṇa*) of complete detachment, separating it from oneself, one should then search (*parimārgitavyam*) for the object (*tat-padam*), Brahman, the great treasure, existing at the root. What type of thing is that? One should look for that object which having attained (*yasmin gataḥ*), one does not return. He then explains the method of searching. I worship (*prapadye*) that original person from whom the long standing (*purāṇī*) action of *samsāra* (*pravṛttiḥ*) has spread out: one should search by the process of *bhakti*.

*nirmāna-mohā jita-saṅga-doṣā  
adhyātma-nityā vinivṛtta-kāmāḥ |  
dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukha-duḥkha-samjñair  
gacchanty amūḍhāḥ padam avyayam tat ||5||*

5. Those who are free from the delusion of pride, who are devoid of attachment, who are absorbed in reflecting on Paramātmā, who have renounced material desire, who are free of dualities of happiness and distress, and who are without bewilderment, attain that indestructible goal.

Performing *bhakti*, what qualities do the people attain, so they can attain that goal? This verse explains. *Adhyātma-nitya* means “those who make a rule of constantly considering about *adhyātma*; those who are absorbed in reflecting on Paramātmā.”

*na tad bhāsayate sūryo na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ |  
yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramam mama ||6||*

6. The sun, moon and fire do not illuminate this supreme light of Mine. Having attained this light one does not return.

What are the qualities of that object which is attained? The words “Sun, moon and fire do not light it” means that it is self-revealing, self-dependent, self-sufficient, and devoid of miseries such as heat and cold (caused by the sun, moon and fire). *tad dhāma paramam mama* means that light (*dhāma*)<sup>159</sup> which is non-material, beyond the material senses (*paramam*), which illuminates or reveals everything else, and which belongs to Me (*mama*). The *Hari Vaṁśa* says:

*tat param paramam brahma sarvam vibhajate jagat  
mamaiva tad ghanam tejo jñātum arhasi bhārata*

That supreme Brahman lights up this whole universe. You should know that this intense light belongs to Me, O Bhārata. *Hari Vaṁśa* 2.114.12

The *śruti* says:

*na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra-tāraḥ  
nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yam agniḥ  
tam eva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam  
tasya bhāsā sarvam idaṁ vibhāti*

The sun does not shine there, nor do the moon or stars. Nor does lightning shine. How, then, can fire burn? When He shines, all of these shine. Through His light, all things shine. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.15

*mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ |  
manaḥ-śaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛti-sthāni karṣati ||7||*

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<sup>159</sup> *Dhāma* can mean light, place and form.

7. This eternal *jīva*, one of My parts, drags with it the senses and the sixth sense called the mind, which are situated in the bewildering *prakṛti*.

Who is that *jīva* who, crossing *samsāra* by devotion to You, attains that place?<sup>160</sup>

In the *Varāha Purāṇa* it is said:

*svāmśas cātha vibhinnāmśa iti dvedhāyam iṣyate  
vibhinnāmśas tu jīvaḥ syāt*

There are two types of *aṁśa* of the Lord, the *svāmśa* and *vibhinnāmśa*. The *vibhinnāmśa* is the *jīva*.

The *jīva* is eternal (*sanātanaḥ*), and in the conditioned state, drags the senses, the sixth of which is the mind, situated in *prakṛti*, situated in delusion--like a person who drags chains bolted on his feet, which he proudly accepts, thinking “These are mine.”

*śarīraṁ yad avāpnoti yac cāpy utkrāmatīśvaraḥ |  
grhītvaitāni saṁyāti vāyur gandhān ivāśayāt ||8||*

8. Whenever the *jīva* accepts or leaves a body, he takes these senses with him in the subtle body, just as air takes fragrances from objects and goes elsewhere.

In dragging around the senses, what does the *jīva* do? When the *jīva*, the master of his senses (*iśvaraḥ*), accepts a body and leaves the body, he goes away, taking these senses along with the subtle body. This is like the wind taking the fragrances with its subtle elements from the receptacles of fragrance (*āśayāt*), such as garlands or sandalwood, and going elsewhere.

*śrotraṁ cakṣuḥ sparśanaṁ ca rasanāṁ ghrāṇaṁ eva ca |  
adhiṣṭhāya manaś cāyaṁ viṣayān upasevate ||9||*

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<sup>160</sup> This was one of the questions asked in the commentary on the first verse of this chapter, in response to the last verses of the previous chapter.

9. Taking shelter of the ear, eye, touch, tongue and nose, the *jīva* enjoys the objects of the senses.

Having gone into a body, what does he do? Taking shelter (*adhiṣṭhāya*) of the senses such as the ear and also the mind, he enjoys the objects of the senses (*viśayān*), such as sound.

*utkrāmantaṁ sthitaṁ vāpi bhuñjanaṁ vā guṇānvitam |*  
*vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñāna-caḥṣuṣaḥ ||10||*

10. The foolish do not understand when the *jīva* is leaving the body, residing in it or enjoying the sense objects. Those with eyes of knowledge perceive this.

Do we not realize at all that body from which we depart, within which we reside in the body and residing there, how we enjoy pleasures? Persons with no intelligence (*vimūḍhā*) do not recognize when the *jīva* is leaving the body, residing in the body or enjoying the present sense objects with the senses (*guṇānvitam*). But men of discrimination (*jñāna-caḥṣuṣaḥ*) observe this.

*yatanto yoginaś cainam paśyanty ātmany avasthitam |*  
*yatanto 'py akṛtātmāno nainam paśyanty acetasaḥ ||11||*

11. Endeavoring *yogīs* see this soul situated in the body. Those with impure heart, though they may endeavor, do not see it.

Those persons of discrimination are the endeavoring *yogīs*. They see the soul in the body. Those of impure consciousness (*akṛtātmānaḥ*), even endeavoring, do not see the soul there.

*yad āditya-gataṁ tejo jagad bhāsayate 'khilam |*  
*yac candramasi yac cāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakam ||12||*

12. Know that the light of the sun, moon and fire, which illuminates this universe, is My light.

Whatever the *jīva* attains in his bound state, I, being the essence of the sun, moon and other objects, supply that. This is explained in three verses. The light situated in the sun, rising in the morning on Udaya Parvata,

illuminates the world in order to cause action for the attaining present and future enjoyment. That light, and all light (*akhilam*) that is in the moon and fire, belong to Me alone. What are known as the sun, moon and fire, are actually Me. Know that these are My *vibhūtis*.

*gām āviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmy aham ojasā |  
puṣṇāmi cauśadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakāḥ ||13||*

13. Entering the earth by My power, I support all beings. I nourish all plants, becoming the moon, full of sweet juice.

Entering the earth (*gām*) by My own *śakti* (*ojasā*), and being situated there, I maintain the moving and non-moving entities (*bhūtāni*). Becoming the sweet-juiced moon, I cause plants such as rice to increase and grow.

*aham vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇinām deham āśritaḥ |  
prāṇāpāna-samāyuktaḥ pacāmy annam catur-vidham ||14||*

14. Becoming the fire of digestion, I take shelter within all beings. I digest the four types of food using the *prāṇa* and *apāna*.

Becoming *vaiśvānara*, the fire in the stomach, taking shelter of the bodies of living entities, along with the *prāṇa* and *apāna*, which stimulate the fire, I digest the food of four types. The four types of food are: chewed with the teeth (*bhakṣya*), like roasted chick peas; savored by the tongue without using the teeth (*bhojya*) such as soup; licked (*lehya*) such as raw sugar; and sucked items (*coṣya*), in which the chewed portion is discarded, such as sugar cane stick.

*sarvasya cāham ḥṛdi sanniviṣṭo  
mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanam ca |  
vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo  
vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham ||15||*

15. I am situated in everyone's heart. From Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. And I am also known by all the *Vedas*. I am the maker of the *Vedānta* since I alone know the *Vedas*.

Just as I am the fire in the stomach, I am also dwelling in the hearts of all moving and non-moving entities, in the form of the element *buddhi*, intelligence. From Me in the form of intelligence (*mattah*), there is remembrance of sensations from objects previously perceived. From Me there is also knowledge, arising through contact of the senses with the sense objects, and also the removal of both knowledge and memory.

Having told how He helps the *jīva* in his bound state, the Lord then tells how He assists the *jīva* to attain liberation. I am known through the *Vedas*. I alone made *Vedānta* through Veda Vyāsa, because I alone know the *Vedas* (*veda-vit*): I know the real meaning of the *Vedas*, and no one except Me knows the real meaning.

*dvāv imau puruṣau loke kṣarāś cākṣara eva ca |  
kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭa-stho 'kṣara ucyate ||16||*

16. There are two conscious beings in this universe: the collective *jīvas* and Brahman.

The collective *jīvas* are all these living entities. The Brahman is fixed with one form for all time.

Because I am the knower of the *Vedas*, I will speak in brief the essential meaning of all the *Vedas* in three verses. Please listen.

In the material universe made of fourteen worlds (*loke*), there are these two conscious beings (*imau dvau puruṣau*). He then describes who they are in brief. One is the *jīva*, called *kṣara*, because he is in a deviated (*kṣar* means to fall) condition from his *svarūpa* or true nature. The other is Brahman, called *akṣara*, which does not deviate from its *svarūpa*. The *śruti* says:

*etad vai tad akṣaram gārgi brāhmaṇā abhivadanti*

The knowers of Brahman know this as *akṣara*, O Gārgī. *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.8.3

The *smṛti* says:

*akṣaram brahma paramam*

The *akṣara* is the supreme Brahman. BG 8.3

From these quotations, it is seen that the word *akṣara* means Brahman.

Now the Lord makes clear the meaning of these two words. All the living entities are one aggregate *jīva* (*sarvāni kṣaraḥ*). The collective *jīva*, fallen from his *svarūpa* by beginningless ignorance and subject to *karma*, becomes the variety of living entities up to the moving entities like Lord Brahmā. The singular number of *kṣaraḥ* is used to express a class. The second conscious being, *akṣara*, is situated for all of time with is one *svarūpa*, which does not fall.

*Amara Kośa* says “That is *kuṭa-sthaḥ* which is situated over all time with one form.”

*uttamaḥ puruṣas tv anyah paramātmety udāhrtaḥ |  
yo loka-trayam āviśya bibharti avyaya īśvaraḥ ||17||*

17. But the highest person is different from this. He is described as the Paramātmā, who having entered the three worlds, though being the controller and unchanging, supports it.

Having just spoken about the impersonal Brahman, which the *jñānīs* worship, the Lord now speaks about the Paramātmā which the *yogīs* worship. The word *tu* indicates a distinction from what was previously spoken. As the *yogī* is a different worshipper than the *jñānī*, the object worshipped by him will also be different.

The Lord shows the nature of Paramātmā. Paramātmā is He who, though having the nature of commanding (*īśvara*) and being unchanging (*avyayaḥ*), enters into the three worlds completely and supports and protects it (*bibharti*).

*yasmāt kṣaram atīto 'ham akṣarād api cottamaḥ |  
ato 'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ ||18||*

18. Because I am superior to the *jīvas*, to the Brahman and to the *puruṣa* known as Paramātmā, and even to the other forms of Bhagavān, I am celebrated in the *Vedas* and the *smṛtis*, as the Supreme Person.

Having spoken about the object of worship of the *yogīs*, Paramātmā, the Lord now speaks about the object of worship of the devotees, Bhagavān.<sup>161</sup> Though He in His form as Kṛṣṇa is also Bhagavān, He denotes the supreme excellence of His own *svarūpa* as Kṛṣṇa by using the name *puruṣottama*.

I am superior to the *jīva* (*kṣaram*), and I am superior to the Brahman (*akṣarāt*), and also to Paramātmā (the last statement is indicated by the word *api*.)

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā  
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

Of all *yogīs*, he who, absorbing his mind in Me, worships Me with faith, is considered by Me to be the best *yogī*. BG 6.47

From the difference in the worshipper, one can conclude that there is a difference in the worshipable object. The word *ca* indicates that Kṛṣṇa is superior even to the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha and other forms of Bhagavān, as Śukadeva has explained in the *Bhāgavatam*:

*ete cāmśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*

These are all parts or parts of parts. Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān Himself. SB 1.3.28

Though His one *sat-cid-ānanda* form is called by the names Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān, actually there is no difference at all between them. *Svarūpa-dvayābhāvāt*:

there is no duality in Your form. (SB 6.9. 36) However, because of observing difference in the worshippers, in terms of *sādhana* and the results, difference has been designated. That is to say, the *sādhana* respectively of the

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<sup>161</sup> This answers the last question raised in the commentary on the first verse: what is the basis of Brahman?

*jñānī*, *yogī* and *bhakta* produces realization of Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān. The result of *jñāna* and *yoga* is mere liberation, and the result of *bhakti* is to become an associate of the Lord with *prema*. Also without *bhakti*, the *jñānī* and *yogī* do not even attain liberation. This is understood from the following verses:

*naiṣkarmyam apy acyuta-bhāva-varjitam na śobhate*

Knowledge of self-realization, even though free from all material affinity, does not look well if devoid of a conception of the Infallible God. SB 1.5.12

*pureha bhūman bahavo 'pi yoginas  
tvad-arpitehā nija-karma-labdhayā  
vibudhya bhaktyaiva kathopanītayā  
prapedire 'ñjo 'cyuta te gatiṁ parām*

O almighty Lord, in the past many *yogīs* in this world achieved the platform of devotional service by offering all their endeavors unto You and faithfully carrying out their prescribed duties. Through such devotional service, perfected by the processes of hearing and chanting about You, they came to understand You, O infallible one, and could easily surrender to You and achieve Your supreme abode. SB 10.14.5

The worshippers of Brahman and Paramātmā must necessarily perform *bhakti* to Bhagavān in order to achieve the final results of their *sādhana* . The worshippers of Bhagavān however do not perform worship of Brahman or Paramātmā to achieve the results of their *sādhana* .

*tasmān mad-bhakti-yuktasya yogino vai mad-ātmanah  
na jñānam na ca vairāgyam prāyaḥ śreyo bhaved iha*

Therefore, for a devotee engaged in My loving service, with mind fixed on Me, the cultivation of knowledge and renunciation is generally not the means of achieving the highest perfection within this world. SB 11.20.31

*yat karmabhir yat tapasā jñāna-vairāgyataś ca yat  
yogena dāna-dharmaṇa śreyobhir itarair api*

*sarvaṁ mad-bhakti-yogena mad-bhaktō labhate `ñjasā  
svargāpavargam mad-dhāma kathañcid yadi vāñchati*

Everything that can be achieved by fruitive activities, penance, knowledge, detachment, mystic *yoga*, charity, religious duties and all other means of perfecting life is easily achieved by My devotee through loving service unto Me. If somehow or other My devotee desires promotion to heaven, liberation, or residence in My abode, he easily achieves such benedictions. SB 1.20.31-32

*yā vai sādhana -sampattiḥ puruṣārtha-catustaye  
tayā vinā tad āpnoti naro nārāyaṇāśrayaḥ*

Even without the usual requirements for achieving the perfection of life, a person will gain that perfection if he is simply a surrendered devotee of Nārāyaṇa. *Nārāyaṇīya*

Therefore, by worship of Bhagavān, it is possible to attain all of the results: material enjoyment, liberation and *prema*. But by the worship of Brahman and Paramātmā alone, it is not possible to attain enjoyment, liberation or *prema*. Therefore, it is said that Bhagavān is in a superior position even though He is not different from Brahman and Paramātmā. It is just as the huge fire is considered superior among a small light, a lamp and a huge fire, because of its superior ability to alleviate the pain of cold, even though all the items are essential the same energy.

However, among the forms of Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa is considered to be the supreme attractive form, just as the sun is considered superior to the huge fire. Why? Because Kṛṣṇa alone gave *nirvāṇa-mokṣa*, the final fruit of worship of Brahman, even to His enemies such as Agha, Baka and Jarāsandha, who were most sinful. This verse has been explained according to Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on the verse *brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*.<sup>162</sup>

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī says:

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<sup>162</sup> He explained that Kṛṣṇa is the condensed form of Brahman.

Men skilful at pious work worship Kṛṣṇa repeatedly, who appears continually to relieve the burden of the earth, who enables the intelligent to cross the material ocean, who is the delight of the women of Vraja, the essence of the beauty of the rain cloud as described in the *Vedas*, and the form of knowledge and bliss.

I do not know any truth higher than Kṛṣṇa, who has lotus eyes, a face beautiful as the full moon, and lips red like the *bimba* fruit; who has the complexion of a rain cloud; who wears yellow cloth; and who holds a flute in his hand. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's commentary on verse 19

Those fools who cannot tolerate the glories of Kṛṣṇa which have been ascertained with valid proof go to hell. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's commentary on verse 20

There should be no indignation at the explanation of these three verses (16-18) which establish the supreme position of the form of Kṛṣṇa. I offer my respects to the impersonalists.<sup>163</sup>

*yo mām evam asaṁmūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam |  
sa sarva-vid bhajati mām sarva-bhāvena bhārata ||19||*

19. He who without bewilderment knows Me as Bhagavān knows everything. He worships Me with complete love, O descendent of Bharata.

“Though this has been established by You, philosophers will argue over the meaning.”

Let them argue! They are bewildered by My *māyā*, and the devotee is not bewildered. He who is not bewildered by the arguments of these philosophers (*asaṁmūḍhaḥ*) knows everything. Even though he has not studied the scriptures, he is the knower of the meaning of all scriptures. The other person, though he has indeed studied and taught all the scriptures, is

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<sup>163</sup> Madhusūdana Sarasvatī was actually a famous supporter of impersonalism, but has also written such devotional verses in his *Gītā* commentary. Viśvanātha is here giving him credit for that, though also recognizing his impersonal stance.

really a complete fool (*sam mūdhaḥ*). He who knows Me worships Me with complete love. The other person, though he worships something, does not worship Me.

*iti guhyatamaṁ śāstram idam uktaṁ mayānagha |  
etad buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛta-kṛtyaś ca bhārata ||20||*

20. Thus I have spoken the most secret teaching, O sinless Arjuna. Knowing this, you will be intelligent and will have attained the goal, O descendent of Bharata.

This verse concludes the chapter. In these twenty verses (*iti*), I have thus spoken completely the most secret teaching.

In this chapter, the classes of matter and consciousness have been revealed by He who makes all things happen, and the supreme position of Kṛṣṇa has been explained.

Thus the commentaries on the fifteenth chapter of the *Gītā* have been completed for the pleasure of the devotees' hearts, by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Sixteen

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca  
abhayaṁ sattva-saṁśuddhir jñāna-yoga-vyavasthitiḥ |  
dānaṁ damaś ca yajñāś ca svādhyāyas tapa ājvam ||1||  
ahiṁsā satyam akrodhas tyāgaḥ śāntir apaśunam |  
dayā bhūteṣv aloluptvaṁ mārdaṁ hrīr acāpalam ||2||  
tejah kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śaucam adroho nātīmānītā |  
bhavanti saṁpadam daivīm abhijātasya bhārata ||3||*

1-3. Fearlessness, purity of consciousness, having knowledge of the methods of *jñāna*, charity, sense control, worship of the Lord, study of the *Vedas*, austerity, sincerity, non-violence, truth, absence of anger, lack of possessiveness, peace, not criticizing others, mercy to living beings, absence of greed, gentleness, humility, steadiness, strength, forgiveness, fortitude,

cleanliness, avoiding injury of others, and lack of pride manifest in a person born at a time indicating sattvic qualities.

In the sixteenth chapter, the *deva* and demon qualities as well as the results of these two conditions will be described.

Remembering that the fruits of the *āsvattha* tree of *samsāra* had not been described in the last chapter after mentioning them, the Lord in this chapter describes the fruits of the tree which are of two varieties: those which cause liberation and those which cause bondage. First, he describes those giving liberation in three verses.

*Abhayam* means freedom from the fear of “How will I live, being alone in the forest without wife and children?”

*Sattva-saṁsuddhiḥ* means purity of consciousness.

*Jñāna-yoga vyavasthitāḥ* means being completely familiar with the methods of attaining *jñāna*, for example lack of pride, mentioned in chapter thirteen.

*Dāna* means to distribute food or other items of one’s enjoyment to others

*Dama* means controlling the external senses.

*Yajña* means worship of the Lord.

*Svadhyaḥ* means studying or reciting the *Vedas*.

The other items after this are clear.

*Tyāga* means to give up possessiveness of wife, children and other things.

*Aloluptam* means absence of greed.

These twenty six items belong to the person born at a moment indicating sattvic nature.

*dambho darpo ’timānaś ca krodhaḥ pārūṣyam eva ca |*  
*ajñānam cābhijātasya pārtha sāmpadam āsurim ||4||*

4. False pretence, pride, attachment, anger, cruelty and lack of discriminating power manifest in one born at a time indicating tamasic or rajasic qualities.

The Lord now speaks of the fruits which cause bondage.

*Dambha* means to announce oneself as religious even though one has a sinful nature.

*Darpa* means pride due to wealth, knowledge and the like.

*Abhimāna* means to desire respect from others or attachment to wife, sons and other things.

*Krodha* means anger.

*Pāruṣya* means cruelty.

*Ajñāna* means lack of discrimination.

These are the qualities of the *asura*, which indicate other types of beings, such as Rākṣasas as well. These qualities belong to the person born at a moment indicating attainment of rajasic or tamasic qualities.

*daivī sampad vimokṣāya nibandhāyāsūrī matā |*  
*mā śucaḥ sampadam daivīm abhijāto'si pāṇḍava ||5||*

5. The *daiva* qualities lead to liberation and the asuric qualities lead to bondage. Do not worry Arjuna, you have been born with the sattvic qualities.

The Lord shows the effects of these two attainments in this verse.

“It appears that I have the asuric traits which will lead to bondage in *samsāra*, since I desire to kill enemies by shooting arrows and am thus filled with cruelty and anger.”

To comfort Arjuna who was thus worried, the Lord speaks. “Do not worry. You are born with the *daiva* qualities. O Pāṇḍava! For one born in a *kṣatriya* family, anger and cruelty during war are prescribed by the scriptures. To do otherwise would make you of the asuric nature, possessing violence and other bad qualities.”

*dvau bhūta-sargau loke'smin daiva āsura eva ca |*  
*daivo vistaraśaḥ prokta āsuram pārtha me śṛṇu ||6||*

6. There are two types of created beings in this world-- the divine and demonic. I have described the divine at length. Hear from Me about the demonic, O son of Pṛthā.

Now Kṛṣṇa begins to explain about the asuric qualities to the despondent Arjuna. I have spoken about the divine persons in detail already, in verse 1-3.

*pravṛttim ca nivṛttim ca janā na vidur āsurāḥ |  
na śaucam nāpi cācāro na satyam teṣu vidyate ||7||*

7. Demonic people do not understand *dharma* and *adharmā*. They do not have cleanliness, regulated activities, or truthfulness.

*Pravṛttim* means *dharma* and *nivṛttim* means *adharmā*.

*asatyam apratiṣṭham te jagad āhur anīśvaram |  
aparaspara-sambhūtam kim anyat kāma-haitukam ||8||*

8. They say the world is false, without a foundation, without a creator, having arisen without cause. What else can be said? Its cause is just some speculation according to ones desire.

This verse describes the thinking process of the *asuras*. They say that the world is an illusory conception, based on falsity (*asatyam*); that it is without shelter (*apṛatiṣṭha*), not having even the basis of a flower in the sky; that it is without creatorship of a controller since it is false (*anīśvaram*). Because it has arisen from nowhere like entities from perspiration, it has not arisen from a cause (*aparaspara-sambhūtam*). What else can be said (*kim anyat*)? Its cause is just according to the desire of those who propound theories about it (*kāma haitukam*). If they can imagine that the world arises only by illusion, then that becomes the cause.

Others explain the verse thus: It has no proof, no confirmation from the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas* or other sources of knowledge (*asatyam*). It is said:

*trayo vedasya kartāro bhaṇḍa-dhūrta-niśācarā*

The makers of the three *Vedas* are jackals imitating wise men.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> This is the philosophy of Cārvāka and others of the Lokāyata school. This is quoted by Śrīdhara Svāmī as well, but the source is not given.

It has no state of *dharma* or *adharmā* (*apratīṣṭham*). The ideas of *dharma* and *adharmā* are both mistaken conceptions. The Lord also is conceived on the basis of mistake or *bhrama* (*anīśvaram*).

“It is observed that the world arises only from the mutual interactions of men and women.” This is not a fact. The world does not arise from their interaction (*aparaspara-sambhūtam*). Though it is said that the child arises from the mother and father, it is a mistaken idea, like false knowledge that the pot has arisen from the potter. What should be said? The cause of the world is simply a speculation of one’s whim (*kāma-haitukam*). By logic, whatever different persons speak about atoms, *māyā* or God, they talk of that as the cause.

*etām dr̥ṣṭim avaṣṭabhya naṣṭātmāno ’lpa-buddhayaḥ |*  
*prabhavanti ugra-karmāṇaḥ kṣayāya jagato ’hitāḥ ||9||*

9. Taking shelter of this viewpoint, being depraved, unintelligent, performing violent actions, these men are born to bring destruction to the world.

Some of these *asuras* who speak in this way are lost souls (*naṣṭātmaṇaḥ*), some have little intelligence, some are violent, doing whatever they want, living hellish existence. This is described in eleven verses. *Avaṣṭabhya* means taking shelter of this conception.

*kāmam āśrītya duṣpūraṇi dambha-māna-madānvitāḥ |*  
*mohād gr̥hītvāsad-grāhān pravartante ’śuci-vratāḥ ||10||*

10. Taking shelter of insatiable lust, filled with false pretense, pride and passion, with impure vows, they engage in all sorts of false doctrines out of bewilderment.

They engage in false doctrines (*asad grāhān*). They perform *vratā* without pure conduct (*aśuci vratāḥ*).

*cintām aparimeyām ca pralayāntām upāśritāḥ |*  
*kāmopabhoga-paramā etāvad iti niścītāḥ ||11||*

11. Taking shelter of unlimited thoughts and worries, they conclude that the goal is to enjoy sense objects to the utmost.

Until death (*pralayāntām*) they take shelter of unlimited thoughts. They are convinced that the only purport of scripture (*etāvan iti niścitāḥ*) is to let the senses enjoy sense objects, and why worry about it?

*āśā-pāśa-śatair baddhāḥ kāma-krodha-parāyaṇāḥ |*  
*ihante kāma-bhogārtham anyāyenārtha-saṁcayān ||12||*

12. Bound by hundreds of shackles of desire, surrendered to lust and anger, they strive to amass heaps of wealth through illegal means in order to enjoy sense objects.

*idam adya mayā labdham idaṁ prāpsyē manoratham |*  
*idam astīdam api me bhaviṣyati punar dhanam ||13||*

13. I have gained this today. Next I will fulfill my other desires. I have this wealth now. This wealth will also be mine.

*asau mayā hataḥ śatrur haniṣyē cāparān api |*  
*īśvaro'ham ahaṁ bhogī siddho'haṁ balavān sukhī ||14||*

14. I have killed my enemy. I will kill others also. I am the lord. I am the enjoyer. I am perfect, strong and happy.

*ādhyo 'bhijanavān asmi ko 'nyo 'sti sadṛśo mayā |*  
*yakṣyē dāsyāmi modisyā ity ajñāna-vimohitāḥ ||15||*

15. I am wealthy and high born. Who is equal to me? I shall perform sacrifices, give charity and rejoice. In this way, they are bewildered by ignorance.

*aneka-citta-vibhrāntā moha-jāla-samāvṛtāḥ |*  
*prasaktāḥ kāma-bhogeṣu patanti narake'sucau ||16||*

16. Misled by many thoughts, covered by a net of illusion, and extremely attached to enjoying objects, they fall into an unclean hell.

Attached to the enjoyment of their desired objects, they fall to unclean hell, into such places as Vaitaraṇī (filled with blood and pus).

*ātma-sambhāvitāḥ stabdhā dhana-māna-madānvitāḥ |  
yajante nāma-yajñais te dambhenāvidhi-pūrvakam ||17||*

17. Respected by the unintelligent, unsubmitive, filled with the intoxication of pride in their wealth, they perform worship for show only, through false *yajña*, without following scriptural rules.

*Ātma-sambhāvitā* means those who have attained worshipable status, but are not respected by any well bred people. Therefore they are unsubmitive (*stabdhā*). They perform worship by actions which are sacrifice in name only (*nāma-yajñaiḥ yajante*).

*ahaṅkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ ca saṁsṛitāḥ |  
mām ātma-para-deheṣu pradviṣanto'bhyaśyākāḥ ||18||*

18. Surrendered to ego, strength, arrogance, lust, and anger, they hate Me situated in their own and others' bodies, and find fault in the qualities of the devotees.

They disrespect Me (*pradviṣantaḥ*), the Paramātmā, who am situated in their own and others bodies (*ātma-para-deheṣu*). Or they hate Me who am situated in the bodies of the devotees who are surrendered to Paramātmā (*ātma-para-deheṣu mām*). They hate Me, since they hate the devotees who have surrendered to Me. And they find fault in the qualities of the devotees (*abhyaśyākāḥ*).

*tān ahaṁ dviṣataḥ krūrān saṁsāreṣu narādhamān |  
kṣipāmy ajasram aśubhān āsurīṣv eva yoniṣu ||19||*

19. I cast those hateful, cruel, and lowest of humans, constantly doing evil, into repeated birth and death in the wombs of demons.

āsūrīm yonim āpannā mūḍhā janmani janmani |  
mām aprāpyaiva kaunteya tato yānti adhamām gatim ||20||

20. Taking birth as demons birth after birth, these fools, not attaining Me, then go to the lowest position, O son of Kuntī.

Not attaining Me, the *asuras* attain low births. However, those *asuras* in the form of Kaiśa and others attained Me, Kṛṣṇa, who appeared at the end of Dvāpara-yuga in the twenty eighth cycle of Vaivasvata Manu's reign. Though hating Me, they attained Me in the form of liberation. Because I am an ocean of mercy, I give even such sinful *asuras* liberation, which is only attained by the perfection of *bhakti* and *jñāna*. The Personified Vedas say:

*nibhṛta-marun-mano'kṣa dr̥ḍha-yoga-yujo hr̥di yan  
munaya upāsate tad-arayo'pi yayuḥ smaraṇāt*

Simply by constantly thinking of Him, the enemies of the Lord attained the same Supreme Truth whom sages fixed in *yoga* worship by controlling their breath, mind and senses. SB 10.87.23

This widens the scope of My supreme attractive position which I mentioned previously.

But as the *Bhagavatāmṛta Kārikā* says:

*mām kṛṣṇa-rūpiṇam yāvan nāpnuvanti mama dviṣaḥ  
tāvad evādhamam yonim prāpnuvantīti hi sphuṭam*

In as much as those who hate Me do not attain Me in My form as Kṛṣṇa, it is clear that they attain the lowest births.

*trividham narakasyedam dvāram nāśanam ātmanah |  
kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād etat trayam tyajet ||21||*

21. Lust, anger and greed, the three gates leading to hell, destroy the self. Therefore one should give up these three.

Thus the Lord has described the nature of the *asura* in detail. The Lord has also correctly said, “Do not worry, O Arjuna, you are born of the divine nature.” (BG 16.5) to confirm that this is true, He then says that there are indeed three inborn tendencies of the *asuras* in this verse.

*etair vimuktaḥ kaunteya tamo-dvārais tribhir naraḥ |  
ācaraty ātmanaḥ śreyas tato yāti parām gatim ||22||*

22. The person who is free from these three gates leading to darkness acts in the best interest of the self, and then attains the supreme goal.

*yaḥ śāstra-vidhim utsṛjya vartate kāma-kārataḥ |  
na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parām gatim ||23||*

23. He who giving up the rules of scripture acts according to his own whim does not attain perfection, happiness, or the supreme goal.

In this verse the Lord expresses that it is beneficial for a person to follow the scriptures. He speaks of the person who does not follow scripture, and does whatever he wants (*kāma-kārataḥ*).

*tasmāc chāstram pramāṇam te kāryākārya-vyavasthitau |  
jñātvā śāstra-vidhānoktam karma kartum ihārhasi ||24||*

24. Therefore scripture is the authority in determining what to do and what not to do. Understanding what is stated in the scripture, you should perform actions in this world.

This chapter has described how those who follow the scripture attain the supreme goal and those who do not follow scripture go to hell.

Thus the commentaries on the sixteenth chapter of the *Gītā* have been completed for the pleasure of the devotees' hearts, by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

## Chapter Seventeen

*arjuna uvāca*

*ye śāstra-vidhim utsrjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ |  
teṣāṃ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvam āho rajas tamasḥ ||1||*

1. Arjuna said: O Kṛṣṇa, what is the position of those who give up the rules of scripture but act without desire for sense enjoyment. Is this *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*?

In the seventeenth chapter according to the questions of Arjuna, the Lord gives a description of the sattvic, rajasic and tamasic things.

“After describing the asuric persons, You concluded by saying that, giving up the injunctions of scripture, they do as they like and do not attain happiness in this life or the next. I have a question about this.” Thus Arjuna speaks this verse.

You have spoken of those who give up scriptural authority and act out of personal desire (*kāma-kāritāḥ*). But what is the foundation (*niṣṭhā*) of those who give up the rules of scripture, and according to their inclination perform worship, such as *tapa-yajña*, *jñāna-yajña* or *japa-yajña*, but with faith, without desire to enjoy as they like (*śraddhayānvitāḥ*)? Is it *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*? Please tell me that. *Āho* is an interrogative particle.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*

*trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehinām sā svabhāva-jā |  
sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tām śṛṇu ||2||*

2. The Lord said: The faith of embodied beings is of three types, arising from their previous impressions. It is made of *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*.

O Arjuna, first hear from Me the situation of those who worship without giving up the rules of scripture. After that I will speak to you about the condition of those who give up the rules of scripture. Hear about the three types of faith which arise from *svabhāva*--particular impressions from previous experiences.

*sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata |  
śraddhā-mayo' yaṁ puruṣo yo yac-chraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ ||3||*

3. This faith corresponds to the nature of the internal organ, O descendent of Bharata. Man is made of his faith. He becomes similar to whatever form he worships with faith.

*Sattvam* here means the heart or internal sense organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*). There are three types of *antaḥkaraṇa*: in the mode of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Accordingly, those who have sattvic *antaḥkaraṇa* have sattvic faith. Those with rajasic *antaḥkaraṇa* have rajasic faith, and those with tamasic *antaḥkaraṇa* have tamasic faith. He becomes similar to whatever he faithfully worships—*deva*, *asura* or *Rākṣasa* (*yac śraddhaḥ*).

*yajante sātṭvikā devān yakṣa-rakṣāṁsi rājasāḥ |  
pretān bhūta-gaṇāṁś cānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ ||4||*

4. Those with sattvic nature worship the *devas*. Those with rajasic nature worship the *Yakṣas* and *Rākṣasas*. Those with tamasic nature worship the *Pretas* and *Bhūtas*.

The Lord clarifies what He has said. Those with sattvic *antaḥkaraṇa*, with sattvic faith, with rules of sattvic scripture, worship *devatās*. Because of having faith in those *devatās*, they are said to be *deva*. In the same way, those with rajasic and tamasic *antaḥkaraṇas* take up such faith, and worship *Rākṣasas* and *Bhūtas* or *Pretas*,<sup>165</sup> and are said to be *Rākṣasas* and *Bhūtas*.

*aśāstra-vihitam ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ |  
dambhāhamkāra-samyuktāḥ kāma-rāga-balānvitāḥ ||5||  
karṣayantaḥ śarīra-stham bhūta-grāmaṁ acetasaḥ |  
mām caivāntaḥ-śarīra-stham tān viddhy āsura-niścayaṁ ||6||*

5-6. Know that those people are demonic in nature who, out of ostentation and pride, filled with attachment, lust and strength to endure, having no

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<sup>165</sup> According to Baladeva, the *Pretas* are the spirits of those who have fallen from caste duties, or else a type of *Piśāca*. The *Bhūtas* are according to some, the seven mothers, or the followers of *Śiva*.

discrimination, undergo extreme austerities not prescribed in the scriptures, and afflict the elements in the body and Me residing in the body.

“You asked the question ‘What is the position of those who, giving up the rules of scripture but with faith, and not simply enjoying as much as possible, perform worship?’ Now hear the answer.” The Lord answers in two verses.

They perform austerities which are harmful to living entities (*ghoram*). The mention of austerities is representative of other acts such as *japa* and sacrifice as well. They perform all these acts against the rules of scriptures. The absence of whimsical enjoyment and endowment of faith (*sraddhānvitāḥ*) are understood in this context. But they are endowed with ostentation (*dambhaḥ*) and pride (*ahaṅkāraḥ*) because without those two, they could not transgress the rules of scripture. They also have desire for eternal youth, eternal life, kingdom and such things (*kāma*), attachment to their particular austerity (*rāga*), and ability to perform the austerity (*bala*), like that Hiraṇyakaśipu and others. Endowed with these qualities, they starve or cause suffering (*karṣyantaḥ*) to all elements such as earth (*bhūtā-gramam*), to Me (*mām*) and to My *amśa* the *jīva*, situated in their bodies. Know these people to be also situated on the level of *asuras*.

*āhāras tv api sarvasya trividho bhavati priyaḥ |  
yajñas tapas tathā dānam teṣām bhedam imaṁ śṛṇu ||7||*

7. The food that people enjoy, their sacrifice, austerity and charity have three divisions also. Please hear about these.

I have described in the previous chapter those who give up scriptural rules and do things according to their desire, and in this chapter I have described those who, according to the *asuras*' scriptures, worship Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, Pretas and other beings (verses 4); and I have also described those who perform austerities and other acts (which appear religious) with no scripture at all (verses 5 and 6). These all end up as asuric beings. Please consider and understand, in like manner, as much as possible, the categories of *deva* and *asura* assumed by foods and other things to be described according to division of the three *guṇas*. Thirteen verses describe these items.

āyuh-sattva-balārogya-sukha-prīti-vivardhanāḥ |  
rasyāḥ snigdḥāḥ sthirā ḥṛdyā āhārāḥ sattvic-priyāḥ ||8||

8. Foods which prolong life span, increase will, strength, immunity to disease, happiness and appetite, and are tasty, mild, substantial, and beneficial are dear to those in *sattva* *guṇa*.

It is well known that sattvic foods increase the life span (*āyuh*). They also increase strength of will (*sattva*) as well as physical strength, freedom from disease, happiness and delightfulness in eating them. The food should be tasty or juicy (*rasyāḥ*). Jaggery has taste but is coarse or dry. Sattvic food should thus be mild, with oil (*snigdḥā*). The foam of milk, though tasty and mild, is insubstantial. Sattvic food should be substantial, with long lasting effect in the body (*sthirā*). Jack fruit and other items are sweet, mild, and substantial, but are not beneficial to the stomach and other organs. Sattvic food should thus also be beneficial to the heart, stomach and other organs (*ḥṛdyā*) as well. Thus it is understood that foods such as rice, wheat, other grains, milk and sugar are dear to the sattvic people, because they have all four of the above mentioned qualities. As those foods are dear to them, the foods are understood to be sattvic. However, even if food has those four qualities, if it is impure, the sattvic people do not like it. Thus, purity should be added as a quality of sattvic food. One should compare the description of tamasic food mentioned later. The adjective used to describe tamasic food is *amedhya*, ritually impure, not to be offered in sacrifice.

kaṭv-amla-lavaṇāty-uṣṇa-tikṣṇa-rūkṣa-vidāhinaḥ |  
āhārā rājasasyeṣṭā duḥkha-śokāmaya-pradāḥ ||9||

9. Foods that are excessively bitter, sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning, and which produce pain while eating, sorrow afterwards and finally disease, are dear to the rajasic person.

In this list the adjective “extremely” should be added to each quality. Very bitter food (*kaṭu*) means such food as *nīma*. Very sour, very salty and very hot foods are well known. Very sharp foods (*tikṣṇa*) are turmeric root and other items, or pepper. Very drying foods (*rūkṣa*) are *hing* and *kodrava*. Burning foods (*vidāhinaḥ*) are those that cause internal heat, such as burned chick peas. These cause suffering (*duḥkha*), lamentation (*śoka*), and disease

(*āmayam*). The word “suffering” here refers to suffering when eating, causing pain to the tongue, throat or other organ. “Lamentation” means afterward, in the future, those foods cause despair. *Āmaya* means disease.

*yāta-yāmam gata-rasam pūti paryuṣitam ca yat |  
ucchiṣṭam api cāmedhyam bhojanam tāmasa-priyam ||10||*

10. Stale food, food without taste, bad-smelling or rotten food, leftovers from others, and impure foods are dear to the tamasic person.

*Yāta yāmam* means food which has remained three hours (*yāmam*) after cooking, or in other words, that which has become cold after cooking. *Gata-rasam* means food from which the natural taste is missing, or has been extracted, or such items as the skin and seed of the ripe mango. *Puti* means bad smelling. *Paryuṣitam* means over-ripe. *Ucchiṣṭam* refers to the leftovers other than that from the *guru* or other similar persons. *Amedyam* means inedible items such as *kalañja*. From reviewing the list of foods, one should conclude that those interested in their own welfare should partake of sattvic foods. The Vaiṣṇavas however reject any food not offered to the Lord, even if it is sattvic food. Food offered to the Lord is dear to the devotees who are beyond the *guṇas*. This is understood from the *Bhāgavatam*.

*aphalākāṅkṣibhir yajño vidhi-drṣṭo ya ijjate |  
yaṣṭavyam eveti manaḥ samādhāya sa sattvich ||11||*

11. That sacrifice which is performed according to scripture, without desire for material results, with the mentality that it should be performed because of scriptural injunction, is sattvic.

With this verse the Lord begins to speak of the three types of sacrifice. That is sattvic sacrifice which is performed according to the rules, with no desire for results. What would be the impetus for sacrifice if there were no desire for results? The mind is fixed in performing the sacrifice with the idea that it should be done because the scriptures prescribe it thus (*yaṣṭavyam eva iti*).

*abhisandhāya tu phalam dambhārtham api caiva yat |  
ijjate bhārata-śreṣṭha tam yajnam viddhi rājasam ||12||*

12. Know that the sacrifice performed with intention of enjoying the result, or for ostentation, is rajasic, O best of Bharata's lineage.

*vidhi-hīnam asṛṣṭānnaṁ mantra-hīnam adakṣiṇam |  
śraddhā-virahitaṁ yajñaṁ tāmasaṁ paricakṣate ||13||*

13. They say that the sacrifice which is contrary to scripture, with no food given in charity, without proper *mantras*, in which the priests are not paid, and which is performed without faith, is tamasic.

*Asṛṣṭa annam* means without giving food in charity.

*deva-dvija-guru-prājña-pūjanaṁ śaucam ārjavam |  
brahmacaryam ahimsā ca śārīraṁ tapa ucyate ||14||*

14. Sattvic austerity of the body consists of worship of *devas*, *brāhmaṇas*, *guru* and the wise, as well as purity, sincerity, celibacy and non-violence.

Speaking of three types of austerity, first the Lord speaks of three types of sattvic austerity in three verses.

*anudvega-karaṁ vākyaṁ satyaṁ priya-hitaṁ ca yat |  
svādhyāyābhyasanaṁ caiva vān-mayaṁ tapa ucyate ||15||*

15. Speech which does not disturb others, which is true, agreeable and beneficial, and as well, the recitation of the Vedas, is sattvic austerity of speech.

*Anudvega-karam* means that in calling out to other persons who have done harm to oneself, one does not cause any disturbance to them.

*manaḥ-prasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunam ātma-vinigrahaḥ |  
bhāva-saṁsuddhir ity etat tapo mānasam ucyate ||16||*

16. Sattvic austerity of the mind consists of tranquility, gentleness, silence, control of the mind, and purity of the heart.

*śraddhayā parayā taptaṁ tapas tat tri-vidhaṁ naraiḥ |*

*aphalākānḱsibhir yuktaih sattvicm paricakṣate ||17||*

17. When these three types of austerity are undertaken with full faith, and without longing for results, they are said to be sattvic.

The three types of austerity are those of body, words, and mind (*tat tri-vidham*).

*satkāra-māna-pūjārtham tapo dambhena caiva yat |  
kriyate tad iha proktam rājasam calam adhruvam ||18||*

18. Austerity undertaken for praise from others and for respect from others, or undertaken for show alone, is said to be rajasic. It is temporary and uncertain.

The austerity performed with ostentation, for the purpose of verbal respect by others who will say he is a great man, for the purpose of gaining bodily respect from others by having them stand up when he approaches, and for the purpose of gaining mental respect from others which will manifest in the future as gifts of money and other things, is rajasic austerity. Its results are very temporary (*calam*) if they appear at all, and it is uncertain (*adhruvam*) that they will appear.

*mūḍha-grāheṇātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapah |  
parasyotsādanārtham vā tat tāmasam udāhṛtam ||19||*

19. Austerity performed out of foolishness, inflicting pain on oneself, or for the purpose of harming others, is tamasic austerity.

*Mūḍha-grahena* means to be performed out of foolishness. *Parasya utsadana artha m* means performed with the intention of harming others.

*dātavyam iti yad dānam diyate 'nupakāriṇe |  
deśe kāle ca pātre ca tad dānam sattvicm smṛtam ||20||*

20. That charity performed with the conviction that it should be given, and given to a proper person who cannot repay, at the proper place and time, is known as sattvic charity.

One should be convinced that the gift should be given (*dātavam iti*). It is understood here that there is no desire for personal gain.

*yat tu pratyupakārārtham phalam uddiṣya vā punaḥ |  
dīyate ca parikliṣṭam tad dānam rājasam smṛtam ||21||*

21. That gift given with expectation of reciprocation, with desire for results, given unwillingly, is said to be rajasic.

*Parikliṣṭam* (reluctance) means that one repents after giving the charity, thinking “Why is it necessary to give so much money?” Or it can mean that though not desiring to give, one gives charity only because the *guru* or someone else ordered him to do so. Or it can mean to use inauspicious items, since one did not do the charity willingly.

*adeśa-kāle yad dānam apātrebhyaś ca dīyate  
asat-kṛtam avajñātam tat tāmasam udāhṛtam ||22||*

22. Charity given with disregard and as a result, with discourtesy, to an undeserving person at the wrong place and time, is said to be tamasic charity.

The result of disregard (*avajñātam*) is offence (*asat-kṛtam*).

*om tat sat iti nirdeśo brahmaṇas tri-vidhaḥ smṛtaḥ  
brāhmaṇās tena vedās ca yajñās ca vihitāḥ purā ||23||*

*tasmād om ity udāhṛtya yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-kriyāḥ  
pravartante vidhānuktāḥ satatam brahma-vādinām ||24||*

23-24. The three words *om tat sat* were revealed by the ancient sages. Brahman in the form of these three sounds created the *brāhmaṇas*, the *Vedas* and sacrifice. Therefore, sacrifices, austerities, charity and other works of the present seekers of Brahman are always started with the uttering of *om*.

The three types of austerity, sacrifice, charity, foods and faith have been described generally for all human beings. However, among the sattvic people there are also the seekers of Brahman. All of their sacrifices, charities, austerities and food indicate Brahman. That is explained in this verse.

The three words *om tat sat*, indicating Brahman, have been revealed by the sages (*smṛtaḥ*). Among those words, *om* is well known in all the *śrutis* as the name of Brahman. The word *tat* is well known to designate the cause of the universe, and is also known to signify the obliterator of what is not *tat*-- the material world. *Sat* is defined in the *śrutis* as that which exists before everything else (eternal): *sad eva saumyam agre aṣīt. (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.2.4)* Since the *brāhmaṇas*, sacrifices and the *Vedas* were created (*vihitāḥ*) in ancient times by Brahman itself (*tena*) in the form of these sounds *om tat sat*, the sacrifices, austerities, charity and other works of the present seekers of Brahman are started uttering (*udāhṛtya*) the name of Brahman, *om*.

*tad ity anabhisandhāya phalaṁ yajña-tapaḥ-kriyāḥ  
dāna-kriyāś ca vividhāḥ kriyante mokṣa-kāṅkṣibhiḥ ||25||*

25. Uttering *tat*, persons aspiring for liberation performed sacrifice, austerity and charity without seeking results.

Uttering the word *tat* (*tad iti*), *udāhṛtya* being understood from the previous verse, they perform activities such as charity. *Anabhisandhaya* means without seeking results.

*sad-bhāve sādhu-bhāve ca sad ity etat prayujyate  
praśaste karmaṇi tathā sac-chabdaḥ pārtha yujyate ||26||*

26. The word *sat* is used in relation to Brahman and also to the seekers of Brahman. Thus the word *sat* is used in performing all auspicious activities.

Because the word *sat* indicating Brahman is present in the most excellent or auspicious things, it should be used in all auspicious activities whether material or spiritual. That is explained in two verses.

The word *sat* indicates Brahman (*sad bhāve*) and the seekers of Brahman (*sādhu bhāve*).

*yajñe tapasi dāne ca sthitiḥ sad iti cocyate  
karma caiva tad-arthīyaṃ sad ity evābhidhīyate ||27||*

27. Being the goal of sacrifice, austerity and charity, *sat* is situated in those works, which are called *sat*. Any work dedicated to Brahman is called *sat*.

*Sat* is situated (*sthitiḥ*) in sacrifice and other works since it is the goal of those works. Any work suitable for serving Brahman (*tad-arthīyaṃ*) such as cleaning the Lord's temple, is called *sat*.

*āsraddhayā hutam dattam tapas taptam kṛtam ca yat  
asad ity ucyate pārtha na ca tat pretya no iha ||28||*

28. O son of Prthā, whatever is offered in the fire, whatever is given in charity, whatever is undertaken as austerity, but which is done without faith, is called *asad* since it bears no result now or in the next life.

“I have heard about *sat* actions (those indicating Brahman). What about *asad* actions?”

Whatever oblation is offered, whatever charity is given, whatever austerity is undertaken, whatever other actions is performed, is *asad* if performed without faith. If there is no faith,<sup>166</sup> whatever oblations are offered are actually not offered, whatever charity is given is actually not give, whether austerity is performed is actually not given, and whatever is done is actually not done. Everything is *asad*, since one obtains no results in the next world (*pretya*) or in this world (*iha*).

This chapter describes how sattvic actions of various types, performed with faith, lead to liberation.

Thus the commentaries on the seventeenth chapter of the *Gītā* have been completed for the pleasure of the devotees' hearts, by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.

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<sup>166</sup> *Sattvika* faith is understood here.

## Chapter Eighteen

*arjuna uvāca*  
*sannyāsasya mahā-bāho tattvam icchāmi veditum*  
*tyāgasya ca hr̥ṣīkeṣa pṛthak keśi-niśūdana ||1||*

1. Arjuna said: O Mighty-armed one, controller of the senses, killer of Keśi, I desire to know the true meaning of *sannyāsa* and the different meaning of *tyāga*.

The eighteenth chapter speaks of the three types of *sannyāsa*, *jñāna* and *karma*, defines liberation, and indicates *bhakti* as the highest secret of all.

“You stated in the previous chapter ‘Uttering the word *tat*, without seeking results, sacrifices, austerities and charities are performed by those with desire for liberation from the *atat* material world.’ Those with a desire for liberation are *sannyāsīs*. But there seems to be others who are detached from all the results of their work, as mentioned by You when you said *sarva-karma-phala-tyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān*: give up all the result of your work with great attention. (BG 12.11) What is the *tyāga* of these others?” Wanting to know the distinction, Arjuna asks a question in this verse.

“If the words *sannyāsa* and *tyāga* have different meanings, I desire to know the distinct essence of these two. But if they mean the same thing, in Your opinion or others’ opinion, I desire to know what is that one meaning as well.

“O controller of the senses (*hr̥ṣīkeṣa*), you have made this doubt arise in me since You are the instigator of my intelligence. O killer of Keśi (*keśi-niśūdana*), You will kill this doubt of mine just as You killed Keśi. O Mighty-armed one (*mahā-bāho*), You have great strength in Your arms, and I have insignificant strength in my arms. You have become friendly with an expansion such as me, rather than with Your other expansions with vast knowledge. Therefore I am not afraid to ask this question, since You have become somewhat friendly with me.”

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca*  
*kāmyānām karmaṇām nyāsaṁ sannyāsaṁ kavayo viduḥ*

*sarva-karma-phala-tyāgam prāhus tyāgam vicakṣaṇāḥ ||2||*

2. The Lord said: The learned know that *sannyāsa* means to give up all actions performed for personal benefit. The learned say that *tyāga* means giving up the results of all actions.

Taking up the former idea first, the Lord explains the different derivations of the two words. To renounce (*nyāsa*) at the very root activities performed for fulfilling personal desires (*kāmyānām karmaṇām*) is called *sannyāsa*. Personal desires are indicated in such statements as the following:

*putra-kāmo yajeta, svarga-kāmo yajeta*

One with a desire for a son should worship. One with desire for Svarga should worship. *Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra* 3.9.4, 19.10.14

This does not mean that one should reject daily obligatory activities (*nitya-karma*) such as *sandhya* worship.<sup>167</sup>

*Tyāga* means that one should give up the results of all activities in performance of actions with personal desire (*kāmya-karma*) or in performance of obligatory actions (*nitya-karma*), rather than to give up those activities completely.

For the *śrutis* also promise results even for the obligatory actions (*nitya-karma*).

*karmaṇā pitṛloka*

By the obligatory actions one goes to Pitṛloka. *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.5

*dharmeṇa pāpam apanudati*

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<sup>167</sup> *Nitya-karmas* are activities ordered by the scriptures as obligatory for certain persons. *Kāmya-karmas* are activities described in the scriptures for persons having certain desires such as desire for wealth or sons. These are not obligatory for anyone, but are performed according to personal desire.

By following *dharma*, one eradicates sin. *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*  
15.7

Therefore, in *tyāga*, one should perform all *kāmya-karmas* and *nitya-karmas* without seeking results, whereas in *sannyāsa* one performs only obligatory duties (*nitya-karma*) without the desire for results, and completely rejects rituals for personal gratification (*kāmya-karma*). This is the distinction of the two words *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*.

*tyājyaṁ doṣa-vad ity eke karma prāhur manīṣiṇaḥ*  
*yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-karma na tyājyam iti cāpare* ||3||

3. Some learned persons say that all actions should be given up because they are all faulty. Others say that activities like sacrifice, charity and austerity should not be given up.

In this verse, the Lord describes other opinions about the meaning of *tyāga*. The sāṅkhya philosophers (*eke manīṣiṇaḥ*) say that all activities described in the scripture, because of being defective by inclusion of violence or other bad qualities, should be given up completely. On the other hand, the Mīmāṃsakas (*apare*) say that activities such as sacrifice cannot be given up because they are prescribed by the scriptures.

*nīścayaṁ śṛṇu me tatra tyāge bharata-sattama*  
*tyāgo hi puruṣa-vyāghra tri-vidhaḥ samprakīrtitaḥ* ||4||

4. Hear from Me the conclusion regarding *tyāga*, O best descendent of Bharata. O tiger among men, *tyāga* is said to have three types.

In this verse the Lord states His opinion. *Tyāga* has three types: in *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The Lord delays describing these three types till verse seven, and then starts with a description of *tyāga* in the mode of *tamas*. From the use of the word *sannyāsa* in describing tamasic *tyāga* in that verse, it is understood that *tyāga* and *sannyāsa* have the same meaning in the opinion of the Lord.

*yajña-dāna-tapaḥ-karma na tyājyaṁ kāryam eva tat*  
*yajño dānaṁ tapaś caiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām* ||5||

5. Sacrifice, charity and austerity should not be given up but should be performed, since they purify even the wise.

According to the Lord, even among *kāmya-karmas* (optional), those sacrifices, charities and austerities which are sattvic in nature, , should be performed without desire for results.<sup>168</sup> This is explained in this verse. Sacrifice, austerity and charity must be done, because they cause purification of the consciousness.

*etāny api tu karmāṇi saṅgam̐ tyaktvā phalāni ca  
kartavyānīti me pārtha niścitam̐ matam̐ uttamam̐ ||6||*

6. These actions must be done, but without the misconception of being the doer and without longing for results. This is My final opinion.

In this verse the Lord shows the method by which these actions become purifying.

Giving up the misconception of being the doer (*saṅgam̐ tyaktvā*) and also giving up the quest for results (*phalāni*), one should perform those actions. Giving up the idea of being the doer and giving up seeking results is *tyāga* and this is also called *sannyāsa*.

*niyatasya tu sannyāsaḥ karmaṇo nopapadyate  
mohāt tasya parityāgas tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ ||7||*

7. It is not recommended to give up *nitya-karmas* even for the *sannyāsī*. Rejection arising from ignorance of scripture ends in ignorance.

Starting the description of the three types of *tyāga*, the Lord here describes tamasic *tyāga*. Giving up daily activities (*niyatasya karmaṇaḥ*) is not recommended. To reject the *nitya-karmas* out of ignorance of the meaning of scriptures (*mohāt*) is called tamasic *tyāga*. The *sannyāsī* can reject *kāmya-karmas* since they are not obligatory, but *nitya-karmas* are not to be rejected. That is the suggestion of the word *tu*. The result of such tamasic *tyāga* is

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<sup>1682</sup>In the second verse, *sannyāsa* was defined as giving up *kāmya-karmas*.

ignorance, instead of attainment of knowledge, which was the very goal in rejecting the *nitya-karma*.

*duḥkham ity eva yat karma kāya-kleśa-bhayāt tyajet  
sa kṛtvā rājasam tyāgam naiva tyāga-phalam labhet ||8||*

8. One who gives up the obligatory actions out of fear of bodily pain, thinking it is an unnecessary inconvenience for the body, performs *tyāga* in the mode of *rajas*, and does not attain the intended result of that *tyāga*.

Even though one knows that performance of *nitya-karma* is necessary and to do it is praiseworthy and to neglect to do it is a sinful, if one rejects the action thinking it is useless trouble to the body, it is known as rajasic *tyāga*. One will not attain the desired result of *tyāga*, knowledge, by doing so.

*kāryam ity eva yat karma niyatam kriyate 'rjuna  
saṅgam tyaktvā phalam caiva sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ ||9||*

9. O Arjuna, that *tyāga* in which obligatory actions are performed out of duty, without sense of doership and desire for results, is considered *tyāga* in the mode of *sattva*.

Performing the *nitya-karma* (*niyatam karma*) thinking “this should be done” while rejecting doership and desired results is called sattvic *tyāga*. It is understood here that the result of renouncing the fruits and not renouncing the action in this sattvic *tyāga* is knowledge.

*na dveṣṭy akuśalam karma kuśale nānuṣajjate  
tyāgī sattva-samāviṣṭo medhāvī chinna-samśayaḥ ||9||*

10. The wise renunciate situated in *sattva*, devoid of doubt, does not hate uncomfortable duties nor prefer comfortable duties.

This verse describes the characteristics of one fixed in such sattvic *tyāga*. *Akuśalam* means those activities which bring suffering to the body, such as bathing during the winter. *Kuśala* means those activities which are pleasurable for the body, such as bathing during the summer.

*na hi deha-bhṛtā śakyam tyaktum karmāṇy aśeṣataḥ  
yas tu karma-phala-tyāgī sa tyāgīty abhidhīyate ||11||*

11. As it is not possible for one with a body to give up all actions completely, he who gives up the results of action is considered a *tyāgī*.

Therefore, actions ordained by scripture should not be given up. It is not possible for one with a body to give up activities. *Śakyam* is used for the proper word *śakyāni*. The Lord has already said that not for a moment can the person remain without doing action: *na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma-kṛt*. (BG 3.5)

*aniṣṭam iṣṭam miśram ca tri-vidham karmanāḥ phalam  
bhavaty atyāginām pretya na tu samnyāsīnām kvacit ||12||*

12. Those who do not renounce in the prescribed way get results in the form of hellish suffering, heavenly enjoyment or human birth in the next life. This is not so for one who renounces in the correct manner.

The fault of not following this process of *tyāga* is described. Those who do not renounce in the prescribed way get results in the form of suffering of hell (*aniṣṭam*), the pleasures of Svarga (*iṣṭam*) and human birth (*miśram*) in the next life (*pretya*).

*pañcāitāni mahā-bāho kāraṇāni nibodha me  
sāṅkhye kṛtānte proktāni siddhaye sarva-karmaṇām ||13||*

13. O Mighty-armed one, learn from Me the five factors necessary for completion of action, which are mentioned in the *Vedānta*, which speaks about the destruction of *karma*.

“But how can doing action not give karmic results?”

In order to establish that there is no contamination of *karma* when performing actions without false identification, the Lord speaks five verses.

For the completion (*siddhaye*) of all actions, know these five factors from My words (me). *Sāṅkhya* means to speak (*khyā*) directly (*samyak*) about the

Paramātmā. These five causes are mentioned in the *Vedānta* scriptures (*sāṅkhye*), whose purpose is to destroy *karma* (*kṛtānte*).

*adhiṣṭhānam tathā kartā karaṇam ca pṛthag-vidham  
vividhās ca pṛthak ceṣṭā daivam caivātra pañcamam ||14||*

14. These five factors are the body, the false ego, the senses of various types, the life airs with various functions, and the Supersoul.

The five causes are listed. *Adhiṣṭhānam* means the body. *Kartā* means the *aṅkāra*, which ties together the soul with the body.<sup>169</sup> *Karaṇam* means the senses of many types (*pṛthag-vidham*) such as eyes or ears. *Ceṣṭā* refers to the life airs such as *pṛāṇa* and *apāna*, which have various functions (*pṛthak*). *Daiva* refers to the *antaryāmī* who sets everything in motion.

*śarīra-vān-manobhir yat karma prārabhate narah  
nyāyam vā viparītam vā pañcaite tasya hetavaḥ ||15||*

15. These five are the causes of all actions both dharmic and adharmic that man performs with his body, words or mind.

Actions are of three types: physical, vocal and mental. These are all of two types: following *dharma* (*nyāyam*) or not following *dharma* (*viparītam*). The five are causes of all these actions.

*tatraivam sati kartāram ātmānam kevalam tu yah  
paśyaty akṛta-buddhitvān na sa paśyati durmatih*

16. Though these five are the causes of action, the unintelligent fool who sees only himself as the doer does not see.

Then what happens? Though these five are causes of action (*tatra evam*), one who sees only that the self, the *jīva*, is the doer, though actually the *jīva* is not associated with action at all, does not see, being a fool (*durmatih*),

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<sup>169</sup> Viśvanātha does not include the *jīva* as a factor in action because in the next verses, the Lord explains that the *jīva* is not a doer.

because of impure intelligence (*akṛta-buddhitvāt*). One may say that such a foolish person is blind.

*yasya nāhaṅkṛto bhāvo buddhir yasya na lipyate  
hatvāpi sa imāl lokān na hanti na nibadhyate ||17||*

17. He who does not think he is the doer, and is not attached to actions by thinking them good or bad, does not kill even though he kills, and is not bound.

Who then is intelligent with good eyes? One who does not have the nature of *ahaṅkāra* (*ahaṅkṛto bhāvaḥ*), who is not thinking himself the doer, who is not attached to actions by thinking the action will give good or bad results (*yasya buddhir na lipyate*), does not obtain reactions of *karma*. What else can be said? Though he may do pious or sinful acts, he does not do them. Though it may appear from ordinary vision that he has killed all these living beings, he does not kill, from his own vision, because he has no motive for the action. Therefore he is not bound. He does not receive the reactions of *karma*.

*jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ parijñātā tri-vidhā karma-codanā  
karaṇaṁ karma karteti tri-vidhaḥ karma-saṅgrahaḥ ||18||*

18. The rules for action are the process for knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knower. The factors in performance of action are the instrument, the object and the subject.

The sattvic *tyāga* or *sannyāsa* just described and approved by the Lord is for the *jñānīs*. The *bhaktas* however reject *karma-yoga* by its very nature. In the Eleventh Canto of *Bhāgavatam* it is said:

*ājñāyaiva guṇān doṣān mayādiṣṭān api svakān  
dharmān santyajya yaḥ sarvān mām bhajet sa ca sattamaḥ*

He perfectly understands that the ordinary religious duties prescribed by Me in various Vedic scriptures possess favorable qualities that purify the performer, and he knows that neglect of such duties constitutes a discrepancy in one's life. Having taken

complete shelter at My lotus feet, however, a saintly person ultimately renounces such ordinary religious duties and worships Me alone. He is thus considered to be the best among all living entities. *SB 11.11.32*

Śrīdhara Svāmī has explained the meaning of the *Bhāgavatam* verse as follows.

“He who giving up his duties prescribed by Me in the form of the *Vedas* and worships Me is the best. Is not such a person ignorant or an atheist? No, though knowing that following the principles of *dharma* has good qualities like purification, and on the other hand, knowing the sin of not following *dharma*, he gives up these practices with the firm conviction that just by being My devotee, all will be accomplished, as these other things cause distraction to meditation upon Me.”

“Giving up *dharma*” in the verse does not mean mere giving up the results of those practices. It should be understood that there is no loss at all in giving up the results of those practices.

The meaning is this. Understanding of the statements of *Bhāgavatam* and the explanations of the commentators requires purity of the consciousness. In proportion to the degree of purification of the heart by *niṣkāma-karma*, there will be an awakening of knowledge. There is no other way. Therefore for attaining the awakening of knowledge even the *sannyāsīs* must perform *karma-yoga*. However, such *karma* is no longer necessary for those who have attained complete purification of the heart by such *karma*. It is said:

*āruruṣor muner yogam karma kāraṇam ucyate  
yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate*

For one who is a neophyte in the eightfold *yoga* system, work is said to be the means; and for one who is already elevated in *yoga*, cessation of all material activities is said to be the means. *BG 6.3*

*yas tv ātma-ratir eva syād ātma-tṛptaś ca mānavah  
ātmany eva ca santuṣṭas tasya kāryam na vidyate*

But for one who takes pleasure in the self, whose human life is one of self-realization, and who is satisfied in the self only, fully satiated—for him there is no duty. *BG 3.17*

But *bhakti*, being independent, supreme and most powerful, does not rely on purification of the heart.

It is said:

*vikrīḍitaṁ vraja-vadhūbhir idam ca viṣṇoḥ  
śraddhānvito yaḥ śṛṇuyād atha varṇayed yaḥ  
bhaktiṁ parāṁ bhagavati parilabhya kāmam  
hr̥d-rogam āśv apahinoty acireṇa dhīraḥ*

Anyone who faithfully hears or describes the Lord's playful affairs with the young *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana will attain the Lord's pure devotional service. Thus he will quickly become sober and conquer lust, the disease of the heart.

*SB 10.33.39*

Supreme *bhakti* enters from the beginning of practice (*sādhana-bhakti*) into a person afflicted with material disease, which causes suffering, and removes lust and other impurities.

*praviṣṭaḥ karṇa-randhreṇa svānām bhāva-saroruham  
dhunoti śamalam kṛṣṇaḥ salilasya yathā śarat*

The sound incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Soul [i.e. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*], enters into the heart, sits on the lotus flower of his loving relationship, and thus cleanses the dust of material association, such as lust, anger and hankering. Thus it acts like autumnal rains upon pools of muddy water. *SB 2.8.5*

Thus, if *bhakti* alone can purify the heart in such a way, why should the devotees perform prescribed duties?

Now let us get back to the text at hand. The process of knowledge means to do acts with understanding that one is different from his body (*jñānam*). The

object of knowledge (*jñeyam*) is the whole subject of *ātmā*. The shelter of such knowledge is a *jñānī*, the knower (*parijñātā*). But this is not all. These three are related to action. Thus these should be understood by the *sannyāsī*. The verse explains this.

The word *codana* means “rule.” The learned say that *codana* means teaching or rule. The first half of the verse is explained in the second half as follows. Knowledge (*jñāna*) is the means of action or instrumental case (*karaṇa*), since knowledge literally means “that by which something is known.” What is to be known (*jñeyam*), *jīvātmā tattva*, is the object of action (knowing) or the accusative case (*karma*). The knower (*parijñātā*) is the subject (*kartā*) or nominative case. These—the instrumental, the accusative, and the nominative—are the three factors in bringing about action (*trividham*). These three are accepted in the performance of *niškāma-karma* (*karma saṁgrahaḥ*). *Karma-saṁgraha* therefore acts as an explanation of *karma-codana*. Thus, the process of knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knower act as a base for performance of *niškāma-karma*.

*jñānam karma ca kartā ca tridhaiva guṇa-bhedataḥ  
procyate guṇa-saṅkhyāne yathāvac chr̥ṇu tāny api ||19||*

19. Hear about the three types of knowledge, action and the knower, which are described in the scriptures dealing with the *guṇas*.

*sarva-bhūteṣu yenaikam bhāvam avyayam iksate  
avibhaktam vibhakteṣu taj jñānam viddhi sattvicm ||20||*

20. Know that the process of knowledge is sattvic in nature when the individual indestructible soul with individual form is seen to exist successively in different bodies.

This verse speaks of sattvic process of knowing. Seeing one soul (*ekam bhāvam*), with one form (*avibhaktam*) which is indestructible (*avyayam*) residing successively in different forms (*vibhakteṣu*) such as human, *devatā*, or animal for the purpose of enjoying various fruits, which are temporary, through knowledge related to action (verse 18), is known as sattvic knowledge.

*prthaktvena tu yaj jñānaṁ nānā-bhāvān prthag-vidhān  
vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu taj jñānaṁ viddhi rājasam ||21||*

21. Know that knowledge to be rajasic in nature by which one understands various types of knowledge and various opinions concerning the soul which is claimed to be different in each body it accepts.

This verse speaks of rajasic knowledge. That knowledge which one sees the soul as different in each body that it accepts, accepting the asuric idea that the soul perishes with the body, with a different soul in every body that arises; that knowledge by which one knows various opinions arising from such asuric scriptures, such as “the soul is the shelter of happiness and distress, the soul is not the shelter of happiness and distress, the soul is unconscious, the soul is conscious, the soul is all pervasive, the soul is atomic, the souls are many, the soul is one” is known as rajasic knowledge.

*yat tu kṛtsna-vad ekasmin kārye saktam ahaitukam  
atattvārtha-vad alpaṁ ca tat tāmasam udāhṛtam ||22||*

22. That knowledge which is without reason, attached to one material action, not concerned with truth, and which is scant, is known as knowledge in *tamo guṇa*.

This verse speaks of tamasic knowledge. Knowledge which is speculative only (*ahaitukam*--not with reference to any scripture), which is extremely attached to performing one material activity such as eating or bathing, drinking or enjoying with a woman, with disregard for Vedic activities like sacrifice, with no idea of real truth (*atattva artha vat*), knowledge which is scant like that of an animal, is known as tamasic knowledge.

Knowledge of *tat*, which is different from the body is sattvic. Knowledge of scriptures of logic and such, which gives rise to various doctrines, is rajasic. Knowledge, which is only of bathing, eating and other material actions, is tamasic. This is a summary of the three types of knowledge.

*niyatam saṅga-rahitam arāga-dveṣataḥ kṛtam  
aphala-prepsunā karma yat tat sattvicm ucyate ||23||*

23. That action which is done regularly, without attachment or repulsion, without desire for results, is called sattvic.

Having explained the three types of knowledge, the Lord now explains the three types of action. The work which is performed regularly (*niyatam*), which is without attachment (*saṅga rahitam*), performed with neither like or dislike (*arāga-dveṣataḥ*), done without desire for results (*aphala-prepsunā*), is called sattvic work.

*yat tu kāmepsunā karma sāhaṅkāreṇa vā punaḥ  
kriyate bahulāyāsam tad rājasam udāhṛtam ||24||*

24. That work is performed with desire for results, with little or great pride, with plenty of suffering, is called rajasic work.

That work which is performed with desire for results (*kāma ipsunā*), indicating a little pride, or with great pride (*sāhaṅkāreṇa*) is called rajasic work.

*anubandham kṣayam himsām anapekṣya ca pauruṣam  
mohād ārabhyate karma yat tat tāmasam ucyate ||25||*

25. That work leading to bondage, which is destructive, harmful to the self, and performed without prior consideration, is called tamasic work.

That work which leads to later bondage by the servants of Yama, by a king or by thieves (*anubandham*), which destroys *dharma*, knowledge and other good qualities (*kṣayam*), which destroys oneself (*himsām*), which is performed without prior consideration (*anapekṣya*), which is performed only by materialistic persons (*pauruṣam*), commenced out of ignorance (*mohāt*), is called tamasic work.

*mukta-saṅgo 'naḥam-vādī dhṛty-utsāha-samanvitaḥ  
siddhy-asiddhyor nirvikāraḥ kartā sattvic ucyate ||26||*

26. The agent free from attachment and false ego, endowed with fortitude and enthusiasm, unperturbed in success or failure, is in *sattva guṇa*.

The three types of work have been described. Now, the three types of workers are described.

*rāgī karma-phala-prepsur lubdho himsātmake 'śuciḥ  
harṣa-śokānvitaḥ kartā rājasah parikirtitaḥ ||27||*

27. The agent who is attached to his work, who desires the results of his actions, who is attached to the enjoyment of the sense objects, who gives pain to others, who is unclean and subject to joy and sorrow, is known to be in the mode of *rajas*.

*Rāgī* means one who is attached to his work. *Lubdha* means one who is attached to enjoyment of sense objects.

*ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭho naiṣkṛtiko 'lasaḥ  
viśādī dīrgha-sūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyate ||28||*

28. One who does what should not be done, whose acts according his nature, who is indifferent to work, who is deceitful, who offends others, who is lazy, dejected, and delays the work, is known as a tamasic worker.

One who does what should not be done is *ayuktaḥ*. One who acts according his nature, so that whatever occurs in his mind he does, rather than according to the instruction of the *guru* is called *prākṛtaḥ*. One who offends others is *naiṣkṛtikaḥ*.

The *jñānīs* must perform the sattvic *tyāga* described here, must take shelter of the knowledge fixed in sattvic *karma*, must perform sattvic work, and must become a sattvic doer. This is the *sannyāsa* of the *jñānī*. This is essential meaning of the section.

The knowledge (*jñānam*) possessed by the devotees however is beyond the *guṇas*. Their work (*karma*) for Me, called *bhakti-yoga*, is beyond the *guṇas*. The doers (*bhaktas*) are also beyond the *guṇas*. This is stated by the Lord in the *Bhāgavatam*:

*kaivalyaṁ sattvicṁ jñānaṁ rajo vaikalpikaṁ tu yat  
prākṛtaṁ tāmasaṁ jñānaṁ man-niṣṭhaṁ nirguṇaṁ smṛtam*

Absolute knowledge is in the mode of goodness, knowledge based on duality is in the mode of passion, and foolish, materialistic knowledge is in the mode of ignorance. Knowledge based upon Me, however, is understood to be transcendental. SB 11.25.24

*lakṣaṇam bhakti-yogasya nirguṇasya hy udāhṛtam*

The characteristics of *bhakti-yoga* which is beyond the *guṇas* are manifested.

SB 3.29.11

*sattvich kārako 'saṅgī rāgāndho rājasah smṛtaḥ  
tāmasah smṛti-vibhraṣṭo nirguṇo mad-apāśrayaḥ*

A worker free of attachment is in the mode of goodness; a worker blinded by personal desire is in the mode of passion; and a worker who has completely forgotten how to tell right from wrong is in the mode of ignorance. But a worker who has taken shelter of Me is understood to be transcendental to the modes of nature. SB

11.25.26

Not only these three items--the knowledge, action (*bhakti-yoga*) and doer (*bhakta*)--are beyond the *guṇas*, but rather everything related to *bhakti* is beyond the *guṇas* according to the philosophy of *bhakti*.

*sāttviky ādhyātmikī śraddhā karma-śraddhā tu rājasī  
tāmasy adharme yā śraddhā mat-sevāyām tu nirguṇā*

Faith directed toward spiritual life is in the mode of goodness, faith rooted in fruitive work is in the mode of passion, faith residing in irreligious activities is in the mode of ignorance, but faith in My devotional service is purely transcendental. SB 11.25.27

*vanam tu sāttviko vāso grāmo rājasa ucyate  
tāmasam dyuta-sadanam man-niketaṁ tu nirguṇam*

Residence in the forest is in the mode of goodness, residence in a town is in the mode of passion, residence in a gambling house displays the quality of ignorance, and residence in a place where I reside is transcendental.

SB 11.25.25

*sattvicīm sukham ātmottham viṣayottham tu rājasam  
tāmasam moha-dainyottham nirguṇam mad-apāśrayam*

Happiness derived from the self is in the mode of goodness, happiness based on sense gratification is in the mode of passion, and happiness based on delusion and degradation is in the mode of ignorance. But that happiness found within Me is transcendental.

SB 11.25.29

Thus, for the devotees who are beyond the *guṇas*, things related to *bhakti* such as knowledge, action, faith, residence and the happiness derived from it, are all beyond the *guṇas*. For the *jñānīs* who are in the mode of *sattva*, things related to *jñāna* are all in the mode of *sattva*. Everything related to *karmīs* acting in the mode of *rajas* is rajasic. For the unrestrained person in the mode of *tamas*, everything related to their action is tamasic. This should be understood by looking over the contents of the *Gītā* .

It has also been stated in the fourteenth chapter that even the *jñānī*, at the last stage, after giving up *jñāna*, attains a position beyond the *guṇas* only by the power of pure *bhakti*, which remains at that point.

*buddher bhedaṁ dhr̥teś caiva guṇatas tri-vidhaṁ śṛṇu  
procyamānam aśeṣeṇa pṛthaktvena dhanañjaya ||29||*

29. O conqueror of wealth, listen to the three types of intelligence and determination, which will be discussed completely and individually.

In order to show that the *jñānīs* should only accept sattvic items, the Lord now speaks of three types of intelligence and other items.

*pravṛttim ca nivṛttim ca kāryākārye bhayābhaye  
bandhaṁ mokṣaṁ ca yā vetti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī ||30||*

30. The intelligence of *sattva-guṇa* understands the difference between *dharma* and *adharmā*, what should be done and what should not be done, what is to be feared and not feared, and the difference between bondage and liberation.

The person of sattvic intelligence understands the difference between fear caused by *saṁsāra* and fearlessness caused by freedom from *saṁsāra*.

*yayā dharmam adharmaṁ ca kāryaṁ cākāryam eva ca  
ayathāvat prajānāti buddhiḥ sā pārtha rājasī ||31||*

31. That intelligence is of *rajo-guṇa*, which does not understand correctly what is *dharma* and *adharmā*, and what is to be done as duty and what is not to be done as duty.

The person of rajasic intelligence does not correctly understand (*ayathāvat*) the distinctions.

*adharmaṁ dharmam iti yā manyate tamasāvṛtā  
sarvārthān viparītāṁś ca buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī ||32||*

32. That intelligence is in *tamo-guṇa* by which one considers *adharmā* to be *dharma*, and sees all things contrary to the truth.

*Yā manyate* is used for *yayā manyate*. The intelligence by which one considers everything opposite of the truth is tamasic intelligence. The statements in these verses, such as this verse, which literally says “the intelligence which considers *adharmā* to *dharma*” but actually means “the intelligence by which a man considers *adharmā* to be *dharma*” are similar to saying, “The axe cuts the tree” instead of saying “the man cuts the tree using an axe.”

*dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate manaḥ-prāṇendriya-kriyāḥ  
yogenāvyabhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī ||33||*

33. Determination by which one restrains the activities of the mind, life airs and senses, using unswerving concentration of mind, is in the mode of *sattva*.

Three types of determination are now described.

*yayā tu dharmā-kāmārthān dhṛtyā dhārayate 'rjuna  
prasāṅgena phalākāṅkṣī dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī ||34||*

34. That determination desiring results, by which one restrains the senses and mind to attain *dharmā*, *artha* and *kāma* with great attachment, is in the mode of *rajas*.

*yayā svapnāṁ bhayaṁ śokaṁ viśādaṁ madam eva ca  
na vimuñcati durmedhā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī ||35||*

35. That determination by which one does not free oneself from sleep, fear, lamentation, dejection and passion is in the mode of *tamas*.

*sukhaṁ tv idānīm tri-vidhaṁ śṛṇu me bhāratarṣabha  
abhyāsād ramate yatra duḥkhāntaṁ ca nigacchati ||36||*

*yat tad agre viṣam iva pariṇāme 'mṛtopamam  
tat sukhaṁ sattvicṁ proktam ātma-buddhi-prasāda-jam ||37||*

36-37. O best of Bharata's lineage, hear from Me about the three types of happiness. That happiness which brings joy and destroys sorrow with practice, which appears to be poison in the beginning but becomes nectar, which arises from peace of mind concentrating on the self is in the mode of *sattva*.

Now sattvic happiness is described in one and a half verses. Only by constant practice (*abhyāsāt*) does such a person enjoy. This means that it is not like happiness derived from sense objects, which gives pleasure just on contact. Enjoying in that happiness, the person crosses over the suffering of *samsāra* (*duḥkhāntam nigacchati*). In the beginning, sattvic happiness is like poison, since restraining the senses and mind causes suffering.

*viṣayendriya-samyogād yat tad agre 'mṛtopamam  
pariṇāme viṣam iva tat sukhaṁ rājasam smṛtam ||38||*

38. That happiness which, arising from contact with objects of the senses, is like nectar in the beginning and like poison in the end, is known to be in the mode of *rajas*.

Rajasic happiness is like nectar in the beginning, as in the case of enjoying sex with others' wives.

*yad agre cānubandhe ca sukhaṁ mohanam ātmanaḥ  
nidrālasya-pramādottham tat tāmasam udāhṛtam ||39||*

39. That happiness is said to be of *tamo-guṇa*, which arises from sleep, laziness and intoxication, and is an illusion for the self.

*na tad asti pṛthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ  
sattvaṁ prakṛti-jair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ ||40||*

40. There is no living entity on earth or in heaven who is free from these three *guṇas* arising from *prakṛti*.

Including those things not mentioned, the Lord now summarizes this section. There is not anything, no living species or non-living things (*sattvam*), which is free from the three *guṇas* born of *prakṛti*. Everything in existence is composed of the three *guṇas*. The meaning of this section is that sattvic items are acceptable and those of *rajas* and *tamas* are not.

*brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya-viśāṁ śūdrāṇāṁ ca parantapa  
karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāva-prabhavair guṇaiḥ ||41||*

41. O afflicter of enemies, the activities of the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* have been designated precisely according to the *guṇas* arising from birth.

However, the living body filled with the three *guṇas* becomes successful by worshipping the Supreme Lord by prescribed activities according to the person's nature. This is described in six verses. These activities or duties, designated precisely (*pravibhaktāni*) by the *guṇas* of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which manifest by birth (*svabhāvena*), are prescribed for the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*.

*śamo damas tapaḥ śaucaṁ kṣāntir ārjavam eva ca  
jñānam vijñānam āstikyaṁ brahma-karma svabhāva-jam ||42||*

42. The natural activities of the *brāhmaṇa* are control of the mind, control of the external senses, austerity, cleanliness, tolerance, honesty, knowledge of scripture, realization, and faith in the scriptures.

This verse describes the natural activities of the *brāhmaṇa* who has a predominance of *sattva*. Control of the inner sense organ (*śamaḥ*), control of the external senses (*damaḥ*), austerity of body, mind and words, *jñāna* and *vijñāna*, which arise from understanding the scriptures, and firm faith in the purport of the scriptures (*āstikyaṁ*) are the activities of the *brāhmaṇa* arising from his nature.

*śauryaṁ tejo dhṛtir dākṣyaṁ yuddhe cāpy apalāyanam  
dānam īśvara-bhāvaś ca kṣātraṁ karma svabhāva-jam ||43||*

43. The natural activities of the *kṣatriya* are courage, confidence, fortitude, expertise in fighting, not fleeing from battle, charity and controlling others.

This verse describes the activities of the *kṣatriya*, in whom *raja guṇa* becomes prominent and *sattva* becomes secondary. Courage (*śauryaṁ*), confidence (*tejah*), fortitude (*dhṛtiḥ*), and controlling others (*īśvara bhāvaḥ*), and not fleeing from battle are the activities of the *kṣatriya*.

*kṛṣi-go-rakṣya-vāṇijyaṁ vaiśya-karma svabhāva-jam  
paricaryātmakaṁ karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāva-jam ||44||*

44. The natural duties of the *vaiśya* are agriculture, raising cows, and commerce. The natural duty of the *śūdra* is service to the other *varṇas*.

This verse describes the actions of the *vaiśyas* predominated by *rajas* with *tamas* as a secondary *guṇa*. Protecting the cows and commerce are the activities of the *vaiśya*. One who protects the cows is called *go-rakṣah*. The state of protecting the cows is called *go-rakṣyam*. The verse also speaks of the *śūdras* in whom *tamas* predominates and *rajas* is secondary. Serving the

*vaiśyas, kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas (paricaryātmikam) is the activity of the śūdra.*

*sve sve karmaṇy abhirataḥ saṃsiddhiṃ labhate naraḥ  
sva-karma-nirataḥ siddhiṃ yathā vindati tac chṛṇu ||45||*

45. Man achieves complete success being engaged in his particular duties. Hear how one attains success by engagement in one's duties.

*yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānām yena sarvam idaṃ tatam  
sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ ||46||*

46. Men achieve success by worshiping the Lord who is the origin of all entities and is spread everywhere, through mentally offering their prescribed duties.

Humans attain perfection by worshipping (*abhyarcya*) through their prescribed work Him alone, the Supreme Lord, from whom arise the activities of all living entities. The worship consists of offering the work in the mind, thinking, "By this work may the Lord be satisfied."

*śreyān sva-dharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt  
svabhāva-niyataṃ karma kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam ||47||*

47. It is better to perform one's own duties with fault than to perform another's duties perfectly. Doing your own duties according to your nature, you do not receive sin.

Looking at one's own rajasic duties with its various activities, and not having a taste for them, one should not perform sattvic duties. It is better to do one's own duties, inferior though they may be, though done imperfectly (*viguṇa*), than doing another's duty (*para-dharmāt*), though it may be preferred because it can be executed easily (*su anuṣṭhitāt*). You should not give up your own work of fighting because of its fault of killing friends, and instead perform another's *dharma* in the form of wandering around begging.

*saha-jam karma kaunteya sa-doṣam api na tyajet  
sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛtāḥ ||48||*

48. O son of Kuntī, one should not give up work, which is according to your nature, even if it has some fault. All undertakings are covered by fault, as fire is covered by smoke.

You should not think that only you have problems in executing your duties. There are problems in others' duties also. You should not give up work according to your nature (*sahajam*), even with fault, because all actions performed now and in the future are covered by fault, just as fire is seen to be covered by smoke. Just as by removing the smoke, the heat of the fire is useful for removing darkness and cold, so by removing the faulty portion of your work, the good portion is useful for purification of your existence.

*asakta-buddhiḥ sarvatra jitātmā vigata-spr̥haḥ  
naiṣkarmya-siddhiṃ paramāṃ sannyāsenādhighacchati ||49||*

49. He whose intelligence is unattached, whose mind is under control, and who is devoid of desire for material happiness, attains the highest perfection by complete renunciation of action.

The first type of *sannyāsī* gives up the faults in his work, characterized by attachment to being the doer and attachment to the results. When that *sannyāsī* perfects his *sādhana* over time, then he reaches the *yogārūḍha* stage. Then he gives up actions completely. That is the second type of *sannyāsa*, mentioned here.

He whose intelligence is free from all attachments to material objects (*asakta buddhiḥ*), whose mind is under control (*jitātmā*), who has no desire for the happiness even of Brahmhaloka (*vigata-spr̥haḥ*), then, by complete renunciation of all activities (*sannyāsenā*), attains the highest perfection of no action at all (*naiṣkarmyam*). In other words, at the stage of *yogārūḍha* (no actions), with attainment of *naiṣkarmyam*, one reaches the highest perfection.

*siddhiṃ prāpto yathā brahma tathāpnoti nibodha me  
samāsenaiḥ kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā ||50||*

50. Understand from Me in brief, O son of Kuntī, how a person, having attained cessation of all work, attains Brahman, the final attainment of *jñāna*.

Understand by which method (*yathā*) one attains or realizes Brahman. This is the very highest stage of *jñāna* (*jñānasya niṣṭhā parā*). According to the *Amara Kośa*, *niṣṭhā* means consummation or final attainment.

The meaning is as follows: “Please understand the method by which, with the cessation of ignorance, and undertaking even the cessation of knowledge (*vidyā*)-- giving up even the process of *jñāna* completely-- a person will realize Brahman.”

*buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhṛtyātmānam niyamya ca  
śabdādīn viśayāms tyaktvā rāga-dveṣau vyudasya ca* ||51||

*vivikta-sevī laghv-āśī yata-vāk-kāya-mānasah  
dhyāna-yoga-paro nityam vairāgyam samupāśritaḥ* ||52||

*aḥṅkāram balaṁ darpaṁ kāmam krodham parigraham  
vimucya nirmamaḥ śanto brahma-bhūyāya kalpate* ||53||

51-53. That person who is endowed with sattvic intelligence, with mind controlled by sattvic determination; who has given up all the sense objects such as sound; who has eliminated attachment and repulsion; who resorts to solitude, eats little, controls speech, body and mind; who is completely absorbed in contemplating the Lord; who has taken shelter of detachment; who is free from false ego; who is devoid of strength related to material attachment, devoid of pride, lust, anger, and possessions; who is free from possessive instinct; and who has reached a cessation of *sattva guṇa*, can attain Brahman.

One should be endowed with sattvic intelligence (*buddhyā viśuddhayā*), controlling the mind (*ātmānam niyamya*) with similar sattvic determination.

One should be completely devoted to thinking of Bhagavān (*dhyāna-yoga-parah*).

One should be devoid of strength (*bala*) related to material attachment and desire, rather than devoid of physical strength.

With the cessation of ignorance (*avidyā*) characterized by freedom from *ahankāra*, pride, lust, anger and possessions, there is also the cessation of *sattva-guṇa* (*śāntaḥ*). This is the achievement of *jñāna sannyāsa*, giving up *jñāna* itself. This is understood from the statement in the Eleventh Canto of *Bhāgavatam jñānam ca mayi sannyaset*: one should offer all *jñāna* to Me. This means that without the cessation of both ignorance and knowledge (*ajñāna* and *jñāna*), there can be no attainment of Brahman realization. Being freed from all these, it is possible (*kalpate*) to realize (*bhūyāya*) Brahman.

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati  
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu mad-bhaktim labhate parām ||54||*

54. Having attained the state of Brahman, being a pure soul, he does not lament in loss of what he had nor does he desire what he does not have, and looks upon all beings as equal. He then manifests *prema-bhakti*.

With the removal of all misconceptions or appearances (*upādhi*), one attains the state of Brahman (*brahma-bhūtaḥ*), by being in a state of uncovered consciousness. Because of the disappearance of the contamination of the *guṇas*, he is said to be pure (*prasanna*) and he is the soul (*ātmā*). And because of absence of misconceptions of body, when he loses something he does not lament and when he fails to attain something he does not hanker for it (*na śocati na kāṅkṣati*), unlike his previous state. Like an innocent child, he regards all beings as equal whether good or bad, without looking at the externals.

With the cessation of *jñāna*, like a fire which dies without fuel, he attains indestructible *bhakti* to Me in the form of hearing chanting and other processes, arising after the cessation of *jñāna*, because, through the action of My *svarūpa-śakti*, *bhakti* alone does not disappear even with the disappearance of *vidyā* and *avidyā*, being different from the *māyā-śakti*. It is called *param*, being far superior to *jñāna*. Remaining after the disappearance of *niškāma-karma*, *jñāna* and any other process, it surpasses all others, and remains exclusively, pure. Thus *param* is equal to the word *kevalam*.

Though *bhakti* was previously present in a small proportion during practices such as *jñāna* and *vairāgya*, just in order to bring about liberation, *bhakti* was not clearly visible, being like the *antaryāmi* in all beings. Therefore the word *labhate*, meaning “discovers,” is the suitable word rather than *produces*, since it was already present within the person. Though a golden jewel remains hidden when mixed among grains of yellow dhal, when the grains are destroyed, separated from them, the indestructible golden jewel becomes *kevalā*, attaining its pure state.

At this particular time, there is also the possibility of attaining complete *prema bhakti*. The result of their practice in this case is not *sāyujya*.<sup>170</sup> Thus, in that case, the phrase *param bhaktim* should be explained as meaning *prema bhakti* in this verse.

*bhaktiyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ  
tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tad-anantaram ||55||*

55. Only by *bhakti* can a person know Me as Brahman. Then, knowing Me as Brahman by that *bhakti*, he merges with Me.

“After attaining *bhakti*, then what happens to that person?” Giving a particular case of the general rule, the Lord speaks this verse. By *bhakti* alone one knows Me truly as either “that” or as “Me”. Thus, the *jñānī* knows Me as *tat* (Brahman) and the various devotees know Me as *mām* (Bhagavān). Since I have said that only by pure *bhakti* am I known (*bhakyāham ekayā grahyah*), then the *jñānī* under discussion, after that (*tad-anantaram*), by that *bhakti* alone which functions after the cessation of *vidyā*, knowing Me, enters Me. He realizes the happiness of merging with Me (*sāyujya*). The meaning is that since I am beyond *māyā* and *vidyā* is part of *māyā*, I (even in the form of Brahman) cannot be known by *vidyā*.

But there may be objection, for in the Nārada Pañcarātra it is said:

*sāṅkhya-yogau ca vairāgyam tapo bhaktiś ca keśave pañca-parvaiva  
vidyā*

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<sup>170</sup> Viśvanātha explains in the commentary on next verse that some *jñānīs* who also worship the Lord with genuine *bhakti*, by association of devotees attain *prema*.

Oh Keśava, there are five types of knowledge: *sāṅkhya*, *yoga*, *vairāgya*, *tapas* and *bhakti*.

*Bhakti* is thus said to be a function of *vidyā* in this verse. However, this actually means that some small portion of the *hlādinī-śakti* of *bhakti* enters into *vidyā* in order to give *vidyā* its results, just as *bhakti* also enters into *karma-yoga* in order to give results of *karma*. This can be said because there are many statements saying that *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga* and other processes are just useless labor without *bhakti*. Since *nirguṇa bhakti* is not a function of *vidyā* filled with *sattva-guṇa*, though *vidyā* is the cause of extinguishing *avidyā*, the cause of knowledge of *tat* is *bhakti* alone.

Moreover, the *smṛti* says *sattvam sañjayate jñānam: sattva* gives rise to *jñāna*. (BG 14.17) Knowledge, which arises from *sattva*, is called *sattva*. Just as the word *sattva* indicates *vidyā*, so knowledge arising from *bhakti* is often called *bhakti*. Sometimes it is called *bhakti* and other times it is called *jñāna*. Therefore, one should see that there are two types of knowledge. Giving up the first type of knowledge (*sattva*), by the second type of knowledge (*bhakti*), one will attain *brahma-sāyujya*. This can be understood by consulting the *Bhāgavatam* 11, twenty-fifth chapter.

Now, those who presume to be *jñānīs*, desiring *sāyujya*, by executing *jñāna* alone without *bhakti* at all, obtain only suffering as their fruit. They are the most heavily condemned.

There are others also who, knowing that one cannot attain liberation by *jñāna* alone without *bhakti*, practice *jñāna* mixed with *bhakti*. But they consider the form of *bhagavan* as a falsity (*upādhi*) created by *māyā*, and consider that the body of the Lord is made of the *guṇas*. Reaching the state of *yogārūḍha*, they think themselves liberated. They too are condemned.

It is said:

*mukha-bāhūru-pādebhyaḥ puruṣasyāśramaiḥ saha  
catvāro jajñire varṇā guṇair viprādayaḥ pṛthak*

Each of the four social orders, headed by the *brāhmaṇas*, was born through different combinations of the modes of nature, from the face, arms, thighs and feet of the Supreme Lord in His universal form. Thus the four spiritual orders were also generated. SB 11.5.2

*ya evaṁ puruṣaṁ sāksād ātma-prabhavam īśvaram  
na bhajanty avajānanti sthānād bhraṣṭāḥ patanty adhaḥ*

If any of the members of the four *varṇas* and four *āśramas* fail to worship or intentionally disrespect the Personality of Godhead, who is the source of their own creation, they will fall down from their position into a hellish state of life. SB 11.5.3

The meaning is that both those who do not worship Me and as well those who do worship Me but also disrespect Me, even if they are *sannyāsīs*, have all their knowledge destroyed and fall.

It is also said:

*ye 'nye 'ravindākṣa vimukta-māninas  
tvayy asta-bhāvād aviśuddha-buddhayaḥ  
āruhya kṛcchreṇa param padam tataḥ  
patanty adho 'nāḍṛta-yuṣmad-aṅghrayaḥ*

O lotus-eyed Lord, although non-devotees who accept severe austerities and penances to achieve the highest position may think themselves liberated, their intelligence is impure. They fall down from their position of imagined superiority because they have no regard for Your lotus feet. SB 10.2.32

The word “foot” (*aṅghri*) should be taken to indicate “with *bhakti*.” Thus the phrase would mean “those who do not accept Your feet with devotion.” They accept the Lord, but in the wrong way. The phrase *anāḍṛta-yuṣmad-aṅghraya* means that they disrespect the Lord by thinking that the Lord’s body is material.

It is also said:

*avajānanti mām mūḍhā mānuṣīm tanum āśritam*

The fools do not know Me. They think I have taken the body of a material human. BG 9.11

Actually His form is human, but it is also *sat-cid-ānanda*. That form can be seen only by the influence of the Lord's inconceivable *kṛpā-śakti*.

It is said in the Nārāyaṇa Adhyātma:

*nityāvvyakto'pi bhagavān iḅ(y)ate nija-śaktiḥ  
tām ṛte paramānandaṁ kaḥ paśyet tam imam prabhum*

The Lord who is eternal and invisible can be seen through His own *śakti*. Other than by that means, who can see that Lord of the highest bliss?

That the Lord has a *sat-cid-ānanda* body is confirmed in the *Gopāla Tāpanī Upaniṣad* (1.33) with *sat-cid-ānanda-vigraham śrī-vṛndāvāna-sura-bhūruha-talāsīnam*: that form of the Lord which is eternity knowledge and bliss was seated at the base of a desire tree in Vṛndāvāna.

*darśayām āsa tam kṣattaḥ śabdaṁ brahma dadhad vapuḥ*

The Lord showed Himself to that Kardama Muni and displayed His transcendental form, which can be understood only through the *Vedas*. SB 3.21.8

Thus in the *śrutis* and *smṛtis* there are thousands of such authoritative statements indicating the Lord's transcendental body. However, by such statements as the following, these *jñānīs* think that the Lord, Bhagavān, is a false creation of *māyā* (*upādhi*).

*māyām tu prakṛtiṁ vidyān māyinaṁ tu mahesvaram*

Know this nature to be *māyā*. The great lord is also made of this *māyā*.

*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 4.2

However, this statement means that the Lord is endowed with an eternal *śakti* called *māyā* arising from His own *svarūpa*.

Madhvācārya quotes *śruti* to explain this statement.

*ato māya-mayaṁ viṣṇuṁ pravādanti sanātanam*

Thus they call the eternal Viṣṇu *māyamayam*.

Thus the word *māyām* in the Śvetāśvatara verse refers to the *cit-śakti* arising from the *svarūpa* of the Lord, not to the *śakti* of the three *guṇas*, which does not arise from His *svarūpa*. (The meaning would then be: Know this *cit-śakti* and the great lord who is the master of this *śakti*.) They do not consider this meaning of the *śruti* statement. Nor do they consider that the statement could mean “Durgā is *māyā* and Śiva is the possessor of *māyā*”.

Thus, though these *jñānīs* attain the status of *jīvan-mukta*, they fall down because of *aparādha* to the Lord. It is said in the *Parīṣiṣṭa Vacana* of the *Vāsanā Bhāṣya*:

*jīvan-muktā api punar yānti saṁsāra-vāsanām  
yady acintya-mahā-śaktau bhagavaty aparādhinaḥ*

The *jīvan-muktas*, if they are offenders to the Lord of inconceivable great *śakti*, again enter the illusions of *saṁsāra*.

Attaining their goal, they think *sādhana* is no longer proper, and thus at the time of rejecting *jñāna*, they reject not only *jñāna*, but also *guṇī bhūtā bhakti*,<sup>171</sup> thinking that tangible realization (of form and qualities) is false. After *bhakti* disappears along with *jñāna*, because of offense to the form of the Lord, it cannot be again attained. Because they cannot realize *tat* without *bhakti*, they are therefore known only as persons who think they are liberated, having only false *samādhi*. This is stated in the verse *ye'nye'ravindākṣa vimukta-māninaḥ*.

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<sup>171</sup> The small amount of *bhakti* they perform along with *jñāna sādhana*.

But those who practice *jñāna* mixed with *bhakti*, and at the same time respect the *sat-cid-ānanda* form of Bhagavān, gradually, with the cessation of *vidyā* and *avidyā*, attain *parā bhakti*. Those liberated souls are of two types. One type, performing *bhakti* for obtaining *sāyujya*, attains *sāyujya* in the Lord's form, realizing *tat*. These persons are praiseworthy.

The other type of person, such as Śukadeva, being greatly fortunate, gives up the desire for liberation by the influence of unpredicted association with kind, elevated devotees, and submerges himself completely in the taste of the sweetness of *bhakti rasa*. This is the most praiseworthy type. It is said:

*ātmārāmās ca munayo nirgranthā apy urukrame  
kurvanty ahaitukīm bhaktim itthambhūta-guṇo hariḥ*

All different varieties of *ātmārāma*, those who take pleasure in *ātmā*, or spirit self], especially those established on the path of self-realization, though freed from all kinds of material bondage, bondage; desire to render unalloyed devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead. This means that the Lord possesses transcendental qualities and therefore can attract everyone, including liberated souls. SB 1.7.10

Thus there are four types of *jñānīs*: two, reproachable, fall; and two, praiseworthy, cross *saṁsāra*.

*sarva-karmāṇy api sadā kurvāṇo mad-vyapāśrayaḥ  
mat-prasādād avāpnoti śāśvataṁ padam avyayam ||56||*

56. But that person, who, though performing all types of actions, also takes shelter of Me predominantly, attains My indestructible, eternal abode, by My mercy.

It has thus been said that the *jñānī* step by step giving up the results of work, work itself and then *jñāna*, attains *sāyujya*. Now hear from Me how My devotee attains Me.

That devotee takes shelter of Me, even with evident material desires (*vi apa āśrayaḥ*). *Vi* stands for *viśeṣataḥ*, meaning “particularly,” and *apa* stands for

*apakṛṣṭa*, meaning “low.” He is not even a *niṣkāma-bhakta*, for he performs all actions even material ones such as protecting wife and children as well as *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kāmya-karmas*. What is the question of his giving up *karma*, *yoga*, *jñāna*, worship of *devatās*, or other desires?

The word *āśrayate* means he completely serves. The prefix “ā” emphasizes the predominance of service. The use of the word *api* indicates inferiority of these other actions. Thus he performs these other activities, but as secondary actions. Thus, he has *bhakti* mixed with *karma*, rather than *karma* mixed with *bhakti*, which was already described in the first six chapters. There is no overlapping of actions with the previous descriptions. That *bhakta* attains My eternal *dhāmas* (*padam*), such as *Vaikuṅṭha*, *Mathurā*, *Dvārakā*, and *Ayodhyā*.<sup>172</sup>

“But will those *dhāmas* remain after the *pralaya*?”

“They are indestructible (*avyayam*). At the time of *mahāpralaya*, My *dhāmas* will not disappear, because of My inconceivable power.”

“The *jñānī*, after many births, having undergone much suffering and austerities, having stopped the action of senses for sense objects, attains *naiṣkarmya*, and then *sāyujya*. How does this devotee, performing actions and having desires, attain Your eternal *dhāmas* just by taking shelter of You?”

“He attains it by My mercy (*mat-prasādāt*). Know that My mercy is inconceivable and most powerful.”

*cetasā sarva-karmāṇi mayi sannyasya mat-paraḥ  
buddhi-yogam upāśritya mac-cittaḥ satatam bhava ||57||*

57. Offering all your activities to Me, making Me your only goal of life, taking shelter of *bhakti-yoga* with fixed intelligence, remember Me always, while doing your actions and at all other times.

“Now, what are you indicating to Me particularly? Am I an *ananya-bhakta*? Or am I the *sakāma-bhakta* just mentioned by You?”

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<sup>172</sup> The *karma mīśra bhakta* gets *sālokya*.

“You do not have the strength to become the most excellent *ananya-bhakta*. And you should not be the *sakāma-bhakta*, the lowest among all the devotees. Therefore, be a *madhyama* devotee, a devotee intermediate between these two. While offering to Me all of your occupational activities and your duties of *āśrama*, you whose goal of life is only to attain Me (*mat-parah*), in other words, being *niškāma*, remember Me always (*mat-cittaḥ bhava*), while doing those activities and at any other time also (*satatam*), being endowed with fixed intelligence, *vyavasāyātmika buddhi* (*buddhi-yogam upāśritya*).”

The Lord has previously said the same:

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat  
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva mad-arpanam*

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever austerity you perform, offer it to Me, O son of Kuntī. BG 9.27

*mac-cittaḥ sarva-durgāṇi mat-prasādāt tariṣyasi  
atha cet tvam ahaṅkārān na śroṣyasi vinanṅsyasi ||58||*

58. Fixing your mind on Me, you will cross over all obstacles by My mercy. If, on the other hand, you do not listen out of pride, you will perish.

Then what will happen? This verse describes the result: you will cross all obstacles.

*yad ahaṅkāram āśritya na yotsya iti manyase  
mithyaiṣa vyavasāyas te prakṛtis tvam niyokṣyati ||59||*

59. If, influenced by false ego, you think “I will not fight,” that resolve is useless. Your nature will engage you in fighting.

“For me, a *kṣatriya*, the highest *dharma* is to fight. But being afraid of the sin incurred from killing friends, I do not desire to start fighting.”

The Lord scolds Arjuna in this verse. “Your nature (*prakṛtiḥ*) will make you fight. Now you do not respect My words. But when your irrepressible natural desire to fight arises, then while fighting, and automatically killing your elders like Bhīṣma, you will smile at Me!”

*svabhāva-jena kaunteya nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā  
kartuṁ necchasi yan mohāt kariṣyasi avaśo 'pi tat ||60||*

60. Being bound by actions arising from your nature, helplessly, you will do what you do not want to do out of bewilderment.

Here the Lord expands the meaning of what he has just said. You are fettered by your actions arising from previous life impressions that give you qualities of the *kṣatriya* (*Svabhāva-jena*).

*īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṁ hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati  
bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā ||61||*

61. O Arjuna, the Lord is situated in the heart of all living entities. He engages them in action by His energy, like dolls moving by strings.

Having stated the views of the advocates of innate nature (*svabhāva*)<sup>173</sup> in two verses, the Lord now states His own view. The Lord, Nārāyaṇa, is the *antaryāmī*.

*yaḥ pṛthivyām tiṣṭhan pṛthivyā antaro, yaṁ pṛthivī na veda, yasya  
pṛthivī śarīraṁ, yaḥ pṛthivīm antaro yamayati*

He is situated within the earth. The earth does not know Him. The earth is His body. He controls the earth from within. *Bṛhad  
Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.6.3*

*yac ca kiñcij jagaty asmin dṛśyate śrūyate'pi vā  
antar-bahiś ca tat sarvaṁ vyāpya nārāyaṇaḥ sthitaḥ*

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<sup>173</sup> According to the theory of *Svabhāva-vāda*, nature and its properties are the cause of everything.

Nārāyaṇa is spread everywhere inside and outside of everything seen or heard of in the universe. *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* 13.5

As is stated in these *śrutis*, the Lord is situated in the heart. What does He do? By His own *śakti* (*māyayā*) He makes all living entities engage in their respective actions (*bhrāmāyan*).<sup>174</sup> The living entities, like artificial dolls attached to a device with strings, are made to move by *māyā*. Or another meaning is: all living entities mounted in their bodies are made to move by *māyā*.

*tam eva śaraṇam gaccha sarva-bhāvena bhārata  
tat-prasādāt parām śāntim sthānam prāpsyasi śāśvatam* ||62||

62. O descendent of Bharata, take refuge in the Paramātmā alone with complete devotion. Having extinguished both *avidyā* and *vidyā*, by My mercy, you will attain the eternal spiritual abode.

This verse explains the purpose of the knowledge just revealed: take shelter of that Lord. You will attain the cessation of *vidyā* and *avidyā* (*parām śāntim*) and then you will attain My eternal place Vaikuṅṭha (*śāśvatam sthānam*). This surrender to the *antaryāmī* is for worshippers of the *antaryāmī* (Paramātmā) whereas the worshippers of Bhagavān surrender to Bhagavān, which will be explained later.<sup>175</sup> This is the opinion of some concerning this verse.

“My Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is my *guru*, and give me instructions which are beneficial for my *bhakti*. I surrender unto Him.” In this way, a person will think.

Uddhava says:

*naivopayanty apacitiṁ kavayas taveśa  
brahmayusāpi kṛtam ṛddha-mudaḥ smarantah  
yo'ntar-bahis tanu-bhṛtām aśubham vidhunvan  
ācārya-caiṭṭya-vapuṣā sva-gatiṁ vyanakti*

<sup>174</sup> *Svabhāva* by itself cannot make the living entities do anything.

<sup>175</sup> The direct process of *bhakti* and realization of Bhagavān are described in verse 65 and 66.

O my Lord! Transcendental poets and experts in spiritual science could not fully express their indebtedness to You, even if they were endowed with the prolonged lifetime of Brahmā, for You appear in two features—externally as the *ācārya* and internally as the Supersoul—to deliver the embodied living being by directing him how to come to You. SB 11.29.6

*iti te jñānam ākhyātam guhyād guhyataram mayā  
vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru ||63||*

63. Thus I have explained a scripture more secret than the secret knowledge of *karma*, *jñāna* and *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. Considering this thoroughly, do as you wish to do.

Here the Lord concludes the whole subject of *Gītā* .

*Jñāna* or knowledge consists of *karma-yoga*, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*. The word *jñāna* means “that by which one knows.” Thus *jñāna* refers to a process, in this case scriptures, which produce knowledge of these *sādhanas*.

I have revealed a scripture, *jñāna*, which is more secret than those scriptures (*guhyād guhyataram*), a process that has not been revealed in the scriptures written by authors such as Vasiṣṭa, Bādarāyaṇa or Nārada.

Another meaning is: In relation to their omniscience, I am infinite. Thus they cannot understand the knowledge because of its most confidential nature. I also did not teach them at all because of its intensely confidential nature. Considering this thoroughly (*aśeṣeṇa*), as is suitable to your taste, do what you want to do. Thus, the last six chapters concerning *jñāna* have been completed.

These three groups of six chapters, the *Gītā* , the crown jewel of all knowledge, are the box containing the most valuable secret treasure of *bhakti*. The first six chapters, concerning *karma*, are the lower covering made of gold. The last six chapters, concerning *jñāna*, are the lid made of gold and studded with jewels. Within the middle six chapters, resting within the container and the lid, shines the most excellent jewel of *bhakti*, more

valuable than anything in the three worlds--which brings Śrī Kṛṣṇa under control. *Bhakti's* servants consisting of two verses (65 and 66) of sixty-four syllables (jewels) embedded on the lid of the box (last six chapters) should also be understood to be pure.

*sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ  
iṣṭo 'si me dṛḍham iti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam ||64||*

64. Again hear from Me the highest words, the supreme secret. Since you are very dear to Me, I will speak for your benefit.

Glancing at Arjuna, His very dear friend, standing silently as he began to review the very deep meaning of the *Gītā* scripture, the Lord, His heart melting like butter due to His mercy, spoke.

“O My dear friend Arjuna, I will now speak the essence of the whole scripture in eight verses. Forget about the difficulties in having to review everything in order to understand it.”

Again (*bhūyaḥ*) hear the *most* secret knowledge.<sup>176</sup> He says “again” because He said the same thing at the end of the ninth chapter:

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī mām namaskuru  
mām evaiśyasi yuktvaivam ātmānaṁ mat-parāyaṇaḥ BG 9.34*

Those are the highest words (*paramaṁ vacaḥ*), the most secret (*guhyatamaṁ*), the essence of even the *Gītā*, which is the essence of the meaning of all scriptures. There is no secret greater than this, in any place, from any cause, by any means.

He then gives the reason for speaking this. Because you are very (*dṛḍham*) dear (*iṣṭaḥ*), My friend, I speak for your benefit. Without having such friendship no one speaks any most confidential topic. *Dṛḍha-matiḥ* (with fixed mind) instead of *dṛḍham iti* is another reading of the text.

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī mām namaskuru*

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<sup>176</sup> This knowledge is therefore more secret than that discussed in verse 62, which was more secret than the knowledge of *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga*.

65. Being My devotee, offer your mind to Me. Offer articles to Me in worship.. Offer respects to Me. I promise that you will come to Me without doubt, for you are most dear to Me.

The phrase *bhava mad-bhaktō* means “Being My devotee, think of Me.” The Lord says this to exclude the other possibilities. He does not mean, “Be a *jñānī* or be a *yogī* and meditate on Me.”

Or the phrase *man-manā* can mean: “Give your mind as a gift to Me, Śyāmasundara, with moon-like face, with shining locks of hair and beautiful eye brows, raining nectar in the form of glances of sweet mercy.”

And then *bhava mad-bhaktāḥ* can mean, “And give all your senses such as the ears to Me. Perform worship of Me (*bhava mad-bhaktāḥ*) using all the senses with such services as hearing, chanting, seeing My *mūrti*, cleaning and anointing My temple, picking flowers, and offering Me garlands, ornaments, umbrella and *cāmara*.”

And then the Lord says, “Give Me objects such as *gandha*, flowers, incense, lamp and *naivedya*. Be My worshipper. Perform My worship.” (*mad-yāji*).

And then Lord says, “O, just give Me respects (*mām namaskuru*). Falling on the ground with the whole body, offer respects, by touching the body to the ground with eight limbs.”

“Of these four--thinking of Me with the mind, serving Me with the senses, worshipping Me with items and offering respects to Me with the whole body--do all of them or any of them, and you will attain Me (*mām eva eṣyasi*). Make an offering of your mind, your senses, or items of worship unto Me, and I make an oath to you (*te satyaṁ*): I will give Myself to you.”<sup>177</sup>

The word *satyaṁ* implies something of which there is no doubt. According to the *Amara Kośa*, *satyaṁ* means an oath and truth.

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<sup>177</sup> Kṛṣṇa said, “You will come to me.” Another way of saying this is “I will give Myself to you.”

“Well, the people born in the land of Mathurā make such oaths in every sentence.”<sup>178</sup>

That is true. In that case, under oath (*pratijāne*) I declare, “You are dear to Me. No one cheats a person dear to himself.”

*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja  
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpēbhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||66||*

66. Giving up all *dharmas*, just surrender unto Me alone. I will deliver you from all sins. Do not worry.

“Am I supposed to perform the meditation and other processes along with my *varṇa āśrama* duties or without them?”

“Giving up all duties of *varṇa* and *āśrama* (*sarva-dharmān parityajya*), surrender only to Me.”

One should not say that *parityajya* means *sannyasya*, to adopt the *sannyāsa* order, because Arjuna was a *kṣatriya*, not qualified for *sannyāsa*. As well it should not be said the Lord used Arjuna just to instruct all other people who are not *kṣatriyas* to take *sannyāsa*, for Arjuna was qualified to be the recipient of the Lord’s instructions which could not be taught to others. Nor should one explain the meaning of *parityajya* in this verse as merely “give up all the results of activities.”

For it is said:

*devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām pitṛṇām  
nāyam kiṅkaro nāyam ṛṇī ca rājan  
sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇam śaraṇyam  
gato mukundaṁ parihṛtya kartam*

Anyone who has taken shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, the giver of liberation, giving up all kinds of obligation, and has taken to the path in all seriousness, owes neither duties nor obligations to

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<sup>178</sup> Here is a reference to Kṛṣṇa promising to return to Vraja.

the demigods, sages, general living entities, family members, humankind or forefathers. SB 11.5.41

*martyo yadā tyakta-samasta-karmā  
niveditātmā vicikīrṣito me  
tadāmṛtatvaṁ pratipadyamāno  
mayātma-bhūyāya ca kalpate vai*

A person who gives up all fruitive activities and offers himself entirely unto Me, eagerly desiring to render service unto Me, achieves liberation from birth and death and is promoted to the status of sharing My own opulences.

SB 11.29.35

*tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvatā  
mat-kathā-śravaṇādau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate*

As long as one is not satiated by fruitive activity and has not awakened his taste for devotional service by *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ* [SB 7.5.23] one has to act according to the regulative principles of the Vedic injunctions. SB 11.20.9

*ājñāyaiva guṇān doṣān mayādiṣṭān api svakān  
dharmān santyajya yaḥ sarvān mām bhajet sa ca sattamaḥ*

He perfectly understands that the ordinary religious duties prescribed by Me in various Vedic scriptures possess favorable qualities that purify the performer, and he knows that neglect of such duties constitutes a discrepancy in one's life. Having taken complete shelter at My lotus feet, however, a saintly person ultimately renounces such ordinary religious duties and worships Me alone. He is thus considered to be the best among all living entities. SB 11.11.37

The meaning of the word should thus be explained using all these statements of the Lord with no contradiction. The meaning can indeed be understood correctly by the prefix *pari* which means “completely.”

“Surrender only to Me (*mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*).” This means that there should be no worship of *devatās*, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, *jñāna* or *dharma* or other elements in that surrender.

“Previously I have said that you were not qualified for *ananyā bhakti*, the highest type of *bhakti*, and that you were qualified for *karma-miśra-bhakti*, when I said ‘Whatever you do, whatever you eat, do it as an offering to Me.’ But now, by My great mercy, you have qualification for *ananyā bhakti*. That *ananyā bhakti* can only be attained by the causeless mercy of My *ekāntika-bhaktā*. Though that is a rule I myself have made, I am now giving the mercy Myself, breaking My own vow, as I did in the fight with Bhīṣma.

“And by following My orders you should not fear some loss on your part in giving up *nitya* and *naimittika-karmas*. The order to perform these *nitya-karmas* was given by Me in the form of the *Vedas*. Now, I am ordering you to give them all up completely. Is there sin in not performing your *nitya-karmas*? No, rather the opposite--in performing *nitya-karmas* you will commit sin, because of disobeying My direct order.”

“If someone surrenders to You, he becomes dependent, like an animal purchased for a price. He does whatever You make him do. If You put him in one place, he stays there. If You offer him food, he eats. These are the characteristics of surrender. But the *Vāyu Purāṇa* says:

*ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ pratikūlyasya varjanam  
rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso gopṛtve<sup>179</sup> varanam tathā  
niḥkṣepanam akārpanyam<sup>180</sup> ṣaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatih*

*Ānukūlya* means conduct which is pleasing to the Lord and according to the scriptures. *Pratikūlya* means the opposite. *Gopṛtva* means to think of the Lord and no one else as ones protector. One should have faith (*viśvasaḥ*) that in times when ones own existence is threatened, the Lord will give protection, as in the case of Gajendra or Draupadī. *Niḥkṣepanam* means employment of ones gross and subtle bodies for Kṛṣṇa’s service. *Akārpanya* means that one should not make a show of ones own humility. Surrender

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<sup>179</sup> The Krishnadas edition gives *bhartṛtve* as an alternative reading both here and further down.

<sup>180</sup> The usual reading is *ātma-niḥkṣepa-kārpanye*.

(*śaraṇa-gati*) consists of performance of these six items in relation to the Lord.”

Then starting today, if I surrender to You, I should then do whatever You say whether it is good or bad. If You make me perform *dharma*, then I will not worry at all. But if You engage me in *adharmā*, since You are the Supreme Lord and can do what You want, then what will happen to me? Please tell me.”

“I will free you from all sinful reactions--from whatever reactions exist from the far past and recent past, and from whatever reactions arise from acts I will make you perform in the future. This is not impossible for Me to do, though it cannot be done by anyone else to whom you surrender. Taking you as the means, I am giving instructions to the whole world. Do not feel grief for your own welfare or that of others. May you and all other people, giving up all *dharmas*--your own and everyone else's--absorbing your thoughts and actions in Me, surrendering to Me, remain in contentment. I Myself have accepted the burden of freeing you from sin, and freeing you from *samsāra*.

*ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate  
teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānāṃ yoga-kṣemaṃ vahāmy aham*

But I carry the burden of supply and maintenance of those who desire constant association with Me, and who, thinking only of Me, worship only Me. BG 9.22

Do not lament thinking ‘Oh, I have thrown my own burden on my master!’ It is no strain at all for Me, who am most affectionate to My devotee. Nothing else remains to be instructed.”

Thus the scripture has been concluded.

*idaṃ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana  
na cāśuśrūṣave vācyam na ca mām yo ’bhyasūyati ||67||*

67. This is not to be spoken to one without control of his senses, to one without true devotion, to one who does not render humble service, or to one who envies Me, thinking that I am material.

Having given the instructions of the scripture of the *Gītā*, the Lord now indicates the process for passing on the information, starting a *sampradāya*. *Atapaskāya* refers to one who does not control his senses.

The *smṛti* says:

*manasaś cendriyāṇām ca aikāgryam paramam tapaḥ*

Concentration of the mind and senses on one object is the greatest austerity.

*Mahābhārata, Śānti Parvā, 23*

Even if a person controls the senses, if he is not a devotee, he should not be taught. Even if he is qualified with three good qualities just mentioned (sense control, devotion and obedience), he should not be taught if he is envious Me, if he thinks that I am a combination of material qualities contaminating the pure Brahman.

*ya idam paramam guhyam mad-bhaktesv abhidhāsyati  
bhaktim mayi pārām kṛtvā mām evaiṣyaty asaṁśayaḥ ||68||*

68. One who teaches this supreme secret to My devotees, attains the highest *bhakti*, and finally attains Me without doubt.

This verse and the next state the results of giving instructions on *bhakti*. The instructor first attains supreme *bhakti* (*parām bhaktim*) and then the Lord Himself (*mām eva eṣyati*).

*na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścīn me priya-kṛttamaḥ  
bhavitā na ca me tasmād anyāḥ priyatara bhuvi ||69||*

69. Among men there is no one so dear to Me. There will never be one dearer to Me than he.

There is no other whom I love so much as the person who teaches *bhakti*.

*adhyeṣyate ca ya imam dharmyam samvādam āvayoh  
jñāna-yajñena tenāham iṣṭaḥ syām iti me matiḥ* ||70||

70. It is My conviction that he who studies this sacred conversation between us two will have worshipped Me through the sacrifice of knowledge.<sup>181</sup>

This verse speaks of the results of studying this scripture.

*śraddhāvān anasūyaś ca śrṇuyād api yo naraḥ  
so 'pi muktaḥ śubhāl lokān prāpnuyāt punya-karmaṇām* ||71||

71. Even that person who, being full of faith, without envy, just hears this teaching, will become free of sin and attain the auspicious world of devotees.

This verse states the results of hearing the *Gītā* .

*kaccid etac chrutaṁ pārtha tvayaikāgreṇa cetasā  
kaccid ajñāna-sammohaḥ praṇaṣṭas te dhanañjaya* ||72||

72. O son of Pṛthā, have you heard this with close attention? O conqueror of wealth, have your ignorance and bewilderment been destroyed?

The Lord speaks this verse with the intention of teaching it again to Arjuna, if he were unable to grasp the meaning fully.

*arjuna uvāca  
naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvat-prasādān mayācyuta  
sthito 'smi gata-sandehaḥ kariṣye vacanam tava* ||73||

73. Arjuna said: My delusion has been destroyed, and my memory has been restored by Your mercy, O Acyuta. I remain without doubts, and will follow Your instructions.

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<sup>181</sup> In chapter four Kṛṣṇa stated the the sacrifice of knowledge was superior to the sacrifice of materials.

“What else can I ask? Having given up all duties, surrendering to You completely, without worries, I now completely trust You.” Thus he speaks this verse.

“I am ready to follow You, who are worthy of surrender. That is the duty of me, who have surrendered to You. I have no use for following my *varṇa* and *āśrama*, nor *jñāna-yoga* or other processes. Starting today, I have given them all up.”

“Oh My dear friend Arjuna, I have some remaining work to do in relieving the burden of the earth. I want you to do that work.”

When the Lord said this, Arjuna, with Gāṇḍīva bow in hand, rose to fight.

*sañjaya uvāca*  
*ity ahaṁ vāsudevasya pārthasya ca mahātmanaḥ*  
*saṁvādam imam āsrauṣam adbhutaṁ roma-harṣaṇam ||74||*

74. Sañjaya said: Thus I have heard this remarkable, hair-raising conversation between Vāsudeva and the son of Prthā, a great devotee of the Lord.

*vyāsa-prasādāc chrutavān etad guhyam ahaṁ param*  
*yogaṁ yogeśvarāt kṛṣṇāt sāksāt kathayataḥ svayam ||75||*

75. By the mercy of Vyāsa, I have heard this supreme secret of *bhakti-yoga*, directly from the master of *yoga* Kṛṣṇa while He personally spoke it.

*rājan saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya saṁvādam imam adbhutam*  
*keśavārjunayoḥ puṇyam hṛṣyāmi ca muhur muhuḥ ||76||*

76. O King, remembering this wonderful, sacred conversation between Keśava and Arjuna again and again, I rejoice again and again.

*tac ca saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya rūpam aty-adbhutaṁ hareḥ*  
*vismayo me mahān rājan hṛṣyāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ ||77||*

77. O King, remembering again and again that amazing form of Hari, I am filled with wonder, and rejoice again and again.

*yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārho dhanur-dharaḥ  
tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama ||78||*

78. Where there is Kṛṣṇa, the master of *yoga*, and where there is Arjuna, the holder of the bow, there will be unfailing prosperity, victory, ever-increasing wealth, and righteousness. That is my conviction.

As for the commentary on the last five verses, which brings out the purport of the whole *Gītā*, they were written on two pages, which have been taken away by the carrier of Ganeśa (a rat). I have not bothered to write them again. They were a trifling matter. Let that be. Thus the commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gītā* called *Sārārtha Darśinī* have been completed.

May this shower of meanings of the essence of scripture, which give benefit to the whole world, delight the devotee *cātaka* birds with its sweetness and may the pleasure they derive from it light up my heart.

Thus end the commentaries on the eighteenth chapter of the *Gītā* for the pleasure of the devotees' hearts, by the mercy of the *ācāryas*.