

ANCIENT WISDOM FOR MODERN LIFE
CHAKRAVYUH



Dr. Shirin Venkat

Inner Search Foundation

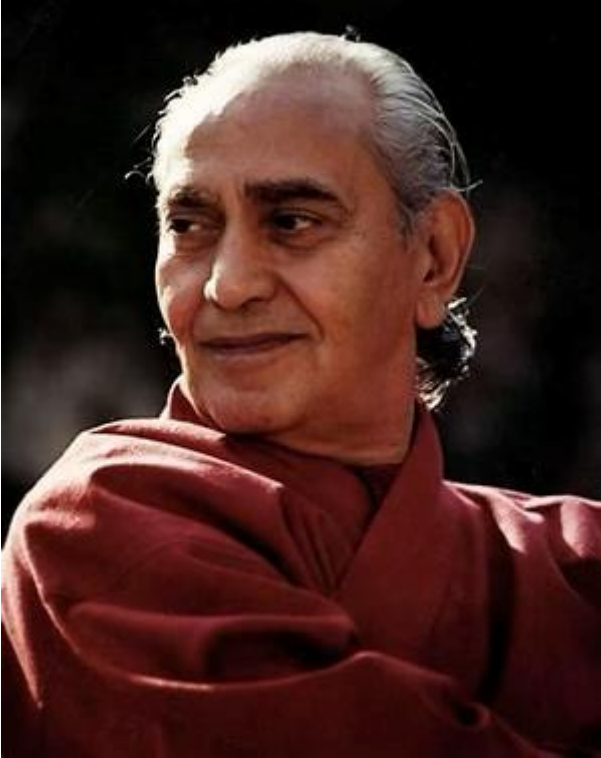
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**Ancient Wisdom for Modern Life – Chakravyyuh
(Shastra Ka Gyan, Jeevan Ho Asaan) - Dr Shirin Venkat**



**Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah
Om Shri Gurubhyo Namah**

**Dedicated at the lotus feet of my beloved Guru
'Baba' Swami Rama**

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Foreword

In a world increasingly driven by noise, distraction, and the pursuit of transient pleasures, the quest for inner harmony and meaning often remains elusive. Many wander through life burdened by stress, anxiety, and an unshakable sense of incompleteness—like Abhimanyu in the Mahabharata, skilled enough to enter the Chakravyuh but not taught how to exit. Dr. Shirin Venkat’s “Ancient Wisdom for Modern Life – Chakravyuh” is a timely and insightful offering that seeks to bridge this gap. With clarity and conviction, she invites the reader to embark on a transformative journey that begins with the profound questions of human existence and ends with the possibility of liberation from suffering.

At its heart, this book is an act of service—springing from the author’s lived experience as a physician, seeker, and devoted disciple of Swami Rama. It is not merely a text of theoretical philosophy or devotional musings. Instead, it is a living document infused with the distilled essence of India’s timeless spiritual heritage, thoughtfully presented for modern sensibilities.

The author's choice of title, Chakravayuh, is more than symbolic. It encapsulates the condition of the modern human being caught in a complex formation of obligations, desires, fears, roles, and identities without the knowledge or clarity to break free. Drawing from Vedanta, the Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, and the experiential wisdom of the Himalayan masters, the book acts as a guide to highlight this entrapment and chart a path out of it.

The beauty of Ancient Wisdom for Modern Life lies in its seamless integration of inner contemplation with outer action. The chapter on "Methodology – The Way Out!" is especially significant. Here, the author lays out practical pathways including Karma Yoga, Jnāna Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Rāja Yoga, Vipassana, and her uniquely articulated, "Thank You Yoga." She underscores the importance of transforming every action into an offering and aligning the inner compass with the eternal.

At a time when the world is reeling from existential crises, ecological, psychological, or societal, this book comes as a gentle yet firm call to return to the source, not by rejecting the

world, but by understanding its ephemeral nature and realigning ourselves with the eternal. The message is neither escapist nor moralistic—it is simply an invitation to understand clearly, live consciously, and to exit the Chakravayuh gracefully.

This is not a book to be read in haste. Its wisdom is layered, resonating differently each time it is revisited. I commend this book to all sincere seekers—whether young or old, novice or seasoned. May it serve as a map in the quest for truth. And may you find the courage not only to enter the Chakravayuh of life with awareness but to find your way out—with wisdom, love, and liberation.

Dr. Prakash Keshavaiya
Dehradun. August 2025.

Dr Prakash is a B. Tech -Mechanical Engineering. M.S and Ph.D in Biomedical Engineering. University of Minnesota, Mineapolis. Director, Nephrology Unit Himalayan Institute Hospital Trust and Hon. Prof. Physiology. Among the 2% most distinguished world scientists. Awarded many accolades from his Alumni IIT Chennai. Author of books, audios and conducting several practical camps, spreading the teachings of Swami Rama his Guru. He is an Initiator in the Tradition.

Preface

This book came into being because I was following modern Gurus of Vedanta, Swami Tadatmanand and Swami Sarvapriyananda. The clarity with which they impart knowledge carefully gleaned for the modern mind is simply amazing. My own Guru, Swami Rama, made obstruse subjects practical and straightforward. His treatise, *The Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita*, is my daily guide.

The idea came about after young patients seemed to be suffering from lifestyle diseases and issues and feeling rudderless. Even after much counselling, it looked as though they needed a simple text to help them. They even asked if I could write a book that would guide them. It became clear they needed direction and focus. This meant information on the how and why of life, as well as useful practical tips. All this, of course, if they feel inclined to follow.

The text is especially focused on Vedantic wisdom in a simplified form. This is not a book for self-improvement or personality development. If anything, it aims to show that the cause of our suffering is this very personality which we so assiduously cling to. It, therefore, tends to be theoretical in most parts. In my understanding as a trained medical doctor, theory is as important as practice and, in fact, foundational. For the actual practice of the different paths of yoga, the reader has plenty to find. Swami Rama's books are replete with practices; one may refer to his numerous books.

The theme here is how our scriptures have illumined the way for a happy life and an easy exit!

I conclude with the appeal that life is too precious to fritter away in fleeting gains; let us together find permanent, unalloyed contentment.

Acknowledgement

The Grace of the Guru made this effort see the light of day. My Guru brother, Mr. Pawan Kapoor the founder of The Confluence, Centre of Yoga & Sustainability, came into my life last year when he sent me an invitation for the inauguration of this most beautiful Institution at a scenic location in Raigad district.

It was strange; I had started writing this book, and it was taking some shape, but rather slowly. In February this year, we were to conduct a silent retreat at The Confluence, and as it happened, we had no registrations. I knew the Guru would be there, and so I requested Pawan ji if we could do it anyway. He not only readily agreed but said he too wanted the same. So, the two of us did the retreat. During those three days, the book proceeded to be written at such a fast pace that I was surprised.

Later, however, when I discussed it with Pawan ji, he offered to format it and do preliminary editing, I was overwhelmed. I could see the hand of the Guru at every step:

- that Pawan ji should connect with me after 16 years.
- that there should be no registrations, and yet we proceed with our commitment.

Thank you, Pawan ji, for doing this. Thank you, Baba, for showing me these connections that you secretly bring about.

Dr. Prakash Keshavaiya, whom I fondly call Anna (elder brother), was kind enough to go through the manuscript and make wise suggestions. Indeed, I am overwhelmed because he has written the Foreword to the book after thoroughly reading it. I am deeply grateful.

Kamal Didi, Director of Swami Rama Centre, and Sailaja assisted with the initial editing process, which was later completed professionally, by Ms. Purva Mishra. I am grateful.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my dear husband, Dr V Venkat, for always giving me the space to think and act according to my inner promptings and partner with me in my endeavours.

Dr Shirin Venkat
3rd July 2024 - Pune

Introduction

Before starting to write, I humbly invoke the Grace of Lord Ganesh and my many Gurus to bless this work. It is as though I am being held, although it has long been my intention to write down what I have learnt in and from life and have found to be of definite practical value. At the same time, it is clear to me that intentions, however well-meant, need not be of value to others. Yet the fact is, if one does not share what they have to give and dies with it, they are considered a “krupana”, a miser! That, I hope, will not apply.

This text is set out to share the pearls of wisdom gathered after diving deeply into the ocean of life and our shastras, which have the rare capacity to illumine life’s journey in all ages. The reader is introduced to certain fundamentals in our scriptures which, if well understood, stand us in good stead in navigating the vicissitudes of life. This will lay the foundation for a clear understanding of the all-comprehensive concepts laid out, which are rational and immensely beneficial. The terminology that accompanies such concepts needs to be clearly defined, and that itself reveals their significance.

We discuss the aims and objectives of life. It is often a nebulous field of attention; not many know why we are here and whereto we are going. It is seen that one just drifts with the tide and reaches the end of this all too fleeting existence without a clue as to these questions, which either do not arise or are summarily dismissed without investigation. It then becomes imperative for us to design a methodology to achieve our aim. This leads us to the path and the possible pitfalls to

be avoided along the way. It naturally raises several questions, too, and these are also addressed as they occur.

In the life of each one of us, a time comes when one wonders how we came into existence and for what purpose. This dilemma is addressed by giving a summary of what our sages have discovered through intense internal research. One needs to know at least what the concept of creation was and thereby understand what the creature is here for. The Rishis have shown the way, and there are six major schools, each given by a Rishi. Advaita Vedanta and Dvaita Vedanta are explained in some detail, as these are the most prevailing today.

The author is an ardent student of the Bhagavad Gita and Vedanta and relies heavily on the knowledge derived from these sources and is therefore supremely confident of the wisdom available to us all. The book 'Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita' by Swami Rama is indeed a classic. Swami Rama was an embodiment of the joy of life, at the same time a sage, a scientist, an architect, an artist; a hero is a hero at all points. It was a great good fortune to have met him and to have been initiated by Him. Throughout the book, the reader may find a few repetitions; these are deliberate. The best way to learn is to familiarise ourselves, which happens when we repeatedly dwell on the subject.

It is generally felt that the scriptures are to be read after the age of 60 years. Often when I have tried to emphasise the importance of understanding the tenets of the Bhagavad Gita, which guide one to a happy stress-free life, I have met with, "Chitti (aunty), we will do all that after retirement!" That would be like offering a comb to one who has gone bald, and so, this Chitti is not to be daunted. Life today has thrown up

many challenges, which lead to a complex and convoluted style of living. It is, in fact, more relevant in this context that we are led out of the ¹Chakravyuh we find ourselves in. We are taught from childhood how to “succeed” in life, but sadly, we are not taught how to be happy in life, which is what we chase success for! Strange? Not really, the recipe for happiness has been kept a tight secret; it is time to make it an open one. This is what the realised masters of today are striving to do with immense success. This little adventure may serve a similar purpose.

1

¹ Chakravyuh is a military formation used in the Mahabharat war.

Chapter 1

Aims And Objectives of Life

“We are all taught how to take off, but no one teaches us how to land. And that is very dangerous!” - Swami Rama

Aim of life: Permanent liberation from suffering. This is required to be our underlying stream of awareness as we pass through life.

Objective: is to be happy throughout life.

Let us see how we can achieve both.

As youngsters, we are not entirely clear about where we are heading. No doubt our parents, teachers, and peers seem to give us a roadmap, but often it does not match our inner promptings, and we are confused. We are confused about what we should do and what we want to do! Sometimes, we end up doing neither. If they do match, we are an instant success both physically and mentally. This can happen more frequently if we had a background understanding of what the Shastras say about life's goals and had our parents or teachers explained it to us. Our elders warmly hand over the prescription to succeed in life, little realising that even if we excel in the rat race, we have spent most of our lives in anxiety, fear, and excitement (not happiness). Besides, towards the end of life, we often feel hollow and empty, lacking contentment in the face

of death, which is the only certainty of life. If we were to look closely at our elders at the end of their lives, we might be dismayed to find that for nine out of ten, their recipe for happiness only created a broth of turmoil.

The story of Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna, comes to mind. Once Subhadra, who was pregnant with Abhimanyu, asked Arjuna the technique used to penetrate and exit the military formation called Chakravyuh, also known as Padmavyuh, as it resembles a blooming lotus. Subhadra was listening intently, and the child in utero understood how to enter this formation, but even as Arjuna continued to explain how to get out, Subhadra fell asleep. During the Mahabharata war, a situation arose when the Kauravas employed this formation, and only Abhimanyu knew how to penetrate it, while the other warriors, including Arjuna, Krishna, and Pradyumna, who also knew the secret, were busy fighting on different fronts. He warned Yudhishtir, the King of the Pandavas, that he did not know how to exit.



Chakravyuh

They all assured him that they would follow close behind and not allow him to be trapped; as it happened, he was trapped and brutally attacked from all sides and killed.

This is precisely what happens to us! We die not knowing that we cannot! Through the existence on this earth and as we navigate it, one thing is clear: we are all taught how to penetrate the Chakravyuh but not given the secret of exit. This book hopes to do just that. Let us therefore dwell on the wisdom of the ancient Dharma Shastras, where we are told what our ultimate and present aims should be and at what stage in our lifespan.

To begin with, let us examine the aims of life as defined in the Vedas:

The four Purusharthas or goals to be achieved in life are:

Necessarily in that order.

1. **Dharma**: Code of Conduct and righteousness.
2. **Artha**: Gaining wealth.
3. **Kāma**: Gratification of desire, and
4. **Moksha**: Liberation from the cycle of birth and death

Dharma is rightly given as our first Objective, and for every society and school as we know it, we find that we are given a grounding in right action and conduct. Dharma has many meanings; it primarily refers to proper conduct. It can also indicate the religion one follows, but

that is not what it signifies. When Shri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita talks about Swadharma, he includes aptitude in it as well. This will become clearer as we discuss the Varnashrama Dharma.

Artha: The wealth one requires to keep oneself and the family comfortable and well provided for. The Rishis of ancient times were primarily married and had the means to maintain a family comfortably. They achieved this by conducting rites and rituals for the material well-being of the populace and were given Dakṣiṇā (an offering of gratitude in the form of cattle, land, etc.). They performed Yajnas, fire sacrifices, e.g., for obtaining a son, acquiring wealth, going to heaven after death, appeasing the elders, etc. All Yajnas are reasons for a comfortable life here and in the hereafter. Today, Artha can be understood as our bank balance and possessions, which we tend to accumulate over years of striving. In ancient times, Artha denoted a certain amount of wealth that provided stability for physical existence; it was never intended to be a comparative analysis of success or a measure of power, as it has come to mean today. This will become clearer once we understand the significance of the Varnashrama Dharma.

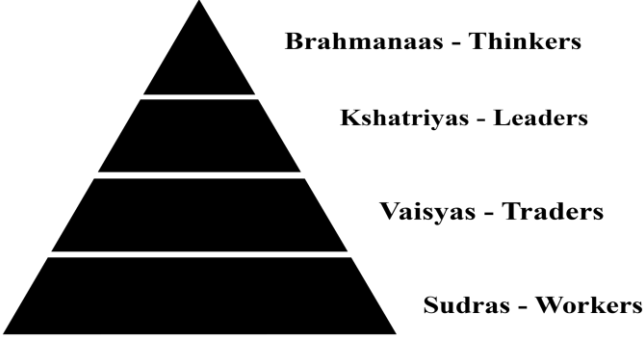
Kāma: Is translated simply as desire but mainly indicates the desire for progeny and the many desires following it. The Vedas recognised and even encouraged man to gratify his desires, such that he may then realise how futile it is to chase after fleeting pleasures. The Kathopanishad defines the pathways that lead to pleasure and happiness using the terms "Preyas" and "Shreyas." That which leads to fleeting pleasures and sense gratification is called Preyas, and that which leads to complete fulfilment and permanent happiness is Shreyas (this might be difficult to walk on in the beginning).

Moksha: Liberation from all desires, because one finds that gratification of desire leads to fleeting satisfaction, and we are forever left thirsting. Thirsting for what? Thirsting for perennial fulfilment, where there is no fear of loss and death. One finds even a 96-year-old who says death would be welcome, calling for the doctor, should even a minor illness happen. We all feel incomplete in some way and are unable to pinpoint the exact reason. Our Shastras show us the way. The Shastras referred to are the Prasthantrayi, which comprises three primary sources: the Brahmasutras, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita.

It is clear, then, that it becomes necessary first to experience Preyas, the pleasant, and only then can one gain the wisdom of what liberation from desire would mean. Rare is the Being who knows this from childhood, and rarer indeed are the parents who can inculcate this knowledge early. And yet, it is not necessary at all to deny the experience of samsara, which is a stepping stone to a more profound understanding. The desire then arises to go beyond!

The term Varnashrama Dharma has two aspects: Varna refers to class, and Ashram denotes the stage of life one is in; the lifespan is assumed to be 100 years. There are four Varnas, and the Ashramas are also four, just like the Puruṣārtha, which are also four.

Varna: Indicates the social class into which one is born and/or grows into. It has nothing to do with Jati or caste. It has to do with the qualities (Gunās) with which one is either born, meaning naturally drifts into or develops.



Varna System

In the Bhagvad Gita Ch. 18 Sh. 42-45, Varna is described as per the Gunās (qualities) in our temperament and innate nature. It has little to do with birth; to an extent, it is often related, as it is usually seen that darji (tailor) no (of) dikaro (son) darji (tailor) bane (becomes).

Sh. 42/43/44 Ch.18

**शमो दमस्तपः शौचं क्षान्तिरार्जवमेव च । ज्ञानं विज्ञानमास्तिक्यं
ब्रह्मकर्म स्वभावजम् ॥ 42 ॥**

*śhamo damastapah śhaucha khāntir ārjavam eva cha
Jnānam vi Jnānam āstikyam brahma-karma svabhāva-jam*
Tranquillity, restraint, austerity, purity, patience, integrity,
knowledge, wisdom, and belief in a hereafter, these are the
intrinsic qualities of work for Brahmins.

**शौर्यं तेजो धृतिर्दाक्ष्यं युद्धे चाप्यपलायनम् । दानमीश्वरभावश्च क्षात्रं
कर्म स्वभावजम् ॥ 43 ॥**

*śhaurya tejo dhitirdākhyam yuddhe chāpy apalāyanam
dānam īśhvara-bhāvaśhcha kshātram karma svabhāva-jam*

Valour, strength, fortitude, skill in weaponry, resolve never to retreat from battle, large-heartedness in charity, and leadership abilities- these are the natural qualities of work for Kshatriyas.

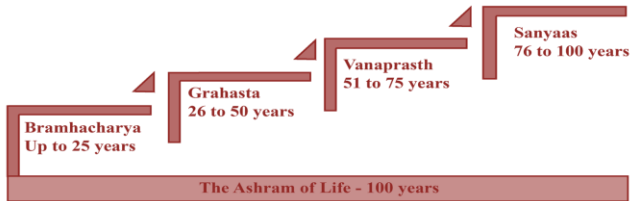
कृषिगौरक्ष्यवाणिज्यं वैश्यकर्म स्वभावजम् | परिचर्यात्मकं कर्म
शूद्रस्यापि स्वभावजम् || 44||

krishi-gau-rakshya-vānihjyam vaiśhya-karma svabhāva-jam
paricharyātmakam karma śhūdrasyāpi svabhāva-jam
Agriculture, dairy farming, and commerce are the natural works for those with the qualities of Vaishyas. Serving through work is the natural duty for those with the qualities of Shudras.

In other parts of the world, there was also a division of society based on a similar concept. For example, in European society, the clergy, the nobility, the burghers, the serf and the proletariat were the classes. In Iran, the division was done in this way: Atharva: the priest, Rathesta: the warrior, Vastrya Fsvant: the head of the family who takes major decisions, and Huiti: the worker class. Among the Zoroastrians, there are two classes: the Dastoor are the priest class, and the Bedins are the Warrior class who also take care of business, etc. No one is segregated based on birth and takes up whatever way of life they are inclined to.

Our lifespan is considered to be 100 years, and this is divided into four stages as follows:

1. **Brahmacharya**: the first 25 years of age represent the bachelor student stage, which focuses on education and the practice of celibacy.



Generally, the child between the ages of 7 and 11 undergoes a Upanayanam ceremony where he is initiated into the Gayatri mantra and given the Yamas and Niyamas of life (according to Patanjali Yoga sutras). These are ten in number and strangely similar to the ten commandments of Christianity and the ten virtues of Buddhism. So, mankind has thought similarly, notwithstanding the geographical zone. At this stage of life, the emphasis is on Dharma, which is the Puruṣārtha that lays the foundation for one's values and behaviour throughout life. In the Ashtanga Yoga, Patanjali has described the first two limbs, which we could call our legs on which we stand, and are as follows:

Yamas are the Don'ts:

- Ahimsa (nonviolence in thought, word and deed)
- Satya (truthfulness)
- Asteya (not to steal)
- Brahmacharya (celibacy)
- Aparigraha (not to hoard or be greedy)

Niyamas are the do's:

- Saucha (cleanliness)
- Santosha (contentment)

- Tapas (austerity, discipline)
- Svadhyaya (self-study, study of texts)
- Isvara Pranidhana (total surrender to a higher power)

Grihastha: The period is from 26 to 50 years of age. This stage of life refers to a person's married life and the responsibilities of a householder, one who has to take care of both elders and children. The emphasis here is on both Artha and Kāma, that is, to gratify sensual desires and obtain the means for the same through Dharmaic effort. This is the most important of all stages of life concerning sustenance and the material well-being of an individual and society. This is where samsara (mundane existence) can ensnare a person and, in their pursuit of sense gratification, lead them astray, but not if the first aspect of the Puruṣārtha is deeply imbibed, namely the Dharma.

In ancient times, Yajna, a fire offering, was a means to attain material well-being so much so that there were fire sacrifices to get a male offspring, to bring wealth, etc.

There are five different basic kinds of Yajnas which were mandatory:

Deva yajna: offerings to the Gods for getting mundane gains.

Pitru yajna: offered to the ancestors (Tarpan: water is offered, rice is kept on the edge of the compound wall for the crow to eat.)

Bhuta yajna: feeding the cow, dog, birds, etc.

Manushya yajna: daan to orphans etc., and atithi devo bhava, feeding guests as God.

Brahma yajna- study of scriptures.

There are very few of our present generation who follow these principles in the above manner. In recent times, we have many NGOs working for animal welfare, for environmental preservation and social welfare, all of which should be considered as Yajna itself. Shri Krishna tells us in the Bhagavad Gita how action should be performed as an offering (yajna) at the feet of the Lord with equanimity towards the outcome of the action—more about this in the methodology chapter.

Vānaprastha: The period from 51-75 years of life. The emphasis at this stage of life should be on Moksha, with some attention on Artha. Towards the attainment of Moksha, one learns to detach oneself from worldly entanglement and craving. Thus, we are encouraged to travel; Vana literally means forest, and Prastha means to go to; in modern times, this may not be possible and is perhaps not necessary. One is encouraged, however, to travel, do pilgrimages, meet saints and sages, study the scriptures once again, and at the same time move out of one's comfort zone. As one grows older, one clings to things and relationships, both past and present. This tendency is to be recognised and guarded against by leaving the comfy corner of one's home. In relationships, a healthy distance should be maintained without becoming indifferent. It is usually very hard to keep away from family; one tends to get involved with grandchildren to the point where children become resentful. It is wise to travel and visit places, as death is whispering bitter somethings close to the ears; these should not be ignored.

At this stage in life, one also undertakes the Veda and Brahma yajna, study of the Upanishads, scriptures, meditation and other penance for attaining liberation.

In the present age, the Kali yuga, Naamasankirtan, i.e., Japa, Shri Krishna says in Chapter 10, is the highest yajna. At present, we are in the Kali yuga, which is considered to be the iron age, or the age where all morals are lost and people are only after selfish gain, poverty is rampant, and hardly anyone thinks of spiritual matters. We are great punyatamas (virtuous beings) to have taken birth in the Kaliyuga, as misery confronts us at every corner, we automatically turn towards the goal of existence. Also, the means to liberation in this yuga are so simple. A little like being 'andhon mein kaana rāja' (the cock-eyed person is king among the blind!). Most are still struggling to feed their stomachs, and others are only interested in self-aggrandisement and appropriating wealth.

Sanyāsa: The period from 76-100 years of life. The emphasis at this stage of life must necessarily be on Moksha alone. Towards this end, one is expected to detach from all material possessions as well as social and family relations. This is the ideal situation, but often it is not practical. The reason it may not be practical is that the body may be affected by a disease or disability, which makes living without family support impossible. Why? Well, because if one needed assisted living, human support is a must, and then it may be preferable to rely on family rather than strangers, that is, of course, if one has a supportive family. It may also be possible to have family nearby and use paid assistance, all this, once again, if one has the finances. If one does not, walking out into the wilderness may be an option. But very few could find the courage to do, with the infirmities of age to boot. What then? Well, attachment is a disease one suffers in the mind, meaning it is subtle. Why look for gross treatment? Use the prescription given by the sages: withdraw the mind's attention into the inner space beyond the mind. Of course, this should have been

practised almost all of one's life to become proficient at it. The other medication would be doing Japa. There are many pathways out of the chakravayuh even without any physical change; the only criterion is a sincere, intense desire to get out! The way then presents itself. One should pray for a long life, as the very physical ageing process teaches detachment. Technically, a sanyasi has no debts and lives only as long as his karmaphala remains.

The prayer is:

Jivem sharadash shatam,
may I live to be a hundred years.
Pashema sharadash shatam,
may I be able to see for a hundred years.
Shrunayam sharadash shatam,
may I be able to hear for a hundred years.
Prabravam sharadash shatam,
may I be able to speak for a hundred years.
Adinasyam sharadash shatam,
may that I am never dependent for a hundred years.

So, in summary, Brahmacharya and Grihastha ashrams are seen as Pravritti dharma, which means actively attaining something. While Vaanaprastha and Sanyāsa dharma are seen as Nivritti dharma, which signifies the renouncing of all that one has accumulated and acquired, both material and emotional entanglements of any kind. In other words, it is common to cling to houses, possessions, and other items. Sometimes, one may feel attached to a pen, claiming it has sentimental value. Do we even realise this is bondage? By the time we are 50 years of age, wisdom should have dawned, and by the time we reach 75, the ability to let go should be effortless.

Thus, the ancient system gave us the balance for the pursuit of worldly life and spirituality. The undercurrent throughout life would necessarily have to be our Aim, Liberation from suffering, for which the first 25 years become the foundation when the proper education is given. The Vedas do not deny the importance of mundane existence and endorse its value, albeit in the right proportion, for the objective of being happy throughout.


Chapter 2

Why We Are Here

At some time in one's life, early or later, the question arises, 'Is this all there is to life?' The sentiment is often summarily brushed aside with the thought, 'what else can there be?' and fleeting pleasures continue to attract us. However, for a few, this becomes a gnawing question demanding an answer. The genuine seeker then sets off on their inner journey.

Human Predicament

- What is the purpose of life?
- Why do fear and doubt plague us?
- Is the mind a by product of the brain or is the brain a condensation of the mind?



The fact of the matter is, the cause of suffering is the IGNORANCE of our TRUE NATURE, and that is why we suffer. The Quest, therefore, is: A Constant search for happiness that is perennial, unalloyed, without a break and infinite - Satchidananda.

The cause of sorrow is Apoornamanyatā, a feeling of incompleteness. Howsoever rich a person is, he never feels

complete. And what is that due to? The answer is: Avidyā, IGNORANCE of that which is.

The first step is discrimination, VIVEKA, between that which is Ātma (Self) and Anatma (not Self), that which is Nitya (Eternal) and Anitya (Fleeting), that which is Suchi (Pure) and Asuchi (Impure), that which is Dukha (Suffering) and Sukha (Happiness). Trying to cling to that which is by nature fleeting leads to suffering.

आहारनिद्राभयमैथुनं च सामान्यं एतत् पशुभिर्नराणाम् ।
धर्मो हि तेषामधिको विशेषो धर्मेण हीनाः पशुभिः समानाः ॥
āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunam cha sāmānyam etat paśubhir
narānām
dharma hi teshām adhiko viśesho dharmena hīnāh paśubhih
samānāh

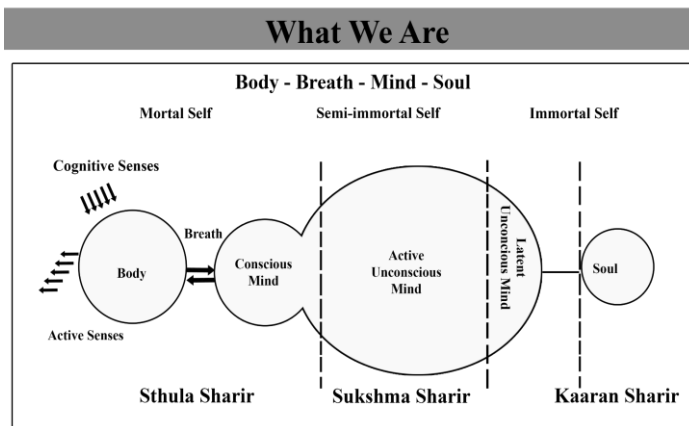
“Food, sleep, fear, and mating are common to both humans and animals. But it is the adherence to dharma (moral and ethical duties) that distinguishes humans. Without dharma, humans are equal to animals.”

What we think we are: A “social animal” with body senses and mind, who have evolved from the ape (Darwin’s theory).

“āhaara, nidra, bhaya, maithunam cha (food, sleep, self-preservation and sex) still control human life exactly as they do in the animal kingdom.” - Swami Rama.

So, we think we are this Mind, Body, Intellect, with emotions and desires, and Ego (is identifying with the body). We then identify with our storyline, conditioning and profession, etc. We have a story all our own to which we tenaciously cling, and often our memory deceives us. We remember things that

never happened and forget what did! This then causes immense suffering as whatever happens to the body, the mind is always personal. Strangely, persona means mask, and that is what we are en clothed in. The personality can be perceived with a little experiment in observation. This means we are not the person, so then what are we?



As Explained by Dr. Swami Rama

The picture below depicts our storyline line, which is continually changing, and yet as we perceive these changes, there must be an underlying perceiver/observer, the True 'I'. The six changes the body undergoes are: Asti - existence, Jāyate - birth, Vardhate - growth, Viparinamate - change, Apakshiyate - decay, and Vinashyati - death.

Our Storyline - Is This The Truth



The six changes the body undergoes are Asti: existence, Jāyate: birth, Vardhate: growth, Viparinamate: change, Apakshiyate: decay, and Vinashyati: death

The underlying Witness Consciousness, the Chāitanya Sākshi, is easily overlooked in the maze of the mundane and mesmerising, moving, mysterious universe full of duality. One can scarcely decipher good from evil these days with everything so well camouflaged.

What we are: To explain the diagram above, let us first understand what the makeup of this body-mind system is.

Our bodies have five cognitive senses: taste, touch, hearing, sight and smell. Five active senses: walking, grasping, speaking, procreation and excretion. Accordingly, each sense has its sense object.

The body is made from the five elements: Prithvi / Aap / Tej / Vayu / Ākāsha, i.e., earth/water/fire/air/space - according to our ancient Shastras. If one dwells a little on the purport, we

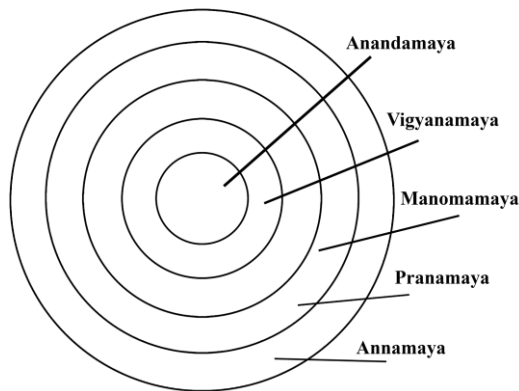
will realise that these are the gross divisions of Nature as we find it. Here we are not talking about the periodic table!

Breath or Prāna is divided according to the function of the vital force.

FIVE (5) PRĀNAS: Pran/Apana/Vyan/Udan/Samaan.

UPAPRANAS: Naga (belching clarity of mind) / Kurma (blinking) / Devdatta (pervades body) / Krikala(hunger, thirst, sneeze)/ Dhananjaya (hiccough).

FIVE (5) KOSHAS: Annamaya, outermost / Pranmaya / Manomaya / Vijnānamaya/ Ānandamaya, innermost.



These are considered the sheaths of which our composite whole is made. The Sthool sharira or gross body is made of the Annamaya kosha, the food body. The Sukshma sharira is made of the Pranāmaya (breath, vital force), Manomaya (mind field) and Vijnānamaya (Intuitive field) and the Kaarana Sharira is made of the Ānandamaya kosha. Swami Rama explains in his classic diagram that BREATH is the link between the mind and

body. Therefore, although it is difficult to control the mind, which is like a restless, drunk monkey bitten by a scorpion, it can be tamed through the power of breath.

We go through three states of Consciousness: Waking, Dreaming and Deep Sleep. These are states of the mind. Consciousness is the underlying Reality, which is the unchanging witness of all three states and is simply known as Turiya (the fourth). The indwelling deity of each state is Vaishvanara (lord of the world) in the waking state, Taijas (self-luminous), who projects different pictures on the dream screen, and Prajnā (wise one) in Deep sleep, which is the state of total rest. The Kaarana sharira, or the causal body, is the least understood. It corresponds to the Ānandmaya kosha, the bliss we experience in deep sleep and for which we so long every night. Yet we know nothing of that bliss when we are asleep; it is only after we wake up that we can say that we had a good night's rest. The rest is from the chattering of the mind and the ego, as well as physical senses. The reason we can say that we are refreshed is because there was, in sleep, a silent, aware witness, which was the Saakshi (witness) to the absence of any experience whatsoever. Now, because we were ignorant, it is termed the causal body or Kaarana sharira, as it houses the Avidyā or ignorance of one's true Nature. Once this body is transcended, we recognise we are Satchidananda and we have always been so and will always be so.

There are three types of Dukha that a man can suffer from:

Ādhidaivik: that which comes from the elements, such as an earthquake, flood or some major accident not in anyone's control.

Ādhibhautik: the dukha one suffers at the hands of others, including other animals. The emotional stress in any relationship.

Ādhyātmika: that which we create for ourselves, whatever the problem, we can always turn it into a situation, face it and choose not to suffer.

It is thus that we say OM Shanti, Shanti, Shantihi three times.

Most often, our suffering is self-created and is due to dwelling on past hurt or future anxiety over which we have no control. So, Ignorance or Avidyā, as we have said, is of our true nature, [Swarupa Jnāna] and it is so because of mistaking the mask for Reality.



What is Reality? There is only ONE. Even a Nobel laureate Scientist, Max Planck (credited as the originator of the Quantum theory), has said:

“I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind

consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness.”

The American philosopher R. W. Emerson says something similar to the above:

“We have learned that we do not see directly, but mediately, and that we have no means of correcting these coloured and distorting lenses which we are, or of computing the amount of their errors. Perhaps these subject-lenses have a creative power; perhaps there are no objects.”

- *Ralph Waldo Emerson in “Experience” (in an essay that confronted the facile positivism of his age).*

What he means by mediately is that we experience through our senses never the object directly, and more often than not, our previous experience colours the interpretation of the data collected. So, we never perceive reality as it is. When he says perhaps there are no objects, he means the underlying Reality is only One, which has taken these myriad forms and that in fact, is why the experience is possible, because otherwise we would have to postulate an interface which does not exist.

What happens at the time of death of the physical form?

Sthula sharira disconnects from the other two bodies, breath ceases, heart stops, brain dies.

The subtle body, Sukshma sharira, having not established or completed the pathways to Infinite Spirit, is still subject to karma.

It must work out its mental, emotional, and belief system conflicts (karma, vāsana , klesha, and samskaras)

Thus, the vehicle for rebirth is the Sukshma sharira and the Kaarana sharira. That which we truly are is the unchanging, pure, eternal Consciousness.

In Adi Sankara's words: Nitya, shuddha, mukta Ātma.
...and this is why we are here...

To awaken to our true nature – Swabhava & Swarupa
Remain as Sat Chid Ananda

Spark of Divinity (Microcosm) recognises the grandeur of the play of Divine manifestation (Macrocosm) discussed in the next chapter.

Shri Mooji has said:

“The highest purpose of this body, as I perceive it... is to awaken to the truth of who you are. If it is for some other purpose, then the body is merely the pyjamas of the Being. You are just sleeping in it.

Chapter 3

The Mechanism of Creation - Chakravayuh

Man is the one living being who is endowed with this almost insatiable faculty of curiosity. He wants to know how this world began, when it began, will it end, and as a corollary, when did man come into existence, why is he here, whether he will cause his own destruction, and so on and so forth. This curiosity led to the belief in God. So, it becomes a moot question as to whether God created man or man created God. Of course, all religions based on dogma will consider this statement a blasphemy.

Yet our sages entered just such contemplation to discover the Truth. The Vedas are also called Shrutis because the sages heard ('shru' is to hear) these truths in their state of contemplation. Truth revealing itself!

The basis of all schools of philosophy is the Vedas, which are four in number: The Rigveda being the oldest, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda (music and hymns), and Atharvaveda. Vedas have two parts, the Karma Kānda, which describes the various rituals to attain material and celestial gains and comprises a major part of the Vedas. The other part is the Jñāna Kanda, which expounds the wisdom for liberation.

The Vedas are discussed under the following headings:

Brāhmaṇās: which describe the rituals and chants.

Samhitās: which explain the contemplation and worship during the yajnas.

Araṇyakās: deal with the wisdom taught in the forest, therefore called the Araṇyakās. They deal with mystical

aspects, meditations and serve as a bridge between the ritualistic Brāhmaṇās and the philosophical Upanishads.

Finally, the **Upanishads**, which deal with the Knowledge of Brahman and form the Jnāna Kānda of the Vedas.

Philosophy is categorised mainly into two schools: for the Āstikas and the Nāstikas, depending on whether they accept the authority of the Vedas or not. Although the commonly held concept is that Āstikas believe in a creator and the Nāstikas do not.

The Āstikas' philosophy is divided further, into six schools of thought (Darshanas), which we shall touch on only briefly. The six schools of this philosophy, given below, are each postulated by a Rishi, and no one is asked to believe; we are all asked to experiment, discover and experience. Here we will enumerate the six Darshanas, and discuss the Sāṃkhya, Advaita Vedanta and Dvaita Vedanta at some length. Darshana means to see, so why do you think the Rishis called them Darshanas? Each of them has a special Rishi (a sage, seer of truth). This signifies that the seers of Truth, through their revelations, show you the Truth. They are as follows:

1. Āstikas (Faith in God and the Vedas)

a. **Sāṃkhya**, a philosophical tradition which regards the universe as consisting of two independent realities: Purusha ('consciousness') and Prakriti ('matter') and which attempts to develop a metaphysics based on this duality. (Rishi: Kapila)

b. **Yoga**, a school similar to Sāṃkhya (or perhaps even a branch of it), which accepts a personal god and focuses on yogic practice. (Rishi: Patanjali)

c. **Nyāya**, a philosophy which focuses on logic and epistemology. (Rishi: Gotam). It accepts six kinds of pramanas

(epistemic warrants, put simply, the means of acquiring knowledge):

- **Pratyaksha** (perception)- direct sense perception- seeing is believing.
- **Anumāna** (inference), eg, where there is smoke, there is fire.
- **Upamāna** (comparison and analogy), if an object like an animal seen is to be described, it is compared to a known animal and then the differences are highlighted.
- **Arthāpatti** (postulation, derivation), eg, Devadatta is fat, he does not eat in the day, so he must be eating at night.
- **Anupalabdi** (non-perception, negative/ cognitive proof), when I do not find an object in a particular place, I say it is not there in this place.
- **Śabda** (Reliable testimony) The testimony of the scriptures, the Bhagvad Gita, the Upanishads, the Vedas, etc. (the shrutis and smrutis)
- Nyāya defends a form of direct realism and a theory of substances (dravya)

d. **Vaiśeshika**, closely related to the Nyāya school, this tradition focused on the metaphysics of substance and on defending a theory of atoms. Unlike Nyāya, they only accept two pramanas: Pratyaksha (perception) and Anumaana (inference). (Rishi: Konada)

e. **Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā** is a school which focuses on exegesis of the Vedas, philology and the interpretation of Vedic ritual. (Rishi: Jaimini)

f. **Vedānta** (also called Uttara Mīmāṃsā) focuses on interpreting the philosophy of the Upanishads, particularly the metaphysical ideas relating to Ātman and Brahman. Vedānta comes at the end of the Vedas, hence called Vedanta. (Vyasa). The matter does not end here. There are many schools of

Vedantic thought as well: Advaita-Shankaracharya, Viśiṣṭādvaita-Ramanuja, Dvaita-Madhavacharya, Dvaitadvaita-Nimbārka, Shuddhadvaita-Vallabhacharya, and Achintya Bheda Abheda-Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

2. **Nāstika and Sramanicas** believe in srama, labour, seekers take to becoming mendicants. They do not accept the Vedas as an authority.

a. **Ajivika:** Most of the literature of this philosophy has disappeared, and little is known about it except that it believes in fate alone.

b. **Jainism:** A philosophy centred around nonviolence. Mahavir was one of the Tirthankaras who popularised this philosophy and was a senior contemporary of the Buddha.

c. **Buddhism:** A philosophy that revolves around the four noble truths and the eightfold path. A system taught by the Buddha (the One who is Awake) 2,500 years ago, after having mastered all the systems that went before him. The design is scientific and relies entirely on your own effort to reach the goal. The salient point is Shunyavaad, which means that this samsara comes into being from Nothing, that there is no underlying Reality. It negates Brahman.

d. **Chārvāka:** also known as Lokayata (for the masses), is an ancient school of Indian materialism. It holds only direct perception, empiricism and conditional inference as proper sources of knowledge, embraces philosophical scepticism, and rejects ritualism and supernaturalism. It considers Consciousness as an epiphenomenon. “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we shall die”, the slogan followed in Sanskrit is “Rinam Kritvah Ghritam pibet”, meaning take a debt but drink Ghee! (clarified butter).

These are Darshanas (showing appearance/view) or traditional schools of philosophy, which have explained the Creation in various ways.

The three scriptures on which our ancient wisdom rests are termed the **Prasthanatrayi**, including:

- **Brahmasutras**, which were compiled from the Vedas by Badrayan Vyasa, are presented in a highly cryptic manner and therefore many commentaries or Bhashyas are required to explain the purport. Each school interprets this to suit its ideology.
- The **Upanishads**.
- The **Bhagvad Gita**.

The model of creation is important to mention, for the ultimate aim in each is liberation. The reader may study these schools in detail for better information.

Sāṃkhya

Sāṃkhyais the most ancient darshana; it is said: *Naasti Sāṃkhyasamam Shastram Naasti Yogah Samam Balam*: there is no scripture like Sāṃkhya and no power equal to Yoga.

It is useful here to outline the Sāṃkhya philosophy with regard to manifestation. It is extremely helpful to understand how and what came about to be, and thus why liberation should be the Ultimate Aim. Sāṃkhya proposes two eternal realities:

- Purusha, Pure consciousness, and
- Prakruti, the manifesting element, which in itself is Jada (bereft of consciousness)

The two come together, and because of the disturbance thus caused in Prakruti, the differentiation into the various evolutes commences. The aim for man is to know he is Purusha, and it's the entanglement with Prakruti that has caused ignorance of his true nature and bondage. There are infinite Purushas, and each is infinite! Can there be infinite infinities?

Prakruti has three modes or Gunās: sattva, rājas and tamas. Tamas indicates inertia, rājas indicate activity, and sattva is the equilibrium of the two. Everything that we see or experience in this world is the permutation and combination of these three Gunās. When these three universal vibrations are held in equipoise, there is no action, according to the theory. It is only when there is a disturbance of the equilibrium that evolution begins. Universal Energy or Prakriti is unconscious, and it is only through the presence of the conscious Purusha that evolution begins.

The Gunās: The concept is originally notable as a feature of Sāṃkhya philosophy. The Gunās are now a key concept in nearly all schools of Hindu philosophy. Hindu (H stands for Himalayas and Indu for the ocean, thus those that live between the Himalayas and the ocean are Hindus).

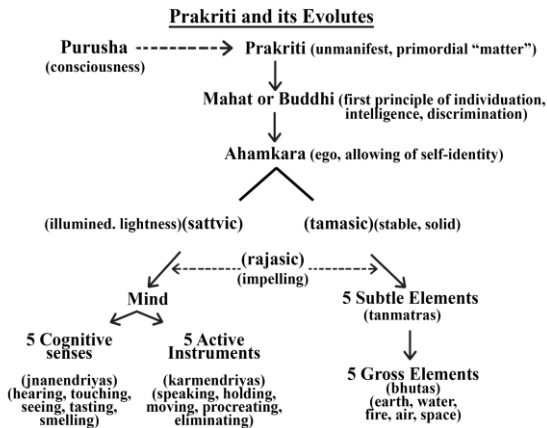
These three Gunās are present in all beings and the whole of Creation. Different permutations, combinations, and proportions lead to myriad appearances and behaviours. The five elements, namely – Prithivi (Earth), Aap (Water), Tej (Agni, Fire), Vayu (Air) and Ākāsha (Space) and the three Gunās form the fabric of creation.

Sattva: is the quality of balance, harmony, goodness, purity, universalism, holism, construction, creativity, positivity, peacefulness and virtue.

Rājas is the quality of passion, activity, neither good nor bad and sometimes either, self-centeredness, egoism, individualisation, drive, movement, and dynamism.

Tamas is the quality of imbalance, disorder, chaos, anxiety, impurity, destruction, delusion, negativity, dullness or inactivity, apathy, inertia or lethargy, violence, viciousness, and ignorance.

According to the Sāṃkhya school, no one and nothing is either purely Sattvic, Rājasic, or Tamasic. One's nature and behaviour constitute a complex interplay of all three Gunās, in varying degrees. In some, the conduct is Rājasic with significant influence of Sattvic guṇa; in some, it is Rājasic with considerable influence of Tamasic guṇa, and so on. The balance of Gunās of everything and everyone can change, and it does. However, a change in one quality faces inertia from the other two qualities in the Indian worldview. Change needs internal or external influence or reinforcement, as a source of knowledge and force to transform. The force to change comes from the Rājas guṇa, the Sattva guṇa empowers one towards harmonious and constructive change, while the Tamas guṇa checks or retards the process. In Indian mythology, Vishnu is envisioned with more Sattva, Brahma with more rājas, and Shiva seen with all three Gunās.



As can be seen from the chart, Prakriti comprises of twenty-four Tatvas. The term Tatva means ‘thatness’; the above chart gives the details. Kindly note the triangle formed by the Gunās, which influence the formation of further evolutes from Ahamkara (the self-identity which leads to a sense of separateness).

Aham karoti iti Ahamkara, the “I” that says it does is the Ahamkara, the EGO. Once the ego forms, karma begins, and the cycle of individual entry into the world and exit from it begins until the Truth of the game is realised. One then awakens to his true nature and is liberated. The circle starts with Avidyā (ignorance of our true nature) which leads to Kāma (desire), and Kriya (Karma) for getting the Rupa (form) to satisfy Kāma which again leads to more Kāma and again Rupa and more Karma, and the vicious circle of samsara (literally means - wandering) begins in the field of the five

elements of Prakruti. The individual then has to traverse from the apparent to his Real Nature, i.e., Swarupa-Pure Consciousness-Purusha. Each one of us is a Purusha and has to realise that. So, there are infinite Purushas. Sāṃkhya does not admit the idea of a Creator.

Advaita Vedanta

In **Advaita Vedanta**, this Universe is a superimposition or an appearance on the substratum of Parabrahman, which is the only ultimate, immutable, timeless, infinite Reality. **One single concept which ought to be emphasised is 'Real', that which is eternal, unchangeable, formless and indestructible alone can be termed REAL.** Real also does not depend on anything. It rests on itself, while the unreal depends on the real for existence. We often confuse this term real with matter, which seems solid and remains unchanged, apparently' for longer than us, giving us the impression that the world is real, and we are unreal! While the exact opposite is the case. Because we are, we can appreciate all manifestations, which are appearances.

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः

**Brahma-Satyam Jagan-Mithyā Jivo Brahmaiva Nāparah
Brahman is the only truth, the world is unreal, and there is
ultimately no difference between Brahman and the
individual self.**

जगतगुरु आदि शंकराचार्य
Jagat Guru Adi Shankaracharya.

Much like our dream, the world arises in our consciousness, is made of our consciousness and dwells and subsides into our consciousness. This universe is an appearance which comes about due to ignorance of Reality, also termed Māyā. Māyā is

a modification / creative power of the Parabrahman, therefore not a separate principle as Prakruti is in Sāṃkhya.

Advaita Vedanta admits three levels of Reality, they are:

- The **Pāramārthika Sat**, or the Absolute, which is beyond all. This is Pure Awareness with no modification or Vrutti, the Parabrahmana.
- The **Vyavahārika Sat**, or the mundane or transactional, which we believe to be the only Reality and therefore we suffer, we identify with our body/mind and take the world we perceive to be everlasting.
- The **Prātibhāsika Sat**, or the dream world projected by our minds, which we take to be absolutely real while in the dream world. And when we wake up, it subsides within!

Cosmology: Macrocosm - Brahmanda, also called Samashti

With regards to the coming of existence and evolution of man, the following is an understanding from Advaita Vedanta.

Pure Consciousness:

- **Ishvara:** Brahman plus Māyā, the avyakta or unmanifest beeja, seed, is the very basis, so even Advaita Vedanta includes Ishvara as the prime principle to whom the Jeeva can pray.
- **Hiranyagarbha:** Brahman plus Māyā plus Cosmic Intelligence is the womb of Universal Intelligence, a subtle aspect of the universe, i.e., collective intelligence, the samashti.

- **Virāṭa:** Brahman plus Māyā plus Cosmic intelligence plus individual Intelligence is the intelligence of vyashti individual.

All of these arise as an appearance on the substratum of the Parabrahman, which is all of this and beyond. This superimposition is bilateral, meaning Māyā superimposes appearance on Parabrahman, and the aspect of Consciousness in Creation is a superimposition of Parabrahman. This superimposition is termed Adhyasa and because it is bilateral it is termed ananyodhyasa

A word on the salient differences between Vedanta and Sāṃkhya:

Advaita Vedanta accepts only one reality and considers the manifest universe as a superimposition, 'Adhyaaropa', on consciousness. In contrast, Sāṃkhya is a purely dualistic theory and admits of two ontological realities: Prakruti, the eternally changing, and Purusha, Consciousness, the Immutable, eternal reality. The second point they diverge on is that Sāṃkhya postulates plural Purushas and Vedanta admits of only the ONE. Both accept the cause of suffering as the ignorance of our true nature, which is pure, eternal, immutable, and indestructible Consciousness. This is not known to us for Prakruti veils it in Sāṃkhya and Māyā in Vedanta. Māyā is different from Prakruti, for Prakruti is, and Māyā only appears to be.

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शांतिः शांतिः शांतिः ॥

**Om Puranam-Adah Puurnnam-Idam Puurnnaat- Puurnnam-
Udacyate |
pūrṇasya Puurnnam-Aadaaya Puurnnam-Eva- Avashishyate
||
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||**

**Om: That (outer world) is Purña (Full with Divine
Consciousness); This (inner world) is also Purña; from Purña
is manifested Purña.
Taking Purña from Purña, Purña indeed remains (because
the Divine Consciousness is non-dual-infinite)
Om Peace, Peace, Peace!**

The example that comes to mind is of a mother when she gives birth to a baby. A totality is born from a totality, and yet the totality remains! This is the Advaitic theme.

Yathā Brahmanda tathā Pinda, as is the Macrocosm so is the Microcosm: Applying the above knowledge to the microcosm we can see that the journey to liberation entails a journey from the differentiated to the non-differentiated state, much like a neuron (brain cell highly differentiated) going back to its stem-cell state and thereby regaining its totipotency which was inherent and never lost! It thus discards its limitations donned because of the function it had to undertake in the brain.

The terms used in Advaita Vedanta, which further our understanding of how ultimately there is only just ONE REALITY, are:

1. These limitations are adjuncts necessary for function, and these limiting adjuncts are termed **Upadhis**. Thus,

Parabrahman with the Upadhi of Māyā, which is the power of creating an appearance of this Universe, primarily becomes Ishwara, i.e., the stem cell, totipotent. You can therefore ask Ishwara to do anything for you, as He is all-powerful. Further Upadhis, when added, limit the powers. Hiranyagarbha is the one with the Cosmic Intelligence and the subtle aspect of all the physical manifest Universe; therefore, changes can be affected there, so one could pray to any number of Gods who have the power in this sphere! Finally, at the level of the individual Virāṭa, we too have enough power to change the physical Universe to our liking. Still, we are considerably more restricted, e.g., we cannot wish away an illness.

2. **Adhyas** is the superimposition of an appearance on the substratum, e.g., mirage, so this Universe is an appearance on the underlying Prabrahman or Pure awareness. The mirage cannot exist without the desert, but the desert can. Water, signifying happiness, seems to be present in the mirage (Universe), and we chase after it never to meet true happiness. The appearance is both so attractive and powerful as to delude us completely. Continuing in the same strain, the example of seeing a snake, while walking along a dimly lit lane where only a rope exists, depicts the unpleasant and fearful experiences created by Māyā. So, death is just an appearance and thus nothing to be feared. We project the fear onto the rope, this is called Shobhana adhyas, i.e., we superimpose desirability on the object, in this case, the opposite, undesirability. Thus, we see the world through our mental projections only.

3. The technical terms for attraction and aversion are Rāga and Dvesha, the pleasant, that which we desire and the unpleasant, that which we want to avoid. When this drama is

seen through, it is easy to dissociate while still enjoying the play of Māyā.

So, to summarise Advaita with the practical implications given below each stage seen in the flow chart form could be something like the following:

Brahmanda: Macrocosm Samashti

Para Brahman

(PureAwareness) Pāramārthika sat, absolute Existence

|

Ishvara

Parabrahmana with Māyā, the illusory power. The seed of creation. The ²Kaaran Sharira or Causal body of the Universe

|

Hiranyagarbha

Ishvara with Cosmic Intelligence, Buddhi, also arising from Māyā, Collective consciousness, the zone of synchronicity and serendipity. Sukshma Sharira or Subtle body of the Universe, all potentiality, including the nineteen tatvas in a seedling form.

|

Virāṭa

Hiranyagarbha plus Individual Buddhi/ Ahamakara / Physical realm of the Universe, the Sthool or Gross body of the Universe.

² From the lectures of Swami Sarvapriyananda on Kathopnishad

Pinda-Microcosm-Vyashti

|

Prajnā

The Kaarana sharira in deep sleep, where there is no experience only experienter, pure consciousness, the realm of total ignorance.

|

Taijas

The Sukshma sharira, subtle body made of the nineteen tatvas in seedling form, is able to create experience in naama [name] and rupa [form], including emotions and reasoning. The realm of the dream state exemplifies that the dream world is made from consciousness, arises in consciousness, and is experienced by consciousness. The only difference from pure consciousness is that there is Naama and Rupa

|

Vishva

The Sthula Sharira, gross body and the waking state, where the experience of the Universe is possible through the gross senses and the antahakaran: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. The zone of the Karta and Bhokta, and therefore Karma³.

Note: The Vishva (man in waking state) can therefore appeal to Ishvara for fulfilment of desires, for relief from distress, etc., because Ishvara is totipotent. It's your faith that needs completion. The above representation is taken from Swami Sarvapriyananda's notes on Kathopnishad.

³ From the lectures of Swami Sarvapriyananda on Kathopnishad

We are Sat: Existence, and Chit: Consciousness, and Ānanda: Infinite fulfilment (where there is no lack). The misapprehension of Reality is the cause of suffering and bondage and is due to Avidyā, Ignorance. The whole game/play (Leela) is to recognise our true nature, Swarupa, which is Purñā; there is only One which appears as many due to Māyā.

Beyond it all is the Parabrahman, which includes Brahman and Māyā with all its evolutes. This chart is not exhaustive; that which IS includes and transcends all.

Once the authority of the Shrutis (Vedas) is accepted as the ultimate source of knowledge, and one feels attracted to the school of Advaita Vedanta as a means for liberation, which is simply the snapping out of this hypnosis (misplaced conviction of reality), one naturally asks, how then am I to return to true understanding? More about that in the chapter on Methodology – The Way Out!

In Dvaita Vedanta, the mainstay is the acknowledgement of a Creator/God/Ishwara and man is a part of Him, not separate (Viśiṣṭādvaita), or man is similar, but always separate and could even be called a servant of God (ShuddhaDvaita), much like the ISCON movement today. The Vedas are also the scriptures that this school accepts as authority. The Bhasyas on Brahmasutras written by Rāmanuja – Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified monism), Madhvacharya, the exponent of Dvaita (dualism) and Nimbārka, the exponent of bhedābheda or the theory of difference and non-difference, refute the Advaita school tooth and nail and consider it almost blasphemous to equate our reality to the Supreme and ultimate reality. It is postulated that we can only know God. This ideology

subscribes to the honeybee status, one who enjoys the honey but does not want to become the honey. There is a lot of logic in here for those of us who do not want to renounce individuality. Liberation in this context is to surrender oneself totally to the feet of the Lord, saying 'Thy will be done, not mine.' We are completely convinced that we are not the doers of action; only the Lord does it all. We also recognise His all-pervading nature and therefore a natural love for all and wanting to serve all arises.

The final stage of the course is once again losing oneself and becoming one with the beloved, exactly as the Doha by Kabir expresses, immensely touching:

**प्रेम गली अति संकरी, तामें दाऊ न समाई । जब में था तब हरी
नहीं, अब हरी है में नाहीं ॥**

**The love lane is very narrow. When I was there, the Lord
was not; now that the Lord is, I am not.**

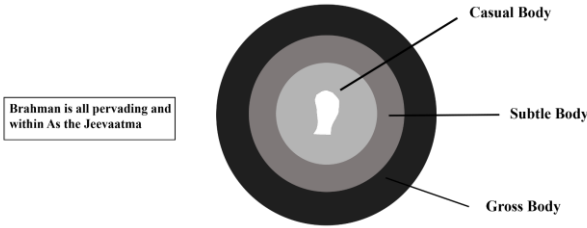
This once again indicates the dissolution of the separate entity. In Advaita Vedanta, this knowledge is the basis. Unless one ceases as a separate entity, how can individual suffering cease? That is liberation, that is Moksha.

All schools, however, share the goal of Moksha, liberation from the bondage of Suffering, Fear and death.

In the scheme of creation, which includes man being the subtlest, so far as we know in this gross physical realm, came into existence from Prakruti and Purusha according to Sāṃkhya philosophy. Advaita, on the other hand, considers Prakruti as Māyā, which is nothing, but an appearance superimposed on the underlying substratum of Parabrahman

and due to which the universe or Manifestation appears other than what it truly is. Māyā is considered the Creative Power of Parabrahman.

**Diagrammatic Representation of
the Pure Consciousness : Brahman & Jeevaatma**



***“Kim vachaneeya, kim avachaneeya; kim gaayantam, kim agaayantam;
Sarvam brahma mayam, re re, sarvam brahma mayam..”***
 Meaning: "What to say, what not to say; what to sing and what not to sing?
 For all this is only Brahman, yes indeed, all this is only Brahman!"
 - Sadashiv Brahmendra

Pure Consciousness, also called Purusha/Chaitanya Sakshi/Ātma, residing in the Heart of all as the Jeevātma, is said to be in the shape of a thumb, Angushtamatra Purusha.

Pure Consciousness is also pervading the Manifest Creation, and beyond. Pure Consciousness, Brahman, is the substratum on which the superimposition of this manifest universe has happened through Māyā, the Creative Power of Brahman. Māyā conceals our True Nature but never completely, and so, it is also revealed when we seek.

What reincarnates is the sukshma sharira as given in the text. Adi Shankara has said:

Brama satyam jagan-mithya jivo-brahmaiva naparah, meaning Brahma alone is the Reality, the universe is Mithya (existing but not real), and the Jeevātma is no different from Brahman.

To elucidate the principle of superimposition, the example of a rope being mistaken for a snake in dim light is given. That which is in fact a rope appears to be a snake; the snake is projected onto the rope by the mind. Similarly, the substratum of the Universe, which is Parabrahman, seems to be this variegated, mesmerising manifest universe due to the power of Māyā, which is ignorance or Avidyā. So, man gets so completely hypnotised into believing that the physical world is REALITY. In fact, not only is the Universe only an appearance (much like the dream), but even man himself is part of this appearance, albeit endowed with the unique ability to discover this TRUTH and uncover the veil of Avidyā, the Māyā.

Once, however, we are under the spell of Māyā, what happens is as follows:

We are convinced that we are physical entities whose brains have developed this power of conscious experience. This forms an identity which then feels separate from the rest of the universe, I and the world; accordingly, it strives to continually improve its position, possessions, and protect the person. This leads to desire, i.e., vāsanā, which is binding, and is mainly of three types:

Deha Vāsanā - the entrenched belief of being a body leading to every effort to preserve, conserve and glorify this body and its relations. The sense of utter separation ends in fear and suffering.

Deha Vāsanā - the entrenched belief of being a body leading to every effort to preserve, conserve and glorify this body and

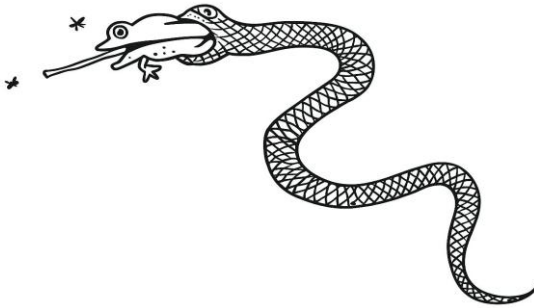
and suffering, and on and on the cycle continues till we awaken!

There is one other term often used, Samskaras, which means our conditionings due to our likes and dislikes (Raag and Dvesha), as well as our family and environment. Samskaras determine how one reacts or responds to any given situation. There is another aspect of Samskara, the various rituals prescribed in the shastras and other religious texts, e.g., Naamkaran/Baptism, Upanayanam, the ceremony of investiture of the sacred thread, marriage, etc. In the Hindu way of life, some 63 such samskaras are to be done throughout life, and the eldest son does the one after death. It is called Śrāddha.

So, the IDENTITY, the Persona (Mask/Upadhi/Limiting adjunct) Person is an aggregate of vāsanā s-desires, samskaras-conditionings, all arising from ignorance of one's true nature, Swarupa. So, he ends up 'doing', i.e., he is a Karta and therefore experiencing, i.e., Bhokta. Once this identity is formed between the ages of 2 and 3, temper tantrums, called the 'terrible twos', begin. In the teens, another aspect of the Ego makes its appearance due to the hormonal changes in the body, the mind, which is only subtle matter (tanmatras ref. chart on Prakruti), and we all know what that means. As adulthood enters, desires multiply, and responsibilities, fear, and anxiety take a grip. The drive to accumulate surfaces defines the identity only by what it has! Once again, for the woman at age 50, menopause and all the vagaries of mood swings, etc., take hold. All these changes can so grip the mind that one feels bound, miserable and even lonesome in the middle of 'friends' and when with one's life partner too! No amount of wealth can buy happiness. Yes, it can make

suffering a little more comfortable. Health issues affect us without warning, and the changes that affect the body (given earlier in the chapter “Why we are here”) automatically follow. The strange glamour of this ‘persona’, the mask is so tightly glued on (fevicol?), that it is taken for the Self. The actor believes he is the character, and samsara (that which wanders, flows) begins. The loop is Avidyā, ignorance of one’s true nature, leading to Kāma (desire), leading to Karma (action) and back.

The situation truly is like that of a frog caught in the mouth of a snake, but still sticking its tongue out to catch a fly!! How pathetic! That, my dear reader, is the Chakravayuh! Here, the snake represents TIME and the fly, our fleeting pleasures in this world.



In summary, the Macrocosm, Brahmanda/Universe forms due to Māyā/Prakruti, depending on which school of Philosophy you subscribe to. The individual IDENTITY, Pinda, the Microcosm forms due to the devolutes of Prakruti as given in

the chart earlier in this chapter, from Ahamkara due to Avidyā, Ignorance of one's true nature. This gives rise to the world, the universe, and the individual personality formed of, and from, the five elements and three Gunās in varying proportions, giving rise to infinite forms. Liberation from suffering lies in the removal of ignorance of separation through the Knowledge of Self.

So, then. Who realises the self. The Self realises the Self. Why does it have to do so? To dispel the illusion of a separate existence as an EGO, resulting in freedom from fear, suffering and false identification.

The great game...leela.... chakravyyuh!

Chapter 4

Methodology - The Way Out!

“To understand others is to have knowledge. To understand oneself is to be free.”

Lao Tzu.

The means to living a happy life and ultimate liberation are many; my observation is that there are as many pathways as there are human beings! Maybe this was the reason the Hindu tradition has 33 Crore Gods! But observations aside, there indeed are many paths to liberation, even though they can broadly be classified under the following heads:

- Karma Yoga.
- Jñāna Yoga
- Rāja Yoga
- Bhakti Yoga
- Kundalini – Siddha Yoga
- Pathless path
- Vipassana
- Thank you, Yoga.

Before we go on to discuss these paths, we need to have a background. The human predicament, as we have seen so far, is:

- What is the purpose of life?
- Why do fear and doubt plague us?

“A HUMAN BEING IS IN CONSTANT SEARCH OF HAPPINESS THAT IS PERENNIAL, UNALLOYED, WITHOUT A BREAK AND EVER GROWING” -SATCHIDANAND

What comes in our way of attaining this are the following five Kleshas (afflictions):

- Avidyā: Ignorance of our true nature
- Asmita: the notion 'I am'
- Rāga: attraction
- Dvesha: aversion
- Abhivivesh: fear of not being (death)

We need our scriptures to reveal the wisdom necessary to know the way out of the Chakravyuh of suffering experientially.

In Indian philosophy, Pramana are the means which can lead to knowledge and serve as one of the core concepts to determine the nature and source of Knowledge.

There are six means to knowledge, called Pramanas in Sanskrit.

a. **Pratyaksha:** Direct knowledge can be both external and internal. External perception is any perception received from the five senses, which are outwardly directed. Internal pertains to the inner sense, the mind, which includes Pratibha (intuition) and Shabda (Knowledge from the scriptures/wise people whom you revere).

b. **Upamana:** comparison, analogy, e.g., someone who has seen a cow but not a buffalo is told that it looks, grazes and gives milk like the cow, but is black, thick-skinned with long horns, unlike a cow it looks, grazes and gives milk like the cow but is black thick skinned with long horns unlike a cow.

- c. **Arthaapatti:** means postulation, derivation from circumstances, e.g., “Devadatta is fat” and “Devadatta does not eat in the day”, so “Devadatta must be eating at night.”
- d. **Anupalabdhi:** negative cognitive proof, e.g., “there is no jug in this room” is a form of valid knowledge.
- e. **Anumaana:** Inference, e.g., observing smoke rising in the distance, one infers there is a fire.
- f. **Shabda:** Scriptures, we take the authority of scriptures like the Vedas as a valid proof of the Truth set therein and then experiment.

Why is it important or necessary to know this? Because we are going to discuss the paths to Truth and living a happy, stress-free life. How else are we to decide the authenticity of the directions? For example, we trust the GPS because we have direct experience, Pratyaksha, of its accuracy. We, therefore, need to verify for ourselves whether the directions given actually lead to the goal. It does not end there; merely knowing the route and the map does not get you there; you have to walk it.

Keeping the goal in mind, one constantly analyses what causes suffering. At times one may feel, ‘I am not suffering’; at such a time one contemplates, ‘True, I don’t have suffering now, but I must accept there is suffering in the world, and who knows when suffering will come.’ The well-known story of Prince Siddhartha Gautama is an apt reminder of the condition we all face. The prime tenet of Buddhism is that there is suffering and there is a way out of suffering. We can all choose our own path and design it, tailor it to suit our “Prakruti” (meaning the permutation and combination of the three Gunās, which form our particular identity). The following will be most helpful if one accepts the law of Karma, which is the best possible

explanation in this Universe of order, for events that happen right from our birth, which are totally out of our conscious control. We make our own destiny, which very much depends on our conditioning, tendencies and environment; by that I mean the *vāsanās*, *samskarās*, which determine the circumstances of our birth. What the law of Karma states is that our every thought, word and deed has the power of sowing the seed to happiness or otherwise. We therefore must live with awareness at all times, for our mind and thoughts determine our words and actions!

Thus, now we can begin to discuss the methods by which we can attain both our material and spiritual goals, that is, our objective of living a happy life and our aim of achieving Moksha or liberation from suffering.

First things first: Our objective is to be happy through life, to navigate in such a way that we do not have to ride the trough and crest of experience precariously. In my own experience and exploration, I have found “Thank You Yoga” most effective. Let me explain it at the end, leave the best for the last, like we savour a sweet dish.

Karma Yoga

We have all heard of Karma Yoga; it is so often quoted and so often misinterpreted, it is ironic. Karma yoga does not mean doing one’s duty only. It is a means of spiritualizing daily activity and purifying the mind. The principal tenets of Karma yoga as taught by Shri Krishna in Chapters 2 and 3 of the Bhagavat Gita are as follows:

Action without expecting fruit, karmaphala tyaga:

Sh. 47 Ch.2

**कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन । मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते
सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥४७॥**

**karmany-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana mā
karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmaṇi**

**Your right is to work only and never to the fruit thereof. Do
not consider yourself to be the cause of the fruit of action;
nor let your attachment be to inaction.**

This is one of the title shlokas of the Bhagvad Gita, and it is here that Shri Krishna gives a practical instruction, leaving behind all theory. Swami Rama gives us a more profound meaning; he says suffering comes when one is interested in reward. If one performs actions expecting rewards, he is bound to receive the fruits of their actions. The fruits then motivate him to do more actions, and in this way, he finds himself caught in the whirlpool of life, never content, always seeking more and more for himself and ignoring or using others for his own gain. Actions done for reward thus create bondage.

The Gita is a forceful call to action but the action in which the right goal (selfless) is pursued by the right means.

Whenever we undertake any action, we always start it because we anticipate a certain result, but the inevitable result is never certain! This is so because, despite one's best efforts, the result depends on various other factors which cannot be computed. Even the time and space in which the action is undertaken cannot be standardised by us, i.e., we can put in our best efforts for an exam but can never predict the

marks we will get, which depends on many an unknown factor, including the mood of the examiner! It is quite logically understandable that the result of the action is just not in our total control; this is all we are asked to remember, and hence if we surrender the fruit of the action at the feet of the Lord, we will be free of the anxiety and fear we regularly feel. This knowledge may drive us to do nothing, for we do not know the outcome; let's just be lazy and do nothing. Thus, we may form an attachment to inaction. Shri Krishna warns us against this very possibility. He therefore emphasises, Do your duty, which is generally clear unless we allow other factors to delude us and at the same time surrender the fruit of action.

This applies to sadhana as well!! (my opinion). Just practice, practice, practice; the result, transcendence, is not in one's control. Here, even less so, for the one who is practicing must be transcended, paradox, eh? That is Shri Krishna for us.

Action without attachment, Asanga:

Sh. 48 Ch.2

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय । सिद्धयसिद्धयोः
समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥४८॥

yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya
siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga uchyate
Arjuna, perform your duties established in Yoga, renouncing
attachment, and be even minded in success and failure;
evenness of mind is called 'Yoga'.

When one learns to enjoy the beauty and grandeur of non-attachment, he acquires the ability to love his duties and comes to experience the offering of the fruits of action as the highest of joys. Remember the example of the lotus, which

arises from the water, but its petals remain untouched, and that of the sun, which shines equally on all, irrespective of what is happening in the world. These are symbols of the yoga of equanimity - Swami Rama.

Arjuna is called first to establish himself in Yoga and renounce attachment, which will then make him even minded. Yoga, Shri Krishna defines as simply Samatvam, i.e., to be equanimous, to be serene. The root of the word yoga is yuja, to join, i.e., union. What might you ask about what unites? The ego unites with the Self, very easily practised if we see that within us there is always a conflict between Manas and Buddhi. Manas is that part of the mind which processes the data and labels experience as pleasant or unpleasant, and it is the Buddhi that decides what action must be performed. When there is a union of both, meaning the Manas loves to do what the Buddhi has decided, e.g., waking up early for sadhana, the Manas presents many an argument against it, and often we give in. Now, if Manas presented it as the most pleasant thing to do, there would be no conflict; thus, to bring Manas in alignment with Buddhi is the goal on the practical level.

When attachment is renounced, the action is done for the sake of the action itself, e.g., an artist paints not for the accolades he may get for his creation but the sheer joy it brings him/her when he is immersed and united with his art. The same may be applied to a surgeon, a musician, a carpenter anyone at all. To be so united with the action is impossible without having total equilibrium or evenness of mind; this happens when there is no fear of failure or anticipation of success. This then is yoga in skilful action, for during that action our ego is out of the way, and we are united with the action!

The moment is all there is, the past and future drop away when one is yoga yukta (enjoined to yoga).

As a yajna, chakra set in motion, environment and man:

Sh.9 Ch.3

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः । तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय
मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥१॥

yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ
tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya mukta-saṅgaḥ samāchara

Man is bound by his own action except when it is performed for the sake of sacrifice. Therefore, O Arjuna, do you efficiently perform your duty, free from attachment, for the sake of sacrifice alone.

The way to do action, as a yajna, an offering without attachment, leads to immense peace. Act in a Dharmaic, ethical way, for it is bad for both society and self if not followed, as it will have a karmic effect later. Even if Preyas (that which is pleasant) is pursued in an ethical manner, it does not bring lasting fulfilment; this should always be borne in mind. Only if action is done without attachment, Shreyas, can there be freedom. Accept the result as Krishna prasad, for prasad cannot be chosen; sometimes one gets prasad one quite dislikes, it has to be accepted!! Cooking, driving, work, all can be made into a Puja, so that whatever comes out of that is prasad. Yajna also means as an offering, so have the arpana buddhi, i.e., to offer it all into this great yajna that life is.

Without Raag/Dvesha-samatvam (equanimity), which is a result of not expecting karmaphala:

Sh. 20 /21 Ch. 3

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः । लोकसंग्रहमेवापि
सम्पश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि ॥20॥ यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥21॥

karmaṇaiva hi sansiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ loka-
saṅgraham evāpi sampāśhyaṅ kartum arhasi yad yad
ācharati śhreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janaḥ sa yat pramāṇaṅ
kurute lokas tad anuvartate

**It is through action without attachment alone that Janaka
and other wise men reached perfection. Having in view the
maintenance of the world order too, you should take to
action.20**

For, whatever a great man does, that very thing other men
also do; whatever standard he sets up, the generality of men
follow the same.

Action with care, loka samgraham, is a word used in the 20th
shloka of Ch. 3, to indicate that the action performed should
be for the good of all. Put samashti (all) before vyashti (one's
self) as a means for Chitta Shuddhi, purification of mind.

Proper role model: One is always a role model to someone or
the other, e.g., your children (when they are children, of
course), what to speak of world leaders and other such
positions. This will protect the masses from imitating the
wrong ideals.

Parasparo devo bhava: having the attitude that Ishwara
dwells in each of us, and since we cannot give back anything
to Ishwara, for all belongs to Him alone, let us give to each
other; this is what one can give back to Ishwara. My Guru's
adesha to me!

The way out of the Chakravayuh that we find ourselves in is this:

It is the Buddhi that has to be pure. To describe this body/mind complex, the example of a chariot is given. The horses are the senses, the reins are the mind, the charioteer is the Buddhi, and the passenger is the Ātma. If one has a charioteer like Shri Krishna, the destination is assured. The charioteer is the Buddhi, and this has to be pure if one has to realise the Self. How is this to be done?

The antahkaran (inner instrument) comprises of four aspects: Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara, and Chitta. The manas is that part which presents the data gathered from the senses and is in a state of doubt; Buddhi is the decisive faculty and leader. Ahamkara is the sense of identification we have with the body and the mind of a separate existence. It also has the ability to appropriate anything to build itself up, e.g., my spouse, my children, my house, my opinion, my likes, my aversions, desires and cravings. Chitta is the storehouse of memories and samskaras over this and previous lifetimes.

This antahkaran (inner instrument) is the instrument given by Prakruti to this Purusha, who is the akarta (non-doer) abhokta (non-enjoyer) to transact in this world. The Purusha alone cannot experience Prakruti in its manifold expression. What we do not know and what we are not taught is who we truly are and how to be stationed (stithapradnya) in that Being and then experience the Prakruti as it is. We get mesmerised by the instrument and believe ourselves to be the body; this is the chakravayuh. Once we know who we are, we can use the instrument as we may wield a stethoscope or pen.

To summarise, there are five ways by which this Buddhi can be purified, inspired and enlightened to practise Karma (Buddhi) Yoga skilfully:

1. Samatvam, equanimity, that aspect which is capable of handling both sukha and dukkha, honour and dishonour, and not be perturbed. Mark that even in sukha, i.e., happiness experienced in sense objects, the mind is not excited, craving for more.
2. Svadharma, the Buddhi that knows what right conduct is and what is not, it should act according to its dharma which means to be compassionate, erudite like a Brahmin ought to be, or may be brave, generous like a Kshatriya, or have a sense of business like the Vaishya or may be like the Sudra who has a great sense of service. Whatever is one's innate Dharma, one should follow that alone.
3. Samarpan, every thought, word, and action dedicated to Shri Krishna. Dedicate every thought, for before one speaks, one thinks or at least should think. Before one acts, one believes or at least should think. So when you dedicate the thought to the Beloved, then duality does not touch you, you cannot do anything wrong or bad or sinful because you have paused. That allows the Buddhi to review. Nowadays, even on the cricket field, one can ask for a review; you get 10 seconds for it! The outcome then matters not, for we have given the very thought over to the Lord, so whatever accrues can only be His.
4. Asangha is without attachment. We become possessive and attached to things we like, and also develop the opposite, i.e., aversion for what we dislike. If samarpan has been done, then it does not matter even if asangha takes time. Remembering the Lord all the time will develop attachment to Him, and all these likes and dislikes, cravings and aversions slowly but surely fall away.

5. Prasaad. When an action is done without fear, anxiety or apprehension, what will the mind be like? Placid, calm and cheerful for the outcome is of no concern, the action is done without attachment so no anticipation of blame or praise, the fear of losing or the excitement of gaining both are absent, an even keel is achieved and the ship of life floats on the sea of a calm mind so blissful, the peace that passeth all understanding. This is more an effect than a cause or practice for Buddhi-Karma yoga.

So, what is Krupana? The miserable situation that we all end up in, craving for sense objects, although endowed with the source of perennial Anand. The term really signifies how pathetic this attitude is, we come with the possibility of BEING and leave by BECOMING this petty EGO. No, no, no, not any, any longer, just surrender this blighted imposter, and Grace shall flood our Antahkaran!

When we practice this non-krupana attitude, we will attain Chittaprasadanam (tranquil and pleasant mind), our Buddhi will become sthir (stable) and sukshma (subtle), attaining equanimity, and only then can we get stabilised in the Truth, knowing what the world is and what we are.

King Janaka performed his duties as an Emperor while being nonattached, as he had only the well-being of others at heart and desired nothing for himself. He is cited as an example of ultimate equanimity achieved by one who is awareness itself.

While performing any role, the actor, even when he identifies with the role and does a great job, knows that he is not the role! Imagine if Karma would accrue to a murderer in a movie! Thus, no Karma can ever accrue to such a one who has

dissociated with the limited identity. To achieve this clear understanding, the easiest method, as propounded by Bhagwan Sri Krishna, is to relinquish the fruit of action, which then cuts asunder the vicious circle of Karma – Fruit - More Karma! As one who does action for the sake of fame, for example, and gets it, gets addicted to that sensation of being applauded and repeats further karma with the hope of a similar result. Yet one can perform the role, surrendering the fruit of the action, observing internally our sensations and developing a space that is liberating, then no Karma can ever accrue. When one learns this trick, it is addictive, and it becomes a source of perennial joy with no dependence on any external factor.

It is a well-known fact that in life, we have role models and icons. If our role model suddenly renounces and walks away into the forest, it would lead to total chaos amongst the masses. They would be confused and lost. It is therefore necessary for Arjuna to continue to do his duty, for otherwise he would be the cause of much confusion in his country. Everyone looked up to him as a great warrior; he only had to continue to perform his duty without attachment, and then no 'karma' would accrue to him. Accordingly, he would also lead his people on the right path. Kindly recall Arjuna's lamenting that he would be responsible for the utter destruction of society by warring.

Shri Krishna has given the example of King Janaka, and then he also gives his example, saying he has nothing whatsoever to attain in all the three worlds, but despite it all, He acts, for if He did not, the whole populace would go to ruin. It is essential that we perform our duty for the sake of the well-being of all. This, we have seen, is the most significant sign of a self-

realised being. Their work is an expression of their compassion and wisdom.

In daily life, we see that in a family, the children learn the words most frequently used by their parents. They act based on what they see, not what is preached to them. In childhood, they idolise their parents, and it is vital that the right values are instilled to ensure that the young move in the right direction. Otherwise, in this world of bombardment by media and peer pressure, it is very easy to go from desire to desire without any fulfilment, and all one ends up having is restlessness.

Thus, Karma Yoga is the path a householder and so-called man of the world should follow, if he truly wants to be 'in the world but not of it.'

Transform all daily activities into spiritual practice following the tenets given above. However, take care not to unsettle the mind of the masses; the average person's attitude, if ethical and Dharmaic, should be simply accepted as is.

The Bhagavad Gita is not a treatise; it is a manual of daily life. This krupana is durenahyavaram, i.e., by far the most inferior attitude, so strive for realisation and even if we do not attain it in this lifetime, Shri Krishna in the 6th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, has assured us that we will start again in the next lifetime exactly where we left off, and never come to grief.

Jnāna Yoga

The followers of Advaita Vedanta and Shankaracharya ardently believe that Moksha, i.e., liberation, is not the result of action, for every action results in a fruit. Therefore, good action will get you good fruit, but that is as likely to bind you as bad action, “Good–good, bad-bad and none escapes the law”, as said by Swami Vivekananda. He has also noted that chains of gold nonetheless bind, even as those of iron. What then is the answer? The cause of bondage is ignorance of our true nature; therefore, the only way is Knowledge. Man suffers from five Kleshas, and to gain knowledge, one must necessarily use the Chatustaya: i.e., Four Pillars:

1. **Viveka:** Discrimination between what is Real and Unreal, what is Self and Non self, what is Pure and Impure, what is Timeless and Timebound, what is changeless and ever changing, what is formless and with form.
2. **Vairagya:** Dispassion, better explained as non-attachment. Earlier, Asanga explained healthy detachment; this is somewhat similar but even more profound. Once one is convinced of the evanescent nature of the happiness one gets in this world, which is ever-changing and doomed, one automatically seeks elsewhere. Renunciation or dispassion is effortless; one does not have to don the ochre robe. A story of Mulla Nasruddin illustrates this well. This wise man of Turkey was found looking for something under a streetlamp in the dead of night. A passerby asked him what he was looking for. Mulla replied that he was looking for his house key. The passerby asked, where does he think he might have lost it? “Well,” answered the Mulla, “I don’t know.” “Then, why are you searching here?” said the passerby. “Because there is light

here,” he replied. Such is our predicament, we have lost the key to a perennial source of joy and keep looking for it in the world, for there is light here, this is all we know. Once we have the discretion, the only thing that comes in our way is our habit pattern, and therefore all these pillars of knowledge.

3. **Shatsampati:** The six kinds of wealth.
 - a. Shama: inner silence and calmness,
 - b. Dama: self- control,
 - c. Uparati: withdrawal from sense objects, indifference to them,
 - d. Titiksha: as defined by Shankara, the bearing of all afflictions without caring to redress them and being free of anxiety or lament on their score.

सहनं सर्वदुःखानामप्रतीकारपूर्वकम् । चिन्ताविलापरहितं सा
तितिक्षा निगद्यते ॥ 24 ॥

**sahanam sarva-dukhanam apratikara-purvakam. cinta-
vilapa-rahitam sa titikshhaa nigadyate - vivekchudamani.**

- e. Shraddha: faith and inner conviction. This path has no applicable belief system; even the Shraddha, which is ordinarily translated as faith, is not about faith in any dogma or deity; it is about a firm conviction in one’s understanding. It forms the basis for experiment and experience.
- f. Samadhana: Focus

4. **Mumukshatva:** Intense desire for liberation. One generally has curiosity, Jigyasa, which is what the search begins with, but that is not enough for the preceding three pillars to be developed. The desire must be intense, well expressed in the word, vyakulta, a certain restlessness to attain. Ramkrishna Paramhansa always stressed this sentiment: if it is sincere, the

Guru, God, Universe, whatever one may like to address the divine force as, will manifest and show the way. Shri Ramkrishna used to say, Cry out for the Lord with all your heart, and you are bound to experience Him. Even though this sounds more like a Bhakti yoga tenet, it applies to all paths, since being earnest requires an intensity of purpose.

The three modalities used are:

Shruti: Mainly the Upanishads and the guidance of a Realised Master. Shruti means that which was heard; the ancient sages listened to this knowledge in their meditations. These scriptures are revelations within and therefore have the power to take you in, to explore the heretofore unknown territory. They give you the map and guide you along the territory as well.

Yukti: Your power of reason, the intellect, the Buddhi has to be constantly used to check in, am I hallucinating? If these are experiences, what am I? The Nirvana Shatakam of Shri Shankaracharya is a classic and must be learnt thoroughly for those on Jnāna marga.

Anubhava: Experience, when one is never convinced enough through wordy knowledge. If one keeps on hammering into a child that the fire is hot, he may stay away from it for a while, but once he gets the experience that it can burn, no one needs to tell him. There is no better convincer than experience; it must become a living truth.

So, in summary so far:

- Where does ignorance reside?
- ◆ In the intellect

- How can it be removed?
- ◆ With knowledge

- How can Knowledge be attained?
- ◆ Pramanas (means to knowledge) are the six given above, and
 - Study of Scriptures: Shruti
 - Razor sharp reasoning: Yukti
 - Experience: Anubhava

- How does one get Anubhava?
- ◆ Purification of the intellect

- How does one purify one's intellect?
- ◆ Buddhi Yoga/ Bhakti
- ◆ Once the Buddhi is purified, it becomes a polished mirror; can it then avoid reflecting the Truth?

- The question is, can we ever purify the Buddhi/intellect thoroughly?
- ◆ Through Bhagavad Krupa only.

- No prayâs, no effort can take you there, why? Because the Karta (doer) must die!
- Reflect on the paradox, and an anubhavâ may happen.

So, then what is the practice?

Shravana: Simply means to listen. Listen, not just hear. Listen to what? And whom? Listen to the shastras, scriptures which expound the Truth by a Brahmavidya Nishthavan Guru, by the Guru who is a self-realised master established in Truth.

Manana: Reflection, introspection, on what has been said. Trying to absorb, imbibe the instructions so that it does not remain a dry philosophy but consumes one, and turns into an obsession for Truth.

Nidhidhyāsa: Meditate on the knowledge, Neti. Neti; I cannot be the body because it is an object that I can sense and perceive; I cannot be the mind, desires, or emotions, for similarly, I can feel and perceive them. This means they are an object, but I am the subject; then what am I?

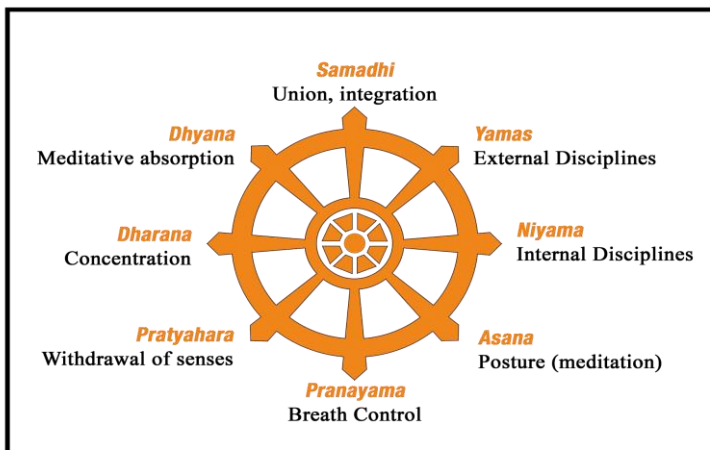
The above is only a sketch of what Jnāna yoga pertains to. The reader is referred to Swami Vivekananda's book on Jnāna Yoga.

Rāja Yoga

It is the path closest to the Sāṃkhya philosophy and provides a practice for attaining the knowledge of Purusha, Pure Consciousness, our true nature, and thus get liberated from suffering. It, however, unlike Sāṃkhya, admits the concept of Ishwara, the Supreme Being to whom one may pray. The path is typically called Patanjali Yoga because it was the sage Patanjali who described it systematically and termed it Ashtanga Yoga. Ashtanga simply means eight limbs. The eight limbs are not to be considered as steps on a ladder. They can all be practised simultaneously and are indeed meant to be so.

The Ashtanga yoga of Patanjali is a masterpiece in psychology, for it lays the foundation for a science of the mind. It addresses all three aspects of human well-being: the physical, the psychological, and the spiritual! Vivekananda writes in his characteristic humorous style, "Every science must have its method of investigation. If you want to become an

astronomer and sit down and cry, “Astronomy! Astronomy!”, it will never come to you. The same with chemistry. A certain method must be followed. The end is the knowledge of the Self, the Ātman. Patanjali says that the human mind is usually in one of five general states: forgetful (mūḍha), wandering (kshipta), occasionally steady or distracted (vikshipta), one-pointed (ekāgra) and restrained (niruddha). It is the last two states of mind that are essential for the realisation of the ātman.



The highest state of mind, according to Patanjali, is the state of Samādhi, or perfect understanding. The last stage is characterised by the fact that there is no thought wave in the mind; it is perfectly still and supremely aware of itself. Thus, it is an identity with the state of Brahman described in the Upanishads.

“The concentration is achieved through faith, energy, re-collectedness, absorption and illumination.”

Swami Prabhavananda in Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras.

We begin with an emphasis on practice as explained to Arjuna by Shri Krishna in verse 35 of Chapter 6 of the Bhagavad Gita, Abhyāsa and Vairāgya. Abhyāsa is repeated effort, and once the discipline is followed, Vairāgya, dispassion, happens; Vairagya is easily attained when one contemplates the defects of gratifying desires for seen and unseen pleasures- Drushta /adrushta ishta bhogeshu dosha darshanam. E.g., Dining at an expensive restaurant comes with a price, but sometimes the food you expect to be delicious turns out to be mediocre. And, the experience ends too quickly!

As the various steps are a preparation to meditation and samadhi, they have both an external and internal component and are therefore to be practised in thought, word and deed.

a. **Yama:** restraints, the don’ts. These embody the ethical principles derived exclusively to concentrate the mind - this is the first limb:

- i. Non-injury (ahimsa)
- ii. Truthfulness (satya) is also how we relate to ourselves - are we true to ourselves?
- iii. Non-stealing (asteya)
- iv. Celibacy (brahmachārya)
- v. Non-possession (aparigraha). It refers to the tendency of the mind to be greedy, to be grasping or to extend the “tentacles of selfishness” outward. It also applies to our tenacious grip on our thoughts and feelings. Often, we hold on to a dogma or a creed and seek comfort from it. Aparigraha implies non-attachment

as an ideal amplified in the Gita. Thus, we see that mastery even of the first step of this yoga will make one into a saint.

b. Niyamas, the ‘dos’, observances, the second limb, are also five:

- i. Cleanliness (saucha),
- ii. Contentment (santosha),
- iii. Austerity (tapas),
- iv. Study (svādhyāya) and
- v. Devotion to Isvara (Isvara pranidhāna) means the awareness of the “River of Teaching” flowing since time immemorial, as a background thought, and total surrender to Ishvara.

c. Āsanā (posture) is the third rung, basically to enable one to sit for a prolonged period without discomfort and ensure physical wellbeing. If combined with an internal awareness, it leads to a subtle dissociation from the body as self-identification. Proper practice keeps the spinal column straight and prevents sluggishness of the mind, which tends to be engulfed by tamo guna if we slouch. When one is not feeling that good, a brisk ten-minute walk is often a great help in lifting the spirits. Such physical techniques are part of Rāja yoga and come under the heading of āsanā and prānayāma.

d. Prānayāma (regulation of breathing): the fourth limb to the top! Over the millennia, these two steps, āsanā and Prānayam, have been expanded upon by the yogis into a series of stretching and breathing exercises. These disciplines were then encoded as hatha yoga. In Patanjali’s yoga sutras, they form a means for the mind to reach higher levels of awareness.

e. Pratyāhara (restraint of the sense organs). We need to withdraw our senses from their objects as a prerequisite to concentrating the mind, making it one-pointed, which is the next step. Essentially, what is being referred to is the outgoing tendency of the mind, and this must be restrained. For example, when we sit down to do some creative work, we find we are unable to start. This is just restlessness of the mind, and the best way to eliminate it is simply to begin the work at hand and withdraw from the distractions. Through effort, the restlessness disappears. The essence of pratyāhara is not to identify with the thought wave as soon as it rises, but to watch it.

f. Dhāraṇa (concentration) to make the monkey mind ekāgra, i.e., one-pointed and focused on a single object, such as the breath or mantra, or by synchronising both. Vivekananda describes the restless mind as follows: “It has been compared to the maddened monkey. There was a monkey, restless by his own nature, as all monkeys are. As if that were not enough, someone made him drink wine freely, so that he became still more restless. Then a scorpion stung him. When a man is stung by a scorpion, he jumps about for a whole day; so, the poor monkey found his condition worse than ever. To complete his misery, a demon entered him. What language can describe the uncontrollable restlessness of that monkey? The human mind is like that monkey, incessantly active by its own nature; then it becomes drunk with the wine of desire, thus increasing its turbulence. After desire takes possession, comes the sting of the scorpion of jealousy at the success of others, and last of all, the demon of pride enters the mind, making it think itself of all importance. How hard to control such a mind!” Even Shri Krishna agrees that the mind

is by nature restless, but by practice and dispassion, it can be brought under control. A practical suggestion to change the course the mind might take when stung by the scorpion of anger, attachment, jealousy and the like, is by offering it a diversion into some pleasant event such as kissing an infant or meeting a friend, when the opposite is experienced, an immediate change overcomes the mind, and it becomes amenable to the right suggestions. Dhāraṇa is holding the mind and increasing the stamina for sustained concentration.

Dhyān (meditation) is an unbroken flow of the mantra, breath awareness or idea one may have held during dhāraṇa. The dharana, sustained in an unbroken flow, is what is meant by dhyāna.

g. Samādhi is the ultimate state of transcendence possible for the mind (super consciousness). All spiritual personalities of history have attained this state of mind, which, once attained, one knows that he or she is one with Brahman and forms the substratum of the Universe; there is no sense of separation, it is the state of total absorption in the Supreme.

All this exercise was undertaken to understand thoroughly just the one word, Samyama, used by Bhagwan in the 14th verse of the 6th discourse of the Bhagavad Gita. So, samyama comprises dhāraṇa, dhyāna, and samadhi, all three together. This process has been compared to the trajectory of a three-stage rocket, where the lower stages drop off at an appropriate time so that the rocket can be propelled into higher reaches of space. Similarly, concentration merges into meditation, which finally culminates in Samadhi.

Bhakti Yoga

Having seen the glorious Vishvarup of Shri Krishna in the Bhagvad Gita, it is quite natural that Arjuna would want to worship the Lord with form, being overwhelmed with devotion. Now he has been listening intently to Shri Krishna expound Brahman, the impersonal eternal Truth that forms the substratum of the Universe. The Lord has initiated him into the knowledge of both the Akshara Brahman (Indestructible Pure awareness) as well as Ishvara, the Supreme Being, the Universe being the body of the Lord, so very distant is His expanse and yet so intimately near as to be within oneself! In the Guru Gita, there is a verse which expresses this:

**तदेजति तन्नैजति, तद्दूरे तत्समीपके ।
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य, तद्दु सर्वस्य बाह्यतः ॥62॥**
**Tadejati tanneijati, tad-doore tat-sameepake
Tadantarasya sarvasya, tadu sarvasya bahyaat**
**He (the Guru) moves and moves not; he is far as well as
near, inside as well as outside everything.**

Now, therefore, Arjuna would like to know which of the paths of worship is superior: is the worship of the Lord with a form superior to the worship of the one without form. This doubt arises in the heart of Arjuna because from the beginning of the second discourse right up to the tenth which talks about the divine glories, Shri Krishna has taught the worship of the Supreme Self, the Imperishable (Akshara) Brahman, devoid of all upadhis (conditions) and here and there Shri Krishna has taught the worship of the Lord as Ishvara, the Lord of the Universe, associated with the upadhi (condition) of that energy (satva) which has the power of carrying on all evolutionary process, and of knowing everything. In the

eleventh discourse, Shri Krishna has even shown Arjuna the Primal Form as Ishvara, manifesting as the whole Universe. Further, Shri Krishna exhorts Arjuna to perform all work for the sake of the Lord alone, to be nimitta mātra (an instrument alone) and so on.

This discourse addresses this doubt, and although Shri Krishna says right at the beginning that it is easier for the embodied being to worship a form than to imagine an unmanifest underlying imperishable reality, when he goes on to qualify what that Bhakti should be like, it does not seem quite so easy after all!

Sh. 1 ch.12

अर्जुन उवाच । एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते । ये
चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः ॥१॥

arjuna uvācha evaṁ satata-yuktā ye bhaktās tvāṁ
paryupāsate te chāpy akṣharam avyaktāṁ teṣhām ke yoga-
vittamāḥ

Arjuna said: The devotees exclusively and constantly devoted to You in the manner stated just earlier, adore You as possessed of form and attributes, and those who adore as the Supreme Reality only the indestructible unmanifest Brahma (Truth, Knowledge and Bliss solidified) of these two types of worshippers, who are the best knowers of Yoga?

As we imbibe the teachings of the Lord through the discourses, a deep reverence arises for the personal aspect of the Divine and one longs to worship this Lord who is the embodiment of Brahman! The Guru Gita begins with Ma Parvati, the symbol of purity, innocence and devotion, humbly asking Shiva, the epitome of Knowledge and Truth (Satchidanand), “*Kena margena bho swamin dehi brahmamayo bhavet?*” By what

path can an embodied being become one with Brahman? The love Arjuna must feel after the Vishwaroop Darshan is hard to put into words, and he now only longs to be united with the Lord. This indeed is the ultimate possibility, by trusting only our senses (mind included) and accepting them as the only means of Knowledge is much like having a marvellous body with infinite possibilities and using only a little finger to go through life! The reason given for such a petty attitude is that that is all I know.

Even science has been trying to reach the Unity of existence. Einstein, when asked how he discovered relativity, simply answered, "By questioning an established axiom." Thus, we need to question the axiom that the physical is all there is! As Spinoza has put it, "the finite rests on the bosom of the Infinite", don't we want to explore? When we address mundane difficulties, even of health, by addressing only their physical basis, we miss the point, e.g., bariatric surgery for overeating. Eknath says, we are not what our DNA rolls out. One can change the expression of our DNA, the key being meditation. Bruce Lipton, a cell biologist, is worth reading. He explains epigenetics, a science which proves we are not victims of our genes.

One naturally wonders, while understanding that indeed all of this is Brahman, including me, how may I relate to this most Divine revelation? I just want to gape in awe and stare at his glorious form, must I instead withdraw and try to experience the formless Reality?

**श्रीभगवानुवाच । मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥२॥**

**Shrī-bhagavān uvācha: mayyāveśhya mano ye mām nitya-
yuktā upāsate shraddhayā parayopetās te me yuktatamā
matāḥ**

**Shri Bhagwan said: I consider them to be the best yogis who
are endowed with supreme faith and ever united through
meditation with Me, Worship Me with their mind centred
on Me.**

Most people cannot fathom the idea of meditation on an indestructible impersonal substratum beyond time and space, Brahman as the underlying reality, is Shri Krishna's immediate response.

Those devotees who fix their minds on Me in the Universal Form, and worship Me as the Supreme Lord, free from the umam (parblindness, lacking in vision, insight, understanding) of attachment, contemplate Me steadfastly endowed with supreme faith; these are the best yogins. Indeed, they pass their days and nights in incessant thought of Me; it is therefore proper to speak of them as the best ⁴yogins.

The worshippers of Akshara also come to Me alone, ever contemplating the Imperishable, Unthinkable, Indefinable, Unmanifest, Immutable, and Eternal, having restrained all their senses, always equanimous, serving all evenly.

Ch. 12. Shlokas 3 - 4: because the Akshara is unmanifest. He is not accessible to words and cannot, therefore, be defined. He is unmanifest to any of the organs of knowledge. They contemplate the Imperishable everywhere, all around. Contemplation (Upasana) consists in

⁴ From Commentary on Bhagavad Gita by Shankara

approaching the object of worship by way of meditating according to the teaching (shastra) and dwelling for a long time steadily in the same thought (continuous), like a ribbon of oil descending. The Imperishable is qualified thus: He is omnipresent, pervading all like the Akaash, He is unthinkable, because He is unmanifest. Whatever is visible to the senses can be thought of by the mind also, but the Akshara is invisible and is therefore unthinkable. He is unchangeable, Kutastha. Thus, it means He who is seated in Maya as its witness. (These are defined as tatastha lakshana, i.e. the attribute less cannot be defined; therefore, it is indicated only)⁵.

The goal of Akshara is very hard for the embodied to reach for those who are attached to their bodies, because of the necessity to give up this attachment. Their trouble is therefore greater. Therefore, Salvation by worship of Ishvara is easier.

Sh. 6/7 Ch. 12

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः । अनन्येनैव योगेन मां
ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥6॥

Shloka 7 Ch12

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् । भवामि नचिरात्पार्थ
मय्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥7॥

ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sannyasya mat-parāḥ
ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate
teṣhām ahaṁ samuddhartā mṛityu-samsāra-sāgarāt
bhavāmi na chirāt pārtha mayy āveśhita-chetasām

On the other hand, those depending exclusively on Me, and surrendering all actions to Me, worship Me (God with attributes), constantly meditating on Me with single minded

⁵ From Commentary on Bhagavad Gita by Shankara

devotion, them, Arjuna I speedily deliver from the ocean of birth and death, their minds being fixed on Me.

Swami Rama has summarised as follows: Sri Krishna integrates the paths of devotion and knowledge. Seeing Arjuna's conflict regarding Saguna and Nirguna practices, Sri Krishna states:

- The Lord is the one single and highest goal of life.
- Contemplate and meditate upon the one truth without a second.
- Concentration of the mind should not be on any object other than the Lord.
- The entire sadhana of the aspirant is to be directed to the Lord alone.
- All the faculties of the mind, including buddhi, should be directed toward the Lord alone.
- Dedicate all your actions and the fruits thereof to the Lord alone.
- Be a yogi, identify yourself with your essential nature instead of with the world.

When the aspirant realises his essential nature and performs his duties skilfully, he remains free from attachment and is liberated. In modern times, our identity is itself defined as name, gender, inheritance, education, etc., which leads us to believe in our accumulations as self. This false identification needs to be merged at the feet and into the Lord for liberation through the path of Bhakti.

Having different relationships is the very nature of man. In Bharat, it is a tradition to call an elderly lady as Mataji (mother), a much younger man as beta (son) and so on, as these are terms of endearment. Similarly, one can establish a

relationship with the Lord as Dasya- servant of the Lord, Sakhya, the Lord as one's most intimate friend, Vātsalya, as though the Lord is your child. You protect and nurture Him, and even as though He is your lover, Madhurya Bhava and keep whispering 'sweet nothings' to Him. The devotee may also adopt the Shanta bhava (feeling), i.e., he remains peaceful and joyful in remembrance of the Lord.

Bhakti in summary

- I. Bhakti is the path of devotion. Without devotion, even Jnāna cannot be persisted with.
- II. In this Vyavāharika Sat, Ishvara exists exactly to the degree of reality that you exist. So, if you believe you are this small, limited identity in the form of body/mind, most certainly Ishvara exists as the divine, infinite, all-pervading, omnipotent Being. He/she exists in the form you choose. All forms are pertinent and possible as Ishvara is Infinite. You may adopt any Bhava for adoring the Lord.
- III. Ishvara is worshipped by four different categories of people: the Ārta or afflicted, the Arthati or one desirous of wealth, the Jigyasu or curious to know the truth, and the Jnani who knows the Truth. None of the categories is to be decried because, at the very least, they believe in a higher entity. As is well known, every karma has a result, and so there is no denying that prayer works; it has to. The result of any action, as we know, is not in our hands, and so the result of prayer may not be what you expect, e.g. the patient on the ventilator may pass despite prayer but will get sadgati, because of prayer. So, prayer has immense value, exactly proportionate to the intensity and shraddha. There is no doubt about this. We all begin as Ārtas / Artharthis, as we are convinced, we cannot achieve our desires by our own might. There is a minor flaw in this attitude, which can be seen with Jnāna, that if Isvara is all-knowing, He

should surely know what is best for me, so is there a need to tell Him? All one should pray for is continued shraddhā and courage to face the situation, and that is sure to come. The Jigyasu is one who might have achieved all he wanted in this world or might be the one who recognises the futility of samsara through previous life's samskaras and embarks on a wondrous journey to discover Isvara, indeed to discover one's Self. The Jnani is one who knows the Truth and identifies Ishvara as his very own Self; there being no separation, only love abides. In the other three, there is Ishvara and me. Therefore, love cannot be total, for disappointment and betrayal can happen.

IV.To think that Bhakti is easy to practice, as one can remember the Lord in every action and offer it to Him, is a fallacy because we see so many Bhaktas running after worldly pleasures while chanting Krishnārpanamastu all the time. They delude themselves that this indeed is the path. Ch. 12 Bhagavad Gita highlights the qualities of a true Bhakta, which may be summarised: Ananya (no other), Nirantar (uninterrupted) and Nishkām (without expectation). Is that even possible? Yes, after Jnāna, once one knows one's true nature, the search ends and desire fails to delude.

V.Jnāna may lead to a false sense of Knowledge and an increase in Ego with the delusion that one knows.

VI.To love anyone, one has to know them. True Knowledge results in unquestioned devotion.

VII.Navavidha Bhakti: Nine types, or shall we say limbs of Bhakti, are:

**श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥**

श्रवण (परीक्षित), कीर्तन (शुकदेव), स्मरण (प्रह्लाद), पादसेवन (लक्ष्मी), अर्चन (पृथुराजा), वंदन (अक्रूर), दास्य (हनुमान), सख्य (अर्जुन) और आत्मनिवेदन (बलि राजा)

1. Shravanam: Listening to the names of and stories about God
2. Keertanam: Chanting or singing about God
3. Smaranam: Remembering God throughout the day
4. Paada sevanam: Serving God willingly
5. Archanam: Worshipping God
6. Vandanam: Praising God selflessly and with total submission
7. Dāsyam: Serving God
8. Sākhyaṃ: Developing a friendship with God
9. Ātma Nivedanam: Surrendering oneself to God; Self-realisation or samadhi

Some sources say that these are nine different ways of showing loving devotion to God, any one of which the yogi can choose to follow. Other sources describe navavidha bhakti as a step-by-step path that leads to moksha.

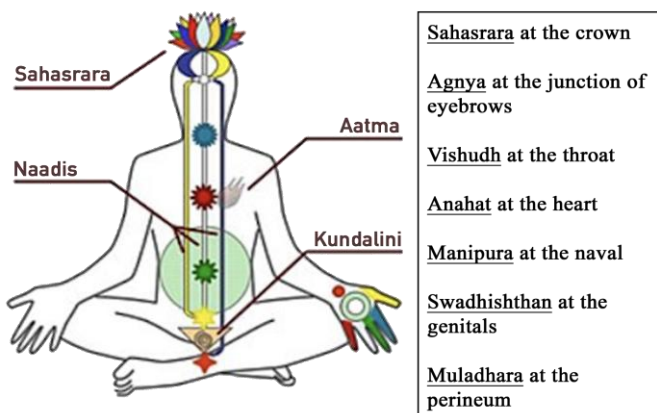
Kundalini Yoga/Siddha Yoga

Kundalini yoga is a school of yoga that is influenced by Shaktism and Tantra schools of Hinduism. It derives its name through a focus on awakening Kundalini energy through regular practice of mantra, tantra, yantra, yoga and meditation. Kundalini is etymologically derived from the word, kundela: a coiled rope, it is like a three-and-a-half times coiled

serpent at the base of the spine. This serpent power is latent or considered asleep in most human beings.

Kundalini yoga is sometimes considered a dangerous form of yoga because of the involvement of subtle energies, unless practised under the guidance of a living master.

The book “Yoga: Kundalini Upanishad” was composed sometime after the Yoga sutras of Patanjali and deals with yogic concepts and methods taught by Siddha Yogi teachers such as Gorakshanath, an 11th-century Yogi. (Banerjea)



The coiled serpent power at the base of the spine, Kundalini Shakti, when awakened, passes through the well-known seven chakras to awaken them. The Shakti (power) reaches the Sahasrara Chakra at the top of the head, the vertex, and meets Shiva, who dwells there. This leads to Self-Realisation and ultimate liberation. Each of these Chakras has a special function and power; the reader is referred to books on the subject, as this forms a science beyond the scope of this book.

Siddha Yoga is what Swami Muktananda (1908-1982) called the path of Kundalini Yoga, for only a Siddha can awaken the latent power coiled in the base of every human spine. The author has been initiated by Swami Muktananda and has experiential knowledge of the Siddha tradition by the Grace of Baba. It is said that Kundalini Shakti lies coiled like a serpent at the base of the spine, and as it rises it energises the seven chakras. The teachings are drawn mainly from Kashmir Shaivism and Vedanta, the Bhagvad Gita and poet saints. Muktananda regarded the path he learned from his Guru Swami Nityananda as a perfect path because it embraced all of the traditional yogas: Bhakti, Jnāna, Rāja and Karma Yogas.

The Siddha Yoga Dham Association was established by Swami Mukatanada in 1975, at Ganeshpuri. The two leading ashrams are Gurudev Siddha Peeth in Ganeshpuri, India, and Shree Muktananda Ashram in New York State, USA, established by his successor Gurumayi. Ashrams and Centres are established the world over, and they provide places to learn and practice Siddha yoga.

Shaktipat is a central element of Siddha Yoga. Diksha, initiation by descent of divine power, through which a seeker's Kundalini Shakti is awakened. Swami Muktananda always said, *“sadhak to mein bana dunga, siddha apne aap bananaa hai. I will make you a seeker of Truth, but to accomplish that, you must practice and walk the path yourself.”* The Guru takes you by the hand, puts you on the path, but you must walk.

Pathless Path

In recent times, we have many Gurus, all genuine, who show the way out of suffering with no prerequisites or rules and regulations or the practices which make you eligible to be liberated. It is a direct path that points to who you are in essence. It is a direct pointing to your essential nature, while accepting this dynamic aspect of worldly experience.

The reader is referred to Shri Mooji, Rupert Spira, and Francis Lucille. To get a taste of the practical aspect and follow a course, the reader should take the 3D (day) POK programme of Tarun Pradhan, which gives you an instant glimpse and undisputable rationale of your essential nature. This path is called: POK- Path of Knowledge. Tarun Pradhan has a series of 72 videos for practice, all free on YouTube. He believes KNOWLEDGE must be dispensed FREE.

Vipassana

Guru Goenka brought the path of the Buddha to Bharat from Myanmar in 1969. It is a path based on Theravada Buddhism. It is very well known and is mentioned here for the sake of completeness. It requires no description. The author has done the course twice, directly with Guru Goenka and can say with absolute certainty that no one, just no one who has ever completed the course, can go without benefit.

Thank You Yoga

Several years of contemplation and the Grace of the living Masters in this life have led to an in-depth and intuitive understanding of the easiest pathway to a contented and happy life. As a child, my father was an example of continuous gratitude. He taught us how to say thank you, how to

appreciate any little help one ever got, even if we were given a glass of water. He always thanked the labour class and acknowledged their help in making our lives comfortable, never once ignoring them. My mother often remarked, “Shirin, you are a grateful child,” when I thanked her, especially when I was sick. All these samskaras (now we know the meaning of this word) are contributing to this understanding coming home so clearly.

As I mentioned earlier, gratitude brings abundance. I have even experienced unpleasant situations reversed, but that is not why or for what it should be practised. It is to be practised for happiness and contentment in daily life, and most importantly, to do away with strife and struggle, which we experience so unnecessarily.

If we have an attitude of gratitude and acceptance for every event that happens in our lives, we are both content and humble at the same time. Contentment does not mean complacency or lack of ambition. Contentment and acceptance mean a healthy detachment from the outcome of one’s effort towards any goal. In case it is achieved, we say thank you for all the forces that combined to make it happen. This is what humility is all about. If it does not occur, we say thank you, for our meagre intellect cannot fathom the grand design, which leads to a state free from regret and disappointment.

If someone says something hurtful to you, genuinely say Thank you. Your response to this is likely to be “Oh come on; I am not a saint!” However, with a bit of reflection, one comes to the following understanding: if what was said was indeed true, you have an opportunity to change; if it was not, you have the

power to let it go. Both responses (not reactions) enable you to separate yourself from the emotions that cloud the mind. A subtle change starts to appear in your maturing mind, 'Oh, not only do I have control over my emotions, but I also realise if indeed this is so, I am separate from my mind and emotions!' This indeed is the Truth: the reason one swings like a pendulum is because we are governed by Rāga (attraction) and Dvesha (aversion), the two stumbling blocks on the path to happiness.

The way to practice this Yoga is simple; As you wake up, say thank you, God, I am still alive to see another day. Did you know that one million people die every day on this planet? As the day proceeds, mentally make note of all the things and people and events for which you could be grateful, the food, the shelter, the weather, health, the job, name it, and you will notice 'Boy! Yes, I have so much.' Suppose you do not like any of the items mentioned and feel no gratitude for the job, food, people, relationships, say thank you, you have an opportunity to wake up from the nightmare of existence and search for the light of Knowledge that will dispel the darkness of ignorance. In short, a Guru. Ask yourself what is more likely to wake a person: a pleasant dream or a nightmare?

If you are depressed, use "Thank you" as a mantra, see the change it will bring about. The universe only echoes your thoughts, emotions and convictions. It will create situations for which you are indeed grateful; but for this to happen, you must be genuine, sincere and investigate, ask yourself, can I be grateful?

When one is healthy, say 'thank you' for you can achieve what you have set out to do. You can go for a holiday, try for that

job, and even date a nice girl/boy. If you are sick, say ‘thank you’; your body is signalling you to take rest, and when you say thank you, you heal faster. If there is an incurable illness and much suffering, say thank you, this too shall pass and turn to the source of true joy, which will wake you out of this nightmare. We live in an age where connectivity is at your fingertips; you don’t have to go anywhere to find guidance in your spiritual, physical, or psychological suffering. Be thankful even for that! There is never, and I repeat never, a moment when one cannot say thank you.

As one stays steadfast in the practice, the intuitive understanding develops that all happenings in life are not in one’s absolute control, and they keep changing sometimes rapidly, sometimes slowly, sometimes drastically, sometimes ever so marginally, much like a movie does. We even remark that it was a slow movie, and at other times we say that was an action-packed movie, well, so is life! So, what should we say? Thank you.

A 64-year-old lady comes and says, ‘There’s just too much happening in my life.’ One would have thought, it is retirement age, life should have quietened down at last, finding time to come home (real home). But no, this is not the case in her life. It’s all topsy-turvy. Her son, 39 years of age, has a partner whom he can neither leave nor hold on to. Both the girl and he are in the same situation; she too wants to be with him. Still, she does not want to give up her desire to study in the US. For her, it’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. As if this is not enough for the 64-year-old, her husband has just decided to rent their beautiful bungalow with eight bedrooms in a posh locality and move to Mumbai, where their daughter, who

is married to an industrialist, resides, and he would rather be near her.

Guess what my advice was? No prizes for the guess. It was, say “THANK YOU!” First, it is not a health issue, nor is it a financial issue; change is the spice of life. It would be so dull if nothing was happening in one’s life. Don’t you think? Her face suddenly relaxed, and all seemed well. (The secret is, you can do nothing about it, so let go, simply another word for thank you!). The charm of life is that it keeps changing, and so variegated are the hues that we get totally hypnotised. Now that we know this is a movie, we can enjoy every scene without getting sucked in.

There may come a doubt: who am I thanking? Well, if you believe in God, you thank Him. If not, thank your own inner Self, which has so far guided you so that you are reading these words. Should you not be grateful? Do we see intelligence, order, and precision in the universe? In our bodies and minds? The Cosmic laws that govern our very existence on this planet are awe-inspiring. Can we say thank you? Should we say thank you?

Let me now elaborate on how the shastras support all that I have said above. As we have seen, there are three ways of verifying the truth of any theorem:

- Yukti: Reason
- Shastra: Scripture
- Anubhava: Experience

Yukti

The rationale, Yukti, in this proposition is the following prayer:

Dear Lord,
May I have the courage to change the things I can,
Accept the things I cannot, and
The wisdom to know the difference.

Now, accepting what I cannot change, and even saying ‘thank you’, leads to a calm and quiet mind and reveals the secret of why unpleasant events happen. A little reflection often shows that the apparent calamity was a blessing. Have we not heard so many stories of how people did not meet their death because they could not reach their workplace on time on the day 9/11 happened, the Twin Towers incident? That is evidence enough and reason enough to accept things one cannot change.

Shastras

Bhagvad Gita: Sh. 22. Ch 4.

**यदृच्छालाभसन्तुष्टो द्वन्द्वतीतो विमत्सरः । समः सिद्धावसिद्धौ च
कृत्वापि न निबध्यते ॥22॥**

**yadṛichchhā-lābha-santuṣṭho dvandvātīto vimatsarah
samaḥ siddhāvasiddhau cha kṛitvāpi na nibadhyate
The Karmayogi, who is content with whatever is got
unsought, is free from jealousy and has transcended all
pairs of opposites like joy and grief, and is balanced in
success and failure, is not bound by his action.**

Once TYY (thank you yoga) is practised assiduously, nothing shakes our psychological balance.

Sh. 22 Ch 6

**यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः । यस्मिन्स्थितो न
दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥22॥**
**yaṁ labdhvā chāparam lābham manyate nādhikam tataḥ
yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vichālyate**

And having obtained which he does not reckon any other gain as greater than that, and established in which he is not shaken even by the heaviest of sorrows.

When one is established in the knowledge of the True Self, not even the greatest of sorrows can shake him; and pray, when does this happen? When one accepts and feels grateful for all that occurs in life.

Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the theme of the Bhagavad Gita is to enable us to develop an equanimous attitude, albeit resulting from the knowledge of Truth. However, the best primary approach is to accept adversity and prosperity with the same attitude of gratitude, *prasad buddhi*. When we go to a temple and we are given *prasad* (some eatable), we have no control over what that might be. It may be something we detest, like crushed banana or some other sweet, yet we accept it humbly and gratefully, for it comes from the deity we revere. Such indeed is the case in real life, too. All that comes our way is given to us by the law of God; remembering this helps us in our “Thank You Yoga”.

One story from the Bhagavat Purana is worth recalling. Mahabali was an Asura (demon) who had vanquished the Devas (gods) and was now ruling all three worlds. The gods approached Lord Vishnu to rescue them from their plight. Lord Vishnu knew that in a war, it was impossible to defeat Mahabali, and so he took the form of a dwarf Brahmin. Mahabali was known to be charitable to a fault. When he was performing a fire sacrifice to proclaim his supremacy, Vaman (the brahmin dwarf form taken by Vishnu) approached him for some charity, and Mahabali readily agreed. Shukadev, the Guru of Mahabali, warned him that this was no ordinary

Brahmin and would bring about the ruin of the Asuras, but Mahabali had given his word and let the Vaman ask him. Vaman simply asked for land covered by his three footsteps. At this, Mahabali explained that Vaman could ask for much, much more and suggested 'Let me give you!'. The young Vaman (Vishnu in disguise) gives a rather lengthy sermon on how one should be satisfied and content with only one's needs, and it is greed that is the cause for misery. He even adds that an attitude of contentment is the sure gateway to Liberation from the shackles of the bondage of karma. Then, with the first step, he covered the earth, and with the second, the heavens. He then asked Mahabali where he might put his third, and Mahabali offered his head to him. This sent Mahabali down into hell, where the Lord made a special hell, Sutala, for him, more opulent than the heavens, for Mahabali was grateful, after all the Lord had come to beg from him his kingdom.

I read this, much after the "Thank you yoga" concept had formed in my mind, and it felt so **familiar, so true, for indeed being grateful for all one receives is a certain way to not only a happy life here, but total liberation as well.**

Many more quotations could be cited, but suffice it to say that the shastras (scriptures) are replete with the proof of this concept.

Anubhava/Experience

I have had several experiences that have proven to me that Thank You Yoga works. Let me quote only two.

At age 24, I was suspected of having aleukemic leukaemia, a rare blood cancer, as my white blood cells were perilously low, I was running a high temperature, and my spleen and liver

were so enlarged they almost crisscrossed. As I was being shifted to the hospital on a stretcher, I saw that my mother was crying. I smiled and asked her 'Why are you crying?' and she said, "They are shifting you in an ambulance". I simply said, "But the hospital is my home!" I had already qualified as a doctor and was working as a resident. However, in the ambulance knowing full well the gravity of the situation, as I had worked in UK in a cancer unit, I asked myself, 'Do you have any regrets?', and I had to confess my only regret was that I was not married and then I don't know from where this thought arose, 'but what of that, I will make friends with God!' So, the attitude changed the situation, and I am still alive to tell the tale.

The second one was when I had a lump in the breast, which was suspected to be cancer. A high probability because of the MRI imaging and the history that my mother too had suffered from it. This was 30 years ago; an excision biopsy was performed. I worked in a major hospital in Dubai at the time; not once did I ask the pathologist what the diagnosis was. I felt I would face it when it is known, what relief there is in not knowing! So, five days later, the pathologist rang me, very surprised that I had not chased her and said that it was an inflammatory mass and there was no malignancy. Not a single sleepless night, not a moment of anxiety! Could I ask for more?

Many other serious events were not so fortunate, and yet the result of utter peace was experienced. However, this is not an autobiography, and those are best left out.

In conclusion, thank you yoga, has been validated by all three tests, and so I can confidently say IT WORKS!

Because it demonstrates HAPPINESS LIES WITHIN AND NOT IN THE SITUATION, [problem] OR OBJECT, one has the choice to allow oneself to be happy for HAPPINESS IS OUR VERY NATURE.

My grandson's new pair of shoes got stolen from the temple, and he was crying his heart out when the following poem happened:

Vedji's shoe got stolen at the temple!

See Vedji

What brought you happiness yesterday

Brought unhappiness to you today

The shoe that was new

Is now not with you

Was the happiness in the shoe

Or was it in you?

It was in the shoe you may want to blurt

My happiness was in the shoe

Or else why should its absence hurt?

Question: is the hurt in the shoe or in you?

In me of course you say

Well then why should you pay?

For what you have and know

Simply let unhappiness go.

Your very nature is to be happy

Just let go and be merry

You are the source of happiness eternal

Independent of anything external

The game is all within my son

Just knowing this is such fun

So, drop that thought of 'in and out'

An illusion of separation which it brought about.

The only condition is, of course, that one must be genuine.

As usual I would like to end with a story – Once upon a time there was a King, who had a very wise minister. The King never went anywhere without the minister. This minister had a unique trait of saying ‘Thank you God’, whatever happened. As with a King it was almost always good things that happened, so it was all very well. However, one day, the King had a fall and broke his arm and promptly the minister said, ‘Thank you God!’ This irked the King no end and he put the minister into jail. As the King was hurt, he was palace bound. A few weeks passed and one day he decided, to ride his favourite horse and wander into the forest. It so happened he got lost and a tribe was conducting a sacrifice to their demon god. They needed a human sacrifice and found the King. The trembling King was taken to the Priest. However, the priest noticed – this human had a broken arm and rejected this piece of human, for human sacrifice. The King was let off! He managed to find his way back to the palace and needless to say, released the minister immediately. He said “you were right, I would have lost my life had this arm been whole; but what about you my friend – you were in jail for several weeks?” The minister replied, “Thank You God! But for that, I would have accompanied you and finding me whole the tribals would have happily offered me to the Gods!” So, dear readers, the Truth of Thank You Yoga gets established.

Chapter V

Applied Bhagavad Gita in the Chakravyuh

To address specific challenges (not problems) is out of the scope of this book. However, it is conducive to explore the Bhagavad Gita to glean the answers. Herewith are presented some common questions and answers from the Bhagavad Gita. The more I study the Bhagavad Gita, the more I wonder why most of us are not taught it systematically, in at least the higher secondary school. It is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. As Swami Rama says, "The word stress has become a hot word today. We all talk about stress. Was there stress in ancient times, too? There was, but it was called ignorance. Today, stress means stress. We don't accept that it's part of ignorance."

The idea here is not to write a treatise on any of these questions, just to give a glimpse that inspires the reader to research further. The reader is further requested to bear with a few repetitions of shlokas from the Bhagavad Gita. These are deliberate and only emphasise the point in question. One learns by repetition, and sometimes the same shloka reveals a new meaning in a different context.

So, the questions that come to mind primarily are:

Do we need a Guru?

This is probably better formulated for the spiritual quest, such as how do we select a Guru? Generally, it is said that when a disciple is ready, the Guru finds him. This, of course, does not satisfy our rational mind. In which case, the criteria that should help are:

- You feel a definite peace in his/her presence
- The path that this specific Guru is propounding resonates with your personality.
- In your initial experimentation with the techniques given by the Guru, you find an inner encouragement to travel that way.

So far as the necessity of a Guru is concerned, there is absolutely no doubt about it. Even learning the simple skills of walking, talking, reading, and writing required someone to teach us. What to speak of the skill of turning within? Literally doing a right about turn!

Our senses are all outward turned, and that is not our fault. Like the Kathopanishad says, it is the work of the Self itself!

Chapter 2 Canto 1 Mantra 1

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भू- स्तस्मात्पराङ्पश्यति
नान्तरात्मन् ।

कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्ष- दावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥
parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūs tasmāt parāñ paśyati
nāntarātman

kāścīd dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmānam aikṣad āvṛtta-cakṣur
amṛtatvam icchan

**The self-existent Lord destroyed the senses. Therefore, one
sees the outer things and not the inner Self.**

**A rare discriminating man, desiring immortality, turns his
eyes away and then sees the indwelling Self.**

So, it is natural that we look for happiness as all our senses are turned outward. Mulla Naseeruddin, the wise man of Turkey, was once found riding on his donkey facing the back of the donkey, and off he went in this direction and that; the

surprised villagers asked him, Where was he headed? His wise reply was “Ask the donkey!” This is what happens to us. We let our minds drive us hither and thither for what lies within. This is precisely what we do, again, not our fault.

Autobiography of Man

I walk down the street
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk
I fall in

I am lost.....I am hopeless.

It isn't my fault

It takes forever to find a way out.

I walk down the same street

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk

I pretend I don't see it

I fall in.

I can't believe I am in the same place

But it isn't my fault.

It still takes a long time to get out.

I walk down the same street.

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk

I see it is there

I still fall in....it is a habit

My eyes are open

It is my fault

I get out immediately.

I walk down the same street

There is a deep hole in the sidewalk

I walk around it.

I walk down ANOTHER STREET.

Author anonymous.

We have lost our happiness and find light in the outside world with all our senses turned out. No wonder we keep looking and looking; we see it in fleeting moments, but never to our complete satisfaction. Mind is the eleventh sense and must be held in check by Buddhi!

Now, what does all this have to do with the need for a Guru? Well, someone must show you the way, even as this book is attempting to do just that.

Now, let us see what Shri Krishna has to say regarding the need for a Guru. Remember, Arjuna has already surrendered to Shri Krishna and begged him to guide him out of the dejection and despondency he finds himself when faced with the prospect of having to kill his Guru Dronacharya and most beloved Pitamaha (grandfather) Bhishma. And yet, in Chapter 4 of the Bhagavad Gita, Shri Krishna refers Arjuna to approach a Guru.

Sh 34. Ch. 4

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया | उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं
ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ||34||

tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśhnena sevayā

upadekṣhyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ

Learn the Truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him with reverence and render service unto him. Such an enlightened Saint can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the Truth.

It has been my great good fortune to have been initiated by two Self-realised Masters: The first is Swami Muktananda of Ganeshpuri, a Siddha Yoga Master, and the second is Swami Rama, at whose lotus feet this book is dedicated. Needless to add, but for the Grace of the external Guru, one would find it

extremely difficult to awaken one's inner Guru, for divinity dwells in us all. When one receives this grace, one no longer needs the external form of the Guru, because at each step of the way, one is led from within. In Truth, there is only a single Guru field. There are many physical forms, but when the form merges with the five elements, the subtle Power continues to guide.

What is Karma?

This question sometimes tickles our intellect, which can rationally see that there cannot be any other explanation for the disparity in human life than the doctrine of Karma. So let us try to understand what the doctrine is. In Swami Vivekananda's words: "Good-Good, Bad-Bad, and none-escape the Law". It is thus straightforward to logically understand this, but it does not explain the disparity at birth and many unforeseen events in life, which seem undeserved and out of the blue, so to speak. Unless, of course, we believe in reincarnation, i.e., the transmigration of the "soul". Soul has been put into inverted commas because it is a much-misunderstood word. Reincarnation simply means "soul" becoming enfleshed again, rebirth implies death followed by birth, and as a doctor, I can say this is continually going on – the red blood cells die every 120 days, the liver cells die every month, the stomach lining changes every 5 days. This is a continuous biological event. Let us then further define what Karma is. Ordinarily, Karma seems to imply our destiny; It is not so. The word simply means "action"—action, however, by thought, word or deed. And as Swami Vivekananda has so aptly and simply put it, none escapes the law.

So, when one accepts the possibility of reincarnation, rather than rebirth, then one can explain the apparent random occurrences in such an otherwise orderly Cosmos (the very word Cosmos means order, the opposite of chaos). So, then Karma is understood under three headings:

1. **Prarabdha Karma:** that which is meant to be experienced in this lifetime. The events happen according to the actions done in previous lifetimes. A certain lot fructifies or matures in this lifetime. Paul Brunton, the author of 'A Search in Secret India' and many other priceless books, has said, 'Events are fixed, your attitude towards them is not.'

2. **Sanchita Karma:** It is like all the actions done in many lifetimes gone by, the storehouse, it is often likened to a quiver which is full of arrows yet to be used or shot out.

3. **Agama or Kriyaman:** That which is happening in this birth at every moment. If we are vigilant and aware, we can determine to respond rather than react to any situation that presents itself. Guru Goenkaji says, 'vyakulta ka beej boge to vyakulta hi milegi na?' Meaning if we react to a situation with distress, we are sowing the seed of the same. As we sow so shall we reap. Once again, as Paul Brunton says, our attitude is not fixed. This does not mean we become robots, as if we could. If an event is sad, we appropriately feel miserable, but do not wallow in self-pity and continue to feel dejected and paralysed. (We have answers for that too, in the Bhagavad Gita).

Thus, the law of Karma is inexorable. Whether we like it or not, believe it or not, it takes effect. Somewhere, a doubt remains about how one can explain tragedies happening

simultaneously to many people. No one knows. Shri Krishna's words:

Sh 17 Ch 4

कर्मणो ह्यपि बोद्धव्यं बोद्धव्यं च विकर्मणः
अकर्मणश्च बोद्धव्यं गहना कर्मणो गतिः ॥१७॥

*karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyaṁ boddhavyaṁ cha vikarmaṇaḥ
akarmaṇaśh cha boddhavyaṁ gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*

You must understand the nature of all three: recommended action, wrong action, and inaction. The truth about these is profound and challenging to understand.

As Shri Krishna explains to Arjuna that action (karma), inaction (akarma) and prohibited action (vikarma) and their results, and the truth of karma (includes akarma and vikarma) are indeed inscrutable, mysterious. It hits us when we find the good in the world suffering great hardships, and those often considered wicked are enjoying a relatively comfortable and sometimes luxurious lifestyle. This is apparent! I say apparent because the mundane is only a relative perceptual world, and there is nothing absolute about it. To my mind, any suffering that leads you to the ultimate goal in life is the fruit of good karma, and even luxury or happiness which leads you away is only the fruit of some bad karma. It was none other than Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, who prayed that let there be sorrow in my life so that I may never forget Thee, Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna has said in the shloka quoted that it is very mysterious and inscrutable. To try to make sense of the cause and effect is an exercise in futility. There is also such a thing as collective karma, for we are all interconnected, and what we do always affects the general good or bad. It is hard for us to make the connections, but the Divine Computer makes no mistakes. Ultimately, it is all our own doing. There is no one

dispensing justice and punishments. We create our field, and we are our farmers. Let's resolve to sow seeds of joy and desire freedom!

It applies to collective karma as well, which is difficult to compute and, in fact, not even necessary; we must accept the limitations of our intellect when compared to Cosmic Intelligence.

Now, the doctrine of Karma is like the law of gravity, infallible and equally applicable to all. The birth we get depends on the Prarabdha karma, i.e. the Karmic endowment allotted for experience in this lifetime. This is selected from the Sanchita Karma, which is a warehouse for our Paap (sinful acts) and Punya (virtuous acts), and the conditions available for the fructification of the same. For any action, there are two results. One is the Drishta, immediate seen experience, and one which is Adrishta, the invisible one, which gets added to the Sanchita, wherefrom it appears for a particular birth. For example, when we do a Punya karma, a virtuous act, we feel immediate satisfaction in our heart, which is the Drishta result. However, the reward for the same will also be experienced at some later date, which is the Adrishta. The vice versa applies to Paap karma, a sinful act. This is the only doctrine that satisfactorily explains why good people seem to suffer and the bad seem to prosper.

It was none other than Draupadi who explained why so much misfortune had befallen the Pandavas in the Aranyaka Parva of the Mahabharat. When asked how she knew so much, she explained that when her father, Drupada, was performing a yajna, Brihaspati, the Guru of the Gods, was giving a discourse,

and she sat on her father's lap to listen. She then goes on to explain that there are three possibilities:

1. **All is ordained, predestined.** If all is such that one can do nothing about it, there is no need to act at all or at worst, there is no use of effort at all. This cannot be so, for our experience denies it. We do find effort paying off, and we do sometimes get the expected result. However, there is some truth in it, as the result of any action is not wholly dependent on effort.

2. **All is by chance.** It all happens by chance and in a random manner. However, this is not true as shown by the example of a sailboat in the middle of the ocean. While strong and adverse winds and currents can throw the boat off course, a vigilant and skilled sailor can foresee the events and adjust the sails to negate completely or minimise the effect.

3. **By effort alone.** We have all experienced failure in the face of great effort and the reverse, success, when we have made only little effort. This means that although effort is required, it is not the only factor.

Draupadi then continues to say that all three factors play their part in any given outcome of action. Life would lose its meaning if effort were of no avail, and justice would not be evident if it were not explained on Adrishta karma fructifying in the future. To confound all matters, there is also something called collective karma, and therefore members of a family, community, or even country, and the world at large, affect each other both beneficially and detrimentally.

So even while we are engaged with the world, we can aspire to reach the ultimate if we bear the following principles in mind and are vigilant in their practice:

- a. Without expecting fruit
- b. Selflessly
- c. Skilfully, yoga yukta
- d. With equanimity
- e. For the welfare of all
- f. Surrendering the fruit of action to the Lord
- g. Without attachment
- h. Relinquishing doer ship and finally
- i. As an act of worship, yajna!!

This is called Karma yoga, meaning Union with the Ultimate through Karma. When one does constant manana (reflection), it starts to translate into daily action, and only then can it be called Siddha Karma.

A story comes to mind where a snake had been listening to the wise words of a sage on non-violence, and he decided to practise the same. Soon enough, he was harassed by village children and even pelted with stones, but he remained calm. Finally, he was so distressed that he came to the sage and told him about his plight. The sage instructed him, "It is well to practise non-violence by not biting anyone, but whoever told you not to hiss?" So, he should have stuck to his dharma without becoming violent.

When the mind of a child is developed with samskaras related to his tendencies and special effort is made to make him good, we say, he has acquired a good sanskruti. If the opposite happens, for example, a Kshatriya, who is not brought up right, may end up becoming a Goonda, terrorising people. This is then called Vikruti. The one with sanskruti works for the welfare of all beings while performing Svadharma, even though the action may be tinged with evil and thereby

practices Karmayoga. He can attain the highest goal by being non-attached and surrendering the fruit of the action at the feet of the Lord.

To summarise, therefore, we have now understood how to perform actions to purify our mind and attain Self-realisation while at the same time not getting disturbed by adverse circumstances when we feel like victims, and to keep going in the right direction with the guidelines given in this most practical Song Divine, the Bhagavad Gita.

In my humble understanding and as seen in the description of THANK YOU YOGA, there is no calamity for which we cannot be grateful, for it has come to teach us a loving lesson. My take on Karma, nay, I should say, whatever comes as a result of our own doing, should it take us towards our spiritual goal, can only be the result of good Karma. It is our choice, which way to go. According to Advaita Vedanta, this world can be compared to a dream. It arises in Consciousness, is made of Consciousness, and is experienced by Consciousness, and subsides into Consciousness. So, my question is, is it easier to wake up from a Nightmare? Or a sweet dream? Wherein even a call from nature is an unwelcome interruption. So, when life seems nightmarish and we are aware of our goal, take it as an opportunity to wake up to REALITY and let the nightmare subside into where it arose from.

In no way is this little precis on Karma written to suggest it as explanatory of the doctrine of Karma. It is only a little glimpse into the nature of experience that we face every day and a hint at how to sublimate and spiritualise it.

Several other questions that bother us in day-to-day activities are addressed below, taking the Bhagavad Gita as authority. From some selected shlokas, we will try here to unravel the meaning of life with an open mind. These little expositions are not limited to any caste or religion. They are equally applicable to all, for the effort here is to give a key to happiness in the mundane world.

Read On:

Q1. How does one face some significant loss, e.g. the death of a loved one?

Although the Bhagavad Gita begins with a specific situation that Arjuna is facing, it can quite easily be applied to situations faced by us in daily life, one just paraphrases e.g. the situation could be, one loses a loved one, or one is faced with imminent danger of financial ruin or even a less ominous situation of loss of job etc.

Sh.28/29 Ch.1

अर्जुन उवाच ।

दृष्ट्वेमं स्वजनं कृष्ण युयुत्सुं समुपस्थितम् ॥28॥

सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति

वेपथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते ॥29॥

arjuna uvācha: dṛiṣṭvemaṁ sva-janaṁ kṛiṣṇa yuyutsum
samupasthitam ॥28॥

Sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṁ cha pariśuṣhyati
vepathuś cha śharīre me roma-harṣhaś cha jāyate ॥29॥

Arjuna said: Krishna, as I see these kinsmen arrayed for battle, my limbs give way, and my mouth is getting parched; nay a shiver runs through my body and hair stands on end.

When one experiences sorrow and grief born from attachment, one is confused and cannot discriminate right from wrong. Even men who have been looked upon as wise and revered can sink into sorrow. They lose touch with reality, and their nervous system seems shattered. They experience shaking, trembling, dry mouth, and weakness of the limbs. A black bee has tremendous strength; it can bore a hole through wood, but when it is intoxicated with the fragrance of the lotus, it is unable to escape its soft petals as they close in on it, at sunset. When one is intoxicated with alcohol or sensual pleasure, or even attachment to dear ones, one loses self-control.

Symptoms of adrenal overactivity may be found in the body if some shocking news is heard. Hormonal secretions and neuronal stimulation cause the symptoms described. Because of these reactions, toxins start building up in the body, and further deterioration happens. Arjuna had lost his equilibrium and the capacity to think rationally; all inner strength seemed to have been lost. Many mental and even physical disorders are a result of attachment to the objects of this world. Both the body and mind are intimately connected, and a disturbance in one is felt in the other. Medications for the mind can only result in symptomatic relief.

Unless we treat the cause and learn about the intimate body-mind connection, no cure is possible. The inseparable link between the two realities of body and mind is pranic energy, called the breath of life.

When we suffer the death of a close relative, a near and dear one, the mind can be plunged into the depths of despair.

A true friend answers:

Sh.2 Ch.2

श्रीभगवानुवाच । कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम् ।
अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यमकीर्तिकरमर्जुन ॥2॥

śhrī bhagavān uvācha: kutastvā kaśhmalamidaṁ viṣhame
samupasthitam anārya-juṣṭamaswargyam akīrti-karam
arjuna

**Shri Bhagwan said: Arjuna, how has this infatuation
overtaken you at this odd hour? It is shunned by noble
souls; neither will it bring heaven, nor fame to you.**

Shri Krishna chides Arjuna in no uncertain terms against the defeatist attitude Arjuna has adopted in the face of war. One needs a friend who can tell us the truth of the matter and awaken us to action in the right direction. A true friend never feels constrained to bring one “in line” with the right course of action.

When Arjuna cannot be pulled out of despair by these powerful words and begs Shri Krishna to accept him as His disciple and guide him out of the mire that he has put himself into, the Bhagavad Gita begins. The noteworthy point is that the ditch we fall into is often self-created. Even if not apparent on the face of the situation, I dare say it is always self-created, and therefore it is imperative that we seek advice and follow.

Now Shri Krishna tells Arjuna, with a gentle smile as though to say, “Arjuna, you talk like a Pandit (one who knows the Truth) and yet behave like an ignoramus.”

Sh.13 Ch.2

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा । तथा
देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥13 ॥

dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā tathā
dehāntara-prāptir dhīras tatra na muhyati

Just as boyhood, youth and old age are attributed to the soul through this body, even so it attains another body. The wise man is not deceived by this.

Ekknath says, for those of us who object to the philosophy of past lives on the simplistic point “why can we not remember it?”, the answer is, do you remember what happened on your first birthday, and if your answer is no, then the natural conclusion should be that you did not exist! This, of course, is not tenable. Somerset Maugham, who had the good fortune of meeting Sri Ramana Maharishi, has written the book *The Razor’s Edge*, based on him, in which he says that, even for a nonbeliever, it is very difficult, logically, to reject the philosophical structure on which this theory is based.

This Shloka is the key to understanding the changing nature of the manifest world. Whatever is experienced is constantly changing. Even death does not occur on a particular day and time. It is continuously happening. We as doctors know this better than anyone else that cells die and are reborn every moment. Fortunately, we cannot feel it. Vipassana teaches us to try to feel the change happening in the body in the form of sensations because we live on sensations. We enjoy the pleasant and detest the unpleasant, but if we were to maintain the witness mode and observe these sensations, we would no longer crave for them, and we could develop discrimination. So, Shri Krishna is telling us not to get deluded by this passing show. In connection with this is the celebrated verse:

Sh. 22 Ch. 2

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि । तथा
शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥22 ॥
vāsānsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛihṇāti naro 'parāṇi
tathā śharīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇānya nyāni sanyāti navāni dehī
As a man sheds his worn-out garments and takes on new
ones, likewise the embodied soul, casting off worn-out
bodies, enters into others that are new.

We do not see things as they are. We identify ourselves as the body, and form attachments to all its relations and then feel anxiety and fear. Attachment to relationships brings about confusion. Shri Krishna now explains to Arjuna that we are not only that which meets the eye. That is only the garment of the eternal divine being within us, and as we do not grieve when we change our external clothes, we should not do so when the body is changed as well.

This verse talks about the change in the body as one would change old, worn-out clothes. This is generally the background of the philosophy of reincarnation. But we do not have to believe in reincarnation. This life is headache enough! Let us not forget the goal, and that is to love the Lord here and now as far as our capacity goes.

Even when we have everything the world can offer, we do not feel complete, and therefore, we feel curious to find out the meaning of existence. It is due to the wrong identification of this mind with the external objects that we are held captive by attachments. Arjuna feels despondent, Shri Krishna shows him with great compassion that to the discriminating intellect, it is clear that the body, which was a newborn, youth and which undergoes so many changes, is undoubtedly not the Self. Once

we see through the coverings of the true Self, we no longer grieve for the passing of this body, which is verily like a garment. That which is unchanging and eternal simply throws the body and assumes a new form, even as when we are in the body, we change our garments when they get old. With the proper observation and identification, death will no longer terrify, and life will no longer delude!

It is not often that we need to remember that the body is perishable while the indwelling divinity is not.

Q2. Very often, we have other problems in life which also need to be faced. How can we face them?

Sh.14 Ch.2

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः
आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत ॥14 ॥

mātrā-sparśhās tu kaunteya śhītoṣhṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ
āgamāpāyino 'nityās tāns-titikṣhasva bhārata

O son of Kunti, the contacts between the senses and their objects, which give rise to the feelings of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc., are transitory and fleeting; therefore, Arjuna endure them.

The function of the senses is to transmit the sensation, whether it be pleasant or unpleasant, as soon as they come in contact with the stimulus, e.g., sound for hearing, light to the eyes and so on. The mind, which can be considered our most powerful sense, interprets these sensations and simultaneously creates craving or aversion. These sensations, however, are so fleeting that they cannot be held or kept. We have also been endowed with the capacity to discriminate (Vivek) and thus Shri Krishna tells us, just endure the transitory

sensations, for they are fleeting. The emphasis is on increasing our threshold for endurance in difficulty, and reducing our clinging to pleasant sensations, for neither will last.

This is one of the celebrated shlokas of the Bhagavad Gita because it emphasises the fleeting nature of sensory perceptions, at the same time goading Arjuna to bear, to endure this passing phenomenon.

Q3. How do we withstand suffering?

Suffering is caused by contact with the world and its reactions. What gives meaning to life? Work and Love do. But all these disappear if there is too much suffering. However, if you bear the suffering with dignity and serenity, that itself will give meaning to life.

The word Titiksha is defined by Sankara thus:

Vivekachudamani Sh. 24

सहनं सर्वदुःखानामऽप्रतिकारपूर्वकम् ।

चिन्ताविलापरहितं सा तितिक्षा निगद्यते ॥24॥

sahanaṃ sarvaduḥkhānāmapratikārapūrvakam ।

cintāvilāparahitaṃ sā titikṣā nigadyate

**Endurance of all afflictions without countering aids, and
without anxiety or lament, is said to be titiksha.**

It is undoubtedly hard to bear pain of any kind, be it physical or mental, and then to bear it without anxiety or lament, while not even trying to seek relief seems well-nigh impossible. Yet, bearing in mind that all is fleeting may help increase our threshold. The anxiety and lament can be eliminated, and even if it seems a disaster or calamity, the situation can be transformed into a blessing by the right attitude. For example,

if one is afflicted with an illness, this results from our Prarabhdha karma (from past lifetimes); now, if we give in to lamentation and anxiety, we will be sowing seeds of the same, and the result will be the fruit thereof, i.e., more cause for lamenting and anxiety. If, however, we endure it with fortitude and utilise every discomfort as a reminder that we are not the body or the mind and remember the Lord, what a blessing that might become!

Moreover, we would be sowing seeds of acceptance and patience and devotion and shall reap the fruit thereof. It is well known that what comes, goes. Therefore, even if the body goes due to the illness, the fact remains that it will go, so why not use this opportunity to turn in the right direction? After all, hasn't Shri Krishna assured us that the one who remembers him at the time of death verily comes to Him? It is therefore never too late. In fact, my take on Karma is that whatever reminds one of the Truth/God/Self is good karma, and whatever takes you away from it is bad karma. Thus, seemingly pleasant happenings in life, which only leave one hankering for more, are a result of the Rajo Guña, which takes one away from the Truth, straight into the jaws of misery in a state of stupor, so one does not even notice what brought the misery on!

Sh. 38 Ch.2

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ | ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व
नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि || 38 ||

sukha-duhkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau tato
yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpam avāpsyasi

Treating alike victory and defeat, gain and loss, pain and
pleasure, get ready for the battle; fighting thus you will not
incur sin.

Ekknath reminds us that the great war is always with the Ego, and it nearly always lasts an entire lifetime, even if we are determined and aware. The easiest way is to view equally victory and defeat, gain and loss, pain and pleasure; for that is the best sadhana. The hallmark of the Ego is to gloat in victory and suffer anguish in defeat, to cling to pleasure and avoid pain, to crave gain and prevent loss. This is so because the Ego is the cause of the sense of separation from others and is adept at appropriating, to consolidate itself, and hence it compels us into the three great impurities: greed, anger, and lust; these are to be transcended. If we puff up with pride on being praised and wilt if criticised, it means that we depend on the evaluation of others of our worth and are not secure in ourselves. To look within and become the true Self leads to such a sense of completeness that it matters little what the external circumstances, whether favourable or unfavourable, render to us. When we undertake any action not attached to the fruit thereof, we do not incur any sin because we are surrendered, and that means the action is being undertaken for it is our duty to do so, irrespective of gain or loss.

In a world full of vanity, we are forever expecting applause. A simple pat on the back is not enough. Nowadays, the number of likes a photograph gets, or the number of followers/friends one has on social media, determines the worth of a person.

14.2.18

Nowadays.....

We say more, mean less.
We express more feel less.
We show more have less.
Oh! what a mess!

We talk more act less.
We think more play less.
We communicate more meet less.
Oh! what a mess!

We own more wear less.
We count more value less.
We celebrate more enjoy less.
Oh! what a mess!

Come, come, let's reverse the stress.
Be physical more and mental less.
Be spiritual more emotional less
Come let's get out of this mess!

Shirin

What irony that there is an illusion within an illusion! Here we are being prodded to wake up to the Real, how? By treating the pairs of opposites equally, it is possible to practise. To some, it may even seem contradictory advice, for they believe they are born to feel sad, to feel glad, to be excited, to be depressed. Well then, they should ask themselves: should there be so much excitement/depression that you die laughing/crying? Even the balance is lost when we depend on outside props to uphold our notion of ourselves and never realise the truth. To the one who is determined to find the

truth, every suggestion towards the goal from the One who is Truth incarnate, Shri Krishna, is the gospel and must be followed. Just offer every action and its fruit, treating the pairs of opposites equally, at His lotus feet, and no sin (karma) can then accrue.

Q4. How does one get over anxiety?

Every time we are anxious, a little introspection will show us that the anxiety is because of the anticipation of a desired result. Given below is perhaps the single most important shloka to overcome anxiety over the action to be undertaken and its result:

Sh. 47 Ch.2

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन । मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते
सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥47॥

karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana mā karma-
phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmaṇi

Your right is to work only and never to the fruit thereof. Do not consider yourself to be the cause of the fruit of action; nor let your attachment be to inaction.

This is one of the title shlokas of the Bhagavad Gita, and it is here that Shri Krishna gives a practical instruction, leaving behind all theory. Swami Rama gives us the deeper meaning, he says, "Suffering comes when one is interested in reward. If one performs actions expecting rewards, he is bound to receive the fruits of his actions. The fruits then motivate him to do more actions, and in this way, he finds himself caught in the whirlpool of life, never content, always seeking more and more for himself and ignoring or using others for his own gain. Actions done for reward thus create bondage."

The Gita is a forceful call to action, but the action in which the right goal (selfless) is pursued by the right means. At no time should the result be confused with the goal. The goal in life is to be happy. This is the way:

Whenever we undertake any action, we always start it because we anticipate a particular result, but the particular result is never certain! This is so because, despite one's best efforts, the outcome depends on various other factors that cannot be accurately predicted. Even the time and space in which the action is undertaken cannot be standardised by us, e.g., we can put in our best efforts for an exam, but can never predict the marks we will get, which depends on many unknown factors, including the mood of the examiner! It is quite logical and understandable that the result of the action is not entirely in our control. This is all we are asked to remember, and hence if we surrender the fruit of the action at the feet of the Lord, we will be free of the anxiety and fear we regularly feel. This knowledge may drive us not to do anything at all, for we do not know the outcome; let's just be lazy and do nothing. Thus, we may form an attachment to inaction. Shri Krishna warns us against this very possibility. He therefore emphasises, do your duty, which is generally clear unless we allow other factors to delude us, and at the same time, surrender the fruit of action.

This applies to sadhana as well!! (my opinion). Just practise, practise, practise, the result, i.e., transcendence, is not in one's control. Here, even less so, for the one who is practising must be transcended, paradox, eh? That is Shri Krishna for us.

Q5. What are the practices and the method of action that will ensure equanimity and peace?

Equanimity leads to clarity of thought and peace of mind. This ensures the right decision-making, and then the result is a given. As seen above, doing one's best and leaving the rest is the best policy.

Sh. 48 Ch. 2

**योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय । सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः
समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥४८॥**

**yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya
siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga uchyate
Arjuna, perform your duties established in Yoga, renouncing
attachment, and be even minded in success and failure;
evenness of mind is called 'Yoga'.**

When one learns to enjoy the beauty and grandeur of non-attachment, he acquires the ability to love his duties and comes to experience the offering of the fruits of action as the highest of joys. Remember the example of the lotus, which arises from the water, but its petals remain untouched, and that of the sun, which shines equally on all, irrespective of what is happening in the world. These are symbols of the yoga of equanimity. - Swami Rama

Arjuna is called first to establish himself in Yoga and renounce attachment, which will then make him even-minded. Yoga, Shri Krishna defines as simply Samatvam, i.e., to be equanimous, to be serene. The root of the word yoga is yuja, to join, i.e., union. What might you ask unites with what? The ego unites with the Self, very easily practised if we see that within us there is always a conflict between Manas and Buddhi. Manas is that part of the mind which processes the data and labels experience as pleasant or unpleasant, and it is the Buddhi that decides what action must be performed.

When there is a union of both, meaning the Manas loves to do what the Buddhi has decided, waking up early for sadhana, the Manas presents many an argument against it and often we give in; now if Manas presented it as the most pleasant thing to do there would be no conflict, thus to bring Manas in alignment with Buddhi is the goal on the practical level.

When attachment is renounced, the action is done for the sake of the action itself, e.g., an artist paints not for the accolades he may get from his creation but the sheer joy it brings him/her when he is immersed and united with his art. The same may be applied to a surgeon, a musician, a carpenter, or anyone at all. To be so united with the action is impossible without having total equilibrium or evenness of mind. This happens when there is no fear of failure or anticipation of success. This then is yoga in skilful action, for during that action our ego is out of the way, and we are united with the action!

The moment is all there is; the past and future drop away, then one is yoga yukta (enjoined to yoga).

Sh. 30 Ch. 3

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा । निराशीर्निर्ममो
भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥३०॥

mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi sannyasyādhyātma-chetasā nirāśhīr
nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigata-jvarah

**Therefore, dedicating all actions to Me with your mind fixed
on Me, the Self of all, freed from desire and the feeling of
me and cured of mental agitation fight.**

The objects of this external world constantly lead one to identify with the phenomenal world, which is constantly changing and holds our attention; this is called being

Bahirmukhi, outward facing, with the result that we forget the unchanging, eternal Self who we truly are. When we finally feel the pull within and turn inwards to the Self for the perennial joy we were searching, it is called being inward turned- Antarmukhi. Dedicating all actions is prayer in action, and this is the highest prayer, not just the recitation of some verses, and that will free us from desire.

Yet what Shri Krishna exhorts Arjuna to do is to simply dedicate the fruit of all actions to the Lord, if he is unable to drop this sense of doer-ship and be free. This will immediately liberate him from psychological suffering, and he can then, with a placid mind, apply himself to the job at hand, which is the war. At all times, if we try to put this principle into practice, e.g. while we are working or even playing, then the torture of psychological suffering that each one of us experiences, hoping for one outcome or the other, comes to an end. We will find that the outcome of the action does not entangle us, and we start experiencing a little freedom, as Guru Goenkaji used to say, “utne utne mukta huay”. Truly, this is simple.

Karma yoga, action done with the attitude of surrender to the Lord, is always in the present; it cannot happen in the past or future. It is, therefore, dynamic meditation, because we act in that moment only. Action should be accompanied by releasing the previous samskaras, which is the baggage we carry (I, me, and mine) into any action, so the past is renounced, for how can we offer stale and sullied action to Shri Krishna? Keeping in mind the attitude of Yajna, an offering unto the Lord, the future is also renounced for the result is offered to Shri Krishna. Then we are verily meditating in action, when this BMI (body, mind, intellect) is being used by Shri Krishna to share this most beautiful knowledge, the I, me and mine being

absent, meditation is automatically happening. Being an instrument, thus, which is the part of Prakruti, He too needs this instrument as much as the instrument needs Him, through which He is acting. However, if the small 'I' is present and modifies knowledge for self-aggrandisement, then of course, Shri Krishna cannot use it in the skilful manner which is Yoga (*Yogah karmasu kaushalam* Ch.2 sh.50). It seems the skill in execution of an action is inversely proportional to the presence of the ego (I do). It is said the Bansuri is empty, and so Shri Krishna puts it to His lips and plays the divine tune! So, when we do not spill our samskaras on others and since we are not attached to the fruit of the action, both past and future being absent, the Karma is pure and perfect. The action is then performed by none other than the Self with the help of this particular BMI, which has taken a physical manifestation. An end to all psychological suffering, and what's more, an end to bondage by Karma. Shri Krishna says in Chapter 11, shloka 33, *Nimitta matra bhav savya sachin*. So, all that is required is the attitude of being the instrument; otherwise, your karma will bind you and Trishna (thirst), the Dukhabijam (seed of sorrow) is born. The one who is an anasuya (without doubt or fault-finding) and follows this advice will be liberated. Those who do not follow this advice will therefore obviously come to ruin and return to this samsara of temporary joys and sorrows.

Q6. How can one be even minded (samatvam) when internal conflict is rife?

Internal strife can be seen, isn't it? You say you have internal strife; you are separate from it, therefore, it becomes an object for you.

Sh.50 Ch. 2

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते । तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व
योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥50॥

**buddhi-yukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛita-duṣhkṛite tasmād
yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśhalam
Endowed with equanimity one sheds in this life both good
and evil. Therefore, strive for the practice of this yoga of
equanimity. Skill in action lies in the practice of this yoga.**

Swami Rama explains the term Buddhi Yoga as the action performed with a mental attitude of non-attachment to the fruits of the action. This is possible because the Buddhi can discriminate between Self and Non-Self. Once that is clear, it is easy.

Often, the question is asked, how can one undertake any action if there is no goal or desire for the fruit thereof? Both Swami Rama and Eknath say that those who have trodden the path show the way. They simply do action which is selfless and has the good of all at heart, then you may desire the fruit as much as you want!!

My mother loved this Shloka, for she said Yoga lies in skilful action. One cannot be skilled in action without practice, one cannot be skilled without discipline, and one cannot be skilled if the mind is distracted by the thought of the fruit of action. As explained above, equilibrium or evenness of mind comes to the one who becomes united with what he is doing. Yoga is union. When one is so totally lost in what he is doing that it is meditation, skill automatically gets expressed, and the fruit of the action is farthest from the mind. All of us have experienced these moments of total absorption, which is Yoga. Then, good or evil lose their hold, for one has gone beyond both. All that remains is the action, not even the doer!

Q7. How does one change habit patterns which are detrimental to a happy life?

The following shlokas give us the key to how to change habit patterns that rule our lives and cause suffering: Shloka 33 expresses our predicament, and the next shloka shows us the way out.

Sh. 33 Ch. 3

**सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि । प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि
निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥33 ॥**

**sadriśham cheṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛiter jñānavān api
prakṛitiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣhyati**

All living creatures follow their tendencies; even the wise man acts according. To the tendencies of his own nature. Of what use is restraint by force?

This shloka always troubled my intellect, for if restraint does not work due to the Gunās which drive even the wise man to a particular course of action, then what are unenlightened beings with aspiration for liberation hope to do? Where is the free will then? Shri Ramana Maharishi has said, "We have free will only in aspiring for Self-realisation and doing sadhana towards it; there is no other free will, which implies that the conditionings and samskaras hopelessly drive one to action."

It was only recently, understanding this shloka in the context of the next, that I got my answer. While aspiring for Self-realisation, which we have the free will to do, the sadhana entails that we rise above the pairs of opposites as explained in the next shloka.

Sh. 34 Ch.3

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ । तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ
ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥ 34 ॥

indriyasyendriyasyārthe rāga-dveṣhau vyavasthitau tayor
na vaśham āgachchhet tau hyasya paripanthinau

Attraction and repulsion are rooted in all sense objects.

**Man should never allow himself to be swayed by them
because they are the two principal enemies standing in the
way of his redemption.**

When I first read Sh.33 as expressed above, I was truly disheartened, for even a wise man is subject to his Gunās (tendencies and qualities), and I have personally also seen this, besides restraint and suppression make matters worse, so what of fools like me? It is in the very next breath that Shri Krishna reassures us and shows us the way out. The Gunās determine our likes and dislikes and propensities, but if our Buddhi is sharp and vigilant, it can catch these thieves that rob us of freedom!

Aai (my mother) explained that rāga (attraction) and dveshā (aversion) were only meant for your protection. Both Swami Rama and Eknath explain the terms indriya, senses and indriyārthe, sense objects. As soon as a sense organ contacts its object, attraction or aversion is generated, and this leads to an immediate reaction, unless one is vigilant. The reaction generates a chain of further reactions, and this is bondage. If we are vigilant and take the step towards that which is noble, even if it creates aversion initially, we will be able to overcome both aversion and attraction. Shreyas is that which may initially be challenging to do or like, but leads to long-term well-being, while Preyas is that which is pleasing and easy initially, but leads to disaster in the long term. In fact, as we

practise this further, we find the challenge of choosing Shreyas will vanish, and we will automatically choose it over Preyas. It is always more challenging to wake up in the morning and do one's sadhana, Shreyas, but in the long run, it brings such peace of mind and active joy that one gets addicted to it. That which is Preyas, e.g., going to the movies and sleeping late, eating out, leads to immediate gratification of the senses but ultimately results in fatigue, a bad stomach, ill health, and lack of sleep. Thus, allowing oneself to be caught in this game of attraction (craving) and aversion is the two supreme obstacles in the path to redemption. It is amply clear that if we don't go on autopilot and switch to manual mode (regarding attraction and craving, striving for achievement, avoiding and condemning the unpleasant), we will easily get liberated from the grip of Maya.

As referred to earlier, the Buddhi is the charioteer, the horses are the senses, and the mind is the reins, the deluded Jeevātama being the passenger. When this Buddhi is purified and knows the right path, we can hope to reach the goal. It felt like a practical and good proposition to imagine Shri Krishna as our charioteer, and where would He lead us?

Sh. 62 Ch.2

ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते | सङ्गात्सञ्जायते कामः
कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ||62||

dhyāyato viṣhayān puṁsaḥ saṅgas teṣhūpajāyatee saṅgāt
sañjāyate kāmaḥ kāmāt krodho 'bhijāyate

The man dwelling on sense objects develops attachment for
them for attachment springs desire and from desire
(unfulfilled) ensues anger.

Sh. 63 Ch. 2

क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः । स्मृतिभ्रंशाद्
बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥ 63 ॥

**krodhād bhavati sammohaḥ sammohāt smṛiti-vibhramah
smṛiti-bhranśhād buddhi-nāśho buddhi-nāśhāt prāṇaśhyati
From anger arises delusion, from delusion confusion of
memory, from confusion of memory, loss of reason and
from loss of reason one goes to complete ruin.**

The lack of gratification of desire leads to frustration and anger. 'A fool cannot get angry, the wise person does not'-
Swami Vivekananda.

This happens to those who constantly dwell on sense objects, leading to uncontrolled anger and frustration, with loss of memory and the delusion of false justification. Desire for an object and not getting it can lead to violence, such that one may even kill another in the wake of this imbalance. For example, two good friends may even kill each other if they fall in love with the same girl. In contrast, two good friends after Self-realisation will become even thicker friends and pursue their goal with zeal and harmony. So, dwelling on sense objects leads to selfishness and dwelling on Self-realisation leads to selflessness. Selflessness is the characteristic of one on the path to the Divine.

Dhyayato vishayan punsa, the first words of this shloka have guided many a sadhaka, including Eknath. It means when you dwell on sense objects, what follows is a given. Remembering this at the right time will save you from many a disaster. Today, there is no section of society where Eros (God of sensual pleasure) has not made it his homestead, flaunting physical attributes is the major attraction. This happens due to

the conviction that one is merely the body. Old classics also had a way of expressing love and romance, often in a subtle way. What Sri Krishna warns later is that attachment and eventual ruin due to anger, delusion and loss of memory are sure to follow. The vicious circle begins: the more we indulge in the senses, the less we get out of them; the less we get out of them, the more we indulge in them.

The two shlokas are really a continuum. The whole secret of sadhana lies revealed in: dhyayato vishayanpunsa, which means, whatever the mind dwells on, it gets attached to, following which the cascade of events of desire, anger, loss of memory and reason and complete ruin follows. Fear happens when we feel we can do nothing about it, and anger occurs when we think we can do something about it.

Now, the key is if the mind dwells on Shri Krishna, it develops attachment to Him, then the desire for Him is so gripping that one cannot rest till one unites with the Beloved! So, just start with training the mind to dwell on Him alone. Raishkan of Vrindavan has said,

“आईना साफ़ किया तो मैं नज़र आया ।
"मैं" साफ़ किया तो खुदा नजर आया ।।
When I cleared the mirror, I saw I,
When I cleared the I, the Lord was seen.

Sh.10 Ch.14

रजस्तमश्चाभिभूय सत्त्वं भवति भारत । रजः सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमः
सत्त्वं रजस्तथा ॥14 ॥
rajas tamaśh chābhibhūya sattvaṁ bhavati bhārata rajah
sattvaṁ tamaśh chaiva tamaḥ sattvaṁ rajas tathā

**Overpowering Rājas and Tamas, Arjuna, Sattva prevails,
overpowering Sattva and Tamas, Rājas prevails,
overpowering Sattva and Rājas, Tamas prevails.**

Chapter 14 explains what the fabric of this creation is by giving us the composition of the yarn that goes into it. The three Gunas are Satva, which brings clarity and balance; Rājas, which brings dynamism, action, and usually drives you towards worldly gain; and Tamas, which leads to indolence, laziness, and ignorance. At any given time, one or the other Guna prevails, if we can alter the proportion, we can tilt the balance towards a balanced attitude. For this, understanding how things work in the mind and the body is very important. It also means that the more we practise, the better we get at achieving equanimity.

Q8. How can one meet challenges that seem insurmountable?

Little do we realise the power within us. We tend to depend on situations to change to get happiness, while the exact reverse is the case. Only we can get ourselves out of trouble. Maybe you've heard this before, but perhaps what you might not have thought of is that we only put ourselves into trouble. Shri Krishna, therefore, advises:

Sh.5 Ch. 6

**उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् । आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो
बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥५॥**

**uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādaye Atmaiva
hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ**

One should lift oneself up with one's own efforts and should not degrade oneself, for one's own self is one's friend and one's own self is one's own enemy.

Dependency on external means cannot help the sadhaka, says Swami Rama. If he thinks visiting shrines and doing pilgrimages will be the means to find true happiness, he is deluding himself, as he is still seeking in the external world, which is devoid of true happiness. For unfoldment and enlightenment to occur, he should be led to his inner light, which will guide him to himself. The Self alone realises the Self. After one has explored external means and discovered their futility to give true happiness, he turns within. That day is most auspicious. A seeker must never allow himself to slip back into old habit patterns once he is on the path. The inner light will guide him; sometimes he gets confused, but the Self will always show the way, and for this, he must trust himself. He who has conquered his lower self with the help of his Self is a friend to Himself. He is an enemy to himself if he gives in to past tendencies and does not follow his inner guidance. There are some who project their own incompetence on others and refuse to take responsibility for their own actions and thus are unable to help themselves. Further, the one who has read scriptures and is guided by a Guru knows the difference between the lower self (mere self) and the Self and identifies with the Self; only then is he said to have made the right effort to lift himself.

Ekknath says, no one can help us grow into knowledge. We must do it ourselves. The Guru can point the way, but we must walk the road. The first step is to take responsibility for where we find ourselves, and not blame our parents, spouse, boss or fate! Once that is done, decide to get out of the morass you

find yourself in by your own effort. The other vital step is to stop procrastinating and take the necessary steps so that you can pursue sadhana assiduously. Finally, trust the Lord, for in trusting the Lord, we are trusting our Self, for He dwells within us.

Swami Veda Bharati told us to learn this shloka by heart, and he often said, “If you do not know any other shloka, it does not matter; learn this and act on it.” It’s been a long time since I ever blamed anything on anybody, or any situation on “taqdeer”, etc. Taking responsibility for the situation, one finds oneself in is the first step to empowering oneself to change it. There is a perfect prayer which says, Lord, give me the courage to change the things I don’t like, the patience to accept the things (e.g., ill health, incurable disease) I cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference.

When one puts a source of happiness outside oneself, there is no way one can achieve anything he is set out to do. We find people lamenting and complaining that fate was against them, or else they too could have realised their dreams, is a contradiction in terms. It is only when we take responsibility for our own creation that we can get the power to change it, or else we shall remain helpless. We are often jealous of the success we find in others; we rarely ever see the work that has gone into it. This is so even with worldly life, then what can be said of spiritual sadhana? Swami Muktananda, my first Guru, always said: ‘Sadhaka to mein bana dunga, siddha apne aap ban na hoga.’ (The seeker in you can be awakened by me, but the Sought you must become yourself.) It is an undeniable advice Sri Krishna is giving us, lift yourself by your own effort, for you alone are your own friend and you alone are your own enemy. Take, e.g., a situation like an accident, or rape or

financial loss happened, Paul Brunton, a British philosopher and author, has said, the event is fixed, but your attitude is not; that is the only choice we have. The right attitude comes from within, and it's we who decide to look positively or negatively. That will then determine the future action and, accordingly, the fruit thereof.

About spiritual progress, too, I have found that unless we apply our own mind to it, no amount of Grace can surmount the ignorance. Unless we decide to eradicate it from within, it will not happen. We often find it in children, repeated admonishing and prodding do not work, and then suddenly one finds the child correcting himself because "it came from inside." The whole drama is, in fact, "inside." Every external stimulus is experienced within and reprojected outwards; the illusion of an external reality endures because of this mind's space/time construct. When we do the prāṇāyāma, Bhramari, we are directed to experience the sound within only. Realising that everything is within anyway, and so it seems dumb to go out there to correct, develop or evolve, all of which must happen within. Now, no one can enter your world, not your spouse, not your Guru. Only you reside there. Who then can uplift you? You alone!

There is another analogy I find extremely helpful, the mirror we look into, to see our image, and when we don't like what we see, we try to clean and fix the image! How laughable, isn't it? We even beg the Guru to do it for us. A story is given at the end of the chapter to illustrate how we can lift ourselves out of an abyss with our own effort.

Story time! The story of Alison. When we had gone to Washington to attend the FIGO conference, the theme had

been violence against women, and the speaker invited was Alison, a South African white girl. She told her story: She was apprehended by two men as she tried to get into her car from the shopping mall, pushed into the back seat by one while the other drove away onto the highway. Somewhere on the way, they stopped, and she was pushed off the road, raped and stabbed. Even her neck was slit; she passed out. The two drove away.

After what seemed like a few hours, she came to and had to drag herself to the centre of the road to get some attention. She found that her head fell back when she tried to lift it. She held that with one hand, till she saw that, as she got up, her bowels were hanging out.

She held that with the other hand and mustered enough courage to lie in the centre of the road vertically. Once again, she passed out. One car passed by, but did not stop. The other car that passed by stopped. A young man got out and spread his coat over her naked body and called for an ambulance. Holding her hand, he kept saying, "You will make it." The ambulance arrived.

She hoped he might get in with her. He did. At the hospital, she was straight wheeled to the operating theatre and after a seven-hour surgery, she was in the ICU for several days till she recovered.

On the second day, the police came to interrogate her. She was the daughter of a single parent, and her mother always told her, "Alison, you are special." Even as her assailants were holding her, she had noted the brand of cigarettes, the tattoos on their arms and what they looked like. The description led

the police to apprehend them, and as the police handcuffed them, saying, "You are being arrested for attempt to murder," one of them blurted out 'Attempt?' That sealed the case. They pleaded guilty, saying Satan had entered them; however, the judge gave them life imprisonment.

Now, Alison went into depression, she put on weight and could not cope with the shock. She was reminded of what her mother said, "Alison, you are special." Alison now tells the bright side of the story and explains what the ABC of life is. After six months of moping around, she decided she had to gather herself together and face the world. As she recalls, 'A' is attitude, her attitude to fight against all odds and drag her body to the road, while her mind cried, 'You have only a 2 % chance of making it, 98% you will drop dead on the way.' It was just the 2% belief that propelled her to place her body in the middle of the road. She asked us, "If I had 100% belief, what then could I not do?" That is what brought her out of depression, and then she had a choice: either to be depressed and drug dependent or work towards the safety of women, and that's what she did! She concluded the ABC of life is Attitude, Belief and Choice, the audience rose to their feet applauding her for giving us the key to life!

Q9. Why does man commit wrong despite knowing it to be so?

This is a question we ask ourselves often after we have done something we know is wrong. For e.g., if being a diabetic, I eat sweets, and tell myself, 'Just this once,' or to give a better example: Shri Krishna was asked why he did not change Duryodhana, after all the Pandavas were right. He said He had gone to Duryodhana, who replied, "*janami dharmam na cha*

mey pravrutti, janami adharma na cha mey nivrutti.” { I know what is Dharma I am not inclined, I know what is Adharma I cannot escape it”]

Arjuna puts this very question to Shri Krishna.

Sh. 36 Ch. 3

**अर्जुन उवाच । अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ॥ 36 ॥**

**arjuna uvācha atha kena prayukto 'yaṁ pāpaṁ charati
pūruṣhaḥ anichchhann api vārṣhṇeya balād iva niyojitaḥ
Now impelled by what, Krishna, does this man commit sin
even involuntarily, as though driven by force.**

Arjun understands that, despite knowing the right path, many times we waver and, as if compelled by some unknown force, actually engage in unwholesome activity. In Marathi, there is a perfect saying, '*kallta ahey pun vallat nahee*', meaning it is understood but not getting implemented. He is wondering what that force might be and feels it necessary to ask his beloved Sri Krishna, the all-knowing one. Often, one feels helplessly drawn towards an action one knows is inherently wrong. Later on, one even tries to justify it.

Shri Krishna explains:

Sh. 5 Ch.3

**न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् । कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म
सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥ 5 ॥**

**na hi kaśhchit kṣhaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhatyakarma-kṛit
kāryate hyavaśhaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛiti-jair guṇaiḥ**

**Surely, none can ever remain inactive even for a moment;
for everyone is helplessly driven to action by modes of
Prakruti (nature born qualified satva, rājas and tamas).**

So, it is due to a pre-programming that we take birth, with different permutations and combinations of the three Gunās of Prakruti. The three Gunās: Satva: clarity and spiritual aspiration, Rājas: the dynamic that drives you to act towards worldly pleasure and ambition, Tamas: leads to indolence, addiction, and sloth. These three strands form our body and mind and depending on the guṇa which is predominant at the time, one has to take action; the action happens, as though we are helpless to change the course. This is the law of Nature, Prakruti. So then, is there no way out? Of course, there is. Shri Krishna further explains the cause of our bewilderment.

Sh.37 Ch.3

**श्रीभगवानुवाच । काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥37 ॥**

**śhrī bhagavān uvācha kāma eṣha krodha eṣha rajo-guṇa-
samudbhavaḥ mahāśhano mahā-pāpmā viddhyenam iha
vairiṇam**

**Shri Bhagwan said: It is desire begotten of the element of
Rājas, which appears as wrath; nay, it is insatiable and
grossly wicked. Know this to be the enemy in this case.**

Sh. 38 Ch. 3

**धूमेनाव्रियते वह्निर्यथादर्शो मलेन च । यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भस्तथा
तेनेदमावृतम् ॥38 ॥**

**dhūmenāvriyate vahnir yathādarśho malena cha
yatholbenāvṛito garbhas tathā tenedam āvṛitam**

As fire is covered by smoke, a mirror by dust, and an embryo by the amniotic fluid, so is knowledge covered by desire.

It is thwarted desire that leads one into anger, and these truly form two sides of the same coin. Of the six enemies, kaam (desire), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (delusion), mada (arrogance), and matsara (jealousy) of man, these two are the principal ones. These are a result of the quality of Rājas, which drives all the 'go-getters' of this world to action!

But we know all this, and yet we commit the same mistakes again and again. Why? Because all the above arise from the single source, Avidyā/Maya, i.e., ignorance of our true nature. The second Sh. 38 explains that our mind is clouded, metaphorically speaking, just as smoke covers the poorly lit fire, dust occludes the mirror, and the amniotic fluid and membrane, which are considered impure, encapsulate the pure foetus.

Once the diagnosis of the disease is made, the treatment is easy. We know now that the cause of desire is ignorance, and so Shri Krishna says:

Sh.35 Ch.4

**यज्ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव । येन भूतान्यशेषेण
द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि ॥35 ॥**

**yaj jñātvā na punar moham evaṁ yāsyasi pāṇḍava yena
bhūtānyaśheṣheṇa drakṣhyasyātmanyatho mayi**

Arjuna, when you have achieved enlightenment, ignorance will delude you no more. In the light of that knowledge, you will see the entire creation first within your own Self, and then in Me.

In the above shloka, Shri Krishna explains the cause of desire as ignorance of our true nature. Shri Krishna has already taught Arjuna the path of Jnāna and Karma Sanyāsa and has instructed him to approach an enlightened Master most humbly.

For a moment, imagine you have dropped the illusion of being a separate individual and have recognised yourself as the ONE underlying substratum of all creation, would you really suffer from desire? You are the Whole; you are complete, nothing would make you more whole, so where can any of the six enemies arise?

Q10. Why does action have to be undertaken at all? Why not renounce and go to a cave in the Himalayas?

Sh.5 Ch.3

**न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् । कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म
सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥५॥**

**na hi kaśhchit kṣhaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhatyakarma-kṛit
kāryate hyavaśhaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛiti-jair guṇaiḥ
Surely, none can ever remain inactive even for a moment;
for everyone is helplessly driven to action by modes of
Prakruti (nature born qualified satva, rājas and tamas).**

The same shloka can be re-sited here and is more applicable to this question.

To further clarify the difficulties of Jnāna Yoga, Shri Krishna now explicitly shows Arjuna that no one is bereft of action, even the one who is practising stillness is still breathing, sleeping and sitting, etc., for such is the law of nature. So, by giving up the action that you have been trained to do, you will

not be absolved of action per se. It is therefore better to do an action which you can perform skilfully with non-attachment and selflessly.

It is the Gunās: Satva, Rājas, and Tamas in various permutations and combinations and proportions that form the structure of action. The Ego is under the illusion that it chooses the action. It usurps the position of doer and appropriates the praise and blame for the same to himself, thereby karma follows him like a shadow.

Sh.6 Ch.3

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥६॥

karmendriyāṇi sanyamya ya āste manasā smaran

indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā mithyāchāraḥ sa uchyate

He who outwardly restrains the organs of sense and action, sits mentally dwelling on the objects of senses, that man of deluded intellect is called a hypocrite.

Swami Rama explains that outward renunciation of family, possessions and creature comforts is not enough. The path of renunciation is austere, and only a very few can take to it. During and immediately after the time of the Buddha, many men and women renounced worldly life and took to begging for sustenance. Some of course were genuine, as they experienced the ephemeral nature of life and felt they would better give their entire attention to the search for truth. Most, however, were charlatans and craved the comforts and luxuries of life inwardly, for whom Shri Krishna says that they were being hypocritical. It is better to do one's duty sincerely and selflessly, surrendering the fruit of that action at the feet of the Guru or God, than to be a renunciate craving material

comforts. The path of action is far easier and more appropriate for the householder and those actively involved in public life. We have the shining example of Mahatma Gandhi, whose every action was for the good of humanity. Eknath says the twentieth century will not be remembered as the nuclear century but as the Gandhian century, for a life which exemplified the tenets of selfless action, that will remain a beacon in times to come.

My own feeling is that renunciation, even while desiring the object one has renounced, leads to some degree of self-control and increases the sankalpa shakti (power to complete a resolve). It is therefore necessary, while not renouncing worldly life totally, that one should desist from indulging in one's favourite food or taking some resolve and completing it so that one develops self-control. This, of course, is not the same as taking to the path of the mendicant. It also serves to remind us of the greater goal of surrendering the fruit of action and selfless action. One could use it to remind oneself every time one desired the object, "Did I do my actions selflessly today?"

Sh.7 Ch.3

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन । कर्मेन्द्रियैः
कर्मयोगमसक्तः स विशिष्यते ॥७॥

yas tvindriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhate 'rjuna

karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam asaktaḥ sa viśiṣhyate

On the other hand, he who controls the organs of sense and action by the power of his will and remaining unattached undertakes the Yoga of selfless action through those organs, Arjuna, he excels.

Shri Krishna is explaining to Arjuna the method of action, not coveting the outcome, doing the action for the sake of the well-being of all, leads to success in sadhana.

Swami Rama describes three types of actions:

1. Action done totally for oneself, e.g., brushing the teeth, eating, ablutions, etc.
2. Action done in the context of relationships, such as sharing with others through activities like cooking, working in an office, or playing games.
3. Action done only towards 'self-realisation,' it is this higher type of action in which we are asked to surrender the fruit at the feet of Shri Krishna.

The message of the Bhagavad Gita is not to shirk one's duty, but rather to do it skilfully with full attention while not craving for the fruit of the action. This can be achieved; it is not impractical if we bear in mind the good of all and not only of our narrow self. This will ensure enthusiastic action, which will clear our path to Self-recognition and perennial joy.

Q11. Who should be our role model?

One thinks, "Oh, this does not apply to me, after all, I'm no celebrity." That is not true at all. We are all role models to someone or the other. Let me show you how. Those of us who have had children, the little ones (only), always look up to their parents and learn by imitation, so many juniors in school and college do too. Shri Krishna advises Arjuna why it is vital to live up to his iconic image, or else he may create chaos in the minds of so many. When one's heart is not in the action, it is well to remember that the lives of so many are inspired, and as given above, karma should be done with the attitude of the well-being of all and without attachment.

Sh.20/21 Ch.3

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः । लोकसंग्रहमेवापि
सम्पश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि ॥20॥ यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥21॥

karmaṇaiva hi sansiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ loka-
saṅgraham evāpi sampāśhyan kartum arhasi
yad yad ācharati śhreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janaḥ sa yat
pramāṇam kurute lokas tad anuvartate

**It is through action without attachment alone that Janaka
and other wise men reached perfection.**

**Considering the maintenance of the world order, you
should take action.**

**For whatever a great man does, that very thing other men
also do; whatever standard he sets up, the generality of
men follow the same.**

King Janaka performed his duties as an Emperor while being totally non-attached, as he had only the well-being of others at heart and desired nothing for himself. He is cited as an example of ultimate equanimity achieved by one who is awareness itself.

While performing any role, the actor, even when he totally identifies with the role and does a great job, knows that he is not the role! Imagine if Karma would accrue to a murderer in a movie! Thus, no Karma can ever accrue to such a one who has dissociated with the limited identity. To achieve this, the easiest method as propounded by Bhagwan Sri Krishna is to relinquish the fruit of action, which then cuts asunder the vicious circle of Karma, more fruit, more karma! As one who does action for the sake of fame, for example, and gets it, gets addicted to that sensation of being applauded and repeats

further karma with the hope of a similar result. Yet one can perform the role, surrendering the fruit of the action, observing internally the sensations and developing a space that is liberating, then no Karma can ever accrue. When one learns this trick, it is addictive, and it becomes a source of perennial joy with no dependence on any external factor.

It is a well-known fact that in life, we have role models and icons. If our role model suddenly renounces and walks away into the forest, it would lead to total chaos amongst the masses. They would be confused and lost. It is therefore necessary for Arjuna to continue to do his duty, for otherwise he would be the cause of much confusion in his country. Everyone looked up to him as a great warrior; he only had to continue to perform his duty without attachment, and then no 'karma' would accrue to him. Accordingly, he would also lead his people on the right path.

Shri Krishna has given the example of King Janaka, and then he also offers his own example, saying he has nothing whatsoever to attain in all the three worlds, but despite it all, He acts. For if He did not, the whole populace would go to ruin. It is essential that we perform our duty for the sake of the well-being of all. This we have seen is the most significant sign of a Self-realised being. Their work is an expression of their compassion and wisdom.

In daily life, we see that in a family, the children learn the words most frequently used by their parents, and they act according to the actions they see, not what is preached to them. In childhood, they idolise their parents, and it is vital that the right values are instilled to ensure that the young move in the right direction. Otherwise, in this world of

bombardment by media and peer pressure, it is very easy to go from desire to desire without any fulfilment, and all one ends up having is restlessness.

Sh. 26 Ch. 3

न बुद्धिभेदं जनयेदज्ञानां कर्मसङ्गिनाम् । जोषयेत्सर्वकर्माणि
विद्वान्युक्तः समाचरन् ॥26॥

na buddhi-bhedaṁ janayed ajñānāṁ karma-saṅginām
joṣhayet sarva-karmāṇi vidvān yuktaḥ samācharan

The wise man established in the Self should not unsettle the mind of the ignorant attached to action, but should get them to perform all their duties, duly performing his own duties.

As is usual in the mundane world, we indulge in making plans with goals in view and expect results. Every corporate operation is aimed at achieving a target and surpassing past performance; incentives are given to improve production and marketing. It would be unwise to call this action unwise! However, in the context of the Bhagavad Gita, Shri Krishna advises improving the quality of the product and having the general good as your goal; all balance is easily achieved. It is difficult to even imagine that we put the general good first, and not our personal gain, for this is the way our mind has been conditioned. The goals we are taught to have are always personal goals. From kindergarten, you must come first in studies, in sports, and in arts. It does not matter if your best friend fails; you have no time to help him, after all, you have to study.

This reminds me of the beautiful song in which two little boys are playing with their toy horses, and the horse of one boy breaks; the other boy says, "Do you think I would leave you

crying when my horse has space for two?” It so happens that they are both in the army and in the cavalry during the war, the second boy’s horse is killed, and he is left stranded. Quickly, the first boy pulls him onto his horse and charges away, saying, “Do you think I would leave you dying when my horse has space for two?”

Sri Krishna gently tells us, put the thought of the other first and forget the reward, for that is a given. The wise act in a selfless manner, and in the long run, they succeed in achieving results far superior to the self-oriented goals of the unwise people who act only to improve their own conditions and amass wealth for themselves and their progeny at the cost of the labourer and society at large.

The truly wise are not attached to either action or inaction, as explained earlier, and no karma accrues to them, but if they choose to act, e.g., like Shri Krishna himself, they bring about total wellbeing almost spontaneously without any attachment to the result. They are therefore never perturbed even in the face of failure, loss or sorrow. Their equilibrium is not lost.

The wise never abruptly change course or introduce ideas which may create disturbance in the minds of the followers. They never expect people to leave their duties; instead, they guide them to love their duties and do them skilfully. This itself is a great sadhana and can lead us to freedom. They inspire them to excel and set increasingly ambitious goals before them, such that their mind eventually turns within.

Q12. If one has done something wrong, what can help one let go of it?

One would think that Shri Krishna could offer some insight into this. It is a problem one would refer to a counsellor. But isn't Shri Krishna the Supreme Counsellor? So, here we go:

Sh. 36 Ch. 4

**अपि चेदसि पापेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यः पापकृत्तमः | सर्वं ज्ञानप्लवेनैव
वृजिनं सन्तरिष्यसि ||36||**

**api ched asi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpa-kṛit-tamaḥ sarvaṁ
jñāna-plavenaiva vṛjinaṁ santariṣhyasi**

**Even if you were the most sinful of all sinners, this
Knowledge alone would carry you, like a raft, across all your
sins.**

Wisdom is the consumer of all sins and actions. Wisdom destroys all sins like a well-kindled fire reduces all fuel to ashes. From this, we understand right knowledge is the cause that renders all fruitive action impotent⁶.

Once the Sadhaka has made the right resolve, he gains spiritual knowledge, and he does not slip back into old habit patterns. Just as fire turns everything to ashes, Truth destroys the veil of illusion. First, with discipline, one can withdraw the senses from the sense objects, then with further persistence, from sense perception and thoughts which arise. With continued vigilance, he determines the source of these thoughts and stops identifying with the deep-rooted habit patterns which arise from the unconscious mind and latent tendencies. He is then known as the Seer or Rishi, for he simply observes without identification, with the power of discretion, Vivek. This results in effortless dispassion, Vairagya, and thus he is free from bondage. Shri Krishna is

⁶ From Commentary on Bhagavad Gita by Shankara

instructing Arjuna to follow this antar-yoga (inward looking), through which even the greatest of sinners can cross the river of delusion with ease, making Knowledge (Vivek and Vairagya) the raft.

It must be recalled that Arjuna was concerned about incurring sin by killing so many and leaving widows, which would then bring about the downfall of the family. Vivek and Vairagya form the raft that can take you across the stormy sea of samsāra. Personally, I love this shloka for it gives me hope. It proclaims that even a sinner can cross the ocean of delusion with the raft of Jnāna (Knowledge). After reading the commentaries of the Sages Swami Rama and Eknath, however, I felt a little disheartened, for they still seem to indicate that hard work and discipline cannot be escaped! There is, of course, great wisdom in what they say, for we cannot develop that sensitivity and stillness so essential to exercise Vivek. Vivek is only about what I am and what I am not. Once the identification with personality is dropped, Truth becomes apparent, and Vairagya is effortless.

Q13. Why is it that despite getting most desires fulfilled, ye dil mange more (one is never satisfied)?

We scarcely understand that fulfilling a desire is like pouring fuel into a fire. No sooner is a desire fulfilled than another raises its head, much like the Hydra and Planaria, which can regenerate from any cut body parts. So, to overcome desire seems like a futile task. We have often been told to attain the Lord; you must become desireless. This seemed more like a catch-22 situation, because to become desireless, you must know the Lord, and that is the Truth. Shri Krishna tells us the reason why desire is this Hydra constantly regenerating,

because Knowledge of our true nature, which is the source of all contentment, peace and joy, is lacking. In chapter 3 of the Bhagavad Gita, Shri Krishna tells us the sequence and where the axe is applied to cut asunder ignorance, which leads to desire.

Kāma (lust, in general desire), Krodh (anger), Lobha (greed), Moha (clouding of intellect), Mada (arrogance), Matsar (jealousy) are the six weaknesses which man suffers from. The first three are considered significant. Kāma is indeed foremost, for it is the root of krodha if desire is not gratified. The cascade of events that follows, such as clouding of the intellect leading to loss of discrimination, as explained in the last chapter, results in ruin and destruction. Just as the mirror, which is covered by dust, cannot reflect anything, similarly, a desire-filled mind is totally incapable of right choice.

Desire arises from the preponderance of Rajo Guṇa; the key, therefore, is to convert it into Satva Guṇa by being vigilant as to where the senses are heading and converting every desire into just the one “I want only You, Shri Krishna, nothing less will suffice.”

The seat of desire. He now tells us where desire is seated, which, by enveloping wisdom, forms the enemy of the whole world. The seat of the enemy being known, it is easy to kill it.

Sh.39 Ch.3

आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा । कामरूपेण कौन्तेय
दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥३९॥

āvṛitam jñānam etena jñānino nitya-vairiṇā kāma-rūpeṇa
kaunteya duṣhpūreṇānalena cha

The knowledge of even the most discerning gets covered by this perpetual enemy in the form of insatiable desire, which is never satisfied and burns like fire, O son of Kunti.

The wise man knows even before suffering the consequence that he has been led by desire to evil ways, and therefore, he feels ever miserable. Whence desire is a constant enemy of the wise, not of the ignorant. For the latter regards desire as a friend at the time he thirsts for objects, and it is only when suffering results from it that he learns the truth, that he has been rendered miserable by desire. Wherefore it is a constant enemy of the wise alone. It is insatiable and greedy; it never has consuming power...*Shankara*⁷.

Sh. 40/41 Ch.3

**इन्द्रियाणि मनो बुद्धिरस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते | एतैर्विमोहयत्येष
ज्ञानमावृत्य देहिनम् ||40||**

**indriyāṇi mano buddhir asyādhiṣṭhānam uchyate etair
vimohayatyeṣha jñānam āvṛitya dehinam**

The senses, mind, and intellect are said to be breeding grounds of desire. Through them, it clouds one's knowledge and deludes the embodied soul.

**तस्मात्त्वमिन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ | पाप्मानं प्रजहि ह्येनं
ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम् ||41||**

**tasmāt tvam indriyāṅyādau niyamy bharatarṣhabha
pāpmānaṁ prajahi hyenaṁ jñāna-vijñāna-nāśhanam**
**Therefore, O best of the Bharatas, in the very beginning,
bring the senses under control and slay this enemy called
desire, which is the embodiment of sin and destroys
knowledge and realisation.**

⁷ From Commentary on Bhagavad Gita by Shankara

Wherefore, Jnāna is the knowledge of the Self and other things acquired from the Shastra (scripture) and from a teacher (acharya). Do thou cast off from you the destroyer of Jnāna, which is that which leads to the highest good. It has been taught, "first master the senses, and cast-off desire, thy enemy." Now it may be asked, where should one take one's stand, and cast off the desire? ...Shankara⁸

Sh. 42 Ch. 3

इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः । मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो
बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः ॥ 42 ॥

indriyāṇi parāṅyāhur indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ manasas
tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ

The senses are said to be greater than the body; greater than the senses is the mind. Greater than the mind is intellect; and what is greater than the intellect is He, the Self.

Ekknath says we are a composite of body, senses, intellect and Ātman. We lack harmony between all these due to desire and lack of discipline; once that is established, the inner journey is no distance at all.

Swami Rama explains that beyond the body consciousness is the field created by sense perception, and beyond that is the subtle realm of the mind, and beyond that is the vast field of the unconscious. Even beyond this is the Ātman. In this verse, the word 'parā' is used, which means beyond and is the most important indication of who we truly are. If we identify with the body, we are the small self, and if we identify with the Ātman, we are the Self, which is eternal and immaculate.

⁸ From Commentary on Bhagavad Gita by Shankara

Once while attending a class that Swami Veda was taking for the Gurukula students, he asked, “*Ātma kya hai?* (What is *Ātma*)”. And of course, even though not a Gurukul student, I put my hand up and was like the child who knows the answer and wants the teacher to ask her. Swamiji let me answer, and like an erudite student, I quoted the above shloka. He looked at me and said, “No, no, that is not the answer.” My jaw dropped, my spirits dropped! He looked at his students, and one at the back who was standing replied, “*Mein hun yeh anubhuti hi ātma hai, the experience, I Am is Ātma.*” Swamiji nodded and looking at me said, “We don’t just teach theory here!”

The senses are five: the sense of hearing, etc. When compared with the physical body, which is gross, external, and limited, the senses are superior as they are comparatively more subtle and internal and have a more extensive sphere of action. So, say the wise. Superior to the senses is the mind (manas, the impulsive nature), which is composed of thoughts and desires, of errors and doubts (sankalpa and vikalpa). Superior to the mind is reason (buddhi), characterised by determination (nischaya). So, he who is behind all things visible, inclusive of reason, the Dweller in the body, is apparently bewildered by the veil of desire. The Self is the Pure Consciousness, also known as the Chaitanya Sākshi. It merely witnesses the show and yet takes the ride through this samsāra (maze/chakravayuh).

Sh. 43 Ch. 3

एवं बुद्धेः परं बुद्ध्वा संस्तभ्यात्मानमात्मना । जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो
कामरूपं दुरासदम् ॥४३॥

evaṃ buddheḥ paraṃ buddhvā sanstabhyātmānam ātmanā
jahi śhatruṃ mahā-bāho kāma-rūpaṃ durāsadam

Thus, Arjuna, knowing the Self which is higher than the intellect and subduing the mind by reason, kills this enemy in the form of desire that is hard to overcome.

The knowledge of the Truth bestows freedom from fear, makes one invincible, but to be that, one needs to control the senses and always think, speak and act with awareness. It is essential to be disciplined. Shri Krishna says, having known this Truth, kill the enemy of desire and be one with the Self so that delusion can no longer take hold of you.

Swami Rama says, the objects of this external world constantly lead one to identify with the phenomenal world, which is continually changing and holds our attention with the result that we forget the unchanging, eternal Self who we truly are. How is one to kill this formidable enemy? Just to summarise what Shri Krishna has told us through this discourse:

- Know you are the Self, and it is Prakruti that acts through the Gunās.
- Surrender all fruits of action at Shri Krishna's feet, and act without attachment, and no Karma will accrue.
- Every act, word, and thought should be an offering like a Yajna, which then automatically frees one from bondage.

Q14. So then, what does one who is established in this yoga look like? How does he behave?

Sh. 55 Ch. 2

श्रीभगवानुवाच । प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्यार्थ मनोगतान् ।
आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥55॥

śhrī bhagavān uvācha prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha
mano-gatān ātmany-evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthita-prajñas
tadochyate

Shri Bhagwan said: Arjuna when one thoroughly casts off all
cravings of the mind and is satisfied in the Self through the
joy of the Self, he is then called stable of mind.

Sh. 56 Ch. 2

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः । वीतरागभयक्रोधः
स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥ 56 ॥

duḥkheṣhv-anudvigna-manāḥ sukheṣhu vigata-sprīhaḥ vīta-
rāga-bhaya-krodhaḥ sthita-dhīr munir uchyate

The sage whose mind remains unperturbed amid sorrows,
whose thirst for pleasure has altogether disappeared, who
is free from passion, fear and anger, is called stable of mind.

Sh. 57 Ch. 2

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् । नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि
तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ 57 ॥

yaḥ sarvatrānabhisnehas tat tat prāpya śhubhāśhubham
nābhinandati na dveṣṭī tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

He who is unattached to everything and meeting with good
and evil neither rejoices nor recoils his mind is stable.

We take the three shlokas together as they explain the traits
of the Sthitapradnya and address Arjuna's question.

Swami Rama says the Self is known by the Self alone and not
by any other means. Once this knowing is firm, the attraction
towards worldly objects, thoughts and/or emotions vanishes.
Such a man of wisdom is of a stable mind. The practical
implications of this knowledge are that he no longer gets

deluded by appearances and can actually feel the ephemeral nature of events, as he is forever in the witness mode of consciousness, even when asleep. For then the pendulum swing of pleasure and pain, good and evil, no longer holds him captive.

Eknath reminds us, it is as though Shri Krishna is asking, ‘Do you not desire Samādhī? Are you still in the grip of craving and aversion? Fear and anger?’ The one who is no longer pulled by pleasure or pulled by pain is the Sthitapradnya.

Happiness, which is created by building tension and releasing, is a sense pleasure, a law of diminishing consumption and utility, like an addiction, is the happiness of the world. It is a natural human tendency to want only pleasure, as if we could ever do so. This is the illusion. We are always trying to separate pain and pleasure, whereas they are not two; they are one. The only secret lies in seeing through the game. This is possible. The sages have done it, and so can we, only if we are willing to grow; it cannot be forced on us, however great the Guru or kind the Guru is. We must also look into seeing if our desire for truth is genuine or just superficial. Do we truly, truly want the truth?

“The unexamined life is not worth living”, says Socrates. Shravana (listening), Manana (reflecting, contemplating), and Nidhidhyasana (steady meditation) are the means by which the ingrained patterns in us can be eradicated. Realisation must be actualised. It must be manifested; does it take me beyond the suffering of this life?

The man of wisdom (Sthitapradnya) has done it. He has gone beyond the pair of opposites, which are inseparable conjoint

twins! He is established in his SELF and therefore is complete, no longer in any kind of lack. Seeing clearly the nature of samsāra, he is unattached, free from fear and anger. When we are totally ignorant of the deeper meaning of life, we are 100% sure that wealth will grant us the freedom to get what we want, and we will be more and more free as we expand our wealth and estate! Sometimes a lifetime passes in this illusion, not realising that it actually leads to bondage; how much more would we want to stick on to this life if we had enormous wealth? How much more would we have to work to ensure no one took it away from us? Would that lead to freedom or bondage? What if we got an incurable disease? Would wealth save us?

However, with the grace of the Guru or some curiosity on our part, we start to wonder if there might be something grander than what the world has heretofore offered us. On deeper reflection, we sense that it is not how it seemed. The very reason for our bondage is so-called wealth, attachment to our near and dear ones, and habit patterns; these do not liberate, they bind us to a kind of compulsive behaviour. Some wise one has said- the fool keeps repeating the same action expecting a different result! This then, we have to struggle to change.

The man of wisdom has seen through this game, and his behaviour exemplifies it. Shri Mooji says blessed is he whose very presence is the evidence of truth.

Some stories that illustrate the Shtitapradnya well:

A letter criticising and cursing Ramana was given to Shri Ramana. He started to correct the grammatical errors in it. However, someone pointed out that the letter was speaking

about him. His response was classic, “It’s about somebody called Ramana”, he said.

A young monk in the Ramakrishna Mission was told to leave and go to the Himalayas to atone for something he had not done. He had been wrongly accused. So, sad, he went to the senior monk who was lying on his deathbed and told him. The senior monk took him close and said, “This is the best news, now you go and be with your God, alone, none to disturb you.” The young monk left the room with a smile on his face and quickened his steps to contemplate the Lord. So, it shows how the attitude alone changes the situation itself.

Q15. I am unable to focus on Japa, prayer or meditation despite trying, Shri Krishna, help me.

In Chapter 6 of the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord explains in detail how one should practice Dhyāna; in fact, the very title of the chapter is Dhyāna Yoga. After a long explanation of 32 shlokas, in the 33rd shloka, Arjuna seems as if to say, “All that you just said has gone way over my head” and asks:

Sh. 33 Ch. 6

अर्जुन उवाच।

**योऽयं योगस्त्वया प्रोक्तः साम्येन मधुसूदन । एतस्याहं न पश्यामि
चञ्चलत्वास्थितिं स्थिराम् ॥३३॥**

**arjuna uvācha yo 'yaṁ yogas tvayā proktaḥ sām्यena
madhusūdana etasyāham na paśhyāmi chañchalatvāt
sthitim sthirām**

**Arjun said: The system of Yoga that you have described, O
Madhusudan, appears impractical and unattainable to me,
due to the restless mind.**

Shri Bhagwan responds:

Sh. 35/36 Ch. 6

श्रीभगवानुवाच।

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् । अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय
वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥35॥

śhrī bhagavān uvācha asanśhayaṁ mahā-bāho mano
durnigrahaṁ chalam abhyāseṇa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa cha
grihyate

Lord Krishna said: O mighty-armed son of Kunti, what you
say is correct; the mind is indeed very difficult to restrain.
But by practice and detachment, it can be controlled.

असंयतात्मना योगो दुष्प्राप इति मे मतिः। वश्यात्मना तु यतता
शक्यो ऽवाप्तुमुपायतः ॥36॥

asaṅyatātmanā yogo duṣṭprāpa iti me matiḥ vaśhyātmanā
tu yatatā śhakyo 'vāptum upāyataḥ

Yoga is difficult to attain for one whose mind is unbridled.
However, those who have learnt to control the mind, and
who strive earnestly by proper means, can achieve
perfection in Yog. This is my opinion.

The most extraordinary difficulty man faces is control of his mind, and Shri Krishna acknowledges the same. He assures us, however, that it is possible by practice and dispassion. In the experience of the author, once the aim of life is specific, one can sincerely take up any practice that will lead to attainment. When one clearly sees that gratification of senses and acquiring sense pleasures, accumulating wealth and the like lead to comfort, no doubt, but never and I repeat never, complete fulfilment. It leaves one with fear of loss and the feeling, "ye dil mange more." Nothing is ever enough. So, one is left seeking; when the way is shown, we have to necessarily

walk it if we hope to reach our destination. Vairagya, dispassion comes effortlessly when we see the result of acquisition and pleasure seeking; this has not worked, so give up that chase. Sit still and do Japa, which is the highest form of yajna, which will help dispel desire and purify our minds such that restraint will become easy.

Q16. What are the Practices that will lead to spiritual progress?

The matrix to be followed would be:

Problem	Solution	Practise	Steps
Ignorance of our true nature, Avidya	Jnyana, Knowledge of our True Nature	Shravana, Manana Niddhidhyasana	Step III
Vikshipta mana restless mind, no clarity, focus	Ekagrata, focussed, concentrated mind	Dhyana, Upasana, meditation, worship, Bhakti, Rājayoga	Step II
Chittamala-impurity of mind	Chittashuddhi-purity of mind	Karma yoga	Step I

Step I: As you can see, one cannot skip the steps lest we fall. First comes Karma yoga with all its prerequisites and attitude to action. This leads to purity of mind, which then becomes easy to tame and focus.

Step II: Besides meditation, all ancillary measures such as daily worship, devotion, japa, and the various limbs of Rājayoga (explained above). One should take all the help one can get. The Guru is vital; he awakens our inner Guru. The word Guru literally means one who removes the darkness of ignorance (Gu: darkness of ignorance, ru: remover).

Step III: With a focused and quiet mind, listening shravana to the teachings of the Shastras and reflecting (manana) becomes easy. Niddhidhyasana is a higher form of meditation in which, when one has transcended all objects in consciousness, one quietly asks, “Who then am I?”. No answer is expected. Knowledge dawns.

Q17 Are there any shortcuts?

Let go, another word for Thank you! Ask any question, the answer will be just these two words, Let go or thank you! Let me tell you a story: Once there was a guy who loved trekking, and he went up a mountain, lost in thought, and he slipped over a cliff but managed to catch hold of a branch of a tree. He kept on crying for help, “Is anyone up there? Please help.” God replied, “Let go!” The man could not believe it. He asked, “Who said that?” God replied, “God”. The man wondered if God was out of His mind?

The drop was a sheer 200 feet. He called again, “God, please help!” God replied yet again, “Let go!” The man could not believe it and fell silent after a while, as his arm was almost coming off, he asked, “Is anyone up there?” God replied, “God.” The man screamed, “Is anyone else up there?” So, there we are, unable to let go! We fear we will drop and die!

Gorakshanath sings a song which means “Die! O yogi, die! For such is sweet death! Die, O yogi, die!”

To attain ultimate bliss, one must die to the ego! And it can be done with THANK YOU YOGA!

Q18. What is Svadharma?

Fulfilling one’s duties in life according to Varnashrama Dharma, ethically and keeping all the principles of Karmayoga in mind, will quickly lead to chittashuddhi, emotional purification, which will remove the restlessness of the mind and make focus possible to attain the AIM of existence.

Q19. Is there rebirth?

Who knows? We know this birth, and we want to be free from suffering here and now; it is imperative then that we strive and seek a way out while still alive.

Shri Krishna has repeatedly referred to it in the Bhagavad Gita, and one really cannot explain birth defects and the like without taking recourse to this doctrine. ‘As you sow so shall you reap’ is a well-known saying, and yet if the new-born had no chance to sow in this birth, why is he/she reaping such a poisonous fruit? Questions such as these, and indeed much research that has gone into reincarnation, strongly support the concept of rebirth, better expressed as reincarnation. The reader is referred to the work of Raymond Moody, who has collected over 2000 cases which could only be explained if we accept rebirth. We have earlier explained regarding the sukshma sharira, the subtle body, which carries the impressions and desires onto the next life for experiencing

once again the fruits of their action as well. In the Bhagavad Gita Chapter 15, Shri Krishna explains:

Sh. 8 Ch. 15

शरीरं यदवाप्नोति यच्चाप्युत्क्रामतीश्वरः । गृहीत्वैतानि संयाति
वायुर्गन्धानिवाशयात् ॥ ८॥

śharīraṁ yad avāpnoti yach chāpy utkrāmatīśhvaraḥ
grihītvaitāni sanyāti vāyur gandhān ivāśhayāt

Even as the wind wafts scent from their seat, so, too, the Jivātma, which is the controller of the body, etc., taking the mind and the senses from the body which it leaves behind, forthwith migrates to the body which it acquires.

Rebirth is one of my favourite topics, for it validates the theory of Karma and rationally explains suffering. It is undoubtedly a fact that this name and form dies and cannot take birth again. This is why we tend even to negate the possibility. But has not Shri Krishna said in the very second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita that we change our bodies even as we change our old garments? So, this worn-out garment of a body and identity indeed perishes. What is reborn are the habit patterns, samskaras, vasanas, and desires which are housed in the sukshma sharira, the subtle body. This has also been explained earlier.

Q20. What is Reality?

Sh. 16 Ch. 2

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः । उभयोरपि
दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥ १६॥

nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ ubhayorapi
dṛiṣṭho 'nta stvanayos tattva-darśhibhiḥ

The unreal has no existence, and the real never ceases to be.

The reality of both has thus been perceived by the seers of Truth.

Just reflect on what Shri Krishna is saying. The definition of REALITY, as given by all Sages and scriptures, is that which is permanent. So, all that passes is not real; only that which endures beyond time.

Mahatma Gandhi, who studied Sanskrit in jail, is quoted as saying 'sat' has two meanings: the first is 'truth' and the second 'that which is,' how simple he made it. That which is the Truth, so only that which has an eternal existence, is Truth or only Truth has an eternal existence; all that is unreal passes, and thus it did not exist in the first place. When he was asked what the definition of God was, he simply answered, "Truth is God and God is Truth."

According to Swami Sarvapriyanand, the whole of the Bhagavad Gita is hidden in this one shloka. He makes an elaborate commentary applying Vedantic principles, which prove what is illusion and what is Truth. Māya means, ma: no, āya: is, that which "is" and "is not, i.e., an illusion, but an illusion must subsist on something, for e.g., the mirage of an oasis must have a desert and the sun to appear, the rope appearing as a snake must have the rope as its substrate. That is the crux of this manifestation, it seems as real, but it is an illusion imposed on the Truth-Consciousness!

One can even take the example of a dream which is real enough while it lasts, but as soon as one wakes up, one dismisses it as false. It needed the substrate of a mind to appear, and the same substrate in a different state, that of waking, rejected it! Thus, it was born, it lived, and it died, just as this body does, and yet this could not happen without a

substratum of Consciousness: Pure Awareness, which made it possible to be experienced. We need to identify ourselves with that to become free of the fear that sometimes this nightmare of a life creates. Pure Awareness is said to be beyond both being and nonbeing; this is necessarily so for both are an appearance in It. This can be borne out by the simple understanding that manifestation is all that one can perceive, and the unmanifest is what is not perceived; however, both must have a ground, which is the Pure Awareness in and beyond both.

So, there are three:

1. REAL: That which is beyond time, space and causality.
2. ILLUSION: Ever-changing based on Reality
3. UNREAL: Never existed, e.g., child of a barren woman, a square circle, etc.

When a dear friend, Suroor, was dying of terminal cancer, this poem came to me—inspired by Suroor’s statement that we have to face reality (the beginning of the end of this body). Is that all? I wondered and felt there must be more. This can’t apparently be true, but I must explore.

What then is reality?

Childhood to youth to now
Am I metamorphosed, or are you?
The world I perceive and how
Every shade of transformed hue.

Waking dreaming sleeping
I pass from the one to the other state

Laughing and crying, fighting and fuming
Multifaceted experiences, self-created or fate?

Waking up from a nightmare
Disoriented, confused, I find
Oh! That was a huge scare
This or that, did I lose my mind?

Health and wealth, friends and foes
Jobs and businesses, and on it goes,
Entertainment and boredom
One to the other, is there freedom?

On the story went
Changing, changing to the day
Days and nights I spent
Contemplating what is the way?

That which does not change is real
Experience is perception, all ephemeral
Yet as is, is not, all is imagined I see
What then, dear friend, is REALITY?

Masked in all that is gloriously apparent
Not of time or space, still and silent
Consciousness immutable eternity
That then is TRUTH AND REALITY.

Shirin
24.12.18

Chapter VI

Convictions From Personal Experience

This part of the book was particularly written when the question arose in my heart, which asked very firmly and honestly, so what is it that you know?

The story of a great scholar and philosopher goes like this.

Once, he was travelling by boat across the river Ganga, alongside him sat an illiterate villager. The scholar wanted it known to all present how erudite he was, so he asked the villager, "Have you read the six Darshanas of Indian philosophy?" The villager replied, "No, Sir, I do not know what that means." The scholar continued, "Do you know of the Upanishads?" Once again, the villager replied, "No, Sir, I can barely sign my name." The scholar was piqued, and he said, "Then you have wasted your life." It so happened that a storm hit the boat, and as it was capsizing, the villager shouted, "Dear Sir, do you know how to swim?" The scholar shouted back 'No...." The villager shot back, "Then you have lost your life!"

I was reminded of this story as I contemplated what exactly I know; I asked myself, will I swim across or drown with my books? Only time will tell.

This is what I am convinced of, and it indicates to me what I am, not what I think I am.

There is another dimension of which we are not aware.

- One can choose to be happy always.
- We create our own reality.

- The law of Karma is real: Every thought, word and deed is shot out into the Ākāshic records and moves into an orbit like the one taken by a boomerang! It comes right back to us; however, we may have dropped this body and taken another in the meantime, which then makes it inexplicable as to why it landed in my lap!! Nothing happens by chance; its accuracy is infinite, after all, it is Cosmic Intelligence and the Cosmic computer at work.
- The Bhagavad Gita is a practical manual and should be learnt early in life.
- Gratitude brings abundance to life. Follow the THANK YOU YOGA explained in the previous chapters.
- We all love to be praised, a sure pitfall to disappointment, and a gateway to hell because it leads to craving. Strange as it may sound, it is one of the most hidden truths I have seen through. It so happened when I was in my late thirties and my son, barely 8 years old, remarked ‘Don’t fall for it, Amma!’ This was when I seemed to be thoroughly taken in by a male college classmate, who was sincerely glorifying me! Those words still ring in my ears, “Don’t fall for it, Amma!”
- We are all taught how to enter and succeed in samsāra, but have not been given the key to exit.
- The Guru shows us the way, but we have to walk it. Knowledge and devotion are both essential parts of the spiritual path.
- Presently, spirituality is a set of concepts for me as follows:
 - To seek is all we can do; to find is the will of the source.
 - The Ego does learn to accept life as it is and experiences peace, which is not the same as that of

the Self-realised being, where the Ego is seen to be just an aspect of mundane life, and all strife goes out.

- The need to look, practice and attain is still there, indicative of the search not being over, while it is clearly understood that the Ego will keep this search going as long as it can, for it is playing both police and chor (thief). It does not necessarily follow that the search should be given up.
- Surrender is a highly misunderstood word. Surrendering to reality is effortless and spontaneous, almost automatic and always in the present.

Musings

Scenario: A 6-year-old child wins a tennis match after being 3 games down (best of 7 games). Mother asks: How do you feel? Grandmother says, "Don't ask this question." Mother resents, "Why not?"

Here is the reason:

The question is quite irrelevant. How are you going to feel if you win? Obviously, very good. Ramdas in Dasbodh said, "The one who states the obvious is a *murkha*, fool." But equally important is the fact that the 6-year-old is getting addicted to the sensation of winning, and we are consolidating that. The joy of playing for playing's sake is gone. Now one plays to win. It gives bursts of high, to which one gets addicted, so when one loses, there is a corresponding low, which one does not know how to handle till much, much later in life, if ever. Play the winning aspect down, appreciate, but do not glorify.

Dwell on what is known as dosha darshana [visualise the defects] of sense pleasures and the truth about perennial joy [Paramānand] as given in the following chart:

Quality and property	Vishayananda	Paramananda
Object	Present	Absent
Fleeting	Indeed	Permanent
Has to be repeated	Again and again, and what's more, it loses its efficacy to give the same degree of pleasure.	No repetition required
Always brings happiness	No one can even bring misery. Certain to cause bondage	Does not apply as there is no object
Is it present in the Now?	No, always in the past and/or in the future	Only in the Now- Take refuge in the now.
Leads to satisfaction	For a while	All the time
Sense of lack	Felt in its absence	No sense of lack
Dependent?	On things, relationships, etc.	Independent.
Tangible	Yes, very much with all senses	Not tangible
Easy to let go	Not at all due to its tangibility	Once there, the question of letting go does not arise

Hard to get	Easy usually, can be difficult	Difficult, apparently, because we do not want to
Know how to get	Yes, the way is chalked out and can be walked	Even though the way is known – because there is nowhere to go – the paradox gets in the way
Leads to	To begin, it tastes like nectar but ends in poison	To begin, it is difficult but ends in immortality
Location?	In the mind through sense gratification	Beyond the mind in the I Am
Sanskaras and Vasanas	Cause and effect of it	Have been burned to ash
Time and space	Affected by both	Beyond both
Goal of life?	For the ignorant	For those on the path
Can you get both?	No, if one takes the train to the west, they cannot go east	The awakened one may have both, but feels complete even in the absence of Vishayanand.
Process?	Always by becoming, having- if only I had this, if only that were not there.	It is in Being.

Kathopanishad:- Ādhyaya 1 Valli 2 Mantras 1,2 Lord Yama tells Nachiketas about Shreyas and Preyas. Shreyas is good, and Preyas means pleasant. One who chooses good is blessed, and the other who chooses the pleasant loses the true end, i.e., gets caught up in Samsāra. One cannot pursue both simultaneously. Can one have nectar and poison at the same time? All actions are either preyas or shreyas. Both bind us in Samsāra. The wise man (dhira) chooses Shreyas as it leads to moksha. The ignorant (manda) chooses Preyas as he gives more importance to sensory pleasures and hankers for growth and protection.

The Exit Route

1. Follow the Varnashram Dharma using your lifespan wisely. Self-control and pleasure seeking are not happiness.
2. Keep the Ultimate Aim in mind and remind yourself every day. Beware of attachment, which only means you are trying to squeeze happiness out of your loved ones. True love means being dedicated to each other's happiness.
3. Read the chapter on Why We Are Here often.
4. Choose your daily practice and be regular.
5. Every action should be ethical, Dharmic.
6. Take 10 days off every year to dedicate to spiritual growth. Find the place of your choice; mine is the Himalayas, my Gurudev's ashram.
7. Rewind your day's events before sleeping.
8. The last thing one does before sleeping makes a significant impression on the subconscious mind; let it be good. Watching television is often the worst thing one can do before sleeping, as the advertisements have a subtle and even not-so-subtle influence, leaving one craving stuff one doesn't need!

9. Blessings that you may find a Guru who leads you out of the Chakravayuh. May you live a hundred years and use them wisely. May this knowledge help you lighten the weight of the ego. May you have good health and well-being to pursue the path to complete fulfilment. May you have the discrimination to separate the Ātma from Anatma, Nityā from Anityā. May the ignorance of separation drop; that is all.

Aham ki Ātmakatha

अहं की आत्मकथा
जब अहं ने लिया आकार
तब वह बन गया अहंकार
शुरू हुई उसकी कहानी
सुनो सुनो उसकी जुबानी।
नन्हा बालक सबको अतिप्रिय
मुझमे ऐसा है क्या जो लगे रमणीय
घुंघराले बाल मोहक हंसी
ये मैं हूँ अब मैं समझी।
यह मेरी माँ कितनी सुन्दर
पिता कितने होनहार, ये मेरा घर
भाई, बहन, दादा, दादी, नाना, नानी
लगते प्रिय मुझको अति
मुझमे कुछ तो है
गालों में गहरे हिलकोरे
आंखों में रवि की किरणें
देखो तो सब कैसे आकर्षित हुए
साल साल बीत गए

काल ने दी आवाज हलकेसे
मैने कुछ देखी न सुनी
अनदेखी अनसुनी कर दी
देखो तो मेरे पास क्या नहीं
बाल बच्चे भार्या समृद्धि
साथ स्वास्थ्य और जवानी अब भी
इस आकार को तो बढना है समझी?
आखिर काल जोर से चिल्लाया
आकार अब थोडा घबराया
गुरूदेव के पास दौडा आया
तु ही बचा मुझे और मेरी काया
गुरूदेव ने दिया उपदेश

छोड इस आकार को
यह तो है एक बडा बन्धन
माया ने डाला है ये कनगन
उतार फेक इसे और देख
तू तो है निर्विकार निराकार ब्रम्हन
विवश हो मैने पूछा
कैसे गुरूदेव कैसे
मै तो केवल हूँ एक प्राणी
अंत करीब है मैने जानी

तूभी वह है मैभी वही
सब दृश्य अदृश्य सभी
जीवन मृत्यु एक खेल महान
इसको अनित्य जान

अहं ने लिया आकार
मोहित हुआ निराकार
सत्य नित्य हृदय मे बसा
हो मुक्त छोड यह व्यथा
कोई न दुजा न कोई दुजा
अब भय कैसो अभय भयो
सर्व ब्राह्ममयं रे रे सर्व ब्राह्ममयं
गाते गाते उसिमे विलीन हो, विलीन हो ।

शिरीन
22/5/20

Autobiography of the 'I'

When the I took shape
It then became the ego
And began its story
Listen, listen through his own tongue.

Small baby to all, very dear
What is in me that is so charming?
Curly hair and bewitching smile
OH this is me now I understand

This is mother so beautiful.
My father so capable, my home
Brother, sister, grandfather, grandmother
Are all very dear to me.

There surely is something in me.
Deep dimples in my cheeks
The radiance of the sun in my eyes
See how all are attracted to me!

Years and years rolled by
Time whispered softly
I turned deaf ear a blind eye
Look, what is it I do not have?

Wife, children and wealth
Youth as yet and health
This shape must yet
Increase, do you understand?

Alas! soon Time screamed.

The shape of I got terrified
Running to the Guru, cried
Save me, save me, save this body

The Guru gave his sage advice.
Drop this shape
This is bondage indeed
Maya has put this handcuff apparent bracelet

Remove this bracelet and see
You are the formless Pure Consciousness (Brahman)
Yet bewildered, I asked
How? how? Gurudev, I am only a creature
The end is near is now known to me.

You too are Brahman and so am I
All seen unseen as well
Life and death a mega game
Know this to be fleeting.
The I took shape and the Formless got deluded!
Truth Eternity dwells in the heart.
Become free, drop this lament
There is no other, no other
How then can fear grip?
All is Brahman. All indeed is Brahman
Singing thus the I merged, merged, eternal!

Shirin

Arjuna's Arrows and Algebra!

* Added here to illustrate the need for stepwise practice to attain the TRUTH.

Bhāskarāchārya (1114 -1185 CE) has been called the greatest mathematician of medieval India. He was born in Karnataka and is considered the progenitor of Differential Calculus, 500 years before Newton and Leibniz!

Bhāskarāchārya wrote at least four mathematical treatises in Sanskrit. One of them, titled *Leelavati*, contains many algebra-related teasers, which have become the subject of significant research by scholars. These teasers are in the form of *shlokas*, which pose problems. The shlokas need to be interpreted correctly to decipher the meaning to find the solution.

Look at the shloka displayed below.

पार्थः कर्णवधाय मार्गणगणं क्रुद्धो रणे संदधे तस्यार्धेन निवार्य
तच्छरणं मूलैश्चतुर्भिर्हयान् । शल्यं षड्भिरथेषुभिस्त्रिभिरपि
च्छत्रं ध्वजं कार्मुकम् चिच्छेदास्य शिरः शरेण कति ते यानर्जुनः
संदधे ॥

The direct meaning of this shloka is a question formulated as follows:

During the battle between Arjuna and Karna in the Mahabharata, Arjuna released some arrows. Of the released arrows:

- Half were consumed in stopping the arrows coming from Karna

- 4 times the square root of the arrows was consumed to control the horses of Karna's chariot
- Six were for gaining control over Shalya, the charioteer of Karna. (Shalya was the maternal uncle of Nakula and Sahadeva)
- 3 were used to take on the umbrella and flag of the chariot and the bow of Karna.
- Finally, Karna was killed by a single arrow.

So how many arrows were released by Arjuna in the battle?

- Basic algebra easily yields the answer to this question if the equation is formulated correctly.
- Let the total number of arrows be X. The statements above can be reduced to the “algebraic” form $X = X/2 + 4\sqrt{X} + 6 + 3 + 1$
- Solving the above, we get the value of X=100 for the total number of arrows shot by Arjuna.

However, the fun is not just in getting the algebra right. There is so much hidden information in this shloka. If we pause to think a little deeper about the hidden meanings:

- Even for an atirathi like Arjuna, it took as many as 50 arrows to stop the arrows of Karna; this highlights Karna's remarkable skills.
- That the horses needed 40 arrows to immobilise the chariot tells us about the kind of training given to the horses on the battlefield.
- When even the horses needed 40 arrows, Shalya the charioteer surrendered with just 6, indicating that he is favouring Arjuna.
- 3 arrows to take the chariot and the bow show the helplessness of Karna.

- Once everything is in control, the enemy should be vanquished in just a single arrow.

So, the rules and skills required to win such a battle operationally are:

- Firstly, stop the enemy's firepower.
- Second, immobilise the enemy by taking on his mobility, the horses and the driver.
- Thirdly, signal to him his helplessness by destroying the carriage, and
- Finally, eliminate the enemy himself.

If we analyse the same shloka on the “spiritual” side:

- To attain ultimate liberation, one needs to control one's personal desires, a task that is challenging. This being the case, it takes 50 arrows.
- Then take control over the 5 senses and sensual pleasures indicated by the horses. The 40 arrows needed to do this indicate the difficulty of the task.
- Gaining control over the 5 senses will lead one to control over the consciousness (manas, thought, ego), indicated by the driver.
- If all the foregoing is done, achieving the ultimate liberation (moksha) should be relatively easy.
- This is the greatness of our ancestors in Sanatana Dharma, Vidyā integrated with Values.

Just a single shloka includes so much knowledge!

Epilogue

Chakravayuh and the way out is intended for all of us who feel life cannot have been gifted to us for simply the routine of education, earning wealth, begetting children and passing away! It is too grand an opportunity and too magnificent a possibility to let go! And yet the key is to let go!

Let go of what you ask.

All that we so assiduously hold dear and cling to despite being fully aware of its fleeting nature.

What then is dearest to us?

We identify with and hold tightly to our identity or persona, the Body/Mind/ Intellect complex (BMI). We never even suspect that our Essence may be beyond these. The cause of suffering is simply false identification with the BMI. The cascade of events that follow is:

- I am this body
- I am this mind
- I must preserve me
- I must feed comfort and clothe me
- I must acquire
- I must enjoy
- I must travel to the most exotic destinations
- I must have the most super relationships

Here, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad explains through a conversation between the Sage Yajnavalkya and his beloved wife Maitreyi, who insisted on being given the knowledge of

Truth, when he announced he was retiring and would proceed to the forest. The famous verse, which is oft quoted, is:

**स होवाचः न वा अरे पत्युः कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति, आत्मनस्तु
कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति**

**sa hovāca: na vā are patyuh kāmāya patiḥ priyo bhavati,
ātmanas tu kāmāya patiḥ priyo bhavati:**

**He said: It is not for the sake of the husband, my dear, that
he is loved, but for one's own sake that he is loved.**

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

It is a long verse enumerating each relationship and saying that the relationship is dear not for the sake of the other but for one's own sake.

- I must buy everything that is branded, clothes, car, watches, you name it
- I must not look old
- I must keep fit
- I must impress all I meet

The list is endless. Nature has its own technology, and the body wears thin, after all, it is made of the five elements. Health and wealth all roll on in a sinusoidal pattern.

- I feel hollow and lost.
- A near and dear one passes.
- Someone betrays my trust.
- I feel hopeless
- I suffer!!

This is the Chakravayuh!

What has been attempted in the foregoing pages is to guide one out of this maze by following ancient techniques. Like Swami Rama says, “The word stress has become a hot word today. We all talk about stress. Was there stress in ancient times, too? There was, but it was called ignorance. Today, stress means stress. We don’t accept that it’s part of ignorance.” No one wants to admit they are ignorant.

The sages have told us the loop of samsara is Avidyā (ignorance of our true nature), following which Kāma (desire) arises and to fulfil which Karma (action) is undertaken, then attachment (emotional dependence) follows, and then more desire arises, and thus the cycle goes on.

Now, to reverse the situation and extricate oneself from suffering and gain freedom from fear, one has to tread the way out! As is given in Chapter V, the key is to gain knowledge so that ignorance of our essential nature is demolished and we finally come to rest in this life, not awaiting death for peace!

Death and Now

If we have to RIP after death
Why not RIP right now?
If birth is sure to follow death
Why not be reborn right now?

If heaven and hell follow death
Heaven and hell also abide right now
If I and you dissolve after death
Why not dissolve I and you right now?

Are we or are we not after death
Why not resolve the dilemma right now
If we have to RIP after death
Why not RIP right now?

Shirin
1.3.18

Jai Gurudev!

Offering this text at your feet,
May the Prasad benefit the readers in full measure.

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः । सर्वे भद्राणि
पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत् । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥
Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Santu Niraamayaah
| Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantumaa Kashcid-Duhkha-Bhaag-
Bhavet | Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||
Om, May All be Happy, May All be Free from Illness. May All
See what is Auspicious, may no one suffer. Om Peace,
Peace, Peace.

Glossary

A

Ādhibhautik: Suffering caused by animals and other living creatures.

Ādhidaivik: Suffering caused by natural calamities or events beyond human control, such as earthquakes or floods.

Ādhyatmic: Self-created suffering arising from personal thoughts, anxieties, and emotional distress.

Ārta- afflicted

Ātma Nivedanam: Surrendering oneself to God; Self-realisation or Samadhi (Bhakti Yoga).

Ātma: The true self or soul, which is eternal and unchanging.

Adhyas- superimposition

Adrishta – unseen

Anandamaya Kosha: The innermost layer or sheath of the human body, associated with bliss and spiritual joy.

Anatma: The concept of 'not-self' or 'non-soul,' referring to the transient and impermanent aspects of existence.

Anitya: Transient, impermanent, or fleeting.

Apoornamanyata: A feeling of incompleteness or insufficiency.

Archanam: Worshipping God.

Arthārti- desirous of wealth

Asti: The state of existence or being.

Avidyā: Ignorance, specifically the ignorance of one's true nature.

B

Bhakti Yoga: Path of devotion.

Brahman: The ultimate, immutable, timeless, infinite reality in Hindu philosophy.

Brahmasutras: One of the three major sources of Vedic knowledge, along with Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, collectively known as Prasthāntrayi.

C

Chaitanya Saakshi: Witness consciousness, the unchanging observer within.

Chakravayuh: A complex, circular formation often symbolising the entanglement of life and the difficulty of escaping suffering.

D

Dāsyam: Serving God.

Darshana: Philosophical viewpoints or traditional schools of philosophy in the Indian tradition.

Dharma: Refers to the code of conduct and righteousness. It emphasises right action and behaviour, and can also indicate the religion one follows. It is the first of the four Purusharthas or goals of life.

Drishta – seen

Dvaita Vedanta: A dualistic interpretation of Vedanta which posits a fundamental distinction between the individual soul (Ātman) and the ultimate reality (Brahman).

G

Gunās – attributes, qualities-Sattva- clarity, Rājas- greed, Tamas- lethargy, indolence

Gunās: The three qualities or modes in Prakriti: Sattva (balance, purity), Rājas (activity, passion), and Tamas (inertia, chaos). These qualities combine in various ways to form the fabric of creation.

I

Ishvara, the lord of the Universe

Ishvara: In Advaita Vedanta, the supreme being or the manifestation of Brahman with Maya (illusion).

J

Jāyate: The state of birth or coming into existence.

Jigyasu- seeker of truth

Jnāna Kānda: The portion of the Vedas dealing with wisdom and liberation.

Jnāna Yoga: Path of knowledge focusing on self-realisation and liberation from ignorance.

Jnyāni- knower of truth

K

Kām (Kama): Refers to desire, particularly the desire for progeny and subsequent desires. The Vedas encourage fulfilling desires to ultimately understand their fleeting nature. It is one of the four Purusharthas.

Karma Kānda: The portion of the Vedas dealing with rituals and ceremonies aimed at achieving material and celestial gains.

Karma Yoga: Path of selfless action.

Kathopanishad: An Upanishad that defines the pathways to pleasure (Preyas) and happiness (Shreyas), emphasising the choice between fleeting pleasure and long-term fulfilment.

Keertanam: Chanting or singing about God (Bhakti Yoga).

Krishnārpanamastu- offered to Shri Krishna

Kundalini – Siddha Yoga: Path of awakening spiritual energy.

Kundalini- coiled power at the base of the spine

Kutastha- unchanging

Lakshana- indicative

M

Madhurya- like a lover

Māyā: The cosmic illusion that veils the true nature of Brahman, making the phenomenal world appear real.

Moksha: Liberation from desires, signifying the attainment of perennial fulfilment and freedom from the cycle of birth and death. It is the ultimate goal among the four Purusharthas.

N

Nāstika: Philosophical schools in Indian tradition that do not accept the authority of the Vedas.

Navavidha- 9 types

Nimitta- intelligent cause

Nirantara-uninterrupted.

Nishkām -without desire for the result of the action

Nitya: Eternal or permanent.

P

Paada Sevanam: Serving God willingly.

Pathless path: A non-traditional approach, often seen in Zen and other minimalist traditions.

Prakriti: The inherent nature or constitution of an individual, determined by the three gunas (qualities).

Prakriti: The natural world or material reality in Indian philosophy, particularly in Samkhya and Yoga schools.

Prāna: Vital life force or energy that animates the body.

Prānic – vital force

Prasthanatrayi: The three foundational texts of Vedanta philosophy: the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Brahmasutras.

Pratibhāsika- dream reality

Preyas: That which leads to fleeting pleasures and sense gratification. It is contrasted with Shreyas, which leads to complete fulfilment and permanent happiness.

R

Rāja Yoga: Path of meditation and control over the mind.

S

Sākshi: Witness or observer, referring to the underlying consciousness that observes all experiences.

Sadgati- right path/goal

Sakhya- friend

Sākhya: Developing a friendship with God.

Sanskriti – elegant and good upbringing

Sat- Truth

Satchidanand: A Sanskrit term representing the ultimate state of being: existence (sat), consciousness (chit), and bliss (ananda).

Satchidananda: A state of being characterised by existence (Sat), consciousness (Chit), and bliss (Ananda).

Shaktipaath – transference of Energy

Shanta- peace

Shraddhā -firm conviction- faith with experience

Shravanam: Listening to the names of and stories about God (Bhakti Yoga).

Smaranam: Remembering God throughout the day (Bhakti Yoga).

Sthula Sharira: The gross physical body.

Sukha: Happiness or pleasure.

Sukshma Sharira: The subtle body, comprising the mind, intellect, and vital energies.

T

Taijas: Self-luminous, representing the state of dreaming.

Tatastha- along the bank {to indicate a river to someone who has not seen one we tell them water running between banks}
Tatvas: Fundamental elements or principles in the Samkhya philosophy, representing the building blocks of reality.
Turiya: The fourth state of consciousness, underlying waking, dreaming, and deep sleep.
Upādāna- material cause
Upadhi- limiting adjunct

V

Vaishvanara: Lord of the world, representing the state of waking consciousness.
Vandanam: Praising God selflessly and with total submission.
Varna: Refers to the social class into which one is born or grows into, determined by qualities (Gunas) rather than caste (Jati). It is a component of Varnashram Dharma.
Varnashram Dharma: The system dividing life into four stages (Ashramas) and social classes (Varnas), guiding the pursuit of the four Purusharthas: Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha.
Vātsalya- feeling of parenthood
Vedānta: A school of philosophy based on the teachings of the Upanishads, focusing on the nature of reality and the relationship between the individual soul (Ātman) and the ultimate reality (Brahman).
Vedas: The oldest sacred scriptures of Hinduism, divided into four main collections: Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda.
Vikruti – distorted conditionings
Vinashyati: The state of decay or destruction.
Viparinamate: The state of change or transformation.
Vipassana: Buddhist meditation technique focusing on insight.
Vishvarupa- universal form

Viveka: Discrimination or discernment between the real and the unreal, the eternal and the transient.

Vyasa: The sage traditionally credited with compiling the Vedas and writing the Brahma Sutras, a key text in Vedanta philosophy.

Vyavāharika- transactional reality

Y

Yajna: Performing actions as a sacrificial offering.

Yajna- fire sacrifice, in a broader sense, an Offering.

Yoga – union

Yoga: The practice of spiritual discipline aimed at achieving self-realisation and liberation.

Yukta yolked too

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About the Author

Dr. Shirin Venkat, a distinguished obstetrician and gynecologist, has dedicated over 45 years to women's health. Graduating as a gold medalist from Grant Medical College, Mumbai, she further honed her expertise in England, earning an FRCOG. Throughout her career, she has worked in high-volume obstetric centers in Dubai and Mumbai, managing over 10,000 deliveries annually and developing significant expertise in high-risk pregnancies.



Beyond her professional achievements, Dr. Shirin has been a passionate advocate for maternal health. She spearheaded initiatives like the SuPrabha Ganga Yatra (SGY) and Hara Narmade Yatra (HNY), raising awareness about maternal mortality. Her dedication to this cause led her to meet esteemed figures such as Hon. President APJ Abdul Kalam and Hon. President Pratibha Patil at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Raised by a deeply spiritual mother, Dr. Shirin's early travels across India to meet Enlightened Masters profoundly influenced her spiritual journey. She remains committed to her spiritual practices, integrating them seamlessly with her professional life. As a disciple of Swami Rama and later Swami Veda Bharati, she emphasizes the importance of spirituality in achieving a balanced life.

Dr. Shirin's contributions extend to literature and media. She has authored several books, including:

1. Holistic Motherhood (available for free download on <https://www.jaypeedigital.com/book/9789352500444>)
2. Jeevansar Kathamrut (available for free download on <https://iire.in/Books.aspx>)
3. Your Questions Answered
4. Shiv Goraksha by Mrunalini Joshi Translated in English (available for free download on <https://iire.in/Books.aspx>)
5. Essays on Ancient Wisdom (available for free download on <https://iire.in/Books.aspx>)
6. Gitaamrut (available for free download on <https://iire.in/Books.aspx>)

Additionally, she shares insights on her YouTube channel.

Dr. Shirin strongly believes that integrating spirituality with professional pursuits leads to a more fulfilling and balanced life.

Key Highlights:

- Over 45 years of experience as an obstetrician and gynecologist.
- Gold medalist from Grant Medical College, Mumbai; FRCOG from England.
- Expertise in high-risk pregnancies, working in Dubai and Mumbai.
- Advocate for maternal health awareness, leading initiatives like SGY and HNY.
- Disciple of Swami Rama and Swami Veda Bharati.

- Authored several books on women's health and spirituality, available for free download.
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